



**SPRUCE  
TREE  
MONTESSORI  
SCHOOL**



**Parent Handbook  
2018-19**

**The difference is here.**

At Spruce Tree Montessori School, learning is an exciting process of discovery leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning.

**Montessori represents an entirely different approach to education.**

Dear Parents,

Thank you for choosing Spruce Tree Montessori School for your child. It is not only a part of my mission as founder of this school, but also a personal desire, to instill a lifetime love of learning in the hearts and minds of the children of Spruce Tree. Together we will enjoy a wonderful adventure with our children at a formidable time in their lives. My children have inspired me, and I seek the best for them; I recognize that you want the best for your child as well. Let's achieve that together.

Warmly,

Sabrina Binkley  
Head of School & Founder of Spruce Tree Montessori School

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. MONTESSORI EDUCATION	p. 4
2. SPRUCE TREE MONTESSORI SCHOOL	p. 5
3. ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT	p. 10
4. SCHOOL OPERATION	p. 15
5. YEAR ROUND EDUCATION	p. 18
6. CURRICULUM	p. 20
7. PROGRAMS	p. 24
8. SCHOOL DAY STRUCTURE	p. 26
9. COMMUNICATION	p. 30
10. STUDENT REDIRECTION	p. 32
11. POLICY	p. 35

## History of Montessori Education

Montessori education is an innovative, child-centered approach to education, developed over a century ago by Dr. Maria Montessori. She was a doctor and scientist turned educator. Her work began in Italy with institutionalized, impoverished youngsters. She realized through careful observation that children absorbed knowledge from their surroundings and that when given developmentally appropriate materials and the freedom to follow their interests, they joyfully taught themselves and enjoyed the process. In 1907, she started her first school, Casa de Bambini "Children's House," for children of varying ages. Two short years later, she gave her first training on what would later become known as "The Montessori Method" in Assisi, Italy. One of her students was Ann George from Terrytown, New York who in 1912 opened the first Montessori School in the United States. Famously, in 1915, Dr. Montessori was invited to attend and speak at the World's Fair in San Francisco where she set up a glass classroom for students who had never been educated. During the 1920's, she traveled around the world and schools began in Holland, Ireland, England, Germany, Panama, Bulgaria and South Africa. After the revolution in Barcelona in 1934, she established permanent residency in the Netherlands. Her life was dedicated to her educational philosophy. Dr. Montessori passed way on May 6, 1952 in the garden of her home in Noordwijk-on-Sea, Netherlands.

## Montessori Education

The goal of Montessori education is to foster a child's natural desire to learn. Montessori teachers serve as guides rather than instructors in a classroom that is purposefully arranged, well organized, and filled with beauty. The prepared environment is a classic example of how thought and purpose are used to target interests of the individuals in the class. Teachers are specially trained and possess keen observation skills in order to link each student with activities that meet his interests, needs, and developmental level. The classroom is designed to allow movement and collaboration, while promoting concentration and a sense of order.

The Montessori philosophy emphasizes learning through all five senses, not just through listening, watching, or reading. Children in Montessori classes learn at their own individual pace and according to their own choice of activities from hundreds of possibilities. Montessori classes place children in three-year age groups (0 - 3, 3 - 6, 6 - 9, 9 - 12, 12 - 15, 15 - 18), forming communities in which the older children spontaneously share their knowledge with the younger ones.

There are many benefits of Montessori education: (taken from the American Montessori Society website)

- **Each child is valued as a unique individual.** Montessori education recognizes that children learn in different ways, and accommodates all learning styles. Students are free to learn at their own pace, each advancing through the curriculum as he is ready, guided by the teacher and an individualized learning plan.
- **Beginning at an early age, Montessori students develop order, coordination, concentration, and independence.** Classroom design, materials, and daily routines support the individual's emerging "self-regulation" (ability to educate one's self and to think about what one is learning), toddlers through adolescents.
- **Students are part of a close, caring community.** The multi-age classroom—typically spanning three years—re-creates a family structure. Older students enjoy stature as mentors and role models; younger children feel supported and gain confidence about the challenges ahead. Teachers model respect, loving kindness, and a belief in peaceful conflict resolution.

- **Montessori students enjoy freedom within limits.** Working within parameters set by their teachers, students are active participants in deciding what their focus of learning will be. Montessorians understand that internal satisfaction drives the child’s curiosity and interest and results in joyous learning that is sustainable over a lifetime.
- **Students are supported in becoming active seekers of knowledge.** Teachers provide environments where students have the freedom and the tools to pursue answers to their own questions.
- **Self-correction and self-assessment are an integral part of the Montessori classroom approach.** As they mature, students learn to look critically at their work, and become adept at recognizing, correcting, and learning from their errors.

Given the freedom and support to question, to probe deeply, and to make connections, Montessori students become confident, enthusiastic, self-directed learners. They are able to think critically, work collaboratively, and act boldly—a skill set for the 21st century.

## SPRUCE TREE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

### Introduction to Spruce Tree Montessori School

#### Vision & Mission

Our vision is to nurture a conscientious spirit in children, families and educators that empowers all to make a positive impact in their community and world while leading a productive and happy life.

#### The mission of Spruce Tree Montessori School is to create an experience that we all love.

We seek to instill a lifetime love of learning in students by providing authentic Montessori early childhood and elementary education in an inspiring environment using the Montessori philosophy. Spruce Tree will work to promote the Montessori philosophy throughout the educational community in an effort to further inform the general public of its benefits.

#### Core Values Statement

At Spruce Tree we value creativity, honesty and patience, and strive to preserve the ideals of the Montessori philosophy with integrity and compassion.

Through a collaborative effort amongst staff, the following values were selected as core to our educational practice: Compassion | Integrity | Honesty | Patience | Creativity.

#### Six Pillars of Character at Spruce Tree Montessori School

The Six Pillars are presented by the Head of School during Sessions 1 and 5 in order to expose elementary students to the perceptions and skills that develop and strengthen personal character. The outcome is that students gain an understanding that certain character traits can improve mental and physical health, aid in the development of human connection, and increase productivity.

The six pillars of character at STMS are:

- **Respect** - for self, for others, for differences, for property/materials, for nature and other living things (plants and animals), for beliefs, customs, rules and laws.
- **Responsibility** - through actions, through words, through thoughts, through choices and decisions.

- **Curiosity** - demonstrating a strong desire to know or learn something; possessing a love of learning.
- **Productivity** - putting forth effective effort in order to make or produce something. Make something of yourself. You are the product of your effort.
- **Honesty** - Be truthful. Be genuine. Be Trustworthy.
- **Conscientious** - wishing to do what is right; striving always to do one's work well and thoroughly on the path toward mastery.

### **Culture & Community**

The culture of our school has developed through a sincere desire to inspire children and families for a lifetime love of learning. The families who join our school community share the dedication necessary to fulfill the promise that the Montessori philosophy strives to achieve. They embody our school's vision and support our school's mission through their commitment to parental involvement, time and/or financial contribution, and enthusiasm for Montessori philosophy and our programs.

As part of our vision to empower positive impact in our community at large, our founder is committed to financial support of select, local charitable organizations and to volunteer service in the following ways. Staff have the opportunity to support our local United Way of the Tanana Valley through payroll deduction donations with a school matching program. Staff volunteer at the Making Strides Walk each fall dedicated to finding a cure for breast cancer. Sabrina serves on the Executive Leadership Team for the Go Red event supporting the American Heart Association and on the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, currently serving as the Chamber's Education & Workforce Development Committee Chair. Spruce Tree supports the Fairbanks Children's Museum through program partnerships and at their annual gala, as well as the American Montessori Society through its Full Member School affiliation, and contributions to the annual AMS fundraiser supporting varied mission-aligned programs like the Emerging Leaders Fellowship and the Teacher Training Scholarship Program. Spruce Tree Montessori School supports the Friends of Spruce Tree Montessori with an annual donation to its scholarship fund which provides tuition assistance to qualified families enrolled at STMS as well as teacher training scholarships to teachers committed to a Montessori career. Additionally, as a founding Board Member of the Alaska Montessori Association, Sabrina supports the mission of the organization as it seeks to connect Alaska Montessori schools and support Montessori educators in Alaska.

### **Purpose Statement**

Our work shall be purposeful. We endeavor to serve students in an inclusive environment informed by the time-tested, socio-diverse-inspired ideals of Montessori philosophy. We commit to this purpose and promise to reflect, revise, renew and retain in order to achieve our goals.

### **Mindful Statement**

Staff are encouraged to enjoy mindful moments to begin and/or end their day in order to model self and group awareness in a respectful and peaceful way. Teachers should provide introductory and practical mindfulness lessons and facilitate activities that promote kinship in order to nurture a mindful school community.

### **Inclusion Statement**

Dr. Maria Montessori hallmarked the idea of inclusion as an scientist, doctor and educator. She pioneered the observation that children from all walks of life, from varied backgrounds and family settings had an equally innate, natural desire to learn. At Spruce Tree, we strive to serve all students, to include those with special needs, by providing accommodation and additional support as deemed necessary to follow the child.

Spruce Tree connects students and families to FNSB School District and/or private support services based on observation and identification of patterns through referral, assessment and evaluation in the areas of speech therapy, school psychologist observation/assessment for academic, cognitive, socio-emotional and/or behavioral needs, as well as gifted child assessment and support.

### **Statement of Ethical Professional Practice**

In order to nurture a peaceful environment where respect among individuals is at the forefront of our educational practice, employees are expected to apply the utmost in respect toward students, peers and colleagues, managers, administrators, parents, volunteers and visitors through verbal and written communication, via phone, memo, email or text. Ethical responsibilities include the responsibility to ensure the safety and security of students and colleagues. This responsibility should inform staff choices in all that they do. Honest, honorable, fair and reasonable actions shall guide staff judgment and situational awareness.

### **Summary of School**

As the first private Montessori school to offer Montessori education at the elementary level, we offer the Fairbanks community another option for elementary education. Our curriculum provides sound academic background for the establishment of critical thinking, problem solving and cooperative learning skills with varied programming in the arts. Our goal is to support the development of each child in all areas - academically, socially, physically, and emotionally using proven Montessori techniques and approved Montessori materials.

In our inaugural year (Fall 2012), we welcomed seven students into our lower elementary classroom for children ages six - nine (6 - 9), grades first through third. Our second year (2013-14), our elementary class grew to 15 students and we expanded to provide early childhood education in a traditional Montessori preschool/kindergarten setting for children ages 3 - 6 and enrolled 13 preschool aged students. During Year 3 (2014-15), we doubled our Children's House program size and added a teacher. In our fourth year, we enrolled 48 students: 30 in Children's House, 18 in elementary and established our upper elementary program. Last year, we doubled our building size when we purchased the historic Fairbanks Train Depot and enrolled 72 students (50 Children's House; 25 in each classroom) and 22 in elementary. This fall, we've enrolled 84 children; 28 in each classroom (56 Children's House, 28 in Elementary). It is important to note that our educational capacity is approximately 100 given AMS guidelines for square footage per student coupled with the layout of our current building. Strategic growth can and will continue in the years to come.

The school is primarily funded by tuition. Fundraising opportunities for the year include the annual Montessori Services Small Hands catalog fundraiser, Montessori Monday programs, a semi-formal trivia dinner event and the sale of logo school apparel and other items. The Friends of Spruce Tree Montessori (FOST) organization supports Montessori education by raising funds through donor solicitation, participating in the AmazonSmile and Fred Meyer Community Rewards programs, and by supporting other small events like book fairs at Barnes & Noble and Lemonade Day. Funds raised by FOST are designated for the scholarship program or for special project aligned with the school's mission, and specifically supporting our educational programs.

Spruce Tree Montessori is currently in the development phase of a middle school program for adolescents, ages 12 - 15. More information is forthcoming.

## **Affiliation & Accreditation**

Spruce Tree Montessori is affiliated with the American Montessori Society (AMS) as a 'Full Member' school and has achieved full implementation of the AMS Standards & Criteria for Accredited Schools. The AMS membership is a collaboration of teachers, administrators, schools, families, and others who prize Montessori education. As an AMS member school, we're a part of a movement to improve education for children around the globe, with representation at the United Nations and a strong advocacy voice in national and international public policy affairs. The AMS accredits full member schools that undergo rigorous criteria for defining and maintaining high standards set forth originally by Dr. Maria Montessori.

Accreditation is a voluntary process that takes up to two years to complete. Accreditation begins with an intensive self-study by the school, involving the school's entire community—students, staff, administration, board members, and parents. During the application process, every aspect of the school is examined and documented, including governance, curriculum, fiscal and personnel policies, facilities, health and safety practices, teacher preparation, and learner outcomes. At the end of the self-study period, a thorough onsite peer review is conducted. In addition to determining whether the school meets AMS standards, the review team evaluates the school to see how well it is achieving its own mission and goals—whether the school is what it says it is and does what it says it does.

After identifying both strengths and areas to strengthen, the school commits to a strategic plan for improvement, which incorporates the recommendations of its peer review team. All AMS accredited schools must maintain compliance with school accreditation standards and work toward continuous improvement. Each accredited school submits a yearly report outlining progress toward the objectives in its strategic plan. This process will not only ensure that Spruce Tree Montessori School operates as an authentic Montessori school in an approved Montessori environment, but it will also educate its staff and school community about the best practices for maintaining top-quality Montessori programming. AMS accreditation is a part of our mid-term strategic plan.

Components necessary for a program to be considered authentically Montessori include multi-age groupings that foster peer learning, uninterrupted blocks of work time, and guided choice of work activity. In addition, a full complement of specially designed Montessori learning materials should be meticulously arranged and available for use in an aesthetically pleasing environment.

## **Staff**

The staff of Spruce Tree is dedicated to providing a well-rounded, inspiring learning experience for all students. Our staff works collaboratively to engage students, nurture professional curiosity and model independent, resourceful learning. As a team, we strive to uphold the ideals of the Montessori philosophy in all aspects of school operation.

Spruce Tree employs 13 staff. Lead Teachers manage all classroom activities and curriculum for their respective level or assigned program; Teacher Assistants, Teacher Associates and Educational Aides assist the Lead Teachers of their assigned level or program with varied levels of responsibility. Our School Counselor supports the social-emotional wellbeing of the school community. The School Chef manages food service and our Administrative Manager is responsible for office management and administrative duties. The Head of School is the school administrator and serves as the organization's chief executive officer.

All staff and classroom volunteers are required to submit to a background check. Educational staff members are required to hold a CPR/First Aid certification and a college degree. Lead Teachers are



required to be Montessori-certified for the level at which they are assigned. Support staff may be working toward a college degree or Montessori credential. Staff assigned to transport students are required to submit driver's license information and are covered by the school's auto insurance policy, which requires training and orientation to the school's transportation policy and safety checklist. Those drivers assigned to drive our school bus attain a Commercial Driver's License (CDL), with Class C Commercial endorsement and undergo additional safety training for transport of children.

Mrs. Sabrina Binkley, Founder and Head of School, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Engineering and a Montessori credential in School Administration.

Ms. Kristin Romberg, Lead Elementary Teacher, holds Montessori certifications for Elementary I and II (ages 6 - 12) and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music & Education - Health & Human Development.

Ms. Katrina Stavang, Elementary Teacher Associated, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary Education, a special education certificate, a State of AK teaching certificate K - 8 and is a Montessori Paraprofessional; certificate Seton Montessori Institute Fall 2018.

Mrs. Jamie Foland, Children's House Lead Teacher, holds her Bachelor of Arts degree in Foreign Language - Hispanic Studies with a minor in Linguistics, and a Montessori credential for the Early Childhood level.

Mrs. Kristen Roper, Children's House Lead Teacher, holds Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education and a Montessori credential for the Early Childhood level.

Ms. Megan Dean, Children's House Teacher Assistant, is a Montessori Paraprofessional; certificate Seton Montessori Institute Spring 2018 and plans to pursue a degree in Elementary Education at UAF.

Ms. Mercedes Culliton, Children's House Teacher Assistant, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Art and is a Montessori Paraprofessional; certificate Seton Montessori Institute Fall 2018.

Mrs. Erica Nash, Educational Counselor, holds a Master of Education degree in Community Counseling and is a Montessori Paraprofessional; certificate Seton Montessori Institute 2016.

Mr. Nate Zody, Physical Education Teacher & Elementary Aide, holds a BA in History with a minor in Sociology, from UAF and is pursuing a BS in Secondary Education with an emphasis on Social Science.

Mrs. Brittany McNeal, Educational Aide, holds a BA in General Studies and is currently completing post-baccalaureate teacher preparation credentials in Elementary Education, K-8.

Mrs. Claudia Gatewood, Spanish Teacher, is currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration.

Mr. Oliver Loftus, School Chef & Kitchen Coordinator, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Philosophy with a minor in Mathematics, as well as a BS with a focus on land surveying and GIS database systems.

Mrs. Annie Scott, Administrative Manager, has completed coursework in human relations and has 11 years experience in banking, office administration and early childhood development.

## ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT

### Admissions Policy

Students are considered for enrollment at Spruce Tree Montessori School (STMS) without regard to race, color or ethnicity, sex, religion or background.

The criteria by which students will be admitted will be based on consideration of the following:

- Interview Performance of Potential Student and Parent: potential student displays a pleasant demeanor and is able to answer simple questions regarding his/her interests and hobbies; parents present a modest philosophical match as to the ideals of the Montessori philosophy and convey a basic understanding of Montessori education.
- Potential student has Montessori educational experience.

### Admissions Process

The Admissions Process is a best-fit selective process that ensures a diverse school community of engaged families and pleasant students. Classroom communities are gender and multi-aged balanced as best as can be achieved for optimal student connection and achievement.

Parental Role in Admissions Process: Parents or legal guardians complete the admissions application and schedule a classroom observation and enrollment interview with the Head of School (both parents encouraged to attend interview). Parents are highly encouraged to attend the annual Spruce Tree Montessori Parent Orientation typically scheduled during the evening one month before school begins.

Prospective Student Role in Admissions Process: Prospective students participate in the interview with their parents or legal guardians. Students who complete their kindergarten year at Spruce Tree Montessori or Fairbanks Montessori have priority admissions consideration in our elementary class.

Upon completion of the enrollment interview, acceptance is granted to those who complete the admissions process to its full extent with consideration of interview content and connection, academic level of the child, and the general interest of the family. The Head of School notifies families of acceptance and distributes an enrollment packet via email. Enrollment deposits are due within ten days of acceptance to reserve placement. The Enrollment Packet includes a Student Medical Profile, permissions forms, an authorized pick up form, an automatic payment authorization form, and the Enrollment Policy Agreement form. Spruce Tree Montessori is required to keep a copy of doctor-validated immunization records on file for each student given its status with the state of Alaska as a private-exempt school. Spruce Tree Montessori School reserves the right to deny admittance and terminate enrollment.

### Enrollment Policy

The child-centered, multi-aged Montessori classroom offers children opportunities to develop at their own pace academically, socially and creatively. In order to maintain a balanced multi-age class, enrollment is based on a best-fit selective process that includes a parent classroom observation, child and parent interview, and the age/developmental/academic level of the child. The Head of School makes placement decisions in an effort to serve the needs of the classroom community and reserves the right to deny enrollment. Priority is given to children whose parents demonstrate knowledge of the Montessori philosophy and to children with previous Montessori school experience. Enrollment requires completion of the admissions process (completed application, background check, classroom observation, and

interview). Siblings of STMS students who are eligible for enrollment are allowed to enroll during the re-enrollment period before new family enrollment, but are required to complete the admissions application and interview separately from their sibling.

Parents who enroll their child at Spruce Tree Montessori School are expected to abide by the Enrollment Policy Agreement. This agreement defines the commitment between the school and its parent-customers. The agreement outlines the partnership that the school and its staff forms with the parents of enrolled students.

### ***Enrollment Policy Agreement***

Parents of students enrolled at Spruce Tree Montessori School agree to read the Parent Handbook. Parents agree to abide by the policies set forth in the handbook. Parents agree to respect the school, its staff and the school community while attending the school. Parents understand that the All Year Montessori calendar offers year-round academics for all ages, and that their enrollment commitment is annual. Parents understand that they have a financial responsibility to the school and agree to abide by the Financial Commitment Policy. Parents understand that timely morning arrival, end of program pick up and attendance are key to student development and achievement, both academically and socially. Parents acknowledge that the Head of School conducts background checks of all parents using the Alaska Court View system.

### **Wait Pool**

If placement is not immediately available in a desired program, parents who have completed the admissions process will be contacted with regard to the waiting pool. There is no fee to be placed in the wait pool and there are no guarantees that a student in the wait pool will be offered enrollment. Because our goal is to enroll a balanced, mixed age group, if/when a spot becomes available the wait pool is considered in order to best fill the needs of the class, with consideration for age. Once contacted by the Head of School regarding available placement, the newly placed family has three business days to reserve placement by remitting payment of the non-refundable enrollment deposit. The new student shall begin school within 30 days of placement. The first monthly tuition payment is due on the child's first day of school. As applicable, tuition for the newly placed child shall be pro-rated for the month based on the first school day the child attends.

### **Financial Commitment**

Enrollment at Spruce Tree requires that parents and/or legal guardians assume financial responsibility for student tuition and fees as outlined on the admissions application and subsequently in this Financial Commitment Policy. Enrollment deposits are due on April 15 for the upcoming fall school year or upon acceptance and are not refundable. Enrollment deposits do not replace any one month's tuition and are not applied toward future month's tuition; the amount is a portion of your annual commitment, due prior to your child's start date. If a family decides to forego placement and defer enrollment for longer than the allowable deferral time frame (see next paragraph), the student will be placed in the Wait Pool. Enrollment deposits are eligible to roll for the current school year, but can not be applied as payment for the enrollment deposit for the following school year.

Deferred enrollment (delayed/late) is an option. We allow new parents of children aged 2 1/2 - 3 1/2 to defer enrollment at the start of the new school year only (this does not apply to mid-year enrollment via the Wait Pool) for up to the equivalent of the first academic session (September - October). Deferred enrollment requires remittance of 75% of the Session 1 tuition amount for the program in which your child is enrolled in order to hold your spot. The following is an example of the deferred enrollment option:

- Start date November 5 (first Monday following Fall Break)
- 75% of Child's Session 1 Tuition due first Friday of September

Tuition is due on the first Friday of every other month of the school year, September through July. A late fee of \$25.00 is assessed for payments received more than five days after first Friday. Tuition payments may not go unpaid for more than 20 days, for a maximum late fee of \$100. STMS reserves the right to apply the Termination Policy if families are unable to pay tuition in a timely fashion according to the Financial Commitment Policy. School holidays, closures for inclement weather, absences for inclement weather choice, family vacations, and student sick days are not pro-rated and/or discounted.

The Program Chart below is applicable to the 2017 - 2018 academic year. Our AYM calendar follows a 7/2 template (7 weeks on / 2 weeks off) September - August. Refer to the Spruce Tree School Calendar for specific dates, intersession / break camp options, school holidays, professional development days, and vacation weeks.

Enrollment in our Elementary, Children's House School Day, and Children's House Half Day programs is based on full-year attendance. Enrollment in our after-school and extended day programs: Expand Your Mind, Tea Time, Sunset and Sunrise is available by academic session or by day as pro-rated.

<b>Program &amp; Tuition Chart 2018 – 2019</b>				
<b>Program</b>	<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Drop-off</b>	<b>Pick-up</b>	<b>Session Tuition</b>
Elementary	8:30 – 3:30	8:15 - 8:30	3:30 - 3:45	\$1677.50
Children's House School Day	8:30 - 3:30	8:15 - 8:30	3:30 - 3:45	\$1485.00
Children's House Half Day	8:30 - 1:00	8:15 - 8:30	12:45 - 1:00	\$1192.00
Expand Your Mind Club - elementary	3:30 - 4:30	NA	4:30 - 4:45	\$275.00
Children's House Tea Time	3:30 - 4:30	NA	4:30 - 4:45	\$190.00
Sunrise	7:30 - 8:15	7:30 - 8:15	NA	\$150.00
Sunset	4:30 - 5:30	NA	5:30 - 5:45	\$150.00
Elementary Enrollment Deposit, included in Annual Tuition Total				\$895.00
Children's House Enrollment Deposit, included in Annual Tuition Total				\$650.00
Elementary Materials Fee, included in Annual Tuition Total				\$290.00
Children's House Materials Fee, included in Annual Tuition Total				\$275.00
Intersession Camp - all ages	8:30 - 4:30	8:15 - 8:30	4:30 - 4:45	\$280 per week

### **Payment Options**

Spruce Tree offers three payment options in order to best accommodate family budgets. We accept check or credit card payments. Automatic payment is available by credit or debit card with corresponding permissions via the Tuition & Fees Auto Payment Approval Form in place. Automatic payment transactions take place on the due date of the current invoice and receipts are emailed to the cardholder.

The default payment schedule is **by session** (*billed every other month*) due first Friday September, November, January, March, May, and July according to the 2018-19 School Year Tuition Schedule.

### **Payment Options**

The following payment options are available. Spruce Tree accepts check or credit/debit card payments. Credit card auto-payments can be scheduled with completion of the corresponding card information below. Please indicate your plan preference below by circling the number of your preferred plan and initialing where noted.

1) **Default Session Payment Plan**, billed every other month

2) **Quarterly Tuition Plan**

Annual tuition discounted by 2% due the first Friday of September, January, March and May. Materials fees, intersession camp fees and before/after school program fees are not discounted and are invoiced during the session in which they occur.

2) **Annual Tuition Lump Sum Plan**

Annual tuition discounted by 5% due the first Friday of September. Materials fees, intersession camp fees and before/after school program fees are not discounted and are invoiced during the session in which they occur.

### **Sibling Discount**

Spruce Tree offers a sibling discount of 2% to the elder sibling(s). The oldest child's tuition is reduced by 2%. Eligibility: Two (2) or more children enrolled at the same time for a minimum of three (3) academic sessions. Discounts are applied to the elder sibling's tuition balance. Siblings do not receive discounts on the materials fee, intersession camp fees or before/after school program fees.

### **Discount Policy**

Quarterly and Annual Tuition Lump Sum Plan discounts are offered exclusively at the start of each school year in September. Discounts may not be combined. Sibling and annual lump sum and/or quarterly payment plan discounts may not be combined. Tuition remission for full time staff may not be combined with annual lump sum and/or quarterly payment plan discounts.

### **Enrollment Termination Policy - initiated by Spruce Tree Montessori School**

Spruce Tree Montessori School reserves the right to terminate enrollment of a student after careful consideration of cause. Cause is defined as violation by the student or parent of any of the policies stated in the parent handbook. Should a student's enrollment be terminated by the school in accordance with policies herein, quarterly and annual tuition payments will be pro-rated for months of attendance and returned to parents within one week of the official withdrawal date, which will be recorded as the last day the child was in attendance. Tuition payments remitted for the current month are not eligible for refund.

### **Withdrawal Policy - initiated by Parent**

Parent withdrawal must be submitted in writing to the Head of School 30 days prior to the date of the student's last day of attendance. Tuition payments remitted for the current month are not eligible for reimbursement. Tuition due within the 30-day period must be paid according to the financial commitment policy. Parents who have pre-paid tuition via the quarterly or annual lump sum payment plan will be reimbursed for any full months yet to occur, less applicable credit card transaction fees. Spruce Tree staff will provide progress reports via the Montessori Compass system directly to the student's new school.

Parents may request a copy as well and the Head of School will email the report within one week of the withdrawal date. Student binders and folders are the property of the school; however student journals and portfolio contents will be given to the student. An exit interview may be conducted with the student and/or parent. The interview contents will be kept confidential as a part of the student's school file.

### **Parental Involvement Expectation**

Parents play an integral role in their child's educational experience as well as in our school community. Children enrolled at Spruce Tree Montessori benefit from parental involvement in various ways. Parents are expected to volunteer at the school, at school-sponsored events, for the school at community events or at home doing school-related projects for an equivalent of ten (10) hours per family (mom/dad/grandparent/other family member) per school year.

In order to provide a well-rounded, community-friendly atmosphere, parents are more than welcome to volunteer in ways that suit their lifestyle and/or are related to their background, from reading tutors to performing maintenance work around the school, snow removal, lawn and garden care, material and supply purchases, event planning, etc. Material and supply purchases are accepted as parental involvement at face value with each \$15.00 purchase logged as one hour of parental involvement; i.e. a \$45.00 purchase/donation would be worth three parental involvement hours. Please visit [SignUpGenius.com](http://SignUpGenius.com) using your login and/or invitation links, email your teacher, or contact the Head of School for information on how you can help. Parents who under serve the school will be assessed a Parental Involvement Fee of \$15.00 per unworked hour (maximum fee \$150.00) with payment due August 10. Spruce Tree Montessori School sincerely appreciates the time and efforts of its parent community. Thank you in advance for your dedication to our school.

Parents may bring family or friends to volunteer as well but should be aware that prior to volunteering in the classroom, the Head of School will perform a background check via the State of Alaska's Court View online records system as advised by the Fairbanks Police Department on all volunteers (even Grandma). Parents may need to submit their family's full legal name, date of birth and social security number to the Head of School for this purpose. School staff conducts volunteer orientations a couple times during the school year (dates TBD). Specific duties and/or projects will be assigned to parents so as not to detract from the freedom of the children. Parents are asked to respect the choices of children and follow teacher instructions while working within the classroom. This type of involvement is very rewarding for parents and highly encouraged. You will develop an appreciation of your child's ability to learn through observation of the classroom. Thank you for considering this option.

### **"Montessori Monday" Community Development & Parent Outreach Program**

On the first Monday evening of most months STMS hosts "Montessori Monday". Montessori Monday includes a program/presentation for parents, activities for students and siblings, with hors d'oeuvres and drinks for a suggested donation of \$5.00 per family. The "Montessori Monday" series is a way to inform and educate currently enrolled parents, potential families and the general interested public about various aspects of the Montessori educational approach. It's also a wonderful way to build a healthy school community, where parent friendships and student relationships flourish outside of the regular school day.

## SCHOOL OPERATION

### Hours of Operation

The school is open 7:30 am - 5:45 pm, Monday - Thursday and 7:30 am - 4:45 pm on Friday.

Head of School office hours are 8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday - Friday, and by appointment.

Teachers are available by appointment or after 3:30 pm, Monday - Friday.

### Security

Security of students, staff, contents and building/grounds is key to our success and is our top priority. While we strive to create a welcoming environment, safety and peace of mind is at the forefront of our operation. Staff use sound judgment for child security at all times, indoors and out. We have reviewed our security protocols with the Fairbanks Police Department and through their consultation determined designated safe rooms inside the building and designated meeting areas outside the building. We are steadfast in our responsibility to provide a safe and secure school facility and have outlined protocols in the event of fire, fire in extreme cold, lost child, seriously injured child, allergic reaction, non-custodial parent request for release of child, suspicious or inebriated person, intruder, and power outage. Fire drills are conducted twice annually and a lockdown drill, called "safe and shelter drill," is conducted annually. A security summary is as follows:

- Our main entrance is open to the public 7:30 am - 5:30 pm; unless a Nixel alert from the Fairbanks Police or Alaska State Troopers notifies us of police activity in our area, at which time, our main entrance is locked and the doorbell is moved to the exterior.
- Our school, past the lobby, is secure 8:30 am - close, accessible by staff using a key code for gym/school entrance.
- Parents and visitors enter the school at the main entrance into the lobby.
- Staff greets all visitors.
- The doors to the classroom patios are locked from the outside, unless programming (weather dependent) allows students to work outdoors, in which case, doors are unlocked and/or propped open allowing freedom of movement to the outside, fenced in space.
- The fence gates are locked, except during carline 8:15 - 8:30 am and 3:30 - 3:45 pm. In good weather, after school program pick up may be from the playground, and gates will be unlocked and monitored by school personnel.
- Interior classroom doors are equipped with deadbolt locks at teacher height for quick lockdown security.
- Each classroom, the front desk and the Head of School office are equipped with panic buttons for emergencies.
- The school is equipped with interior security cameras.
- The school is equipped with a security alarm system, armed nightly.

Students are allowed and encouraged to move about the school, between classrooms, use the restrooms, the library, gym and kitchen throughout the day. Students are not allowed in the lobby without adult supervision.

### School Closures

Spruce Tree Montessori will follow the temperature and weather reports of the National Weather Service and school will be closed when the temperature at the Fairbanks International Airport is -50 (negative fifty)

degrees Fahrenheit at 7:00 am on any given school day. Spruce Tree will monitor road conditions via the Alaska DOT highway reports and consider the Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District's (FNSBSD) decision on school closures due to weather; however closures will be at the discretion of the Head of School based on safe travel for staff. Parents will be notified as soon as a decision has been made, generally prior to 7:00 am, via email or text, if applicable. A notice will be posted on the Home page at [www.sprucetreemontessori.com](http://www.sprucetreemontessori.com) as well as on the Spruce Tree Montessori School Facebook page.

Spruce Tree will not transport students to/from school sponsored outings, field trips, or sports clubs if the temperature is below -30 (negative 30) degrees Fahrenheit within three hours of the departure time given the reduced visibility and increased risk that extreme temperatures cause. Parents will be notified of activity cancelations due to extreme cold as soon as the decision to cancel is made.

The safety and security of our students is our top priority. Spruce Tree does its utmost to balance road safety with our commitment to providing consistent programming for working parents. When possible, our doors will remain open, and occasionally school days will be recorded as "optional" with modified programming for those students in attendance depending on staff availability. Though attendance is still taken on "optional" days, it will be noted in Montessori Compass that the day was considered "optional" for inclement weather. Please note that Spruce Tree does not have an attendance policy therefore students are not discredited for missed days. Our attendance policy allows for extended family travel, illness and inclement weather choice.

### **Health & Wellness Guidelines**

The wellness of the school community, along with providing a healthy environment in which to learn, is a top priority at Spruce Tree. We will ensure the cleanliness of the school, provide necessary ventilation for good air quality, and provide guidance to families regarding the spread of illness. We respectfully ask that parents serve as our partners in this effort.

The staff at Spruce Tree will use sound judgment for recognition of illness. Evidence of a cold (congestion, persistent cough, fever) or virus (inflamed eyes or ears, redness or rash, fever) will be reported to parents as soon as is necessary with regard to the well being of the child. Parents are asked to help control the spread of disease by keeping children home when signs of illness are evident. We ask that parents use careful consideration of school attendance with vomiting and/or diarrhea when symptoms occur within 12 hours of a school day. In the event that a child becomes severely ill or seriously injured while at school, staff will contact parents and refer to the student's Medical Profile on file. When immediate medical attention is required, staff reserves the right to call the child's doctor, 911 or transport the child to the hospital as appropriate. Doctor advice will be followed, including administering CPR/First Aid as necessary. Staff is CPR/First Aid certified.

### **Lice**

Head lice are a common childhood occurrence and typically do not cause health related concerns. Lice are tiny bugs that attach to your child's hair. They live on tiny amounts of blood from your child's scalp. They are about the size of a sesame seed. They lay eggs (nits) and attach the eggs to your child's hair. Anyone can get head lice but it is most common in children ages 3 to 11. Head lice are spread through direct contact. For example, sharing combs, hats, hair ribbons, or hairbrushes can spread lice. Your child may also get lice if he/she shares pillows, towels, clothes, or blankets.

Symptoms include itching of the scalp, neck bites in children with longer hair, and/or a feeling of something crawling on the scalp. Treatment aims at complete removal of the parasite from the hair and the



scalp with topical shampoos and/or gels applied directly to the hair and combed out in small sections. These treatments are available locally at Walgreens. Consult with your pediatrician for confirmation and advice. Sometimes lice can resist topical treatment and oral medications may need to be administered. Here are some tips to rid your household of lice should you or your child contract them:

- Wash clothes and bedding in hot water and dry them on high heat in the dryer
- Vacuum upholstered furniture and floors
- Seal clothes and beddings for a period of two weeks
- Soak hair brushes, combs, barrettes, and other hair accessories in hot water for 10 minutes
- Continue treatment as directed and check your child daily. Nits (lice eggs) can remain viable for two weeks from first onset.

Spruce Tree periodically conducts head checks in order to ensure the wellness of our student body. If your child is suspected of having head lice, we will contact you directly and confidentially and ask that you administer over the counter treatment before your child returns to school – this can be done the evening of the suspected case. Your child may return to school the following morning. If you find lice on your child, we ask that you report the case immediately to the administrative manager so that we can inform other parents and consider conducting a head check. Thank you for your partnership in these efforts.

### **Dress Code**

Children attending Spruce Tree Montessori School are given the right to choose their attire with few limitations. Children are expected to dress appropriately according to the list below. Children take responsibility for their attire including layers of clothing not worn throughout the day. As needed, initial reminders about choice of clothing will be given directly to the elementary child for correction, second reminders will be given to both the child and parent. Parents of Children's House students will be notified with written or direct reminders as necessary. Please help your child make suitable choices based on the following expectations. Some discretion is applied to the below expectations; please respect your teacher's discretion.

Shoes: Inside shoes – a set of clean, comfortable shoes – are required. Inside shoes should be comfortable and children should be able to put them on and take them off independently; if your child can not yet tie her shoes, please do not send shoes with laces as this can add unnecessary frustration to your child's day. PE shoes are highly recommended - white/non-marking soles are preferred. Inside shoes can serve as PE shoes, however students need to be able to run, jump, and play in their PE shoes. Outdoor shoes/boots required for cold/wet weather.

### **Attire Expectations**

- Shorts and skirts shall be of fingertip length when arms hang by the child's side.
- Graphics and/or print shall not discriminate or be offensive.
- Heels of shoes shall be of an appropriate height so as not to distract children at work or take away from the child's ability to participate in activities.
- Hoods shall not be worn inside the classroom; however baseball style caps and knit hats may be worn so long as they do not cover the child's eyes or distract from the productivity of the classroom. Hats and hoods may be worn on the playground, during bike rides and occasionally during outdoor PE classes.
- Denim jeans or shorts with holes shall not be worn to school.
- Tops with low or drooping necklines or of a cropped length and pants with low waistlines should not be worn to school. A child's mid-drift should not be visible.
- Children shall designate shoes for inside and those shoes should be left at school for convenience.

- Clothing worn at school shall not distract learning, including but not limited to: tutus, costume pieces, crowns, large jewelry pieces, sports padding or gear, be it the individual's interest/attention or that of his/her classmates.
- Costumes shall not be worn in the classroom except during our annual Halloween party or for arts/drama programs and/or spirit weeks.
- Student attire shall not distract the attention of the class.

The staff's attire is a part of the prepared environment and should be comfortable and simple so that it is not a distraction during lesson presentations. The staff of STMS follows the attire expectations listed above as well as those in the Spruce Tree Employee Handbook. The staff of STMS is expected to professionally represent the school and therefore dress in business casual attire on a daily basis with opportunities to wear school logo apparel when appropriate. Our teachers wear name tags during the school day and during school events.

### **Restroom Use**

Our school has four restrooms: three child-sized unisex stalls in the Children's House classroom, boys and girls restrooms on Main Street, and a staff only restroom in the teachers' office. The ones located on Main Street are used the majority of the time by Elementary students, visitors, volunteers and parents. Students may use the restroom at their leisure and will be oriented on proper restroom use, hand-washing and drying, washcloth hooks and minor clean-ups. Children's House students primarily use the restrooms in their classroom. We use cotton washcloths to decrease our paper product usage and to provide a home-like environment. Linens are refreshed multiple times during the day. Paper towels are provided in the Main Street restrooms.

### **Student (Toilet) Accident Guidelines**

Younger students are prone to accidents surrounding bodily functions, particularly in new places, around new people and upon learning a new routine. Spruce Tree staff shall respect this physical and often psychological developmental hurdle by nurturing the student as needed. The following are the guidelines followed by staff for student accidents occurring near and/or in the restroom.

- Reassure child; "accidents happen sometimes," "we'll help you get cleaned up and changed," etc.
- Encourage independent clean up. Provide assistance if child asks for help.
- Take child to restroom stall; ask them to undress and place wet clothes in a pile.
- Get child's extra clothes and an empty plastic bag from organizer located in the restroom.
- Ask child to put wet clothes in plastic bag.
- Provide a wet washcloth or baby wipe for child to wash legs and body.
- Ask child to put clean clothes on.
- Clean floor and/or restroom area as needed with appropriate disinfectant.
- Ask child to wash hands.
- Ask child to take plastic bag to cubby so that clothes can be laundered at home.
- Wash their own hands; tidy restroom as needed.
- Inform parent of accident and request new set of extra clothes through Montessori Compass.

## **YEAR ROUND EDUCATION**

Our All Year Montessori (AYM) program provides families with consistent academic support year round with more frequent, but shorter breaks well suited to enrichment activities or family travel. Our innovative calendar offers the best opportunity for supportive, continuous learning for children ages 3 - 12. Spruce

Tree follows a 7-2 template with six academic sessions averaging seven weeks in length, each followed by two-week breaks September through August. School holidays include Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King Jr. Day, and Memorial Day. (Christmas, New Year's and Independence Day fall during scheduled breaks.) We have four staff professional development school closures: the Friday before the Holiday Break, the Monday following the Holiday Break, and two days in March.

Part of our mission is to be a resource for families. Our AYM program is a good fit for our parent demographics and the academic benefits we've observed, particularly at the elementary level, are compelling, making year round academics a best-fit solution for all involved. Summer learning loss and 'the burnout factor' are real issues educators, parents and students face over the course of a traditional school year. AYM balances academic sessions of optimum length with breaks at opportune times. This combination reduces learning loss and prevents burnout so that students, parents and teachers can make the most of their educational experience. Shorter, more frequent breaks provide students, staff and parents the time needed to reflect and recharge.

Another important benefit of our calendar is that it allows frequent R&R for staff - we find the morale and the creativity of our teachers to be top notch. We do not count down the days 'til school is out or in... we enjoy the consistency of routine and the social connections we make with students, parents and with one another.

After three years now of data, observation, and student performance and achievement evaluation, Spruce Tree is compelled to advise against extended summer breaks and/or lengthy vacations outside of our breaks, particularly for our elementary students. The evidence, both anecdotal and according to benchmark assessments, is striking, particularly for older children. Given that the lower elementary academic sequence is presented according to our academic session schedule and that lessons build upon one another for conceptual understanding and mastery, student attendance is a critical component for achieving goals and meeting expectations. For example, the math scope and sequence is highly sequential requiring lesson presentation upon student readiness and according to a scope necessary for grade/level advancement. And while we are able to individualize that lesson sequence, for some children the adjustment to one-on-one vs. small group lessons can be challenging. Elementary students, in the second plane of development, thrive in social learning environments, and our small groups give students opportunities for collaboration and mentorship, not to mention 'buddy working/studying' opportunities that reinforce both children's understanding.

The All Year Montessori calendar is set up to provide academic and social-emotional support to students year round giving them the consistency of routine and social connections they need. It is our view that as students get older and more mature, consistency of support and repetition becomes increasingly important. Our calendar offers 192 days of school per year, which is 22 more than the state minimum (state minimum is 180 allowing for 10 professional development and/or conference days annually); however taking extended breaks reduces the number of days and more importantly the number of hours of equivalent instruction students receive. That deficit affects transitions and over time, may affect student performance and achievement.

### **Intersession / Break Camps**

Intersession programming provides enrichment activities along paths less traveled during the regular, academic sessions. Our break camps offer students a rejuvenating, active day. The all-age, camp-style atmosphere provides students with the break they need from academics in a familiar environment.

## All Year Montessori (AYM) Academic Session / Intersession Schedule

Academic Session I	Sep 4 - Oct 19
Intersession I	Oct 22 - Nov 2 (Break Camps 1, 2)
Academic Session II	Nov 5 - Dec 20
Intersession II	Dec 21 - Jan 7 (School Closed)
Academic Session III	Jan 8 - March 1
Intersession III	Mar 4 - 15 (Break Camps 3, 4)
Academic Session IV	March 18 - Apr 26
Intersession IV	Apr 29 - May 10 (Break Camps 5, 6)
Academic Session V	May 13 - Jun 21
Intersession V	Jun 24 - Jul 5 (School Closed)
Academic Session VI	Jul 8 - Aug 16
Intersession VI	Aug 19 - 30 (Camp at Fairbanks Children's Museum)

## CURRICULUM

### Curriculum

Our curriculum provides sound academic background for the establishment of critical thinking, problem solving, reading skill and comprehension, and cooperative-learning skills with varied programming in the arts. Our goal is to support the development of each child in all areas - academically, socially, physically, and emotionally. Part of the Spruce Tree Montessori forum for expanding horizons is to offer instruction in the arts and history of culture, both in school and through field trips to local institutions; physical education and health/wellness exposure and instruction through utilization of community resources and an annual Field Day event; music and dance assemblies and/or activities. The school supports local non-profit service organizations in order to establish philanthropic habits in the children and provide opportunities for volunteerism. The interdisciplinary, "cosmic" Montessori curriculum integrates subjects into a unified program of study and includes:

- History / Geography
- Botany / Zoology
- Natural and Physical Sciences
- Practical Life
- Mathematical Studies - arithmetic/geometry
- Sensorial
- Language, Reading and Writing
- Spanish Language Instruction
- Music & Movement
- Peace / Communication
- Arts: visual (ceramics, drawing, painting, sculpture, printmaking, design, crafts, photography, video, filmmaking and architecture), performing, textile, culinary
- Computer / Technology - elementary class
- Physical Education & Health/Wellness
- Social-Emotional Learning

The elementary curriculum is based on the **"FIVE Great Lessons"** of Montessori education, which are:

- Lesson 1: The Story of the Universe

- Lesson 3: The Coming of Humans
- Lesson 4: The Story of Language
- Lesson 5: The Story of Mathematics

### **Citizenship**

All students learn the United States Pledge of Allegiance and the Alaska Flag Song as a part of our civic responsibility. Respectfully, children are given the choice to vocally participate but all will be expected to stand with respect. Newspaper articles, radio and TV news programming, and exposure to current events provide real-world opportunities for lessons in citizenship. Occasionally, recorded and/or live television broadcasts will be a part of educational programming, including educational YouTube videos. Historical events, televised cultural celebrations, national elections and top news stories offer valuable world perspective and the Spruce Tree student body is exposed, in short intervals, to news as part of their learning experience, as appropriate to their level of understanding. Political and/or religious lessons and discussions will be neutral and respectful. Parents will be informed of topics discussed or watched so that families may engage in conversation about the topic at home.

### **Community Service**

Spruce Tree students learn the meaning of philanthropy by being given opportunities to volunteer in our community. Various charitable organizations are solicited to gather ideas for projects and opportunities for student-directed volunteerism.

### **Classroom Culture & Community**

We are fortunate to have a diverse school community with backgrounds from many different cultures and countries. We promote the sharing of family culture and traditions, and encourage parents to share ideas for cultural topics with the school staff in order to provide a well-rounded agenda for students. It is our belief that given the opportunity, children can learn tolerance and compassion for all people. It's important that a child learn about their place in the world, both geographically and culturally. As a secular school, we welcome all religions and no religion. Holiday lessons are educational and neutral. Parents are sometimes invited to help coordinate and participate in cultural and holiday lessons.

Spruce Tree promotes individuality, respect of person, friend and space, and we ask that you support this effort. Students are given lessons on respectful and peaceful communication practices and our classroom communities flourish through diligent, consistent application of those practices. Our teachers model respectful, appropriate communication practices in a fair and balanced nature as a part of the community. Independent problem solving is encouraged through use of the 'peace rose' in nearly all cases. As necessary, teachers will assist with the communication process. The Head of School will be consulted if a problem persists between the same students. Parents will be made aware only of persistent problems as advised by the Head of School.

### **Music Education**

Music is a part of the Montessori classroom. We take pride in our ability to offer music and rhythm work within the classroom using simple materials (rhythm sticks, recorders, piano, bells, shakers, harmonicas, percussion, and more). The study of music offers great benefits and rounds out the "whole child" educational ideal. Here's a sampling of the skills music education develops: concentration, counting and other math skills, listening abilities, self-discipline, cooperation, language usage, memory and recall skills, creativity, spatial-temporal reasoning, abstract reasoning and physical coordination (gross and fine-motor skill), to name a few. We are fortunate to have musically talented teachers willing to share their talents with their classes.

## **Physical Education**

Spruce Tree offers physical education (PE) curriculum that focuses on physical activity, health, wellness, and nutrition. Children are naturally very active and enjoy learning and exploring new ways to move and be active. Physical education supports the development of a wide variety of fine and gross motor activities that involve locomotion, non-locomotion, and manipulation of objects. Students will be engaged in a variety of physical activities that emphasize social interaction, future participation, and enjoyment of life-long physical activity. (Reference: State of Alaska Department of Education, Physical Education Standards webpage.)

Our PE program offers activities inside and outside the gym for all ages for at least 20 minutes per day. PE periods are scheduled during the afternoon work cycle and students are divided into developmentally appropriate groups. Basic physical skills and fitness, rules of games, strategies of competition, and nutritional/wellness habits for leading an active lifestyle are presented during the course of the year.

## **STEM Education**

Spruce Tree values exposure to all things. From holidays, religious or not, to current events, to extensions in science, technology, engineering and math. Children in today's world are exposed directly and indirectly to a broad range of topics through varied media and as a means to monitor and censor that exposure in a developmentally appropriate manner, STMS offers students time and space to explore various concepts more deeply, with support and guidance from our teaching staff. Our "Maker Space" provides children with space and time to solve problems and take on challenges using tools, scraps, and other supplies. Conceptual guidance and creative rein are a critical component of our commitment to whole child education.

## **Recess / "Outside Time"**

Outside free play on the playground (recess) is offered at minimum once per day five days per week. Children of all ages often go on nature walks or walks to local parks or playgrounds, and older students enjoy bike rides to various downtown locations. Students enjoy recess every day, rain or shine, cold or hot, with a minimum temperature cut off of 20 degrees below zero. Our playground offers a climbing tower (made of cedar logs), a jungle gym (made of metal), tires to climb, sit in, roll and play with, a balance beam, a basketball hoop, hopscotch and 4-square game area, umbrella seating, a sandbox, children's garden, a range of balls, frisbees, paddles, lumber and tools.

Please note the following guidelines for play:

- Children are allowed and encouraged to climb our log climbing tower and jungle gym to a height that they are comfortable. We do not help children climb up or down; the guidance and language we use is this, "you can climb as high as you are comfortable, but you will need to be able to climb down all by yourself."
- Children are allowed to jump off the log climbing tower or monkey gym from a height no greater than their head.

## **Spanish Language Curriculum**

Our Spanish program provides exposure to the Spanish language through individual, small and large group lessons and activities during the afternoon work cycle using Montessori materials in Spanish as well as through music and songs. Each classroom has a dedicated shelf for presentation of Spanish materials and students have the opportunity to choose to practice work as presented at their leisure. Our Spanish Teacher presents lessons at designated tables in each classroom and provides assistance and follow up on previously presented vocabulary, concepts and materials. Hearing, speaking, singing, reading and writing Spanish are among the expected outcomes of the program.

## **Field Trips**

In order to complement various areas of study and to enhance the overall learning experience, Spruce Tree students have the opportunity to go on multiple field trips during the school year. Field trips are scheduled in advance and entered onto the Spruce Tree online calendar (MontessoriCompass.com). Some field trips are for all students and others are classroom specific. Parent permission is requested for each field trip using a group permission form. Parents of participating children pay for the cost of each field trip; billed the following month (please do not exchange cash with teachers). Some field trips are within walking distance of the school and some require school or parent carpool transportation to and from the venue. Parents are invited to attend as appropriate. Siblings are allowed to attend with a parent so long as the trip is age-appropriate and the parent takes full responsibility for the sibling.

## **Going Outs**

An essential part of the Montessori approach to the upper elementary student's work is "Going Outs." Upper elementary students (typically ages 9 - 12) are encouraged to investigate real life connections between their studies and the outside world - leading them to plan trips independently or with small groups to resources in the community. Examples include visiting a local professor, museum, the library or a natural landmark in order to deepen their understanding of various subject areas and/or specific concepts. This process develops a sense of responsibility to mastery of concept or skill. These trips include the company of an approved adult (not specifically a teacher), but are planned completely by the students themselves, including calls for reservations, planning transportation, figuring out applicable fees, as well as the questions to resources/professionals and/or the information they seek.

*"When the child goes out, it is the world itself that offers itself to him. Let us take the child out to show him real things instead of making objects which represent ideas and closing them up in cupboards." -Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence*

## **Library**

The library at Spruce Tree offers an organized collection of children's books for reading at school and at home. Children may check out one book at a time for up to one week at a time. We also have a collection of resources and books for parents, mostly pertaining to the Montessori philosophy. Parents are welcome to check out books at their leisure and return them within a reasonable time frame. Spruce Tree greatly appreciates and welcomes book donations for our collection.

## **Peace Rose, Table, Shelf and Room**

Peaceful materials and spaces are found in Montessori classrooms/schools around the world. A peace rose or peace bridge is utilized for problem-solving interactions between children and peaceful spaces are designated for students who need a quiet break, time alone or away, and for peaceful conversations between students and/or between students and teachers or parents. The Children's House classrooms have a peace rose and all staff have been oriented on how to facilitate peaceful communication using the peace rose. Elementary students are oriented to a peace bridge, a more communicative and reflective process for problem solving, for older students. The school's peace table is located in the Peace Room and provides a quiet, private space for students to use at their leisure.

## **Technology**

The use of technology is an important resource for elementary students and staff. Our school is equipped with wi-fi, several iPads, laptops and wireless printers.

Teachers' use of iPads or laptops includes: entering observations, parent communication, lesson data and attendance in the Montessori Compass app, email, lesson planning and projects, Internet research, watching videos, listening to music, audio books, podcasts or white noise.

Elementary students have the privilege of using computers and/or iPads for specific curriculum and/or projects, to supplement their understanding of some subjects, typing lessons, Internet research and academic extension programs like Kahn Academy. Teachers may suggest the use of technology as a supplemental resource, but do not use it as an introduction to a subject. Elementary student use of iPads and MacBooks includes: listening to music, audio books, podcasts or white noise, Internet research, watching videos as presented for an assignment, monitored use of pre-approved reading/math/geography apps, or software for students identified as needed accommodation, and specific curricular use as noted above. Applications (apps) are purchased, loaded and monitored by staff with developmentally-appropriate restrictions in place.

Children's House students are not allowed to use iPads or laptops, and teachers do not use iPads to supplement curricular content, except during National Week of Coding during which kindergarteners participate, and for Spanish music practice during Spanish lessons. Children's House teachers may use iPads or iPhones to play music or audio books in the classroom, but visual screen time is limited to a once-monthly first Friday movie, typically no more than 90 minutes in length. Occasionally, short seasonal or cultural videos will be presented to Children's House students during circle time to supplement the lesson of the day or holidays.

Students should not bring their own devices (iPads, iPods, iPhones) to school unless pre-approved by their teacher for a specific project. Use of personal devices is not allowed during school or after school programs given the mixed age groupings of children. Parents are expected to support this rule. If it is necessary for your child to bring a phone to school in order to improve communication with you outside of school day hours, the child must keep it on silent in their locker or turn it into the office for safe keeping. Spruce Tree reserves the right to confiscate a child's phone until the child is picked up if use is outside of these guidelines.

## PROGRAMS

Spruce Tree Montessori School offers an authentic Montessori learning environment for children ages 2 1/2 - 12 through two programs: Children's House (combined preschool/kindergarten classroom for ages 2 1/2 - 6) and a combined Lower/Upper Elementary (classroom for elementary students ages 6 - 12, 1st - 6th grades).

### **Elementary Program**

Offering authentic, AMS-approved Montessori elementary curriculum to children ages 6 - 12, grades 1<sup>st</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup>, we provide an inspiring educational experience that "keeps the flame alive" in order to help children reach their potential independently. What sets us apart from traditional elementary programs is our ability to educate the whole child through purposefully prepared, developmentally appropriate curriculum that provides a sound academic foundation, socio-emotional understanding of others, and an extensive practical life skill set.

Our elementary program provides a full academic slate (see curriculum outline, p. 20) where art, science, foreign language, physical education, culinary and musical arts, and computer technology are a part of the regular school day. Monday - Friday, 8:30 am - 3:30 pm. Morning snack provided.

### **Children's House Programs: School Day and Half Day**

A Montessori preschool/kindergarten offering full, half and extended day programs guided by a Montessori-certified teacher in a multi-age environment for children ages 2 1/2 - 6.



Montessori education nurtures the child's natural desire to learn. Classrooms are active, but peaceful, engaging yet quiet. Students develop in a self-paced environment where socio-emotional and practical life skills are learned alongside academics.

Spruce Tree Montessori is affiliated with the American Montessori Society (AMS) as a Full-Member School and has achieved full implementation of the AMS School Standards and Accreditation Criteria.

### **School Day Program (Full Day)**

The School Day Program provides a well-rounded full day including the hallmark Montessori 3-hour morning work cycle where students work independently, in pairs, or in small groups and when individual and small group lessons are presented. During the afternoon work cycle, students enjoy time outdoors, physical education (PE), music/dance, Spanish and art as a part of their school day. Monday - Friday, 8:30 am - 3:30 pm. Morning snack provided. Nap optional.

### **Half Day Program**

Our Half Day Program provides for participation in the morning 3-hour work period alongside School Day Program students where social and community building skills, academic interests and excitement for learning are nurtured. Monday - Friday, 8:30 am - 12:45 pm. Morning snack provided.

### **Before/After School Programs: Tea Time, Sunset, Sunrise, Expand Your Mind**

Spruce Tree recognizes the need parents and families have for extended day options, while acknowledging student needs for free play. Our after school programs are relatively unstructured (besides basic school ground rules and guidelines for respectful interactions) and offer children time to play with approved toys (Legos, building blocks, games, magnets, puzzles), additional outside time and opportunities to do craft projects and other artful activities. Before/after school program options are available on a drop in basis, as well as daily.

#### **Tea Time Program**

Tea Time extends the afternoon work cycle by one hour, offering an active period of free choice to include games, stories, music, songs, and arts/craft projects. Taiga classroom; Monday - Friday, 3:30 - 4:30 pm.

#### **Sunset Program**

As the day comes to a close, students are encouraged to draw, write, read, color or play logic or building games during the Sunset Program, a one-hour extended day option. Library; Monday - Thursday, 4:30 - 5:30 pm. Note: No Sunset Program on Fridays.

#### **Sunrise Program**

For the early birds, the Sunrise Program is an early drop off option where students of all ages may eat breakfast\* and enjoy free play, music and news before the school day begins. \*Students bring their own breakfast. Library; Monday - Friday, 7:30 - 8:15 am.

#### **Expand Your Mind Club - Elementary**

Our EYM program is organized into themed weeks, and takes on a 'club format' in order to provide students with opportunities to focus on specific, project-based opportunities. Library; Monday - Friday, 3:30 - 4:30 pm.

## SCHOOL DAY STRUCTURE & COMPONENTS

### Drop-off / Pick-up Schedule & Guidelines

Drop-off Period 7:30 – 8:15 am	Sunrise
Drop-off Period 8:15 – 8:30 am	Half and School Day Programs
Pick-up Period 12:45 – 1:00 pm	Half-day Children’s House Program
Pick-up Period 3:30 – 3:45 pm	School Day Children’s House & Elementary
Pick-up Period 4:30 – 4:45 pm	Expand Your Mind / Tea Time Programs
Pick-up Period 5:30 – 5:45 pm	Sunset

Timely arrival is a key factor in community building. We strongly encourage parents to be diligent when it comes to school arrival times. Students who arrive in time for a relaxed entry and a few moments of socialization typically enjoy their day more thoroughly and have greater academic interest. Prepare your child for success by establishing morning routines that balance independence and family time.

Here are some suggestions for establishing morning routines:

- Implement a consistent bedtime and bedtime routine, even on the weekends and during intersession breaks.
- Establish a morning wake up time allowing ample time for independent dressing, eating, family time / playtime, and packing backpack or lunch.
- If applicable, pack lunches or prepare lunch contents the night before.
- Help children pick out clothes for the next day the night before.
- Provide space for children to keep their coat, shoes/boots, backpacks, etc. that is easy for them to access (hooks at child height, baskets large enough for all items, etc).
- Plan ahead for yourself. Model an organized, non-rushed (low-stress) morning routine.

Drop-off and pick-up logistics are important for street safety as well as child-parent separation anxiety. Students will be greeted each morning in the car line by school staff. Morning check-in is the responsibility of the child. Parents are encouraged to remain in their vehicles for ease of traffic flow in the car line. If children are dropped off after 8:30 am, parents should wait to see that their child is greeted and goes into the school before pulling away. Parents arriving late for pick-up should come in to pick up their child who will be waiting in the lobby.

We understand that life brings unexpected delays at times; therefore parents will be allotted three late pick-ups without charge during the school year. Subsequent late pick-ups will be assessed a \$10.00 fee each time and invoiced on a monthly basis. Please respect the duties and responsibilities of the staff at the end of each program.

### **Drop-off**

The Elementary and Children’s House school day begins promptly at 8:30 am, Monday through Friday. Parents are expected to provide timely transportation for their children. Being on time each morning will allow your child to enjoy the full morning work session and to begin their day in a relaxed, socialized fashion. Likewise, being on time for mid-day and afternoon pick up is crucial so that after-school programming can begin on time and teachers can begin end of day duties with little distraction.

Drop-off logistics are important for street safety as well as the development of appropriate child-parent separation. Parents may drop children off between 8:15 and 8:30 am, unless enrolled in the Sunrise Program, which offers early morning drop-off anytime between 7:30 - 8:30 am. Students are greeted each morning by school staff at the car line. Morning check-in is the responsibility of the child.

All students enter through our "Main Street" door by the kitchen, accessed through the playground. All parents are encouraged to utilize our carline for curbside drop off allowing children to walk along the fence to the gate. Parents are asked to remain in vehicles for ease of traffic flow. Using the north parking lot to park and walk children through the playground is also an option; however parents are asked to say goodbye at the classroom door so that the child may independently check in with their teacher, hang their coat, change their shoes, etc. If children arrive after 8:30 am, parents should wait for their child to be greeted in the lobby before pulling away or walk their child into the school. Attendance flowers are used to identify tardy children. Children are given a flower upon arrival to give to their teacher so that the child's attendance is entered for the day.

### **Car Line Drop Off**

We have designed two car lines to best accommodate parent vehicle traffic. One is staffed and designated for younger children needing assistance in/out of carseats along N. Cushman St. (along front main fence line). The other is not staffed and should be used by older, more capable students who can get out of the car independently and efficiently; it is accessed off Phillips Field Road on the north end of the building along the sidewalk/curb. Please approach and proceed into and through the car lines slowly to ensure the safety of all students. Parents of children of all ages are encouraged to utilize the car line and staff assistance for morning drop off and regular school day pick up. Our staff has been trained on car seat buckling/un-buckling, child removal and safe practices. Please do not park in front of the lobby, along the fence during carline drop off (8 - 8:35 am or 3 - 3:45). Pull in - back up drop off is not safe and causes congestion for the north carline.

### **Pick Up**

Parents should pick children up during the 15-minute window allotted for each program as follows and understand that while the carline may look long, it will take less than 15 minutes and is typically complete within 10 minutes. Please respect the minutes of time it takes to ensure the safety of all students.

Half-Day	12:45 - 1:00 pm, in school lobby (parents park and come inside)
School Day	3:30 - 3:45 pm, car line/parking lot, upon teacher dismissal
Tea Time & EYM	4:30 - 4:45 pm, in school library or lobby
Sunset	5:30 - 5:45 pm, in school library or lobby

Students take responsibility for a timely departure; backpacks packed, outerwear on, lunch boxes in hand to promote efficiency. If parents arrive after the allotted carline pick up window, and haven't called ahead for drop-in after school programming, children will await pick up in the lobby. We allow three late pick-ups for life's uncertainties; subsequent late pick-ups are assessed a \$10.00 fee, invoiced the following month.

### **Car Line Pick Up**

Students will be ready for a timely departure at 3:30; backpacks packed, outerwear on. When parents pull into the afternoon carline, which is open 3:30 - 3:45 Monday - Friday, students will be dismissed from the playground gates.

### **Parent Parking**

Parents who choose to park and walk in with their child should park in the parking lot on the north end of the building. Parking spots in front of the main lobby door are available 8:35 - 3 pm daily, generally used for

volunteers, visitors and school day pick ups for appointments. Please refrain from parking in front of the building when the car line is forming and moving to limit the hazard of pulling in / backing out. (Car line open 8:15 - 8:30 am and 3:30 - 3:45 pm).

## **SCHOOL DAY COMPONENTS**

### ***Uninterrupted Morning Work Session***

The three-hour work period is a hallmark of Montessori education. Spruce Tree respects the ideal that children engage in topics they are sensitive to and interested in. We know that your child *wants* to learn. We believe their love of learning flourishes when the element of choice is applied to the work cycle. Students are given the opportunity to manage time and master work. When necessary, teachers guide students to appropriate academic choices. The uninterrupted work cycle during which children chose to work with materials as guided by the teacher offers an appropriate amount of time for the student to work individually, with a partner or small group, and to work one on one with the teachers. Group activities and “circle time” are at the discretion of the teacher. Classroom assemblies, holiday celebrations and student presentations are typically scheduled in the afternoon or at the beginning of the morning work period so as not to disrupt the work cycle.

### ***Outdoor Classroom Environments and Outside Time (Recess)***

Outdoor space is a part of our prepared environments and we are pleased to present a natural playscape where child-centered, student-driven physical and gross motor activities and free, creative and imaginative play can occur. Students may choose to work/play outside when appropriate as one of the many choices available. The outdoor classroom spaces serve as an extension to the interior learning environments. A direct connection to nature and the outdoors is a hallmark of the Montessori approach. Outdoor work choices (water, sand, and other sensory activities as well as wood working and building materials) are provided and creativity is encouraged. We know that work happens both indoors and outdoors and acknowledge that children thrive in a dynamic, active setting. Students may choose to work outside when appropriate and take certain materials outside as well. Outdoor work choices are purposefully arranged and creativity encouraged.

Outdoor time (commonly known as recess) is scheduled after the morning work period for all ages for approximately 30 minutes each day. Students go outside every day, rain, snow or shine, freezing or scorching. When the temperature is negative twenty degrees (-20) Fahrenheit or colder, alternative indoor activity choices are offered in our gym. Children must bring proper cold weather gear\*: parka/coat, snow pants, snow boots, gloves/mittens, hat and scarf/face mask. Children will not be allowed to go outside if they do not have proper outdoor gear. Extra outdoor gear may be kept in the child’s personal cubby at school for convenience.

\*Applies to wintertime temps of about 32 degrees or colder or as directed by school staff.

### ***Snack***

The school provides healthy snack choices daily. Our snack choices are largely self-prepared (not packaged), made in-house (student/teacher prepped), familiar and simple. The snack menu is outlined weekly by the school chef and posted in the kitchen. Each morning, an elementary student is assigned to prepare the elementary snack, write the menu, and set up necessary serving pieces and utensils. The “snack prep” job also includes assisting with the preparation of the Children’s House snack tray and delivering it to that classroom as needed. Snacks are optional and children are allowed to choose when to have their snack during the morning three-hour work period. Snacks should not take the place of breakfast at home or lunch (packed sack or school hot lunch). All children are different, but we know that well-rested, well-fed children thrive in school. Spruce Tree staff do not force children to eat or finish their snack or lunch. The topic of waste is discussed on an as-needed basis. At times, at the teacher’s discretion, students may be asked to eat in silence for a few minutes to encourage healthy eating habits.

### ***Class Meeting***

The elementary class gathers each day for a morning class meeting where the teachers facilitate a discussion of interests, comments, questions, concerns and other topics. Afternoon reflection occurs daily and is guided by the elementary teacher.

### ***Circle***

Children's House students enjoy group time sitting together in a circle formation either to begin or close the morning work cycle, after lunch or to close the afternoon work cycle - a time for sharing, songs, special lessons, and comments/questions. A common Montessori activity in circle is 'walking the line' where children learn to walk peacefully, balanced and respectfully in a line around their circle. This promotes their understanding of appropriate behavior in groups, prepares them for field trips to local destinations where line formation is common and provides opportunity for demonstrative leadership.

### ***Lunch***

To enhance our classroom and whole school community bond, we "break for lunch" together. Our lunch hour begins at noon each day. Hot lunch is served to Children's House students 12 - 12:30 and to elementary students 12:30 - 1 pm, using placemats, plates, glasses and silverware. Children serve themselves as guided and eat together. Children not enrolled in the lunch program bring their lunch and all children (hot or sack lunch) eat together. Classroom refrigerators are used to store bulk snack items and are not large enough to store student lunch boxes. If items need to be kept chilled, please include an ice pack or provide a thermal lunch box or container for your child. We have microwaves to warm lunch items as necessary. Hot meals are encouraged, particularly on cold days. The school provides milk and/or water for lunch. Parents are welcome to join their child for lunch with sign up on SignUpGenius.com, October - August. (We reserve the first month of the school year for community building and developing routine.)

### ***Culinary Time***

Cooking projects are a part of our curriculum and organized collaboratively by the school chef and classroom teachers. The class prepares a dish, typically coordinating with continent or cultural unit studies, for the group to sample. Cooking projects do not replace lunch but are sometimes offered as the snack choice. Culinary projects are to be a part of the work cycle, not a distraction for the teacher and class as a whole, so often times parents are invited to volunteer/help with cooking projects.

### ***Afternoon Work Session***

The afternoon work session begins after lunch and includes time for group activities like PE, nap/rest time, silent reading, follow-up work, extension topics, classroom jobs, Spanish, art, cultural enrichment, book club and writer's workshop. Field trips and assemblies are scheduled during the afternoon work cycle as often as possible.

### ***Silent Reading***

Silent reading provides time for enjoying books. Students select books they are interested in and read them individually. First year students meet with the teacher during this time to work on cursive sandpaper letters, the sounds they make and other reading basics. Once students are highly capable of reading independently, the opportunity to explore enjoying books quietly with a friend will be introduced. Older students may form novel study groups, hold group discussions or read to younger children at during this time. The goal is to nurture a life-long love of reading. This typically supplements academic reading activities like book club, writer's workshop and reading buddies.

### **Read Aloud**

Another way to nurture a life-long love of reading is to provide an opportunity for students to hear literature read aloud. Beginning readers often become less interested in reading themselves when their reading ability does not allow them to read at their interest level. It is important to continue to meet their interest level with great literature read with expression. Once students are highly capable of listening for a chapter or two, they will be invited to work on handwork projects (finger-knitting, knitting, weaving, coloring, etc) while they listen. Elementary students are given many opportunities to read aloud to others: reading buddies (at, below or above their level), Children's House students, staff, and volunteer parents.

### **Study Groups**

There are two types of study groups that meet during the afternoon work session. Skill-based groups are formed as needed to support students in specific skill building; typically focused on subjects like mathematics or reading. Interest-based groups are formed as common interests arise. Interest groups focus on a specific interest usually in the areas of history, biology, geography or science and are commonly organized by students in an effort to explore those interests in greater detail. At times, adults who share the interest are invited to be a resource for interest groups. The elementary class also participates in Writer's Workshop and Author's Circle for writing and reading practice, respectively, with peers.

### **Classroom Jobs**

Classroom jobs offer students the opportunity to make a contribution to the classroom community by performing a practical life skill. Care for the environment is a hallmark of the Montessori philosophy given its importance to independent living and preparation for adulthood. Jobs may include, but are not limited to, the following: caring for the classroom pet (turtle, fish, bird, rabbit), washing dishes, table tops, chairs, walls or nap mats, tidying materials and dusting shelves, keeping the library in order, setting up snack, sweeping, mopping, raking, shoveling and other outdoor care, folding linens, and loading/unloading the dishwasher. Classroom jobs are assigned on a rotational basis. Students generally enjoy making contributions to the classroom in this fashion because it allows them to show their mastery of basic skills and promotes ownership of their work/play space. Taking care of our environment, both inside and out, is one of Dr. Maria Montessori's founding principles. She believed that students would enjoy learning even more if they were given real responsibility for the well being of the group and the group's space.

### **Community Service**

Community service is an important part of our commitment to creating an experience that we all love. Students are invited and sometimes expected to do community service projects and tasks inside the school. Examples include: snow shoveling, sweeping, pulling weeds, watering gardens, taking out garbage or recycling, cleaning, inventorying / stocking supplies, and more. At times, as appropriate, community service is assigned by the Head of School as a consequence for a pattern of misbehavior.

## **COMMUNICATION**

### **"One Voice" Philosophy for Communication**

Communication is the key to success. Our commitment to you is to provide "one voice" for consistent presentation of policies and classroom information. Parents should address the teacher for all matters in the classroom or with regard to academic, socio-emotional or behavioral progress with copy to our Educational Counselor as applicable. Parents are asked to discuss matters of policy, planning and finance with the Head of School. At times, issues may arise that require the attention of both the teacher and Head of School, and in that case a joint meeting is scheduled.

### **Parent-Teacher Communication**

We use vinyl folders for communication between home and school. These “take home folders” provide a means for indirect and efficient communication. Folders may contain field trip permissions slips, memos from the teacher or Head of School, invitations to school-sponsored events, classmate birthday party invitations, and most importantly, completed work. Occasionally elementary students will ask to (or be asked to) take work home to complete on a topic that they want to share with parents. Parents should take time to check this folder weekly for important information from the school. Completed work sent home is for families to take out and keep. Folders are the property of the school and should be returned to school on Monday in your child’s backpack. Please notify your teacher if you lose your folder so another can be assigned in order to ensure efficient communication.

The Montessori Compass online message system and direct email is used regularly for communication with families. Parents should login to Montessori Compass regularly to see photos of their child’s classroom, their work and other activity and event photos. Email communication is encouraged; conversations at drop-off/pick-up are discouraged. This is not the best time to discuss issues or concerns with teachers, or for teachers to provide feedback or suggestions to parents or caregivers. Please email your teacher to schedule time to chat as needed. We can accommodate parent-teacher meetings throughout the day by appointment and after 3:30 daily. Issues that need immediate attention will be handled on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Head of School.

### **Social Media Communication Guidelines**

Spruce Tree Montessori School has a Facebook and Instagram page by the same name and encourages all parents to follow it. It is used for marketing our school, the Montessori philosophy, and for sharing events, activities, photos and school announcements. Spruce Tree does not typically post full frontal photos of children, without explicit permission, or any photos of children whose parents denied permission for photo release (via the Photo Release Permission Form within your enrollment packet). Spruce Tree does not ‘tag’ you, your family, or staff in photos and uses only the school as the location reference. Spruce Tree staff, including the Head of School, are advised against accepting Facebook friendships from parents within our school community in an effort to respect personal boundaries. Spruce Tree staff are not at liberty to share photos of school events, classroom activities, students working/playing on their own Facebook pages.

### **Electronic Communication Policy: Email and Text Messaging**

In order to provide efficient means of communication amongst our school community, Spruce Tree staff have been assigned Spruce Tree hosted email addresses; [firstname@sprucetreemontessori.com](mailto:firstname@sprucetreemontessori.com). Parents are encouraged to use these with discretion of topic and with respect to professional boundaries of time. Parents should not send time reliable emails to teachers; i.e. “I need to pick my child up at 1:00 pm today,” or “please give Susie her medicine at 10:30 am today.” Teachers check their email before or after school, and during their daily planning times and lunch breaks. While they are expected to respond in a timely manner to address concerns and/or answer questions, they are not expected to check email throughout the day or respond to email outside of regular working hours. Parents may also send messages through our online classroom management system by logging into [MontessoriCompass.com](http://MontessoriCompass.com).

Mass text messages are sent to parents for inclement weather school closures or to alert parents about an emergency situation if parents have joined our Parent Group on the app “Remind”. Staff are not given school cell phones and have been advised against exchanging mobile phone numbers and exchanging text messages with parents to protect personal boundaries of time and privacy. Please respect the privacy of their personal cell phones.

Spruce Tree teachers do however use their personal cell phones on occasion during the school day for group text messaging with other staff and the Head of School to improve the efficiency of the school day, enhance programming, improve security and/or ensure staff and student safety. Cell phones are used discreetly so as not to distract from student concentration and are kept on silent in the classroom.

### **Student Portfolios - Elementary Class**

Your child's portfolio is a collection of work documenting your child's growth, development and accomplishments from month to month and year to year. Samples of your child's work will be collected monthly in two areas of learning in at least five domains: (1) Language & Literacy, (2) Mathematics, (3) Sciences (4) Social Studies, (5) Arts. Additionally, there will be a sixth section for individual items where up to five work samples may be included each trimester. This portfolio is a component of the Work Sampling System used for assessment of forward progress.

### **Benchmark Assessments: Elementary Students Only**

We utilize the AIMSweb benchmark assessment system. This is a nationally recognized assessment tool, also used by the Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District. We assess students in reading and math at grades 3, 4, 5, 6 and at grade 1 for reading. This provides a foundation for the teacher to differentiate and individualize programming by student by subject as needed. This is not a standardized test.

### **Extrinsic Motivation: Testing & Tokens**

Tests, test/quiz results, grades, points, stickers and other tokens or forms of extrinsic motivation are not a part of the Spruce Tree Montessori model. Given our independent status as an Alaska Private-Exempt School, we are not required to administer, nor do we participate in, the Alaska state standardized test or any other federally mandated standardized test. Teacher discretion allows for occasional spelling quizzes/checks, math mad minute corrections, and/or student-lead flash card activities. When guided by our school counselor, token economies may be implemented for students identified as needing additional support. Parents are informed about various strategies implemented for their child only. With respect to student privacy, staff are not at liberty to share strategies implemented for children with other parents. Please direct testing and assessment questions or concerns to the Head of School.

## **STUDENT BEHAVIORAL REDIRECTION & CONFLICT MANAGEMENT**

A Montessori-centered philosophy guides the disciplinary policies of Spruce Tree Montessori School. We adhere to practices learned through the training modules provided by Dr. Ross Greene for the Collaborative Problem Solving Approach (CPS). (LivesInTheBalance.org) Staff receive ongoing training on the approach and are expected to learn, use, reflect upon, and apply its practices, particularly for older children (6 and up).

Respect for self, for others, and for the environment informs all that we do.

Children are treated with respect and hence are expected to treat others respectfully. The individuality of children is nurtured and while STMS staff support the natural freedom and spontaneity of children, they recognize that the "liberty of the child should have as its limit the collective interest; as its form, what we universally consider good (behavior)."

-Maria Montessori, *The Montessori Method*

Our goal is to provide appropriate guidance based on the fundamentals of the Montessori philosophy to the challenged child and to the parents of that child in an effort to improve the child's classroom demeanor. A teacher shall intervene when a child's behavior or actions endangers himself, the well being of his classmates,



the staff, or the materials within the classroom. Violation of basic norms of social behavior, such as the use of foul language, hitting, spitting, shouting or otherwise disrupting the peaceful nature of the classroom will not be tolerated. Staff intervenes with clear, calm, and respectful redirection. Just as rewards and/or punishments are not used as a means to coerce good behavior, they are not used to mediate poor behavior. Interventions do not include threats or coercion, intimidation or physical harm. Students are encouraged to discuss their frustrations with their peer(s), teacher, Educational Counselor or Head of School through use of a Peace Rose or Peace Bridge.

We have set age and developmentally appropriate protocols and guidelines for assigning consequences, per the discretion of the Head of School or Educational Counselor. Consequences are typically natural in nature, directly related to the misbehavior and immediate to include clear verbal redirection, individualized discussions, and/or time away from the group or activity. Students are not disciplined however in front of the class or labeled in any way. In order to ensure thorough intervention, the misbehaving child meets privately at a later time, but same day, with a teacher to discuss appropriate and respectful behavior and depending on the behavior or frequency of the behavior, is asked to have a conversation with the Head of School to ensure understanding and consequence as appropriate. Notes are entered into Montessori Compass by the teacher in order to thoroughly communicate the issue to parents as a means to enlist support from home. Parents of the other child, when a physical, verbal or otherwise unacceptable interaction occurs between two children, are also informed in Compass; however names of children are excluded with respect for the child and so as to ensure a healthy morale among the school community.

The Head of School holds the utmost of respect for child development and is steadfast in her commitment to child advocacy. That said, she has an obligation to child wellness, our staff, our students and our environment, all of which, can be unsettled when patterns of concerning behavior persist. Exposure to unruly behaviors, particularly the use of foul language, physical aggression and/or destruction of school materials and/or supplies, upsets the dynamics of the community and its wellbeing as a whole. As much as we try to separate children and engage with each individual, we are purposefully not equipped to contain and/or restrain children; our space is intentionally not designed for that level of support.

A tantrum is a normal part of early child development, and is defined as struggling for a period of time, be it hitting, kicking, shouting, throwing things, usually for a time period less than 10 minutes, and then calming either independently or with the help of a staff member via read aloud, snack offering, quiet time away, or meditative practices, and then normalizing (rejoining) back into the classroom.

When behavioral concerns unbecoming of a Spruce Tree Montessori student occur at frequent interval and a pattern has been identified, the Head of School will schedule a meeting with parents, the child's Lead Teacher, and the school's Educational Counselor. The purpose of this meeting is to formulate a mutually agreeable strategy for guiding the child through his/her challenging behavioral tendencies. Behaviors that are disrespectful, aggressive, destructive or violent in nature will not be tolerated. All behavioral concerns are recorded in Montessori Compass for internal and parent/external reference. The Head of School applies the utmost of care and concern upon consideration of disciplinary action, applied consequences and when developing an appropriate behavioral intervention plan. If the pattern of behavior persists despite teacher interventions, educational counseling, Head of School intervention, and parent partnership, interventions will be elevated at the discretion of the Head of School according to the following list.

Behavioral interventions, depending on the nature of the incident and/or behavioral pattern, may include:

- assigned work space in classroom or in designated area for a period of time
- multi-day consequences (individual lunch, minutes off recess or an assigned seat) for a period of time

- work time in Head of School's office as a means to calm down, discuss behavior
- individual or small group work with the school's educational counselor to include discussions, social-emotional learning activities, developmentally appropriate writing assignments, counseling
- early dismissal (request for pick up following an incident)

The Head of School will recommend a change of program or limit program options when the child's behavior rises to the point of needing extenuating one on one support. For example:

- full day program to half day program
- regular school day drop off at 8:15 rather than participation in Sunrise program
- regular school day pick up at 3:30 rather than participation in Tea Time, EYM and Sunset

Termination of enrollment occurs only after multiple attempts to resolve the issue have been imposed and is at the explicit discretion of the Head of School.

Spruce Tree Montessori School reserves the right to terminate enrollment of students.

### **Socialization of Children**

Typical or Normal Peer Conflict is a part of every child's life experience. As children learn to give and take, learn about cooperation and social interaction, conflict naturally occurs. Children in the early years do not always think of others. Their goal in both friendship and play is egocentric, or self-centered. They are still learning self-control and developing a sense of personal space. A common response to frustration is one of rejecting the other child, both emotionally and physically. Pushing or getting upset about not being first in line, grabbing an item away from another child, disagreeing about what to play or how to proceed in a game, or saying, "I'm not going to be your friend anymore," are all examples of Normal Peer Conflict. It is typically characterized by the developmental level of the children involved. Relationship and social struggles often surface in the early elementary years, as children become more independent and attempt to navigate friendships and group dynamics. Aggression and hurtful remarks are part of conflict at all ages; they do not necessarily mean that a bully-victim problem exists.

Bullying is a willful, conscious desire to hurt, frighten, or threaten. Although it is usually ongoing in nature, it may also consist of a single, intentional incident. Bullying is a series of repeated, intentionally cruel incidents, or threat of harm, that involve the same children, in the same bully and victim roles. It involves an imbalance of power, either real or perceived. It can be physical and/or verbal and may include racial, religious and sexual harassment. Additionally it can include offensive gestures, inappropriate touching, intimidation, extortion and social exclusion. The behavior is designed to intentionally hurt, injure, embarrass, upset or discomfort the other person. Due to the willful and conscious nature, preschool and children under the age of about 9 (all children develop at a different pace) are not characteristically developmentally capable of carrying out bullying and are often involved in Normal Peer Conflicts.

The following policies apply to our school community, including staff, students, parents and legal guardians. School community members shall abide by all policies during their enrollment and/or employment at Spruce Tree Montessori School. Failure to abide by these policies may result in termination of enrollment or employment at the discretion of the Head of School.

**Attendance Policy**

Spruce Tree Montessori provides your family with consistent educational support and respects your privacy. Timely attendance is crucial to the establishment of routine, the achievement of academic goals and for building healthy social dynamics. However, because we apply the element of choice to every aspect of school operation and respect your privacy for family time and travel, this attendance policy allows for extended family travel, illness and inclement weather choice. There is no minimum number of days students must attend. We do not pro-rate tuition for extended family travel, illness, inclement weather closure or inclement weather choice. On the third absent day, the teacher will call the parent to check in unless otherwise notified of the child's absence or a recorded vacation.

**Enrollment Policy**

The child-centered, multi-aged Montessori classroom offers children opportunities to develop at their own pace academically, socially and creatively. In order to maintain a balanced multi-age class, enrollment is based on a best-fit selective process that includes a parent classroom observation, child and parent interview, and the age/developmental/academic level of the child. The Head of School makes placement decisions in an effort to serve the needs of the classroom community and reserves the right to deny enrollment. Priority is given to children whose parents demonstrate knowledge of the Montessori philosophy and to children with previous Montessori school experience. Enrollment requires completion of the admissions process (completed application, background check, classroom observation, and interview). Siblings of STMS students who are eligible for enrollment are allowed to enroll during the re-enrollment period before new family enrollment, but are required to complete the admissions application and interview separately from their sibling.

Parents who enroll their child at Spruce Tree Montessori School are expected to abide by the Enrollment Policy Agreement. This agreement defines the commitment between the school and its parent-customers. The agreement outlines the partnership that the school and its staff forms with the parents of enrolled students.

***Enrollment Policy Agreement***

Parents of students enrolled at Spruce Tree Montessori School agree to read the Parent Handbook. Parents agree to abide by the policies set forth in the handbook. Parents agree to respect the school, its staff and the school community while attending the school. Parents understand that the All Year Montessori calendar offers year-round academics for all ages, and that their enrollment commitment is annual. Parents understand that they have a financial responsibility to the school and agree to abide by the Financial Commitment Policy. Parents understand that timely morning arrival, end of program pick up and attendance are key to student development and achievement, both academically and socially. Parents acknowledge that the Head of School conducts background checks of all parents using the Alaska Court View system.

**Enrollment Termination Policy - initiated by Spruce Tree Montessori School**

Spruce Tree Montessori School reserves the right to terminate enrollment of a student after careful consideration of cause. Cause is defined as violation by the student or parent of any of the policies stated in the parent handbook. Should a student's enrollment be terminated by the school in accordance with policies herein, quarterly and annual tuition payments will be pro-rated for months of attendance and returned to

parents within one week of the official withdrawal date, which will be recorded as the last day the child was in attendance. Tuition payments remitted for the current month are not eligible for reimbursement.

### **Withdrawal Policy - initiated by Parent**

Parent withdrawal must be submitted in writing to the Head of School 30 days prior to the date of the student's last day of attendance. Tuition payments remitted for the current month are not eligible for reimbursement. Tuition due within the 30-day period must be paid according to the financial commitment policy. Parents who have pre-paid tuition via the quarterly or annual lump sum payment plan will be reimbursed for any full months yet to occur. Spruce Tree staff will provide progress reports via the Montessori Compass system directly to the student's new school. Parents may request a copy as well and the Head of School will email the report within one week of the withdrawal date. Student binders and folders are the property of the school; however student journals and portfolio contents will be given to the student. An exit interview may be conducted with the student and/or parent. The interview contents will be kept confidential as a part of the student's school file.

### **Financial Commitment Policy**

Enrollment at Spruce Tree requires that parents and/or legal guardians assume financial responsibility for student tuition and fees as outlined on the admissions application and subsequently in this Financial Commitment Policy. Enrollment deposits are due on April 15 for the upcoming fall school year or upon acceptance and are not refundable. Enrollment deposits do not replace any one month's tuition and are not applied toward future month's tuition; the amount is a portion of your annual commitment, due prior to your child's start date. If a family decides to forego placement and defer enrollment for longer than the allowable deferral time frame, the student will be placed in the Wait Pool. Enrollment deposits are eligible to roll for the current school year, but can not be applied as payment for the enrollment deposit for the following school year.

Tuition is due on the first Friday of each month of the school year, September through July. There is no tuition due in August for the current school year. The school year is defined as September - August. A late fee of \$25.00 is assessed for payments received more than five days after first Friday. Tuition payments may not go unpaid for more than 20 days, for a maximum late fee of \$100.00. STMS reserves the right to initiate termination of enrollment per the Enrollment Termination Policy if families are unable to pay tuition in a timely fashion according to the Financial Commitment Policy. School holidays, closures for inclement weather, absences for inclement weather choice, family vacations, and student sick days are not pro-rated and/or discounted.

### **Communication Policy**

Direct communication with parents is reserved for the Lead Teacher. The Lead Teacher shall provide the utmost in customer service when responding to parent emails or phone calls. Communication should be simple, thankful, respectful and timely. The Lead Teacher should not text parents in response to any issue. All communication with parents regarding academic and/or behavioral concerns should be documented electronically and provided to the Head of School in a timely fashion for the student's file.

The Head of School will communicate with parents on financial matters, enrollment issues, strategic plans for the school, volunteer activities outside the classroom, and other non-academic related issues.

Parents are asked to communicate with the Lead Teacher on all academic matters, classroom behavioral concerns, and volunteer activities within the classroom.

The Head of School will communicate any and all changes to the school day, school calendar or school policy to staff and parents. Staff should not make announcements ahead of schedule for the aforementioned topics.

**Corporal Punishment Policy** - as required by the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development and as stated in the STMS Employee Handbook

Corporal Punishment of students or staff is not authorized at Spruce Tree Montessori School. Spruce Tree staff will abide by its Disciplinary Policy to manage student behavior and resolve conflicts between students. In the unfortunate event that a staff member violates this policy, the staff member will be counseled and corrective action will be taken up to and including termination.

### **Illegal Substance Policy**

Illegal substances of any nature and all tobacco and cannabis products are forbidden from the school campus. We abide by a zero tolerance policy. Substances will be confiscated. Spruce Tree will uphold the law. Possession of illegal substances will be reported to the appropriate authorities. Parents, if applicable, will be notified immediately. Violation of this policy by a student may result in termination of enrollment according to the Enrollment Policy Agreement. Violation of this policy by staff will result in termination of employment from Spruce Tree Montessori School.

Spruce Tree Montessori School staff reserves the right to refuse release of student to anyone suspected of being under the influence of an illegal substance, alcohol, marijuana or other drugs. Another person on the student's list of authorized persons for release will be called. Parents will be given one (1) warning. A second offense will result in termination of student enrollment at Spruce Tree Montessori School according to the Enrollment Policy Agreement.

Staff suspected to be under the influence of alcohol, marijuana or other illegal substances will be questioned by the Head of School. The Head of School reserves the right to request that the employee submit to a drug test with reasonable cause, leave the school without pay, or call the authorities.

Substance abuse on campus will not be tolerated.

### **Firearms & Weapons Policy**

Firearms and/or weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited from the school campus. Pocketknives are not allowed in the school. Firearms and/or weapons of any kind will be confiscated. Parents will be notified immediately. Authorities will be notified as necessary. Violation of this policy will result in termination of student enrollment from Spruce Tree Montessori School according to the Enrollment Policy Agreement.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

Spruce Tree Montessori School affords all rights, privileges, programs and activities to its students without regard to race, color or ethnicity, sex, religion or background. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color or ethnicity, sex, religion or background in administration of its admissions and enrollment policies, educational practices, or other programs.

**"Free the child's potential and you will  
transform him into the world."**

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

{END OF HANDBOOK}