

Classroom Notes
September 2020

September 4, 2020

Big hello to everyone, intrepid parents — A slightly more relaxing summer for you has followed our crazy spring and June session, I hope...

With September 8 just under two weeks away, it's time to get down to business. More information will follow, but I wanted to get us started on the basics, at least. In this email I'm including an overview of our health protections, a supplies list, and our launch (literally... canoes!) of the new school year.

One note: This year I'll be enforcing a no-phones-in-the-classroom rule. If you want your student to have them at school, they can keep them in their cubby. Computer use in the classroom is limited to research as directed by teachers.

And we're off... ! Any questions, just holler. I think we're in for a good year. Bests, Elizabeth.

1. MLMS Health Protections. Each student will wash his or her hands thoroughly first thing on arrival, and last thing before leaving. While inside, we'll all wear masks. The CDC recommends against wearing only a face shield, as they are primarily for eye protection.

Wearing masks can be wearisome indeed, so we're going to be holding class outside whenever we can. In general we'll be staying aware of not staying too close to another, and seating will be several feet apart.

I hope this strikes a balance between keeping this awful malady out of our school and sticking to Maria Montessori principles of interaction and just plain humanity. Please let me know now or going forward of any concerns you might have.

2. Wednesday 9 September. the second day of school, will be a canoe trip on the Shenandoah. Teambuilding at its wettest! (—though not toooo wet, I hope) I'll be sending a waiver form from Front Royal Outdoors along with more particulars, but the short version is that they supply everything but lunch, appropriate clothes, and sunscreen.

3. Supplies List. We're going to start off this year with sharing supplies as little as possible, so each student will keep at his or her place a stash for easy access. Thus the first item on the list...

— a tackle box, small toolbox, craft box, organizer tote, whatever works for you ([here](#) and [here](#) are a couple ideas). You may want to have two smaller ones to separate general and art supplies, or just fit them in one — your choice.

General supplies:

- calendar book for writing assignments and other reminders. (make sure the block for each day is big enough to write in.)
- handheld, non-motorized pencil sharpener that captures shavings ([click here](#) for what I mean
- just basic dollar-store variety is fine.)
- 5 individual notebooks (math, history/language arts, writing workshop/spanish, science, logic/current events)
- 5 folders with prongs to hold papers ([click here](#) for example)
- white eraser (something [like this](#))
- permanent-bond glue stick (something [like this](#); try Michaels if Target craft section etc is out)
- scissors with pointy tips (whatever size your student is comfortable with)
- 100 sheets each college-lined school paper and graph paper ([like this](#)) for work at home
- variety pack of water-based colored markers ([like this](#))
- two black Sharpies, one fine tip and one ultra fine tip

Art supplies: Mrs. Kuzmick notes you'll find a range of prices/quality for many of these art supplies, but to purchase student or beginner grade — for example, the \$6 set of watercolor tubes from Michaels rather than the \$24 set. If you're having trouble finding something, drop her a line at jkuzmick@mlm-school.org.

- one roll of select-a-size paper towels
- smock or apron
- plastic plate or similar smooth white or light-colored dish to use as a paint palette
- two glass jars (cleaned-out jelly or salsa jars work well.)
- set of drawing pencils ([here's an example](#) from Michaels)
- 9"x12" spiral-bound sketch book with "mixed media" label (such as [here](#))
- regular blank-page notebook for doodling, planning, etc
- set of small bottles of acrylic paints in primary colors (like [this](#))
- set of watercolor tubes, student grade (like [this](#))
- no. 6 "round" acrylic paint brush, synthetic nylon, beginner/student grade (like [this](#))
- 18" ruler, preferably clear — sewing sections often have them if school supply doesn't
- basic protractor, triangle, and drawing compass (see [here](#) for the idea)

September 7, 2020

Hello parents! A few updates and reminders:

— As I mentioned in the parent meeting, please make sure your student has soft-soled slippers to change into when they arrive each day.

Normally we'd want an outdoor sole, but we have the toddler community below us and our floor acts like a big sounding board. They take naps in the mid-day, and we don't want to wake them up!

— Dual-enrollment parents, would you send me your child's schedule please? Thanks.

— Below is a link to the MLMS schedule as final as I can make it. As you can imagine, our watchword this year is ADAPT, so I'll keep you posted as to any changes.

(One change you'll see, for example: Since we're not doing food prep this year, community snack is gone from the schedule. Accordingly, I moved lunch from noon to 11:30. As a result, we have time four days of five for a study hall at the end of each day in which students can get a head start on homework, have silent reading time, practice art, etc. The proctor, Gunnar Burling, will be able to take one or two kids at a time to teach guitar — those who want to — so it'll be a pleasant way to wind down from the day once we finish our daily cleaning chores.)

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1QK-eKJqcOpY7N_LUI09-sMj-STmNjMu1/view?usp=sharing

— For now we're using alternating cubbies to keep some distancing, but everyone including our dual-enrollment students will have their own cubby to keep slippers, backpacks, lunch, etc in. Jr high kids will have their own place at the big table where they can keep their supplies.

— Small change since last week: Due to the heroic cleaning efforts of Mona and Gunnar, the dual-enrollment students will now be able to use the science room while they're in virtual class. The door will remain open and teachers will keep an ear and eye out, but this should afford both groups more focus on their work.

— DE kids should bring a book, knitting, or other activity for those times when they're not in virtual class.

— Reminding that tomorrow, Tuesday, will be a regular day. We moved the canoe trip to Wednesday so everyone — jr high and DE — can come. [Check my canoe-trip email of 4 September for important information about the trip!](#)

No doubt I've forgotten something, but hey, I'll ADAPT! Any questions, give me a shout. And looking forward to seeing everyone tomorrow.

Bests, Elizabeth.

September 20, 2020

Hello Jr High parents -- We seem to be off to a scary-smooth start from what I'm seeing, so I'm expecting to trip and fall off the deck or some such that will put us back in balance. Wait, bad idea!

We all have our inboxes stuffed, so I aim to keep in touch rather than overwhelm. Thus we can go about these reports in two ways: either highlight a couple of subjects with a paragraph or so each time (on a rotating basis), or just short bits about the variety of subjects.

Let me know if you have a preference.

For this week, I'm going to talk about History and Language Arts, because they're a good example this quarter of how subject material can play off each other... like how real life works (something I didn't figure out until I was well out of school, which seems kind of backwards).

In History, we're starting the year studying Reconstruction, and for a couple of reasons: First, everybody studies the Civil War, and Reconstruction gets tossed in at the end as an afterthought. It was incredibly more important than that — arguably as and perhaps even more life-changing to the United States (with worldwide ripples) than the Civil War itself.

Second follows on first: This period is the impetus behind everything from the civil rights movement (and now BLM) to women's suffrage, America's leap into industrialization, and Prohibition.

PBS made a very good 2-part video called Reconstruction: The Second Civil War which I found via the wonders of YouTube. We've been watching segments of it over the last couple of weeks, alternating with a combination of me dancing about with enthusiasm at the blackboard and freezing in place to hear the students' points of view. I think I've learned as much as they (I hope, on both counts).

Meanwhile, in Language Arts, I first asked them to come to the next class with three ways to finish this sentence: "What makes people equal is...". I asked them to keep thinking about their answers as we continued to study Reconstruction, and I started laying out the elements of a good introductory paragraph to an essay. (A summary page with examples that I wrote is attached should you be interested.)

In class they've been writing a practice intro on whatever topic they like. Tomorrow is due their intro for what will be the "what makes people equal" essay. Can't wait to see what they've come up with.

As always, questions or feedback, just drop me a line. Thanks for letting me have fun with your kids. Bests, Elizabeth.

ESSAY WRITING: INTRODUCTORY PARAGRAPH. *Where it All Begins.*

General Outline:

Topic (from which you'll eventually derive, or come up with, Essay Title)

I. Introduction

- A. Context and background of what you're talking about
- B. Interesting fact(s) that make the reader curious to keep learning what you have to say
- C. Thesis statement -- what you believe to be true about the topic and want to convince your reader (also known as your argument)

EXAMPLE 1:

Cheetahs

Cheetahs, the world's fastest land animal, live on the dry, hot plains of Africa. Their spines are specially evolved to flex like springs to help them make huge leaps as they chase their prey. They have a mystery in the past, however -- their DNA has so little diversity that zoologists conclude they must have almost died out about 20,000 years ago, and today's population is descended from just a few individuals. This genetic "bottleneck" makes cheetahs today vulnerable -- one disease could afflict them all, for example. Thus it's critical to study and protect the cheetahs we have today.

EXAMPLE 2:

Muscle Cars

With the return of models like the Dodge Challenger and the regular redesigns of others like the Chevy Camaro and Ford Mustang, the American muscle car is enjoying a resurgence in popularity. In 2015, for example, the latest edition of the Ford Mustang sold the most cars since the early 2000s -- this after Ford nearly cancelled the line in the late 1980s. Instead, the Mustang has become Ford's longest-running model ever. When engineering advances combine increased horsepower and aggressive styling with better fuel economy and safety ratings, the American driver who wants to look and sound cool can have it all.