

Sweet Gum Upper Elementary Community
Distance Learning Plan & Digital Resources
Week of March 30, 2020

Dear Sweet Gum Community,

Week One of Distance Learning, here we are! In the course of preparing academic content and a schedule of virtual morning meetings, virtual conferences, and virtual office hours, one thing has become clear to me: we are part of an extraordinary community at Aidan. In three weeks time, I have worked in collaboration with our dedicated administration, our creative faculty, and our generous parent community to adapt to our unusual circumstances, as families throughout the world are doing today.

As we embark on an adventure together these next few weeks, I wanted to share some wisdom from my own mentors, which is guiding me as I aim to share thoughtful resources, ideas, and structure for your children. I hope this will help to ground me in my own new style of work, and offer families some context to how I am approaching this time of “self education at home.”

From MINT (Montessori Institute of North Texas):

Find what combination of activity works for your children and family. We want to help families in the ways that best work for them while continuing to support whole child development.

Whole child development means we aim to serve every child’s intellectual capacity as well as their psychological, emotional/spiritual natures, moral, and physical beings. Humans are not workers, or scholars, or artists, or athletes (or...) all the time.

We are looking to create balance using our principles and practices. We understand children at different ages and stages (birth-6, 6-12, 12-18, 18-24) have different needs and characteristics but they all need age-appropriate versions of:

- **Freedom** (choice of activity) for the child coupled with **responsibility** (accountability) to self, others, their tools/resources, and their environments.
- **Friendliness with Error**: mistakes are natural and an opportunity to learn and grow into...
- Independence: elementary children are looking for intellectual independence (*Help me think for myself!*)
- **The Human Tendencies for Life** which are our innate urges to learn and grow: to Orient & Adapt, to make Order, to Explore & Discover, to Communicate, to Abstract & Imagine, to Become & Belong, to Repeat, to Perfect and be Exact
- **Joy, Love, Optimism**: We can do hard things and enjoy the process and thereby create conditions for a better future.

From Elise Huneke-Stone, AMI Elementary Trainer at Montessori Northwest (MNW):

Let's ask our 6-12 year olds: You have this block of time where you can't go to school. What kind of learning will you do instead? And let's listen to them.

And let's make our adult priorities clear: "We adults (teachers and parents) want your learning to include nature, the health of your body, literacy and numeracy in the context of something you love and are interested in, and gratitude. Because those are things that we know are good for kids to use as materials for their optimal self-construction. That's why our Montessori schools are designed the way they are, to give kids the best materials for self-construction that we can offer. But you can't come to school right now, so how will you take responsibility for yourself during this time of physical distancing?"

Need a little inspiration before we begin? Watch *To Scale: The Solar System* (7 min. YouTube [video](#)). These folks took collaboration, outdoor work, science, and math to a new level!

And here are a few words of [advice](#) on time at home from NASA Astronaut, Scott Kelly, who spent a year in space.

In service,

Ms. Isaza

Daily Reading and Response Journal:

- Read a fiction book for a minimum of 1 hour per day.
- Keep a response journal: summarize in paragraph form the main events in your fiction book each day. Explain your story to a reader who has not yet read the book and is not familiar with the setting or the characters. Introduce characters and use descriptive language to make the story come alive (and maybe convince me, or a friend, to read your story).

Writing Prompts via [826 Digital](#), NPR, and Mentor Texts NYT:

Choose three writing prompts from the list below to try this week. You may hand write in a journal, or you may choose to type on your Google account and share them with me:

j.isaza@aidanschool.org.

1. [Paint a Picture with Words](#): NPR's Poetry Contest from author Kwame Alexander (author of *The Crossover*, *Solo*, and *Swing*)
2. Do you have a family member, friend, or neighbor who is a medical professional or a first responder? Write a letter of gratitude for all they are doing to keep us all safe. There could be other ways to express your gratitude and support too!
3. Think of someone who helped you grow or change in some way—it can be someone still in your life or someone you've parted ways: a family member, a friend, a neighbor, a classmate, whoever! Write a letter to them about the impact that they had on your life

and what big changes came about as a result of their presence in your life. You might decide never to send it - it's up to you!

4. Write a letter that you never intend to send to another person (or group of people) of your choice. After you write, reflect: what was it like, writing something to someone that you know won't be read. Did it feel cathartic (a feeling of relief)? Pointless? Energizing? Why?
5. Open up the fiction book you are currently reading and write the first sentence you see into your notebook. You can also use the first sentence of the book or first sentence of any chapter. This sentence is the beginning of **your** story. Your job is now to write your own version of events. The possibilities are endless!
6. [Hooking the Reader Right From the Start](#) (recommended for 6th Years, from the NYT Mentor Texts collection. Children will need internet access or a printer to view the entire prompt and mentor text/writing sample)
7. This is a great time to write an autobiography, a biography of a family member, or a family history because you can interview family members. Grandma, Grandpa, or Great Auntie would probably love a phone call/Facetime from a joyful young person!
8. Do you have a special little one in your life? A new baby sibling, cousin, or neighbor? Creating a baby booklet could be a lovely project! Write your own simple poem or nursery rhyme and illustrate the pages (perhaps if you have them, look at some baby books around your house for inspiration).

Writing Conferences:

Please reach out to Ms. Navarro by email at 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)

Grade 6 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 :)

Life Science & Physical Science (choose one area of focus):

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

[Scientific American's Bring Science Home Collection](#)

Geography Activity:

For the internet inclined: try the NatGeo Kids Geography [Quiz](#) and see what you know! Can you name the countries of the world? Take this online [quiz](#).

History Studies: *Unsung Heroes of Racial and Gender Justice*

Choose an individual from the list below or choose your own hero. Make sure you can find information about their life and their contributions. Find out as much about your individual as you can.

Susan B. Anthony
Black Panther Party for Self Defense
Member
Elaine Brown
John Brown
Carlos Bulosan
Elizabeth Cady Stanton
César Chávez
Frederick Douglass
William Lloyd Garrison
Marcus Garvey
Emma Goldman
Sarah and Angelina Grimké
Elizabeth Gurley Flynn
Fannie Lou Hamer
Dolores Huerta
Fred Korematsu

Queen Lili'uokalani
Harvey Milk
Rosa Parks
Melba Pattillo Beals
Leonard Peltier
Jeannette Rankin
Bernice Reagon Johnson
Jackie Robinson
Mickey Schwerner, James Cheney, and Andrew
Goodman
Bessie Smith
Soldier of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment
Henry David Thoreau
Sojourner Truth
Harriet Tubman
Nat Turner
Malcolm X

Find out how your hero worked to create a more just world.

You have access to Encyclopedia Britannica Online for research. Go to <https://school.eb.com/> and then use **aidanmont** as the access i.d. and **27school** as the passcode. Note the “**Web’s Best Sites**” link on the left-hand side in Britannica’s search results page - it links to other quality resources on the web on the topic you searched. You can also contact Ms. Stewart for help with your research queries: n.stewart@aidanschool.org.

Ms. Stewart has also set up a Google Group at which students and teachers can send research questions: library@aidanschool.org

Try to answer the following questions—and be sure to look for specific stories from their lives:

- What happened in their life to make them willing to take the risks they took? What significant events in the person's life shaped their social commitment?
- What did the person want to accomplish or change?
- What did they accomplish?
- What methods did this person use to try to effect change?
- What, if anything, about their life reminds you of something in your life? Is there anything in their life that you relate to, or that is similar to feelings or experiences you've had?
- What meaning does this person's life have for today?

- Find a quote from the individual that you agree with or think is somehow significant.

Now, write from the **first person perspective**, as if you have become the hero you have studied! A short, provocative paragraph works best. Send your paragraph to Ms. Isaza at j.isaza@aidanschool.org.

See an example below:

Queen Liliuokalani (pronounced lee-lee-oo'-oh-kah-lahn'-ee): *I was the last reigning monarch of Hawai'i. I was deposed by a revolt led by wealthy US-born sugar planters, and was replaced by men like Sanford Dole -- ever hear of Dole Pineapple? -- who in 1898 finally got the United States to annex (take over) my country. I was also a songwriter and wrote many songs, including "Aloha Oe" ("Farewell to Thee").* - from [Rethinking Schools](#)

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.)

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)

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)

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:

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)