



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PANDEMIC

- When we come back to the school building, will my child be safe?
 - STMS is developing a Pandemic Policy intended to ensure the health and wellness of our school community. The policy will include developmentally appropriate practices that serve to protect our students and staff, and prevent the spread of illness. Most importantly the policy will require parents to keep children home who are symptomatic as per guidance from the CDC. STMS will abide by all recommendations for health and safety as identified by state, federal and medical officials. For info on the Governor's REOPEN ALASKA RESPONSIBLY plan including guidelines for several sectors of business, and coordinating phases, go to <https://covid19.alaska.gov/reopen/>. Our policy may include the use of personal protective equipment and/or supplies.
- What will our June session look like at this point?
 - Our staff is working together to formulate a safe return. Plans include a hybrid model of live and virtual learning, perhaps rotating a yet undetermined size group of children over the course of the week in for morning or afternoon work cycles, supplemented by virtual lessons and enrichment sessions, printable work packets, and other offerings that students can do at home. Our responsible reopening plan will be informed by the state's criteria for safe operation. Stay tuned for more in the coming weeks.
- Why don't we do more worksheets (printed work packets) instead of Zoom meetings?
 - As a Montessori school, STMS is dedicated to following the Mission and Vision of the school as well as abiding by our philosophical beliefs and developmental best practices of learning for children. Even when students are learning at home, we feel it is critical that we deliver a Montessori-true experience, albeit modified for the distance between us. Worksheets are not typical in a Montessori classroom and are not a substitution for the learning activities we have provided for students during the virtual learning offerings. That said, we appreciate the feedback we received from our elementary parent survey and from Children's House parent-teacher conferences, and are working to bridge the gap and balance your needs for structure and support. You can expect more about our June session hybrid plan in the coming weeks to

include: weekly work plans, 1-1 teacher time for each child, daily lesson times for all age groups, and links to recorded lessons in all subject areas. In addition, we are in the midst of learning how to use Google Classroom to the best of its ability to better support our older students.

- Why don't we just do online modules?
 - Online modules are not the same as live teacher-student and student-student connection time. Online learning looks different at the various developmental stages. As we become more familiar with online resources, we are becoming better and better at organization, communication, and planning, and are considering using online platforms/educational modules to supplement virtual learning in June and beyond.
- Will my child be ready for the next level or grade by fall?
 - We are so fortunate that we are a Montessori school with trained Montessori teachers who meet students where they are in all areas of development every day. We are fortunate that in every environment there is a 3 year cycle of curriculum. Children can take more time in certain subjects as needed, while also moving ahead in areas as they are ready. Children, no matter what level they are, will be met in the fall with lessons based on their individual readiness.
- What is the plan for Kindergarten & 6th Grade Graduation?
 - At this time, we are hopeful that we will be able to return to school and proceed with our annual completion celebration as planned. It is currently scheduled for Friday, June 30, 4:30 - 6:30 pm. This is a CELEBRATION for our whole school community - whether your child is graduating or not, you and your family are invited. However, in the event that social gathering restrictions limit such a celebration, we will come up with an alternate plan to celebrate and honor our kindergarteners and Tighe, our lone 6th grader, even if it means we have a massive Zoom party for all! Please save the date and stay tuned!
- What are the teachers doing while working from home?
 - Teachers have been working hard to solidify developmentally appropriate activities, create and record lessons, plan and host virtual lessons and meetings, and attend staff meetings. Our support and administrative team continues with daily responsibilities and lends support to classroom teachers on a daily basis. We have also identified an ongoing list of projects that we are completing at home, from making materials to supplement our collection to developing units of study that will enhance our programs when we are able to return.

- What if my child needs technology for the June return or even into next school year?
 - We will continue to loan school iPads and/or laptops to students if your family needs an extra device to participate in virtual learning. We are considering hosting a fundraiser specifically to supplement our technology collection in order to ensure that all students can learn at home as long as is needed.
- What is planned for the 2020-21 School Year?
 - We are monitoring guidance by Governor Dunleavy and President Trump. Plans are being formulated to prepare for a variety of scenarios should there be a delay to the start of the school year or should there be another shelter-in-place order issued during the 2020-2021 school year. We have learned a lot the past six weeks and will be adequately prepared to provide the educational experience you expect from Spruce Tree. Our new school year begins Tuesday, August 4. Our unique, year round calendar is robust and always exceeds the state minimum of teacher-student contact hours required by the Alaska Department of Education.
- What if I have been furloughed, laid off or I'm self-employed and my business has been mandated to close; hence a significant loss of income or financial hardship?
 - We empathize with those who have been financially affected during the coronavirus crisis and will work with individual families on a case by case basis to come up with alternative payment plans. Additionally, the Friends of Spruce Tree Scholarship Fund is healthy and funds are available for the summer session and 2020-21 school year. It's very important to retain families and maintain our enrollment. Please don't hesitate to apply. The only requirement for already enrolled families is a letter to the Friends of Spruce Tree Board - a personal statement about why a Montessori educational experience at Spruce Tree is desirable for your family. Letters should be emailed to Sabrina by June 1. Scholarship awards are confidential.
- Did STMS apply for a PPP loan or seek other financial assistance?
 - Sabrina has explored many options available to our school, and will continue to monitor policy and legislative developments at the local, state, and federal levels. To date, we have received a PPP Loan (the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program loan) through our local bank – a shout out to Tammy Kosa, our banker at Northrim – she and her team have been wonderful to work with. They have been with us since start up, and are very supportive of our school and want us to succeed.

- Will STMS offer tuition relief?
 - Yes, per the Memo from Sabrina, dated/emailed April 14, RE COVID-19 Tuition Relief, STMS is offering tuition relief on May invoices. The 55% Tuition Relief offer for May reduces your annual financial commitment by 9.2%. This relief is being offered equitably to all families, regardless of your payment plan election. Tuition is critical to teacher and staff retention, as I continue to pay our full-time team, all of whom continue to work during this crisis to ensure our students are receiving at-home curriculum, support and daily connection.

Do you have additional questions? Email or call Sabrina anytime.

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FRIENDLY REMINDERS ABOUT OUR 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.

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.