



# SPRUCE TREE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Parent Handbook  
2020-21

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**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

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### 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.

## Introduction to Spruce Tree Montessori School

The purpose for which Spruce Tree Montessori School is organized is to provide primary (preschool) and elementary education using the fundamentals of the Montessori philosophy.

### 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 attends the annual Go Red event supporting the American Heart Association. She is in her second term with the Greater Fairbanks Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. Spruce Tree supports the Fairbanks Children's Museum through program partnerships and at their annual gala. We support the American Montessori Society through our commitment to Full Member School status, and contributions to their annual 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 both individually and personally and collaboratively and professionally 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 a 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 in order to follow the child. Spruce Tree connects students and families to FNSB School District and/or other 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.

### **Risk Statement**

Spruce Tree Montessori School will abide by the current Spruce Tree Montessori School COVID-19 Mitigation Plan in an effort to ensure a safe return to school for students and staff and maintain wellness. Parents of enrolled children assume inherent risk of the possibility of the presence of a positive COVID case (and other communicable

diseases) within the school community. The STMS Mitigation Plan addresses that potential according to the CDC guidelines. Parents of enrolled children must commit to adherence of all guidelines stated in the Spruce Tree Montessori School COVID-19 Mitigation Plan and relieve Spruce Tree Montessori School of any and all liability related to the health of participants.

### **Summary of School**

As the first independent Montessori school to offer Montessori education at the elementary level in Fairbanks, we offer the 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 nearly 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. During our 5th year, we doubled our building size when we purchased the historic Fairbanks Train Depot in downtown Fairbanks and enrolled 72 students (50 Children’s House; 25 in each classroom) and 22 in elementary. During Year 6 (2016-17), we enrolled 86 children (58 Children’s House, 28 in Elementary). The past two falls, we purposefully held enrollment at 56 for Children’s House and continued to grow our elementary class. It is important to note that our educational building 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 to include potential development of a Middle Years program for children ages 12 – 15, grades 7th – 9th.

Our 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 school merchandise. 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. FOST is the sole benefactor of our annual trivia event. Funds raised by FOST are designated for the scholarship program or for special projects aligned with the school’s mission, specifically supporting our educational programs.

### **Affiliation & Accreditation**

Spruce Tree Montessori is a member of the American Montessori Society (AMS), recognized for our ongoing commitment to providing and sustaining a quality Montessori program through the Pathway for Continuous School Improvement at Level 6 – the highest level of achievement. Spruce Tree has achieved full implementation of the AMS Standards & Criteria for Accredited Schools. The AMS is an international, professional membership organization – a collaboration of teachers, administrators, schools, families, and others who prize Montessori education. As an AMS member school, we are 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.

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. Spruce Tree has implemented each of these components and is committed to the maintenance of such practice.

### **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 10 - 12 staff on an annual basis, depending on enrollment and programs. We endeavor to maintain a whole school 10:1 ratio, inclusive of all staff. Montessori teachers serve as guides as they endeavor to support (or guide) individually-paced, child-centered, inquiry-based learning. 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 our food service (snack and hot lunch program). 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/equivalent experience. 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), Class C, with passenger 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.

Mrs. Alisha Thompson, Lower Elementary Teacher / Student Teacher, holds a BA in English, with a minor in Psychology. She is currently working toward attaining her Montessori Teacher Certification at the Center for Guided Montessori Studies, estimated completion Summer 2020.

Mrs. Erin Reger, Upper Elementary Teacher, holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Studies, an Elementary Teaching Certification and a Multiple Subject Teaching Clear Credential.

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.

Mr. Jarrett Burke, Physical (PE) & Outdoor Education Teacher & Groundskeeper, holds a Master's Degree in Agriculture Extension Education and a Bachelor of Science in General Agriculture.

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

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 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 and abide by the policies set forth in the handbook, and any addendums distributed during the course of the school year. Parents agree to respect the school, its staff, and the school community while attending the school and thereafter. Parents understand that the STMS All Year Montessori school calendar offers year-round academics for all ages, and that their enrollment commitment is annual. The 2020-21 School Year is August 4 - June 30. 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 Wait 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 placed. 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 suit the needs of the class, with consideration of 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 tuition payment is due on or before the child's first day of school. As applicable, tuition for the newly placed child shall be pro-rated for the session based on the first school day the child attends.

### **Financial Commitment Policy**

Enrollment at Spruce Tree Montessori School (STMS) requires that parents and/or legal guardians assume financial responsibility for student tuition and fees as outlined in this Financial Commitment Policy. Enrollment deposits are due May 15 or upon acceptance for the upcoming fall school year and are *non-refundable*. The Materials Fee is due July 1. The default payment schedule is *bi-monthly (billed every other month)*, with payments due six times per year on the first of August, October, December, February, April, and June according to the 2020-21 School Year Tuition Schedule below. A late fee of \$25.00 is assessed for payments received more than five business days after the due date, and \$25.00 additionally for each week thereafter. School holidays, closures for inclement weather, absences for inclement weather choice, family vacations, student sick days, and mandated school closures during state and/or national emergencies, including during a declared pandemic (see Pandemic Policy for details), and school closures due to damage related to natural disasters are not refunded, pro-rated and/or discounted.

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 - 4 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 the first academic session. Deferred enrollment requires remittance 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 of the first Monday following Fall Break, October 26, 2020
- Child's Session 1 Tuition due August 1

Tuition is due on the first of every other month of the school year, August through June. A late fee of \$25.00 is assessed for payments received more than five days after the first, and additionally for each five day period after that. 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, student sick days and mandated school closures are not pro-rated and/or discounted.

The Program Chart below is applicable to the 2020 - 21 academic year. Refer to the Spruce Tree Montessori School Calendar for specific dates, intersession / break camp weeks, school holidays, professional development days, and vacation weeks.

<b>Program Options</b>	<b>Children's House School Day (preK - K)</b>	<b>Children's House Half Day (preK - K)</b>	<b>Elementary (1st - 6th gr)</b>	<b>Sunrise (all ages)</b>	<b>Sunset (all ages)</b>	<b>Hot Lunch (all ages)</b>
<b>Schedule</b>	Mon - Fri 8:30 - 3:30	Mon - Fri 8:30 - 12:45	Mon - Fri 8:30 - 3:30	Mon - Fri 7:30 - 8:30	Mon - Thurs 3:30 - 5:00	Mon - Fri 12 / 12:30
Enrollment Deposit, Due 5/15, <i>non-refundable</i>	\$675	\$675	\$675			
Materials Fee: Due 7/1	\$285	\$285	\$325			
<b>Academic Session Tuition: Due Aug, Oct, Dec, Feb, Apr, June</b>	<b>\$1,625</b>	<b>\$1,300</b>	<b>\$1,725</b>	<b>\$200</b>	<b>\$385</b>	<b>\$230</b>

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 extended day programs, Sunrise and Sunset, as well as Hot Lunch is available by academic session or by daily drop in.

### **Payment Options**

Spruce Tree accepts check or credit card payments. Automatic payment is available by credit or debit card with corresponding permissions via the Auto Payment Approval Form. 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 six times per year on the first of August, October, December, February, April, and June according to the 2020-21 School Year Tuition Schedule.

Please note: Intersession Camp fees, Hot Lunch Program fees, and before/after school program fees 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.

Please note: Siblings do not receive discounts on the materials fee, hot lunch fee, intersession camp fees or before/after school program fees.

### **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**

Spruce Tree budgets program expenses based on expected student enrollment. Accordingly, 30 days written notice is required for withdrawal. We recognize that withdrawal is in the best interests of your child and family; likewise, application of this policy is in the best interests of our school. Consistent application of this policy preserves the integrity of our programs. Parent withdrawal must be submitted in writing to the Head of School 30 school days prior to the student's expected last day of attendance. Tuition payments remitted for the current period are not eligible for refund. Tuition due within the 30-day period must be paid according to the financial commitment policy. Should the withdrawal notice be submitted shy of 30 days, a financial commitment in the amount of a pro-rated daily rate times the number of days shy of 30 days is required. If the pro-rated financial commitment exceeds the amount due per session, the session payment will be used as the withdrawal obligation. Parents who provide 30-days written notice and who have pre-paid tuition via the quarterly or annual lump sum payment plan will be reimbursed for any full sessions yet to occur outside of the student's withdrawal notice period. Reimbursement checks are processed within 30 days of the child's last day of attendance. Withdrawals after April 1 of the current school year do not qualify for reimbursement as enrollment of new students during the last session of the academic school year is not feasible. Therefore parents are responsible for any remaining tuition obligations (June tuition) through the end of the academic school year. The Academic School Year is defined as August 4 - June 30. Spruce Tree staff will provide progress reports via the Montessori Compass system directly to the student's new school with appropriate records release from parents and/or new school. Parents may request a copy as well and the Head of School will email the report within one week of the student's last day of attendance. 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 (3) 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 June 1. 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 may 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 some months, see School Calendar, STMS hosts "Montessori Monday". Montessori Monday includes a program/presentation for parents, activities for students and siblings; hors d'oeuvres and drinks provided. 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 – 5:00 pm, Monday – 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 8:00 am - 4:30 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 at all times, except during some open house style events when the lobby door is ajar but monitored.
- The school, past the lobby, is accessible by staff using a numeric door code. Only staff and older elementary students are given the door code.
- Parents and visitors enter the school at the main entrance into the lobby.
- Staff greets all parents and 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 monitored 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 (on the inside) 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 and exterior security cameras.
- The school is equipped with a security alarm system, and armed nightly and on the weekends.

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.sprucetreeмонтessori.com](http://www.sprucetreeмонтessori.com) as well as on the Spruce Tree Montessori School Facebook page.

School holidays, closures for inclement weather, absences for inclement weather choice, family vacations, student sick days, federal or state mandated school closures, and school closures due to building damage related to natural disasters or states of emergency are not pro-rated and/or discounted.

Spruce Tree will not transport students to/from school sponsored outings, field trips, or sports clubs if the temperature is below -20 (negative 20) 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 cancellations 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 parents working outside the home. When possible, school 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 Spruce Tree Montessori School COVID-19 Mitigation Plan was implemented on June 1 in order to ensure the wellness of our school community in an effort to mitigate the spread of illness amongst students and staff. It is an addendum to this Parent Handbook, updated and revised per guidance from local and state officials as needed, in response to the metrics of the current corona virus pandemic. The Head of School will notify parents of any changes to the mitigation plan prior to implementation. Enrolled parents are expected to stay abreast of current mitigation strategies and follow all guidelines.

The staff at Spruce Tree uses sound judgment for recognition of illness. Evidence of a cold (congestion, persistent cough, fever - defined as 100.5 or higher) or virus (inflamed eyes or ears, redness or rash, fever - defined as 'elevated') 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, 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 Montessori 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. Children's House students primarily use the restrooms in their classroom. The ones located on Main Street are used the majority of the time by Elementary students, parents and staff. The restroom in the teachers' office is used by teachers and visitors. Students may use the restroom at their leisure and are oriented on proper restroom use, hand-washing and drying, washcloth hooks and minor clean-ups. We use cotton washcloths alongside paper towels to decrease our paper product usage and to provide a home-like environment. Linens are refreshed multiple times during the day and laundered weekly. 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.

### **Student Toilet-training & Accidents**

Younger students are prone to accidents related to bodily functions, particularly in new places, around new people and without routine. Spruce Tree staff shall respect this physical and often psychological developmental phase by nurturing the student in times of distress. Spruce Tree will enroll students per parent-driven readiness and support students during the final stages of toilet-training to include frequent reminders to use the restroom during the school day, facilitating the use of parent-provided pull-up style diapers, and providing frequent communication via Montessori Compass to parents of toilet-training students related to the child's forward progress or lack thereof. Spruce Tree offers delayed enrollment to students unable to demonstrate reasonable independence for restroom use and Children's House staff are expected to inform the Head of School if such a recommendation is warranted.

To ensure the safety and privacy of our student body, the following guidelines are to be followed for student accidents occurring near and/or in the restroom. Visiting parents shall not assist with student accidents during the school day; this task is among the job responsibilities of all members of the Children's House team (Lead and

Assistant Teachers), as well as the Educational Counselor, Head of School, and educational aides. Elementary Teachers, the Special Education Teacher, the Spanish Teacher, the School Chef and the Administrative Manager shall not assist with student accidents unless specifically assigned as a substitute to a Children's House position. Substitute Teachers/Staff shall not assist with student accidents unless explicit permission has been granted by the Head of School.

### **Guidelines for Restroom-Related Accidents**

- Teacher reassures child that it's okay; "accidents happen sometimes," "we'll get you cleaned up," etc.
- Teacher encourages independent clean up; provides assistance if/when child asks for help.
- Teacher takes child to restroom stall, closes the stall door with respect to child privacy (teacher stands on outside of stall door - is able to look over top as needed to provide guidance); ask child to undress and place wet clothes in a pile.
- Teacher gets child's extra clothes and an empty plastic bag from organizer located in the restroom area.
- Teachers asks child to put wet clothes in plastic bag; helps as needed.
- Teacher provides a wet washcloth for child to wash legs and body as needed; assists as needed.
- Teacher asks child to put clean clothes on; helps as needed. If child needs assistance, teacher helps with stall door open but with their body blocking the doorway.
- Teacher cleans restroom floor, toilet and other restroom accessories.
- Teacher asks child to wash hands.
- Teacher asks child to take plastic bag to hook.
- Teacher washes hands; tidies restroom as needed.
- Teacher informs parent of accident and requests a 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 five academic sessions averaging seven weeks in length, each followed by two-week breaks September through June. 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 four 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 students' understanding.

The All Year Montessori calendar is set up to provide academic and social-emotional support to students year round through consistency of routine and steady social connections. It is our view that as students get older and more mature, consistency of support and repetition becomes increasingly important. Our calendar offers on average 190 school days per year, which is 20 more days and over 215 more hours of equivalent instruction than the state minimum. The state minimum is 180 allowing for 10 professional development and/or conference days annually; the FNSBSD calendar is 170 days. Therefore 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. Our camp teachers are members of

our team – familiar faces – who plan and prepare for each camp. Camp assistant teachers are assigned according to enrollment for a 15:1 ratio. The school office is open during camp weeks. Intersession camp fees apply; confirmation of enrollment in camp is required within one week of the start of camp. Drop in attendance is not allowed.

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

Academic Session I	August 4 - October 9
Intersession I	October 12 - 23 (Break Camps 1, 2)
Academic Session II	October 26 - December 17
Intersession II	Dec 21 - Jan 5 (School Closed)
Academic Session III	Jan 6 - Feb 19
Intersession III	Feb 22 - March 5 (Break Camps 3, 4)
Academic Session IV	Mar 9 - Apr 23
Intersession IV	Apr 26 - May 7 (Break Camps 5, 6)
Academic Session V	May 10 - Jun 30
Intersession V	Jul 1 - Aug 2 (Summer Break - Camp at Fairbanks Children's Museum TBD)

### 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 2: The Coming of Life
- 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 self, others, and the environment, and we ask that parents 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.

### **Art Education**

Spruce Tree Montessori students appreciate and participate actively in the visual arts. Above all, it is the aim of Spruce Tree to grow creative learners who enjoy creating and sharing their imagination through artwork. Students learn the process, techniques, and concepts necessary to express their point of view creatively in all forms of visual art. These forms include drawing, painting, collage, printmaking, sculpture, clay work, and fiber arts. Each student explores and masters many various materials throughout their study of art. Some of the major materials the students work with are: crayon, oil and chalk pastel, marker, watercolor paint, acrylic paint, clay, stamps, and colored pencil. Use of these materials brings the children through their study of concepts, from landscape to still life and beyond.

### **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.

### **Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (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, recycled goods, 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), a swing set with rotating swing/climbing accessories, tires to climb, sit in, roll in and play with, a balance beam, a basketball hoop, hopscotch and 4-square game area, umbrella seating, sand and water play, musical garden, a range of balls, frisbees, paddles, lumber and tools.

### **Playground Guidelines**

The establishment of a safe yet playful playground culture is a critical element of our work. Staff shall model peaceful play and safe touch at all times. Teachers at each level should create, introduce and apply the utmost of care to the implementation of developmentally appropriate playground guidelines that nurture independence, provide opportunities for safe risk-taking, and foster community. Playground guidelines should be followed anytime children are at work or play on the playground; i.e. recess, after school programs, lunchtime and at school events. The following are guidelines for all ages, including for visiting children and parents:

- Staff model, at all times, a peaceful work and play environment, using even-toned, moderate volume (inside) voices and a nurturing demeanor at all times. On the playground, children can use 'outside voices' but teachers are expected to model the use of direct and even tone direction to gain a child's attention; i.e. without shouting or raising their voice. For example, if we see something happen, or about to happen, from a distance, we walk over to the child or children to talk with or help them, rather than shouting at them from the distance or shouting for them to come to us.
- We allow children to climb to a height at which they are comfortable but do not help them down. This promotes safe risk-taking and independence. For example, if a child climbs to the top of the climbing tower, we are there to spot them, but encourage them to climb down, teaching them to climb down backwards (like a ladder) to build confidence and competence in climbing.
- We allow jumping off the climbing tower from heights equal or less than the height of the child, therefore not from the top or even the steps closest to the top. For our littles that's about 3 - 5 steps up. We do not encourage children to jump to us, as catching children mid-air is – helping them down – plus there is inherent risk in catching children.
- We do not carry children unless they are physically or emotionally unable to walk themselves. This includes piggy back rides, shoulder rides, fireman carrying, etc. Teachers shall 'hip-carry' an upset child or 'cradle-carry' an injured child, using cautious discretion.

- We do not allow children to climb the fence or to climb over it, ever, as a point of safety and security.
- Physically boisterous or violent play; i.e. rough-housing, including wrestling, holding/restraining, hugging, dog-piling and other physical contact perceived as not peaceful in nature is not allowed.
  - A nurturing yet instructive redirection by a teacher is the expected reaction / interaction.
  - Aggressive physical interactions are met with firm redirection and a "sit out" / time-out-inspired consequence, on the playground. Using discretion for the incident, teachers should take disciplinary action according to the guidelines provided for their level; i.e. office referral.

### **Spanish Language Curriculum <on hold for 2020-21 at the time of this Handbook version>**

Our Spanish program, if applicable to the year, 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 in exchange for parental involvement hours. (donations: \$15.00 donation = 1 hour involvement)

## **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, 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 laptops and/or iPads for specific curriculum and/or projects, to supplement their understanding of some subjects, keyboarding lessons, Internet research and academic extension programs like IXL, Reading A-Z, ReadingWorks.com, Seesaw, Kahn Academy, among others approved by the Head of School. 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, 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.

During school closures Spruce Tree will do its utmost to remain connected to students and families. When reasonably practical, and within a reasonable amount of time to plan and configure, Spruce Tree staff will present virtual educational lessons via Zoom or other platform, used for video conferencing. Zoom/other online meetings facilitated by staff are supervised via video and audio. Zoom features; i.e. audio controls (mute/unmute), chat window (messaging board), screen share, drawing, and other options are managed by the meeting host (the teacher). Teachers will not allow students to host school-sponsored meetings. Students are not allowed to use teacher meeting ID codes without the supervision of the teacher. At times, teachers will 'stop video' on their end in order to allow the group to collaborate independently, but teachers will remain as the audible host and supervisor of the meeting for its duration, continuing to listen to the children at work to ensure appropriate and productive conversations among students.

Risk Statement - Virtual and Online Learning: Parents should be aware of the risks related to online and/or virtual learning. Students meeting outside of school hosted meetings using their own meeting ID codes are not subject to school guidelines. Therefore there is inherent risk of exposure to inappropriate music, language, drawing, and/or chatting and/or other visual or audible actions by students. For children of early childhood age (3 - 6 years), it is recommended that their virtual learning be supervised by an adult and for older children, appropriate device parental controls and frequent monitoring is best practice.

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 a holiday.

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, excluding Apple Watches or other smart watches, is not allowed during school or after school programs given the mixed age groupings of children. Smart watches should be silent and used for time keeping only while the child is at school. 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.

### **Birthday Celebrations**

Student birthdays are recognized on our Spruce Tree Montessori Family Birthday mobile displayed on Main Street as well as on the day or within the week of the child's birthday per teacher discretion. Parents are welcome to visit as coordinated by the teacher. We offer the element of choice in all that we do and allow parents (and children) the opportunity to choose their birthday snack/treat. Parents are invited to provide birthday snacks or treats on or near their child's birthday with no restrictions (including those ingredients/items excluded from our school's food service; i.e. high fructose corn syrup, pre-packaged items, and juice or sugary drinks). Healthy snacks/treats are preferable; we ask that parents provide one for each child in the class. Allergy and dietary restrictions are a part of each child's student file and are not shared with other parents with respect for the family's privacy. Children with food allergies provide their own treats for birthday celebrations.

At the Children's House level, parents are invited to bring photos and tell the story of the child's life during the child's "birthday walk around the sun" – a Montessori tradition.

## 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: Sunrise, Sunset**

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.

### **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 - Friday, 3:30 - 5:00 pm.

### **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 - 8:30 am.

### **Sports Clubs - After School**

Our commitment to facilitating a healthy, active lifestyle for Spruce Tree students along with our commitment to enriched after school programming for children of all ages includes offering after school sports clubs through partnership with various local facilities. Our clubs are optional, at additional cost depending on the club, and scheduled throughout the year. Examples include Swim Club at the Alaska Club, Climb Club at Ascension Rock Club, Skate Club at the Patty Ice Rink, Ski Club at Birch Hill Ski Area, Jump Club at Fly Trampoline Park, Running Club at Birch Hill, and Biking Club in downtown Fairbanks. Clubs are typically for kindergarten and elementary students only; however Swim Club welcomes children 3 and up. For all sports clubs, Spruce Tree provides transportation to the venue with parent pick up between 4:30 and 5:00 pm depending on the club.

## 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 – 5:00 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 <Please note that the STMS COVID19 Mitigation Plan specifies different entry points for each class>, 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. <Please note the STMS COVID19 Mitigation Plan requires parents to get children out of the car.> 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 lobby. <Please note that the STMS COVID19 Mitigation Plan requires parents to call the school and await drop off/greeting at the child's designated classroom gate.> Attendance spruce boughs are used to identify tardy children who come through the lobby (when this practice is in use). Children are given a faux spruce tree bough upon arrival to give to their teacher so that the child's attendance is entered for the day. Parents are asked to say goodbye in the lobby to nurture independence and out of respect for school day boundaries.

### **Car Line Drop Off**

We have designed two car lines to best accommodate parent vehicle traffic. <STMS COVID19 Mitigation Plan provides three carlines.> 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 or along the fence during carline drop off (8 - 8:35 am or 3 - 3:45). Pull in, park and 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 takes less than 15 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
Sunset	4:30 - 5:00 pm, in school gym/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 per child, 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 class meeting during which the teachers facilitate a discussion of interests, comments, questions, concerns and other topics. Afternoon reflection occurs daily and is guided by the elementary teachers.

### **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](http://SignUpGenius.com), during sessions 2 - 5. (We reserve the first session of the school year for community building and routine development.)

Our hot lunch program is optional. Parents can enroll for the session which provided hot lunch daily, Monday - Friday, or on a drop in basis via [SignUpGenius.com](http://SignUpGenius.com) or by emailing our school chef by 9 am on the day of drop in. Drop in lunches charges are added to your next invoice.

### **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.

### **“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 social media pages. In addition, photos taken at school by school staff are treated with the utmost of care and concern. Staff are not at liberty to share photos with parents via text or email, but use Montessori Compass, our school’s password protected classroom management system, for sharing photos within classroom photo albums.

### **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 sensitive 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” in short notice. Teachers check their email before or after school, and during their daily planning times. 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.

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 session. 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 at grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. This provides a foundation for the teacher to differentiate and individualize programming by student by subject as needed. This is not a standardized test. We also use the Fountas & Pinnell Literacy Program which is a reading fluency and comprehension tool.

### **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/tests, math mad minute corrections, and/or student-lead flash card activities. When guided by our school counselor or special education teacher, 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 parents other than their own; i.e. we can only talk with you about your child. 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. Social exclusion\* is not used as a consequence. 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. An office referral\*\* may be submitted depending on the behavior or frequency of the behavior 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.

\* Social Exclusion Consequences are defined as those of an exclusive nature that purposefully label and/or publicly shame a child in the view of their peers. Social exclusion consequences develop consequence-avoidance habits in children rather than nurture intrinsic desire. Spruce Tree is committed to positive reinforcement and collaborative problem solving with appropriate self-reflection.

**\*\* Office referrals:** The purpose of an office referral is to elevate the matter. Teachers use office referrals modestly in an effort to develop trust and nurture collaborative problem solving skills among students and between students and teachers. An office referral is accompanied by a conversation card, with a note written on the card from the student or teacher for the Head of School (HOS) or Educational Counselor (EC) reference of reason for referral; consequences assigned by HOS/EC will be noted in Compass for teacher/parent review as well as on conversation card for the child's return to the classroom.

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. Tantrums are recorded in Compass for parent review and patterns are monitored by teachers, our counselor, our special educator and our head of school. Tantrums violent or destructive in nature are not tolerated. Staff are trained to contain, not restrain, the child during times of distress. If possible, a tantruming child is removed from the classroom to the Peace Room. Children suffering from tantrums that are lengthy, violent and/or destructive in nature are dismissed early. Parents are asked to respect requests for early pick up in order to support our school culture.

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.

Consequences are assigned for a reasonable and appropriate, designated amount of time, not open-ended. Behavioral interventions (or consequences), 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 or an assigned seat) for a period of time
- work time in Peace Room or 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/or 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 a child's third day of absence in a row, the school will call a parent to check in unless otherwise notified of the child's absence for illness or 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 and abide by the policies set forth in the handbook, and any addendums distributed during the course of the school year. Parents agree to respect the school, its staff, and the school community while attending the school and thereafter. Parents understand that the STMS All Year Montessori school calendar offers year-round academics for all ages, and that their enrollment commitment is annual. The 2020-21 School Year is August 4 - June 30. 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**

Spruce Tree budgets program expenses based on expected student enrollment. Accordingly, 30 days written notice is required for withdrawal. We recognize that withdrawal is in the best interests of your child and family; likewise, application of this policy is in the best interests of our school. Consistent application of this policy preserves the integrity of our programs. Parent withdrawal must be submitted in writing to the Head of School 30 school days prior to the student's expected last day of attendance. Tuition payments remitted for the current period are not eligible for refund. Tuition due within the 30-day period must be paid according to the financial commitment policy. Should the withdrawal notice be submitted shy of 30 days, a financial commitment in the amount of a pro-rated daily rate times the number of days shy of 30 days is required. If the pro-rated financial commitment exceeds the amount due per session, the session payment will be used as the withdrawal obligation. Withdrawals after April 1 require financial responsibility for any remaining tuition obligations through the end of the academic school year; i.e. no refund for April's tuition and payment of June tuition. Spruce Tree tuition is due on the first of August, October, December, February, April, and June. The Academic School Year is defined as August 4 - June 30. Spruce Tree staff will provide progress reports via the Montessori Compass system directly to the student's new school with appropriate records release from parents and/or new school. Parents may request a copy as well and the Head of School will email the report within one week of the student's last day of attendance. 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 in this Financial Commitment Policy. Enrollment deposits are due on May 15 (2020 only due to COVID-19 closure, typical due date is 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.

The default payment schedule is bi-monthly (billed every other month), with payments due six times per year on the first of August, October, December, February, April, and June according to the 2020-21 School Year Tuition Schedule. The 2020-21 School Year is defined as August - June. A late fee of \$25.00 is assessed for payments received more than five days after the first. 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, student sick days, and mandated school closures for declared state and/or national emergencies, including during a declared pandemic (see Pandemic Policy), and school closures due to damage related to natural disasters are not refunded, pro-rated and/or discounted.

### **Pandemic Policy**

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. A pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges to which the collective population has little or no immunity and for which there may be no vaccine. New viruses often spread quickly and easily from person to person and may cause serious illness. Studies have demonstrated that school-aged children are susceptible to disease transmission. They have a high attack rate of influenza infection because they have limited pre-existing immunity and once infected, transmit influenza viruses to others even before they themselves have recognizable symptoms.

In the event that the Center for Disease Control (CDC) or World Health Organization (WHO) identifies the presence of a potential pandemic virus (such as Human Avian influenza A, SARS, H1N1 Swine Flu, Ebola, Zika, COVID-19), Spruce Tree Montessori will monitor federal, state and local government recommendations as well as guidance from the medical community in order to ensure the health and safe well being of our school community, and adhere to any and all mandates including school closure and safes operating practices. Such closures may be deemed appropriate even in the event that there are no confirmed cases of the disease in the school or in our local community.

In addition, Spruce Tree Montessori will undertake the following practices:

- Any child who has returned, or whose immediate family member has returned, from an area for which the CDC has issued travel advisories due to a pandemic situation, or any child who has an immediate family member who has been infected, will not be allowed to attend school for a minimum of 72 hours (or the incubation period for the virus as defined by the CDC).
- Any child with a suspected or confirmed case of the disease will be required to stay home from school until they have been asymptomatic for a minimum of 72 hours (or as long as is deemed appropriate by the state and local health department) without the aid of medication. The case will be reported to local authorities who will oversee the child's re-entry.
- Spruce Tree Montessori will notify parents and staff of any confirmed or suspected cases.
- Spruce Tree Montessori will comply with any and all state or local health department guidelines regarding cleaning and sanitization practices, recommended safe practices (including but not limited to wearing masks, requiring frequent hand washing, spacial distancing, student rotation of attendance, and/or temperature checks). School staff will develop exact requirements for attendance once recommendations and/or requirements are outlined by state and medical officials.
- Spruce Tree Montessori will comply with any and all state or local health department guidelines regarding school closures, reopening, and re-entry of students after infection with the disease.
- Spruce Tree Montessori will utilize email as the primary method of communicating school closures and other pertinent information related to operational changes.
- During school closures Spruce Tree will do its utmost to remain connected to students and families. When reasonably practical, and within a reasonable amount of time to plan and configure, Spruce Tree staff will present virtual learning opportunities via Zoom, a free app used for video conferencing, or similar platform.
- Spruce Tree Montessori will not refund or reduce academic program tuition during mandated closures related to a pandemic in an effort to preserve the integrity of school programs and retain essential staff. However, reasonable pro-rated credits will be offered for non-academic programs: before/after school programs and hot lunch; Sunrise, Sunset, Hot Lunch.
- Spruce Tree Montessori reserves the right, at the sole discretion of the Head of School, to close the school at any time that such action is deemed appropriate in order to minimize the transmission of disease.

### **Communication Policy**

Direct communication with parents is reserved for the Lead or Co-Teacher. The Lead or Co-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 or Co-Teacher should not text parents in response to any issue. All

communication with parents regarding academic and/or behavioral concerns shall be documented electronically and provided to the Head of School in a timely fashion for the student's file.

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 with parents on financial matters, enrollment status, disciplinary policy, strategic plans for the school, volunteer activities outside the classroom, and other non-academic related issues. The Head of School serves to support the partnership between teacher and parent, and is an elevated and/or discretionary resource for all matters pertaining to the child.

The Head of School will communicate any and all changes to the school day, school calendar or school policy to staff and parents. Staff are not at liberty to make announcements about sensitive matters related to 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 abide by the school Disciplinary Policy as well as specific Disciplinary Guidelines written for each program level 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}**