



STMS STORY



Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) Newsletter

Upcoming Events:

March 4 - 15

Winter Intersession

March 18, Monday

Students Return for Session 4

March 21 - 22 (Thursday & Friday)

Professional Development

SCHOOL CLOSED

April 1, Monday, 6 - 7:15 pm

Montessori Monday! Montessori Math
STMS Kids' Night at the Children's
Museum, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

April 5, Friday, 11 am

Geography Fair, Lower Elementary

April 26, Friday, Clean Up Day

Celebrating Earth Day

April 29 - May 10

Spring Intersession

April 29 - May 3

Camp 5: Little Mermaids

May 6 - 9, No Camp Friday, May 10

Camp 6: Scout it Out!

May 10, Friday

Staff Work Day SCHOOL CLOSED

May 13, Monday

Muffins with Moms, 8 - 9 am

May 17, Friday

Garden Day! 12 - 3 pm

May 27, Monday

Memorial Day SCHOOL CLOSED

May 28 - June 7

Parent Teacher Conferences

NEW School Calendar Concept

By Mrs. Sabrina Binkley, Head of School

Over the past four years, I've taken notes about our calendar related to parent feedback, student attendance, parent travel preferences, academic sequence, teacher feedback and our school's budgetary / operational considerations. Our year-round calendar offers 40 academic weeks (equating to 20 more days than the Fairbanks Northstar Borough School District offers). Our calendar coupled with our 7 hour school day (compared with the District's 6.5 hour school day) provides for 225 more hours of equivalent instruction, not including the 11 early dismissal days the District calendars each year.

Here's why I am considering a change to our calendar; the change being to shift our August two week break to the month of July such that our school community would have 4 weeks off in one lump (the month of July) rather than two weeks in July and two weeks in August.

- **To reduce student absences and untimely student turnover** in the summer months. Some families extend travel past our July break, some attend alternative summer camps, and those not re-enrolling for fall typically choose to withdraw in June or July. While we do not pro-rate or reduce tuition for family travel or camp attendance, the summer student withdrawals strain our budget given that our commitments to teacher salaries are fixed through mid-August, the end of our current school year. Because I reasonably can not fill those spots as it is not best practice to start a new student at the end of a school year, not to mention that very few parents desire a June/July start date for their child, those departures have an affect on our school's bottom line. The new calendar would offer a clear last day of school (June 30) for those students not re-enrolling for fall.
- **To provide more time for scheduling maintenance and improvement projects** indoors and out without distracting students or affecting programs.

Thank you for your survey feedback; I'd like to address specific common strands of comments that I received.

Our Vision Statement:

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Goals of New Calendar:

- 1) Continue to offer our unique model of 40 academic weeks and 12 break weeks annually. This equates to about 190 school days each school year.
- 2) Take the whole month of July off.

Response to Comments:

- ✓ I hear your concern for **finding childcare in July**; I neglected to outline that my plan would include facilitating two weeks of camp at the Children's Museum in July (just as I currently do for the August break).
- ✓ Related to the **"transition year" during which we'd shorten our fall, winter and spring breaks to one week** each in October, February, and April, respectively, we can not move forward with the new calendar directly because our total number of days would be 167, which is 3 days short of the required state minimum of 170. To do this we would need to either give up days during the holiday break, give up our two professional development days in March, or shorten one break to one week. I will take a closer look at making a direct switch through compromise of these options, negating the need for a "transition year".
- ✓ This proposal is **not intended to better align with the public school calendar**, it seeks to better serve our community which is aging (siblings in different schools) and allow for increased time for building R&M.
- ✓ I believe the transitional year 1-week breaks will offer an appropriate amount of time for the R&R we all enjoy, and I'm compelled by **feedback from my staff that the 10-week August session** will provide the best opportunity to integrate and connect new and returning students to each other, their teachers, the curricular scope and the classroom environment.
- ✓ Spruce Tree is registered with the AK Department of Education & Early Development as a private-exempt school. **We provide top quality educational programs; we are not a daycare.** We purposefully have not sought to acquire a daycare license from the state's Childcare Program Office within the AK Health & Social Services Department given the compromise it would require to our Montessori accreditation standards.

SPRUCE TREE & ME MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

By: Shaye Persinger, 5th Grade Student, Tongass Community

Every Wednesday we have mentorship in the afternoon. The teachers have picked people from Children's House and Elementary that they think would work well together for Mentorship. "My favorite thing about mentorship is that you get to have a partner," said Anderson Bartusch from the Taiga class. The classes meet up in the gym to get together with their partner. We have stations that we rotate through. The teachers select the stations so that hopefully the partners both have a good time. These stations can be inside or outside. For example some of the weekly station activities we have done are an obstacle course, making paper pumpkins, and cooking. "I like the fun activities and working with my mentee even though he sometimes goes crazy," said Oliver Brans from the Tongass class. We rotate the stations throughout the session so that everybody gets a turn at all of them. Mentorship helps the kids from Elementary and Children's House get to know each other better. This is how we build community at school.

"And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but in virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment for the child."

-Maria Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*

OUR MISSION IS TO CREATE AN EXPERIENCE THAT WE ALL LOVE. -Spruce Tree Montessori

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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 past session:

- ◆ Day 2 after the holiday break, "Is there another Christmas coming up?" -4 year old boy to Ms. Megan
- ◆ "When I'm by myself, I say 'roar'!", 3 year old boy to Ms. Erica walking down Main Street
- ◆ A 3 year old negotiating nap, "Well tornadoes don't live in Alaska, so I'm going to rest."
- ◆ At morning snack time, "these apples taste a lot like pears," a 4 year old describing pears.
- ◆ "Ms. Haley, he hit me," child points to a child clear across the room independently working. "When?" she asked. After a long pause, the child says pointedly, "last year."
- ◆ Child needing to change his pants and was prompted by a teacher to get his extra clothes from his cubby. Upon looking and finding some he exclaimed, "I have sweaty pants!"
- ◆ 5 year old girl showing a teacher how she colored in her journal, the child says, "I like to add some pizzaz, other people call it white but I call it pizzaz."



Trivia & Tapas Event, 2/9/19,
at Pike's Waterfront Lodge
(see recap article on back page)



Yukon Quest Finish -
elementary field trip



Aven, 1st grade Science
Fair participant



Tighe, 5th grade Ski
Club participant



Children's House
Valentine's Day project

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Beyond the Classroom

STMS Sockeye Cross Fit Club

March 26 - April 25
 Tuesday & Thursday, 4:15 - 5 pm
 \$150, ages 5 and up
 Bring gym clothes and PE shoes.
 Transportation by STMS; pick up at
 Sundog Cross Fit, 3501 Lathrop
 Street, next to Gym Inc.
 479-TREE to register

STMS Sockeye SWIM Club

March 26 - April 25
 Tuesday & Thursday, 3:45 - 4:30 pm
 \$210, all ages, 3 and up
 Transportation by STMS; pick up at
 The Alaska Club.
 479-TREE to register

JUNIOR NORDICS

Cross country skiing for ages 4 - 14.
 Spring Session, March - April.
 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. orionsbentalaska.com

Fairbanks Children's Museum

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



THIS IS
 OUR
 SCHOOL.



Trivia & Tapas Event - *Peace Together*

-By Mrs. Mila Neubert, Parent Advisory Committee Member

Our third annual Spruce Tree Trivia & Tapas Event was a resounding success. Not just with the generosity of attendees and how much money was raised – \$18,000 this year – but with the spirited round of trivia courtesy of MC Brent Bennett, and the fierce dessert auction throughout the evening. Spouses actually bid against themselves in a desperate attempt to get the dessert of their choice when they were not otherwise enjoying the company of other event attendees. Featured silent auction items included a week-long stay at Ms. Sabrina's childhood condo in Colorado, a serving tray decorated by Boreal students, a painted sockeye canvas by the Taiga classroom, artful decorations made by the elementary students, a wine/charcuterie board, a pack raft, movie night and date night baskets, a handmade quilt, a stand-up desk, and more! The theme of peace was evoked with the olive wreath and candle table decorations, as well as the olive garland over the fireplace. The garland enabled attendees to donate directly to materials for the classrooms that were on teachers' wish lists. And HooDoo brewed another delicious Spruce Tree specialty beer for the event. The PAC wishes to thank the event organizers and donors for such a lovely evening. Information is forthcoming from the Friends of Spruce Tree Montessori Board as to how the proceeds will be utilized.

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 Grabinska-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)

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