

ADVICE FOR NEW FAMILIES

(by parents for parents)

Mt. Everest Academy (MEA) offers families a unique environment in which students can thrive both academically and socially. Yes, it's an independent study school; however, we are fortunate to have features of a traditional school: a dedicated campus with real classrooms, library, auditorium, computer lab, science lab, music and multimedia rooms, and a maker space. We have on-site credentialed teachers who provide instruction, guidance, and support throughout the week.

Parents are very much a part of the MEA community. MEA encourages parental involvement by providing educational counseling and support, resources for parents to lead short and long term classes on campus, and a dedicated place for parents to wait for or work with their students. Many parents gather on campus to share ideas and provide moral support for challenging days. There are social groups that coordinate play dates and field trips.

The following sections offer advice from our veteran families. Our students are unique individuals, so it's helpful to explore different points-of-view to find your groove here. Advice for elementary school often differs significantly from secondary school. Parents provide the majority of instruction in the primary grades, and then help their students become increasingly independent throughout the secondary grades.

ORGANIZATION/STUDY TIPS

Read aloud together - There is no better way for your child to learn than to read books together, no matter what age. When your child is young, you may have to do all or most of the reading, but as his/her reading skills develop, reading can be shared. This allows you to monitor reading skill development, have meaningful discussions, and learn alongside your child.

Elementary (K-5)

Parents will be expected to plan and even create lessons on their own. A certain level of creativity, troubleshooting and Googling is necessary for success. The school does not simply offer a packet that you need to give to your child to complete. They expect parents to develop and use their own instructional strategies personalized to their child(ren).

Lesson planning - have a clear objective/purpose, introduce lesson (relevant, check previous knowledge, new vocabulary), engage in activities to teach, check for understanding (test, write, discuss), supervise practice/review of concepts, and reflect on lesson effectiveness. Use the teacher manuals for related materials, instruction tips, and, of course, answers.

There are multiple methods to plan your student's week/month. Keep experimenting and asking other parents for suggestions to find what works best for your student. Here are some examples:

- Make a chart that lists what they are supposed to do each time everyday,
- Make a template of a daily schedule by subject and write specifics for each week,
- Use a chart that lists how much needs to be done each day per subject, or
- Use sticky notes for each assignment, so you can adjust them as needed.

At the beginning of each month or week, pull out the worksheets that your child will need to complete and put them in a binder (separate subjects with tabs) or separate pocket folders by subject. Set expectations with your child for how much work needs to be done each day/week. Designate a place where completed work goes for you to check it. You may have to start on a weekly basis, but it becomes easier if you can do this monthly. Don't do it daily or you'll burn out with nightly preparations. Be realistic with the amount of study time and your child's energy level.

When instructing students in multiple grades, identify subjects that you can teach together. Good examples are science, social studies, history, PE, and fine arts. Present a lesson and have each student write, draw, present, or experiment at his/her own level. For math and language arts, find some independent work (e.g. reading, a workbook, music practice) that one child can do regularly when you need one-on-one time with the other. Then, switch off so you can spend focused time with your other child. Don't allow one child to play while the other works; it's too distracting!

If you feel that your child is struggling to work on a lesson or that you're beating your head against a brick wall, don't fight it. We all have these days! Try to find a game or activity that will make the lesson more fun, allow your child to take a timed break and come back ready to work, or switch to an easier lesson and come back to the more challenging one at another time or day. Talk to other parents at school; they will empathize with you and offer support.

Our students are evaluated on their performance based on the California State Standards for their grade level. You can find a copy of the standards at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/>. Or, for a more "user friendly" version, please ask your supervising teacher. As parents, we are expected to review these standards throughout the year and plan our child's lessons accordingly. You will provide input and sample work during parent-teacher conferences to complete your child's progress report..

Secondary (6-12)

Don't assume that all middle school (6-8) students are ready to work independently. These are the years when students become less dependent on their parents and teachers for structure and instruction, and learn to take control of their academic responsibilities. Some sixth grade

students embrace this new independence, while some eighth graders still require much direction. Just help your student become more independent at his own pace.

Work hard during the first part of every month. For example, plan to have all of the assigned work completed by the end of the third week. This way you will have the last week as a buffer for anything you missed, special projects, exam preparation, or some relaxation.

Don't procrastinate! Schedule your own deadlines throughout the month, so you are not cramming during the last week for turn-in. The time-mapping advice for secondary students is the same as that above for elementary learners. Create a schedule for what you need to do in each subject area daily/weekly. If you need to mentally threaten/reward yourself, do it!

Some assignments are posted online and need to be done online or uploaded. Make sure you don't miss any of these assignments.

TIME MANAGEMENT

Use summertime to your advantage - It is a good time to review a subject that was difficult in the previous school year, tackle a skill that you wouldn't have time to teach during the school year (e.g. how to play chess, how to type, cursive, 50 states, presidents, etc.), or even start a challenging subject that your child will take in the upcoming school year (so it will all be review and much easier when the workload is heavier).

Primary (K-5)

It is easy to feel overwhelmed with academics and extracurricular activities and you may find yourself "squeezing in" the school work. Set your priorities and stick to them. Schedule the important or harder tasks during the time when your child is rested and focused. Weekly or daily routines are helpful to manage time and stress. Make a weekly schedule that includes academics, daily physical activity (PE), extra-curricular activities, meal time, drive time, independent time, etc.

Sometimes it's hard to get the kids focused on their work. Use timers to set the work time or designate a amount of work. Then reward them (after work well done) by selecting a break card. Break cards state a specific activity (e.g. snacks, TV, video games, reading, coloring, trampoline, etc.). Either you or the break card can indicate a specific amount of time, or, to add some excitement have them roll a pair a dice to set the time.

Secondary (6-12)

Before the beginning of each month, middle school students get cover sheets for different subjects listing what needs to be done that month. Many teachers even have weekly/daily

schedules. If your child follows these schedules, they are more likely to complete their monthly assignments in a timely manner and without stressing out during turn-in week. Additional assignments may be added by the teachers, so your child needs to be aware of any additional assignments or changes.

For students entering 6th grade, be advised that the first month's workload may feel much heavier than what you're used to. Get ahead if possible. For example, find out what the first assigned novel in English is and start reading it before school starts. Manage your time and workload and you won't feel overwhelmed during the last week of the month.

For students who prefer to focus on one subject at a time, this is one way to organize the monthly workload:

1. Every day of the month, do the assigned math and foreign language assignments based on the teachers' pacing guide. These subjects should be done daily.
2. For the other subjects (e.g. English, Social Studies, and Science), divide the monthly work into three parts. Focus on one subject a day for three weeks. For example, do English on Monday, Social Studies on Tuesday, and Science on Wednesday.
3. One day a week will be your class day.
4. Use Fridays for the daily math and foreign language work, special projects, and any review or catch up work on other subjects.
5. Complete all of the assignments by the end of the third week of the month. Use the last week of the month to review/prepare for the exams and complete the PE assignments.

WORKING WITH TEACHERS

You can obtain a wealth of information by attending the orientations with your child's teachers or talking to the teachers. Different teachers have different criteria and expectations. Some assignments are optional or can be done verbally. Other assignments are mandatory. If you think of doing substitutions, it's best if your teacher approves them ahead of time. Sometimes it's better to supplement than to substitute materials in order for your child to be familiar with the material in the various quizzes and end-of-the-month tests.

The teachers provide pacing guides for some subjects on their web sites. Don't feel pressured to complete everything for each day. Some students need more time to master a skill, others will be bored if they have to repeat what they already know. You know what's best for your child, so you ultimately are in charge of delivering the material and pacing of lessons.

Of course, don't forget that you have regular access to your child's credentialed, supervising teacher throughout the school year and can ask for advice on working through any assignments with which you struggle in teaching. Setting up an appointment with your supervising teacher can assure you the attention and assistance you need. Emails are great, too, because you can send them around the clock.

Elementary school teachers have supplemental resources available for you to check out. They have many grade-appropriate books, games, and manipulatives that are great for teaching language arts and math. This eliminates the need to buy things that you will only use for a short time to teach a skill.

TURN-IN PACKETS

Primary (K-5)

It is common to feel overwhelmed with the amount of paperwork. Don't feel as though you have to have a worksheet or written piece for every activity you do. Your supervising teacher just wants to see that your child is progressing in each subject. For supplemental workbooks that you use, you can just show the teacher the completed work during the parent-teacher conference instead of tearing out all of the pages each month.

One week prior to the turn-in date, parents should check to be sure that you have a sample for every subject for audit. Don't wait until the night before to find that you're missing something. Art and PE don't always require written assignments that can be turned in for audit, so you'll need to have your child do a Reflection sheet. You can also find Art and PE worksheets and activities online.

Turn in your child's completed work for the month in the provided grade-level turn-in folder, audit samples on the right and the rest of the work on the left side. Directions are provided on the inside pockets of each folder. If you are overstuffing the folder so that it tears, you are probably submitting more papers than necessary.

Secondary (6-12)

Secondary students take on more or full responsibility for assembling and submitting their monthly work. Parents should review the turn-in packets before it is delivered to the teacher. Please see the *Checklist for Turning In Monthly Work* document for detailed instructions.

SCHOOL RESOURCES

The school library has many fiction and nonfiction books perfect for young readers...and it's so convenient because you're here every week! There is an area in the library with resources for students and parents to supplement lessons. It's easy to search and place holds for books using the student's login on Destiny.

Use the Library link on the school's home page to access numerous online tools provided by the school district. These online resources provide a safe learning environment for all grade levels. Some examples include: Safari Montage, SIRS Discover, World Book, Culture Grams, and TeachingBooks. Please ask the librarians for login information.

SUPPLEMENTAL CURRICULUM

Primary (K-5)

In the primary grades, parents may supplement the school's textbooks with other curriculum that may be better suited for their child. The school does not pay for supplemental materials. This work should be turned in with any other work completed during the month, but any worksheets containing religious material cannot be part of the audit samples. Please note that all students are graded based on their ability to perform at grade-level expectations according to the California State Standards, regardless of the curriculum used.

102 Top Picks for Homeschool Curriculum by Cathy Duffy provides excellent reviews on materials. You can search for reviews on her website: <http://cathyduffyreviews.com/>.

Education for the Well Trained Mind by Bauer, Susan Wise. This book provides advice for curriculum and supplemental reading for all subjects from a classical education perspective.

EXTRA CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

To get the most out of Mt. Everest Academy, you need to get involved in extracurricular activities. This will help you feel like you're part of this special community. This is what makes MEA such a great school!

Stay on campus! If you are only on campus for classes, you'll miss a lot of friendship opportunities. Socialize and hang-out with other parents and give your student(s) time to make friends.

Extra-curricular activities are great but also take time. You can optimize your time by doing homework in the car or while waiting for an activity to start. If you know ahead of time that an activity will take more time, try to get ahead in your school assignments so that you don't get behind.

Primary (K-5)

Parents, keep in mind that this is a working school and that your child is your responsibility outside of their regular study group. Classes are taking place throughout the campus on any given day, and teachers need non-classroom time to complete other tasks. Please show your respect for teachers and other students by playing only in the designated areas and keeping the noise level to a minimum.

Take advantage of the music classes offered at school. At Mt. Everest, we have the opportunity to get students started in music earlier than at traditional schools. Choir and violin are great ways for young children to learn tempo, how to read music, play music in a group, and the discipline of practice. Parents should determine when their child is ready to begin learning an instrument (e.g. attention span, careful with instrument, discipline to practice, etc.). As they progress, they can try out a more difficult instrument such as brass or woodwinds. An added benefit is that they can learn this new skill with their school friends.

For more P.E. activities:

- EMH Sports (<http://www.emhsports.com/>) conducts weekly classes focusing on a different sport each month at neighborhood parks around the county.
- The YMCA (<http://www.ymca.org/>) offers affordable classes. The Toby Wells YMCA has a homeschool gymnastics class.
- San Diego Park & Recreation centers (<https://www.sandiego.gov/park-and-recreation/centers>) have many different classes. Some rec centers like Telecote and Serra Mesa have a Pee Wee Sports class that introduces young children to different sports.
- The Boys & Girls Club (<https://www.sdyouth.org/clairemout>) is a great place to take swimming lessons.