

**SPRUCE
TREE
MONTESSORI
SCHOOL**



Parent Handbook 2012

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 embark on a wonderful adventure with our children at a crucial time in their lives. I have been inspired by my son, and I seek the best for him; I recognize that you want the best for your child as well. Let's achieve that together.

Sincerely yours,

Sabrina Binkley

Founder/Director of Spruce Tree Montessori School

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SPRUCE TREE MONTESSORI SCHOOL & MONTESSORI EDUCATION

Introduction to Spruce Tree Montessori School

The mission of Spruce Tree Montessori School is to instill a lifetime love of learning in students by providing accredited elementary education in an inspiring environment using the Montessori philosophy. Spruce Tree will work to promote the Montessori philosophy throughout the Fairbanks community in an effort to further inform the general public of its benefits.

Fairbanks's first private Montessori elementary school will provide our community with another option for elementary education. Our curriculum will provide sound academic background for the establishment of critical thinking, problem solving and cooperative learning skills with varied programming in the arts. Its goal will be to support the development of each child in all areas – academically, socially, physically, and emotionally using proven Montessori techniques and approved Montessori materials.

In its inaugural year, Spruce Tree Montessori School will enroll a single, lower elementary classroom for children ages six – nine (6 – 9) years old, grades first through third. Children will be considered for enrollment if they are age 6, 7, or 8 as of September 1, 2012. As students grow, an upper elementary program will be established.

Spruce Tree employs minimal staff: one Montessori-credentialed teacher, a school director and a part-time custodial service. The teacher will manage all classroom activities and curriculum; the director will manage all administrative tasks and serve as the organization's chief executive officer; and the custodial service will clean on a weekly basis.

The school is primarily funded by tuition. A signature fundraising event will occur each year in an effort to raise operational funds and community awareness, and there will likely be opportunities to raise small amounts of money through sales of logo school apparel or other items.

Strategically, Spruce Tree Montessori intends to develop its reputation within the Fairbanks-North Pole community by providing a top-notch experience for children and families. Building class sizes and expanding programming to include foreign language, music education and extra-curricular opportunities will be a top priority in the short term. Adding year-round educational opportunities and an upper elementary classroom in the years to come will solidify its place in the educational community.

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 of learning 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 (3 – 6, 6 – 9, 9 – 12, 12 - 15), 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.

Accreditation

Spruce Tree Montessori has begun the process for accreditation with the American Montessori Society (AMS) by registering as a 'Full Member' school. The AMS membership is a collaboration of teachers, administrators, schools, families, and others who prize Montessori education. As an AMS member school,

we'll be 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 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 a true 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.

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

Spruce Tree employs a Lead Lower Elementary Teacher & Curriculum Director who holds Montessori certifications for both Elementary I and II (ages 6 – 12) and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Musical Theatre. The school director holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Petroleum Engineering and is working toward her Montessori Administrator credential. The staff will strive to uphold the ideals of the Montessori philosophy in all aspects of school operation.

All staff and classroom volunteers are required to submit to a background check. Staff members are required to hold a CPR/First Aid certification and a college degree. Assistant teachers may be working toward a college degree.

ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT

Admissions Policy

Students will be 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 attended Fairbanks Montessori School or other Montessori school.

Admissions Process

The Admissions Process is a best-fit selective process that ensures a diverse school community of engaged families and pleasant students.

Parental Role in Admissions Process: Parents or legal guardians must complete the admissions application, schedule a one-hour school visit and personal interview with the school director (both parents highly encouraged to attend interview), and attend one Montessori Monday workshop. Parents, students and staff must attend the annual Spruce Tree Montessori Orientation, which is scheduled for August 27, 2012.

Prospective Student Role in Admissions Process: Prospective students must participate in the interview and attend one Montessori Monday workshop with their parents or legal guardians. Students who complete their kindergarten year at Fairbanks Montessori School will receive preferential admissions consideration.

Upon completion of the interview period, enrollment will be granted to those who complete the Admissions Process to its full extent with consideration of interview performance and the academic level of the child. Enrollment packets will be distributed to the admitted group. The packets will be due within 30 days of distribution and must contain completed forms: Student Medical Profile, Permissions Forms, doctor validated Immunization Records, and the contract deposit payment.

Spruce Tree Montessori School reserves the right to refuse admittance.

Enrollment Policy

The child-centered, multi-aged Montessori classroom offers children the opportunity to develop at their own pace academically, socially and creatively. In order to maintain a balanced multi-age class, enrollment will be based on interview performance and the academic level of the child (age 6 – 12). Priority will be given to children who attended Fairbanks Montessori School and to those with previous Montessori school experience. Prior to enrollment, parents and students must complete the requirements stated in the Admissions Policy. Siblings of STMS students will be granted priority placement but must still complete the admissions process. Parents of current STMS students with younger children are encouraged to complete an “Intent to Enroll” application to secure placement.

The “Intent to Enroll” application provides parents of kindergartners the option to secure early enrollment in the lower elementary class. Children must be five (5) years old by October 1, 2012 to be eligible for early

enrollment. The Intent to Enroll application is due on or before December 1, 2012 and secures placement until April 15, 2013, at which time parents shall commit to Spruce Tree Montessori School or forego placement. The Intent to Enroll application fee is a non-refundable \$50.00. Parents who reserve the Intent to Enroll option are eligible to complete the admissions application packet during the in-house enrollment period, which opens March 1, 2013. Public enrollment for new families begins April 1, 2013.

Parents and students who enroll at Spruce Tree Montessori School will be required to sign and abide by the Enrollment Policy Agreement. This agreement will serve as a contract between the school and its parent-customers. The agreement outlines the partnership that the school and its staff have with the parents of the enrolled students.

Enrollment Policy Agreement

Parents of students enrolled at Spruce Tree Montessori School agree to read this handbook. Parents agree to abide by the policies set forth in this handbook. Parents agree to respect the school, its staff and the school community while attending the school.

Enrollment Termination Policy

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, severe behavioral concerns, and failure to comply with the enrollment and financial policies herein. Should a student be withdrawn from the school in accordance with policies herein, tuition payment will be pro-rated and returned to parents within seven (7) days of the official withdrawal date, which will be the last day the child checked into the school.

Waiting List

If placement is not immediately available, parents who have completed the application process will be contacted with regard to the waiting list. Waiting list placement will be based on the timing of and performance during the application process. There is no fee to be placed on the waiting list and there are no guarantees that a student on the waiting list will be offered enrollment. If placement becomes available, the parents of the first two children on the waiting list will be notified in list order on the first business day following the vacancy. The first family will be entered as "prime" and the second family will be entered as "standby." Both families will be asked to confirm admittance within seven (7) days. If the "prime" family declines admittance and the "standby" family confirms, the "standby" family will be admitted, providing they complete the full enrollment packet. If the "prime" family confirms admittance, then the "standby" family will move into the #1 spot on the waiting list. The newly admitted family will be expected to begin school within five (5) school days. The contract deposit and monthly tuition payment is due on the first day the child checks into school; tuition for the newly placed child shall be pro-rated for the month based on the first school day the child attends.

Parental Involvement Expectation

Parents play an integral role in their child's educational experience. Children enrolled at Spruce Tree Montessori will benefit from parental involvement in various ways. Parents are expected to volunteer at the school, at school-sponsored events, or for the school through various opportunities for an equivalent of six (6) hours during the 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, scrapbooking, event planning, etc. Material and supply purchases are accepted as parental involvement at face value; i.e. each \$17 purchase is worth one hour of time. Please inquire within, check the Information Board and/or website or contact the school director directly for information on how you can help. Parents who under serve the school will be assessed a fee of \$17.00 per unworked hour (maximum fee \$102.00). Spruce Tree Montessori School sincerely appreciates the time and efforts of its parent community. Thank you in advance for your dedication to our school.

The teacher or school director will provide a brief overview and orientation for parents wishing to help in the classroom. 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 to parents and highly encouraged. An appreciation of your child's ability to learn will develop through observation of the classroom. Thank you for considering this option.

“Montessori Monday” Open House Seminars

On the first Monday of each month beginning in August, STMS will host a series of workshops coined “Montessori Mondays.” The “Montessori Monday” series of informative seminars will continue each first Monday of each month as a way to educate currently enrolled parents and potential families about the fundamentals of the learning philosophy. These monthly, optional workshops will also serve as an opportunity for currently enrolled families to get to know one another, offering a time for social camaraderie and friendship intended to strengthen the school community.

SCHOOL OPERATION

Hours of Operation & Staff Office Hours

The school office hours are 8:00 am – 5:00 pm.

Parents are welcome to schedule meetings with the school director anytime during this period. The teacher will post office hours on a monthly basis with a minimum of two days per week in 60-minute blocks; and will rotate days of the week so as to offer the utmost in convenience for parents with varying schedules. For example, teacher office hours for the month of September may be Tuesday and Wednesday from 3:00 – 4:00 pm. Teacher office hours for the month of October may be Monday and Thursday from 12:00 – 1:00 pm. The teacher will be available outside of posted office hours if there is an emergency or an issue that needs immediate attention as per the discretion of the school director. During parent-teacher meetings occurring during the school day, the school director will directly supervise the children.

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 close school for safety reasons per the discretion of the school director. Parents will be notified as soon as a decision has been made, prior to 7:00 am, via email. A notice will be posted on the Home page at www.sprucetreemontessori.com as well as on the Spruce Tree Montessori School Facebook page.

Health & Safety 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 mission.

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 24 hours of a school day.

In the event that a child becomes severely ill or seriously injured while at school, the staff will contact parents per the Student Medical Profile on file. When immediate medical attention is required, the staff reserves the right to call the child's doctor or 911 as appropriate. Doctor advice will be followed and/or emergency medical team treatment administered. The staff of STMS is CPR/First Aid certified; however we do not employ a school nurse.

Dress Code

Children attending Spruce Tree Montessori School will be given the right to choose their attire with few limitations. Children are expected to dress appropriately according to the list below. Children will take responsibility for their attire including layers of clothing not worn throughout the day. Cold weather gear needed during the school year: gloves/mittens, hats, scarves, etc may be kept at school in the child's personal cubby. As needed, initial reminders about choice of clothing will be given directly to the child. As

necessary, parents will be reminded. Please help your child make suitable choices based on the following expectations.

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 physical activity.
- Flip-flop style shoes may not be worn inside the classroom.
- Hats and/or caps shall not be worn inside the classroom.
- Denim jeans with holes shall not be worn inside the classroom.
- Tops with low or drooping neck lines and pants with low waist lines should not be worn in the classroom.
- Children shall designate shoes for inside and those shoes should be left at school during the week for convenience.

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 presentations and/or lessons. The staff of STMS will follow the attire expectations listed above. The staff of STMS will be 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.

School Calendar

Inaugural School Year 2012 – 2013

August 27	First Annual Spruce Tree Montessori Orientation & BBQ
September 4	First Day of School
November 22 - 26	Thanksgiving Break (Thursday – Monday)
December 21 – January 6	Holiday Break
March 11 – 15	Spring Break
May 27	Memorial Day (holiday)
May 31	Field Day Event and Last Day of School

PROGRAM CONTENT

Curriculum

Our curriculum will provide 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 instruction with monthly guest coaching / fitness outings and an annual Field Day event; music and dance assemblies and/or activities; and an after-school Spanish class. The school supports local non-profit service organizations in order to establish philanthropic habits in the children and provide opportunities for volunteerism. The interdisciplinary elementary curriculum will integrate subjects into a unified program of study and includes:

- History / Geography
- Botany / Zoology
- Natural and Physical Sciences
- Geometry
- Mathematical Studies – arithmetic/geometry
- Language and Reading
- Foreign Language Instruction
- Music
- Theatrical Arts
- Computer & Technology
- Health & Wellness
- Physical Education

The elementary program is based on the “**FIVE Great Lessons**” of Montessori education, which are:

- Lesson 1: The Story of the Universe
- Lesson 2: The Coming of Life
- Lesson 3: The Coming of Humans
- Lesson 4: The Story of Language
- Lesson 5: The Story of Mathematics

Citizenship

Students will learn the United States Pledge of Allegiance and be given the opportunity to stand and recite it with their classmates each morning. Respectfully, children are given the choice to vocally participate. Newspaper articles, radio and TV news programming, and exposure to current events will provide real-world opportunities for lessons in citizenship. Occasionally, recorded and/or live television broadcasts will be a part of the educational programming. Historical events, televised cultural celebrations, national elections and top news stories offer valuable world perspective and children at Spruce Tree will be exposed, in short intervals, to news as part of their learning experience, as appropriate to their level of understanding. Political 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 will learn the meaning of philanthropy by being given opportunities to volunteer in our community. Various non-profit and charitable organizations will be solicited to gather ideas for projects.

Classroom Culture

Cultural experiences will include educational holiday celebrations throughout the year. We encourage parents to share ideas for cultural topics with the school staff in order to provide a well-rounded agenda for the students. We promote the sharing of family culture and traditions for various holidays and will prepare guidelines for doing so.

Music Education

Music is a part of the Montessori classroom. Montessori schools take pride in the ability to offer music within the classroom using simple materials available throughout the day. 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 a musically talented teacher who is willing to share her talents with the class.

Physical Education

Spruce Tree will offer a physical education (PE) curriculum that focuses on physical activity and fitness, health, wellness, and nutrition. Children in grades K-2 are 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 program will be organized into unit studies that change monthly. The program offers activities inside and outside the classroom. Guest instructors and volunteers will be utilized for specialized topics and/or sports 2 or 3 days per week. The PE period will be during the 2 o'clock hour ranging in duration between 25 - 45 minutes, five days per week, depending on the unit. On the off days (if using a guest coach), students will review and practice the activity with the director or learn about other aspects of the sport: rules of the game, strategies of competition, and nutritional / wellness habits for leading an active lifestyle. Transportation to various locations for certain units will be coordinated through staff and parent volunteers. Parents will be oriented on the upcoming unit and be informed about the details of the activity, transportation arrangements, clothing/gear required, etc.

Cultural Enrichment

The goal of our cultural enrichment program will be to expose and educate students to the cultures of our school community and world. 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 will take pride in our ability and efforts to welcome all religions and no religion. Holiday lessons will be historical and optional, but we encourage families to respectfully acknowledge the cultural differences and religious beliefs within our school community. Parents will be invited to help coordinate and participate in cultural and holiday lessons.

Foreign Language Enrichment Track

Spanish language instruction is offered as an after-school option. Class begins at 3:35 pm and ends at 4:30 pm Monday – Thursday. Spanish class is offered as an enrichment track and carries a fee of \$120 per month.

Spanish Class will be scheduled from 3:35 – 4:30 pm each day and will include instruction for speaking, writing, reading and understanding the Spanish language as well as songs, games, and projects associated with Spanish-speaking countries.

Field Trips

In order to complement various areas of study and to enhance the overall learning experience, there will be a number of field trips scheduled during the school year. Field trips will be scheduled in advance and entered onto the Spruce Tree online calendar as well as posted on the school bulletin board. Parents will be required to sign a permission slip for each field trip. Parents of participating children will pay for all costs of field trips but may opt to be billed monthly. Some field trips will be within walking distance of the school; however, for those a further distance away, we will ask for parent volunteers to provide vehicle transportation to and from the venue. Parents will be invited to attend as appropriate. Younger siblings will be allowed to attend with a parent so long as the trip is age-appropriate and the parent takes full responsibility for the younger child.

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 up to two books for 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 checkout books at their leisure and return them within a reasonable time frame. Spruce Tree greatly appreciates and welcomes book donations to our collection.

Peace Table

The Peace Table is a traditional place within a Montessori classroom/school. Peace Tables are often designated for peaceful interactions between children, for meetings between parents and staff, and for special programming or tutoring offered to individuals or small groups. Our Peace Table is located in the library and serves all of these purposes as well as being a quiet, separate area for children to work in privacy if they desire to do so.

Computer Lab

The use of technology is an important resource for students and staff. The computer lab is located just off the classroom. In it we have a computer workstation and iPad for students to use as a tool for various learning needs. iPad applications (apps) will be purchased, loaded and monitored by the staff. Students will have the opportunity to use the computer and iPad for specific projects, to supplement their understanding of some subjects, Internet research and to read online newspaper and magazine subscriptions. Teachers will suggest the use of technology as a supplemental resource, not as an introduction to a subject.

SCHOOL DAY STRUCTURE

Drop-off / Pick-up

School will begin promptly at 8:30 am and end at 3:30 pm 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. Likewise, being on time for afternoon pick up is crucial so that after school programming can begin on time, teachers can begin closing duties, classroom preparations, and compose journal entries for students at the end of the day with little distraction.

Drop-off and pick-up logistics are important for street safety as well as child-parent separation anxiety. Parents may drop children off between 8:15 and 8:30 am. Students will be greeted each morning by school staff at the sidewalk. Morning check-in is the responsibility of the child. Parents are encouraged to remain in their vehicles for ease of traffic flow. If children are dropped off after 8:30 am, parents are required to come into the school building with their children for check-in. Parents may pick children up between 3:30 and 3:45 pm each day. Students shall take responsibility for a timely departure; backpacks packed, outerwear on, lunch boxes in hand. If parents arrive after 3:45 pm, it is required that they come inside the building to pick up their child.

Uninterrupted Morning Work Session

The three-hour work period is a hallmark of Montessori education. Spruce Tree will respect the ideal that children will engage in topics they are sensitive to and that they will be engaged in their learning and take pride in their ability to manage time and master work. This 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, to work with peers, and to work with the teacher. Group activities and “circle time” will be at the discretion of the teacher. Classroom assemblies, holiday celebrations and student presentations will be scheduled at the beginning of a work session as often as feasible so as not to disrupt the work cycle.

Outdoor Time (Recess)

Outdoor space is a part of the prepared environment. Work happens both indoors and outdoors. Outdoor time (known as recess) will not be scheduled, but rather at the student’s leisure as one of the many choices that are a part of the school day. Children will be allowed to enjoy the outdoors anytime during the morning work period. Outdoor work will be provided and creativity encouraged. When the temperature is -20 (negative twenty) degrees Fahrenheit or colder, we will provide alternative indoor activities. Children must bring proper cold weather gear: coat, snow pants, boots, gloves/mittens, hat and scarf/facemask are highly recommended. Children will not be allowed to go outside if they do not have boots or gloves/mittens when the temperature is below freezing. Extra outdoor gear may be kept in the child’s personal cubby at the school for convenience.

Snacks

The school provides health snack choices daily. The snack menu will be outlined bi-weekly by the teacher and posted. Each morning, one student will be assigned the responsibility to prepare the snack area, write the menu, and set up necessary serving pieces and utensils. Snacks will be optional and children will be allowed to choose when to have their snack during the morning three-hour work session. Snacks should not take the place of breakfast at home. Please help your child start their day off on the right foot.

Morning Meeting

As the morning work session comes to a close, the class will gather each day for a class meeting where the teacher will facilitate a discussion of interests, comments, questions, concerns and other topics.

Lunch

To enhance our classroom community, we will “break for lunch” together. Time for lunch will be offered at 12:00 pm each day. Children should bring their lunch in an appropriate container considering its contents. There will not be a refrigerator available for student lunches. If items need to be kept chilled, please provide a thermal lunch box or container for your child. Students and/or teachers may use the classroom microwave to warm lunch items as necessary. Hot meals are encouraged. Students are encouraged to drink water or milk with lunch, and the school provides either option. On Fridays, there will be a classroom cooking project where the class will prepare soup, bread, etc for the group. The cooking project will supplement the child’s lunch, but in most cases it won’t be enough to replace it. The menu will be calendared monthly and posted for parents. Parents are welcome to join their child any day for lunch from 12:00 – 12:30 pm.

Afternoon Work Session

The afternoon work session will begin at 12:30 pm and include time for silent reading, study groups, classroom jobs, physical education, and cultural enrichment. The school day ends at 3:30 pm.

Silent Reading

Silent reading provides time for enjoying books. Students select books they are interested in and read them individually. Silent reading will be 10-15 minutes long and gradually increase to 30-45 minutes. 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 and hold discussions in the library during this time. The goal is to nurture a life-long love of reading.

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 language. Interest-based groups are formed as common interests arise. Interest groups focus on a specific interest in an area of history, biology, geography and 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.

Classroom Jobs

Classroom jobs offer each child the opportunity to make a contribution to the classroom community by performing a practical life skill. Jobs may include the following tasks: caring for the turtle, washing the table tops, tidying materials on the shelves, keeping the library in order, setting up snack, dusting, sweeping, lawn care, snow shoveling, etc and 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. Taking care of our environment, both inside and out, is one of Dr. Maria Montessori’s founding principles. She believed that students enjoy learning when they are given real responsibility for the well being of the group.

Read Aloud

Another way to nurture a life-long love of reading is providing 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 while they listen. This also allows students to become independent in their handwork before bringing the two activities together.

COMMUNICATION & POLICY

Parent-Teacher Communication & Daily Work Record

We use heavy duty plastic folders for communication between home and school. These “home folders” provide a means for indirect and efficient communication. Staff will check the front pocket of folders upon arrival to collect communication about pick-up/drop-off arrangements, field trips permissions slips, etc. Occasionally students will ask to (or be asked to) take work home to complete on a topic that they want to share with parents. Please make sure to check your child’s folder daily for important information. Completed work sent home is for families to take out and keep. Home folders should be returned to school everyday in your child’s backpack. Email will also be used regularly for communication with families.

Student Portfolios

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) Mathematical Thinking, (3) Scientific Thinking, (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.

“One Voice” Philosophy for Communication

Communication is the key to success. Our commitment to you is to provide “one voice” for a consistent presentation of policies and classroom information. Parents should address the teacher for all matters in the classroom or with regard to academic and socio-emotional progress. Parents are asked to discuss matters of policy, strategic planning and finances with the director. At times, issues may arise that require the attention of both the teacher and the director; a joint meeting will be scheduled.

Disciplinary Policy & Conflict Management Practices

A Montessori-centered philosophy will guide the disciplinary policies of Spruce Tree Montessori School.

Children will be treated with respect and hence be expected to treat others with respect. The individuality of children will be nurtured and while STMS staff will support the natural freedom and spontaneity of children, they will 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*

The goal will be 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. The lead teacher will intervene when a child’s behavior endangers himself, the well being of his classmates, or the staff. 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. The staff will intervene with clear, calm, and respectful redirection. Just as rewards and/or punishments will not be used as a means to coerce good behavior, they will not be used to mediate poor behavior. Students will be encouraged to discuss their frustrations with their peer(s), teacher or school director. Interventions will not include threats or coercion, intimidation or physical harm. Parents will be notified of any behavioral concerns recorded about their child and consideration of consequences will be discussed as necessary. If behavior problems become frequent despite teacher interventions and parent counseling, parents will be asked to conference with the school director. The purpose of the conference would be to formulate a mutually agreeable strategy for guiding the child through his/her

challenging behavioral tendencies. Removal from the classroom will occur only after multiple attempts to resolve the issues at hand have been imposed.

Spruce Tree Montessori School reserves the right to withdraw students from its student body after consideration of cause and counsel.

Corporal Punishment Policy, as required by the Alaska Department of Education & Early Development 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 products are forbidden from the school campus. We will 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 will be notified immediately. Violation of this policy will result in termination of student enrollment from Spruce Tree Montessori School according to the Enrollment Policy Agreement.

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 or 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.

Firearms & Weapons Policy

Firearms and/or weapons of any kind are strictly prohibited from the school campus. Pocket knives are not allowed in the school. Firearms and/or weapons 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.