



STMS STORY



Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) Newsletter

Upcoming Events:

December 20 - January 7

Holiday Intersession

January 7

Staff Work Day (school closed)

Tuesday, January 8

Students Return for Session 3

Monday, January 14/15

Ski (MW) & Swim (TR) Clubs Begin

Monday, January 21

MLK Jr. Day (school closed)

February 4 | Montessori Monday!

Prospective Parent Meeting, 6 pm

February 8 | Spelling Bee

11 am in the school gym

February 9 Trivia & Tapas Event!

6 - 11 pm, Pike's Waterfront Lodge

March 1 | Science Fair

11 am in the school gym

March 4 - 15

Winter Intersession

March 4 - 8

Camp 3: Alaska Animals

March 11 - 15

Camp 4: Viva La Musica!

March 21 - 22

AMS Conference (School Closed)

Teacher Professional Development

April 1 | Montessori Monday!

Montessori Math & Culture

April 5 | Geography Fair, Elementary

11 am in the school gym

Take a Breath

By Mrs. Erica Nash, Educational Counselor

If you're reading this, release your shoulders, unclench your jaw, and remove your tongue from the roof of your mouth. Take a breath. For real, like a deep breath. Inhale 1, 2, 3, 4. Exhale 5, 6, 7, 8. Thanks! We hold onto so much tension throughout the day that we hardly notice the little ways we're expending energy. The holidays are often a busy and bustling time of year full of parties, programs, and family gatherings. In the rush to get things done, it is so easy to lose sight of the spirit of the season. So amid the hustle and bustle, I implore you to take a pause every once in a while and notice the little things - the sparkle of fresh snow, the crunch beneath your boots, your child's rosy red cheeks after playing outside, the incessant battle cry of "I'm hungry," complete with the standard issue runny nose. Take it all in.

If the lifespan is broken into seasons, then childhood is surely spring - bursting with life and buzzing with energy. We know that childhood is fleeting, so we capture it in photos, clumsy handwritten notes, and thousands of crafts. While the minutia of day to day can be exhausting, please take this gentle reminder to stop, breathe, and notice your child as he or she is in this moment. Notice their little hands. Maybe they still have chubby baby hands that grip a crayon with a fist, or maybe they're bit older and hold a pencil with precision. Notice how their little legs dangle from a chair, hands fumble to tie their shoes, and they look like marshmallows in oversized snow gear. Because ever so slowly their handwriting gets clearer, they no longer ask what a 2 looks like, and they read a book silently instead of taking time to sound out each word out loud. They begin to transition from "How come..." to "Did you know..." and they grow up right before your eyes. So amid the tantrums, tears, and sleepless nights take a breath, and take heart knowing that this won't last forever.

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel."

-Maya Angelou

Our Vision Statement:

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 Transition... the BIG one. To 7th Grade... and beyond.

By July Bond, PAC Member and Inaugural Parent (parent of Isa, alumni 2018 and Makai, 3rd grade) Any transition has its challenges, and each and every child and their family is unique. But Montessori students in general, adapt to new situations extremely well. They know how to do things for themselves. As I reflected on our transition from Spruce Tree Montessori to a non-Montessori, traditional junior high school, I couldn't remember feeling nervous for my daughter. And the only thing she seemed nervous about was navigating her way to a new classroom for each subject. We always knew we'd eventually have to make the switch and I was confident she had received the perfect preparation for her move. As a Montessori child, she has had many years of practice in working collaboratively, negotiating, leading, following, and learning how to adapt and rely on herself. I believe, these skills, coupled with our decision to enroll our daughter at a smaller junior high school, prepared her completely for all of the junior high obstacles she has encountered.

Some of the things we were not ready for... but wouldn't have wanted our elementary experience to include are: **homework**, hours of homework, busy work, frustrating, tiring homework. **Passing periods** with 7 teachers for 7 subjects... a reduced connection to any teacher. Individual school iPads – required of all students – on which everything is managed, from assignments and due dates to text messaging and email, to educational apps used for various subjects. **Grades**... while my daughter is academically prepared for the rigor of the curriculum she's learning and made "first honors" first quarter (all A/B's), the pressure that 'getting the grade' has added to her experience has been overwhelming at times and has in some ways doused her interest in understanding certain things... I've said on many occasions, "now you got this done and it's right, but do you get it? Do you understand this?" First Honors wasn't something we were looking for or needing or wanting for our daughter... but it helped me to recognize how well informed her time at Spruce Tree was, all the while providing a unique, well rounded, child centered, self-directed experience. Best of all, what I thought she would struggle in (her weakest subject area of math) she figured out herself, was self-disciplined and persistent, and ultimately demonstrated an ability to be resourceful by asking for help from teachers and friends. She worked hard to "get it"... and she got the grade too.

Junior high is tough. You remember... physical and physiological development paired with social challenges is exhausting for these young adolescent minds. Maria Montessori, in fact, described this stage of their development as transformational – a time of great mental, physical and spiritual growth.

We've come to realize that the Montessori model more than adequately prepared our daughter for her transition to the third plane of development - her adolescent years - and the oh so (potentially) horrible 7th grade. And we love it. It's not oh so horrible, but rather oh so eye opening, oh so satisfying.

If you have any questions for me, ask away!

"Montessori is an education for independence, preparing not just for school, but for life."

-Maria Montessori

Our Vision Statement:

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.

Kids' Quotes

Kids say the darnedest things... and at Spruce Tree we cherish the things we hear, see and experience. Here are a few of our favorites this session:

During our Give Thanks Open House, an elementary student said this to her dad, "Here Dad, do you need some concentration cream? It looks like you need some concentration cream..." referring to the hand lotion in the "iCalm Toolkit" that Ms. Kris has on a shelf to aide children in self-regulation and mindfulness activities.



A 4-year old says to a teacher, "get out of my way," to which the teacher responds, "can you ask nicely?" The child replies, "Mrs. Haley, can you please get out of my way..."

Following a grace and courtesy lesson in the Taiga classroom, during which Ms. Jamie presented a lesson related to respectful hands (not hitting or touching others' work)... an older 4 year old child comes to her in all seriousness and says, "I have good news and bad news, the good news is I finished my work, the bad news is someone touched it." Then not a minute

later, a young 3 year old reported the exact story verbatim.



During an elementary morning meeting, after the announcement that we'd be going to the Nutcracker performance, a second grade student asks, "Are they

going to be real people or fake people," in regards to the 'live performance.'

During our holiday program rehearsal, Ms. Haley said to a child, "Hi Hannah-banana," and the child cried, "I don't like bananas!"



Kids' Book Corner

Here a few titles our students shared as favorites:

Cinderella, Ayla's favorite!

Dinosaurs - T-Rex, Tanner's "best book"

Humpty Dumpty, Hannah's favorite

Elsa, Kylanna "loves her"



Fuzzy Mud, Fiona's (4th grade) favorite

Land of Stories, Wyatt's (2nd grade) favorite

The List, Shaye's (5th grade) favorite

Adventures of Tom Sawyer, Liam M's (2nd grade) fave

Alice in Wonderland, Saffey's (3rd grade) favorite

Our Vision Statement:

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.

Beyond the Classroom

STMS Sockeye SKI Club

January 14 - February 27
 Monday & Wednesday, 4 - 5 pm
 \$210, ages 5 and up
 Must have nordic skis and boots (poles optional), and warm gear.
 Transportation by STMS; pick up at Birch Hill Nordic Ski Lodge.
 479-TREE to register

STMS Sockeye SWIM Club

January 15 - February 28
 Tuesday & Thursday, 3:45 - 4:30 pm
 \$195 PRE-K/K ONLY
 Transportation by STMS; pick up at The Alaska Club.
 479-TREE to register

JUNIOR NORDICS

Cross country skiing for ages 4 - 14.
 November - March.
 Choose to ski 1 - 4 days per week.
 371-9564 for info.

LEARN TO SKATE

UAF Patty Ice Arena.
 474-6888 for info.

SUZUKI MUSIC

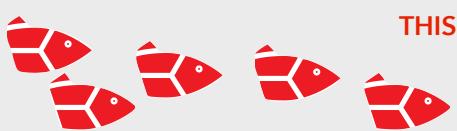
Fairbanks School of Talent and Education. Classes in violin, viola, cello, and flute. suzukifairbanks.com

MARTIAL ARTS

Orion's Belt. Martial Arts classes for ages 3 & up, with pick up from STMS available. orionsbeltalaska.com

Fairbanks Children's Museum

Kids' Night, 1st Fridays
 5:30 pm - 8:00 pm | 374-6873



My Commitment to Responsive Educational Best Practice

-By Mrs. Sabrina Binkley, Head of School & Founder

When we come back in January, we'll find ourselves a third of the way through our academic calendar. I am committed to being responsive. Responsive to student needs, parents needs, staff needs, the needs of each of our three classroom communities, and the needs of our school community as a whole. To do this, it often requires discretion for disciplinary action for students who repeatedly misbehave or who are not yet willing to follow our school guidelines. This is a very challenging aspect of my work. I have spent a lot of time reflecting on the importance of this commitment to you and to your children. Safety is of the utmost importance, and while normal peer conflict and misbehavior are a part of any child's educational and developmental journey, I must apply the utmost of care and concern to any and all physical aggression, inappropriate interactions, and foul language. Students are afforded many choices every day and so am I. I will continue to serve each and every child, and every parent too, as we endeavor to provide the best educational experience in Fairbanks to your family. And I promise to do this with grace and courtesy, respect, and in fairness to all involved.

Parent Advisory Committee

What Is the PAC?

The STMS Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) was formed by Founder Sabrina Binkley in May 2016 to serve as an advisory body for strategic planning, measured growth, and program and policy development. It is a coordinating parent group with the goal of encouraging school-wide parent communication and parental involvement in tandem with the mission and vision of STMS, under the auspices of its Founder. PAC members are parents that the school community can reach out to with questions and concerns related to STMS. The PAC welcomes conversations with parents, leads community-building activities, steers fundraising events and suggests parent educational topics and programs. In addition to Sabrina and staff, we encourage you to connect in person or through Montessori Compass with PAC members to ask questions, provide comments, or share ideas.

MEMBERS:

Brent Bennett, Chair (4th year parent; Hudson, Hadley, Rhys)
 July Bond (7th year parent; Makai, Isa - alumni)
 Kjersten Bartusch (6th year parent, Anderson, Owen, Nolan - alumni)
 Catharine Persinger (5th year parent; Shaye & Ainsley)
 Kalina Grabska-Marusek (5th year parent; Zozsa)
 Todd Carey (4th year parent; Kinley & Brezlinn)
 Mila Neubert (3rd year parent; Alex)
 (new 2018 school year) Dan Adamczak (3rd year parent; Nolan & Eli)
 (new 2018 school year) Michael Reynolds (1st year parent; Noah)

Our Vision Statement:

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.