



## **Spruce Pine Montessori School**

67 Walnut Avenue  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
828-765-7779  
sprucepinemontessori.org

### **Family Handbook 2009-10**

Dear SPMS Families,

Welcome to a new school year! I am looking forward to spending time during the upcoming year with you and your child

I want you to know that your presence at the school is valued, and I cannot emphasize enough the importance of taking an active role in your child's education. I hope that your desire to participate first-hand in your child's school community is one of the reasons you chose to enroll at Spruce Pine Montessori School. We encourage you to plan to visit your child's classroom as an observer, and also to let us know how your skills may be used to enhance our students' educational experience. We appreciate hearing your ideas about how to make Spruce Pine Montessori the best possible learning and growing environment for our children.

This handbook is filled with important information about our school including a brief history, a description of your role as an SPMS parent and community member, information about our policies and procedures, and a Montessori educational resource page. Please take the time to read through your handbook in its entirety, to familiarize yourself with its contents, and to place it in a convenient location where you can refer to it as needed. Even if you are a returning parent, please commit to reading through this year's handbook carefully and bear in mind that the SPMS handbook is a continual work-in-progress that continues to grow and change as the school does.

Whether you are a returning family or new to our school, we hope you find this handbook informative and helpful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, comments, or ideas to share.

Sincerely,

Kori Fidler  
Head of School

License number: 6100002

## **Staff**

Kori Fidler, head of school

Erin Peters, assistant to the head of school

Mary Wray, 9 to 12 year-old lead teacher

Anna Stoysich, 6 to 9 year-old lead teacher

Mitzi Ray, 3 to 6 year-old lead teacher

Wanda Levin, 3 to 6 year-old lead teacher

Desiree Duncan, 3 to 6 year-old assistant teacher

Lisa Schultz, toddler lead teacher

Christine Henry, toddler assistant teacher

Morgan Gibson, after-school teacher

## **History of SPMS**

Spruce Pine Montessori School was established in 1972 as a preschool (for ages 3–5) by three parents who sought a creative, active learning environment for children instead of a traditional daycare. For over twenty years the program rented several rooms in the basement of the Trinity Episcopal Church in Spruce Pine, serving thirty students with two guides and parent volunteer participation. In 1993, several involved parents decided to help the school expand its reach by creating and staffing an additional classroom for grades 1–3, beginning with five students in the new program. Demand for this program quickly grew, and a year later it was moved into a small nearby house purchased by some parents to accommodate the now sixteen students in attendance. The following year saw the creation and staffing of a classroom for grades 4–6, thus completing the expansion of the school into the elementary grades. The elementary program currently serves 21 students.

Along with this expansion came the need to house the entire program under one roof. In 1997, Phillip and June Frye offered the school the opportunity to purchase an appropriate building and the adjacent land in a perfect “campus” location downtown. Through diligent work and a deep commitment by the school’s staff and parents, money was raised to meet the down payment and closing costs to make the dream a reality. All renovation and repairs to the building and grounds to create the classrooms and playground spaces were done by parent volunteers and through donated in-kind services provided by local merchants, businesses, foundations and contractors.

In 2008, the staff and board of SPMS recognized a community need for a Montessori toddler classroom. After much research and discussion, the school decided to move forward with the development of a classroom for children ages 15 months to 3 years. Working with the locally run MAY Coalition, SPMS was able to renovate the old office space in the main building, turning it into a beautiful Montessori environment for our new group of young students. Opening in the fall of 2009, our new toddler class will be full to capacity before the end of its first semester and, beginning in January 2010, will start to transition its first group of Montessori toddlers into our 3-6 year-old environments.

Over the school’s 37-year history, the program has grown nearly ten-fold from 6 students in one room in a church basement (operated as a parent cooperative), to the present 51 students in four classrooms with five trained Montessori guides and two assistants. In 2000 the board hired the school’s first full-time Head of School to meet our increasing administrative needs and in 2009 we welcomed our first full-time assistant to the Head of School. We continue to be proud of, and rely on, the amount of parent volunteerism that serves to support the Spruce Pine Montessori School in many capacities and has always been an integral part of the creation and climate of our wonderful school. We are a community of learners. And with the main office now residing in the “little red brick house,” the school’s administration space can truly be “open-door” and we’d love to see you, so come on in!

## **Statement of Non-Discrimination**

Spruce Pine Montessori School invites students, ages 15 months to 12 years, of any race, religion, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sexual orientation, or national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational or admissions policies.

Priority is given to returning students, then to siblings and transferring Montessori students. After these considerations, children are selected from the waiting list based upon age and gender as we strive to maintain a balance in each classroom.

## Administration

SPMS is organized as a non-profit corporation that is governed by a board of trustees who serve without remuneration. The daily operations of SPMS are the responsibility of the Head of School. The Head implements board policy.

## North Carolina Child Care Law

The NC Division of Child Development requires that we post the "Summary of the North Carolina Child Care Law for Child Care Centers" in a place accessible to all parents of toddler and 3 to 6 year-old students. This summary is posted on the bulletin board in the multi-purpose of SPMS. Please review the summary if you have any questions regarding NC child care law.

## Expectations for all Parents

Spruce Pine Montessori School was founded to be a community of learning for children, their parents and the guides. From the beginning, our school has relied heavily on the participation and assistance of its parents to foster a high standard of education through the contribution of ideas, skills and experience. While we are a non-profit organization managed by an elected Board of Trustees, the parents are involved in many aspects of school operations. Each parent is encouraged to participate at whatever level he/she can. Whether you are a snack provider, classroom helper, or committee member, your involvement in your child's school instills a richness, closeness and sense of pride between you and your child.

Parents are expected to promote the image of the school and support its mission, vision, and goals. Cooperation, peaceful communication, respect, and resourcefulness are qualities expected of staff, students, and parents at all times.

At the beginning of each year, families new to SPMS, or those who are moving into a new classroom within the school, will have an interview with their child's guide(s). All parents are asked to attend a classroom-specific orientation meeting. At that time, guides will review classroom procedures and policies. It is very important that both parents plan to attend. Likewise, it is extremely important that your child attend the orientation week at the start of each new year. The first six weeks of school are very important times in which relationships are formed and a foundation for the year is set. Transitions into new classes can be difficult for children and parents. Each child transitions differently and this early time is essential to the child's feelings of confidence and comfort in his/her new environment. Absenteeism during the first weeks of school should be avoided as it can add to the transition difficulty. Of course, if your child is ill during this time, please use your best judgment in deciding whether to keep him/her home from school. Parents of toddlers may want to coordinate an individualized transition schedule with your teacher that meets the needs of your child, your family, and the class as a whole. In addition, attendance during the last weeks of school is also vital. Many important activities that are tied to the curriculum happen throughout the last month of school. Please check your school calendar when planning a family vacation. Make your child's education a priority by having him/her attend during these times.

Each year, the parents of SPMS are asked to contribute to the enrichment of the school environment – assisting within the classrooms, during fundraising events, for maintenance, repairs, and even landscaping around the SPMS campus, just to name a few. Parents are a very important part of making our school successful. Your contributions ensure a reasonable fee policy and allow children to witness parental involvement with their education. **We will be asking all parents for at least 30 hours of parental participation per family during the tuition-schedule school year (May 2009-April 2010). Families with more than one child will be asked for 45 annual hours of participation at SPMS.** There will be a current list of volunteer needs/jobs in the school office and on our website; you may also check with your child's teacher for classroom specific tasks. Parents will be responsible for logging participation hours. There will be log-in sheets in the SPMS office and/or you may e-mail your volunteer hours to either [headofschool@sprucepinemontessori.org](mailto:headofschool@sprucepinemontessori.org) or [erin@sprucepinemontessori.org](mailto:erin@sprucepinemontessori.org). At the end of the school year when your final tuition payment is due, in April 2010, the parent participation deposit will be credited towards your child's tuition based on the level of fulfillment of your parent participation hours at the established rate of \$10/hour.

Along with paying tuition, parents of children in the toddler and 3 to 6 year-old programs are asked, if possible, to work at least one 4-hour shift per month as a parent-helper and/or provide snack once or twice per month. Parent-helper duties include: welcoming students to school in the morning, helping prepare snack, tidying the classrooms and kitchen, and other odd jobs as needed. (Parent-helpers from our toddler families will be asked to serve outside of their child's classroom as it can often be difficult for a child that age to have temporary access to a family member.) We

always welcome grandparents to help fill this role too; it's a great way for extended family to get involved at SPMS! We also ask for parent volunteers to help with laundry (we now have a washer and dryer on premises,) and serve as hike-helper each Friday.

Parents with children in the elementary program are expected to drive on field trips, be responsible for one classroom job for which you will sign up at the beginning of each year, help their child complete his/her homework, help with big field trips or the school play, volunteer at least once during the year with a special event, and provide snack for one week at a time on a rotating basis.

**We ask that each parent observe in his/her child's classroom at least one time during the school year and preferably before parent conferences.** Parents of toddlers will be asked to observe through the observation windows located in the multi-purpose room of the main building. Please call or e-mail your child's guide to set up an observation appointment after the first month of school. Additionally, if teachers notice a behavior pattern in the classroom about which they would like you to be aware, they may ask you to observe your child in his/her school environment at another scheduled time. Please note that being a parent helper for the toddler or 3-6 age groups is different than coming to observe your child's class.

Parent volunteer workdays are planned about twice each year. Through these workdays, we can help keep costs down and tuition low by performing tasks we would otherwise have to pay for or ask the guides to assume. Your participation in these scheduled workdays is crucial to keeping tuition down. They are also a fun way to meet other SPMS parents and build a sense of community.

If you are doing a volunteer project for the school or are participating in a meeting, please make plans for the supervision of your child. Oftentimes children make themselves comfortable in the classrooms they consider their own when guides are preparing for the next day. If your child must be in a classroom during off hours, please talk to the guide in advance and know that you must be responsible for the supervision of your child. State law requires that we cannot leave children on the playground unsupervised.

These expectations will be further discussed at parent orientation meetings and conferences. The school reserves the right to cancel enrollment of a child based on the uncooperative or non-supportive attitude of the parents.

### **Hours of School**

#### **Toddler Program:**

Early Arrival 7:30 AM

Full Day 8:30 AM until 2:45 PM

#### **Before-School Program:**

7:30 AM until 8:15 AM

#### **3 to 6 Year-Old Program:**

Morning Program 8:30 AM until 12:00 noon

Full Day 8:30 AM until 2:45 PM

#### **Elementary Program:**

8:30 AM until 2:45 PM

#### **After-School Program:**

3:00 PM until 5:30 PM

### **Arrival and Departure**

Teachers go on-duty for morning drop-off at 8:15 (7:30 for early-arrival toddlers with a limit of 6). We do offer a before-school care program beginning at 7:30 each morning. Children needing before-school care should be walked in by their parents and will be required to stay either in the multi-purpose room or on the playground until 8:15. There is a legal limit of 10 or fewer before-school students, so it is best to check for space availability in advance if you are using this as a drop-in service. The before-school care provider reserves the right to refuse drop-in care to a student if

he/she is already at the legal ratio limit of 1:10. The before-school time is a critical time when guides are preparing for their day. If you need to speak with your child's guide, mornings are usually not a good time. Please call between 3 and 4 PM (after the children have left the school), e-mail, or send a note requesting an appointment

Afternoon pickup is scheduled to occur between 2:45 and 3:00 PM. Please make sure your child is picked up on time. In the case of an emergency, call and notify the school office if you will be late. Likewise, if you need to pick your child up early, please call the school office so that the teachers and child can be prepared for your early arrival. Toddlers in need of an early pickup time should try to arrive before 12:00 noon so as not to interrupt the napping time of the rest of the class. If you must pick up your toddler between the hours of noon and 2:30, please let the teachers know in advance so that they can have your child awake and ready in a way that does not disrupt the group.

If you are unexpectedly late picking up your child, he/she will be placed in the after-school program as long as there is space available, and you will be charged the regular after-school rate dependent upon what time you arrive. If there is no space available in the after-school program and your child's guide must continue to supervise your child, a one-dollar per minute late fee will be charged. This fee should either be paid that day or can be charged on your regular tuition statement.

### **Toilet Training for the Toddler Classroom**

The teachers at Spruce Pine Montessori School use an approach to toilet "learning" that we believe is the most advantageous to the child because it allows for independence and experiential learning. All of the children, as soon as they enter the environment or upon their first daily changing, wear cloth diapers or cotton training pants all day. In cotton training pants that are wet or soiled, the child becomes aware of "wetness" and therefore his/her own toileting needs and cycles and is often more motivated to want to change his/her soiled pants. Unlike disposable diapers or "Pull-ups", these alternatives can give the child an opportunity to more readily assist in dressing him/herself at an early age. He/she can quickly become proficient at pulling his/her pants up and down, which will greatly aid in the development of self-confidence and independence with this skill.

Additionally, we are not interested in and will not require any child to use the toilet before s/he chooses to do so him/herself. What we are interested in is facilitating the natural process by which a child 1) becomes aware of when s/he is wet; 2) begins to anticipate or feel the need to go; 3) is interested in how older children and adults go to the bathroom; 4) tries the toilet; and 5) eventually uses the toilet on his/her own. It is the parents' responsibility to provide a supply of labeled training pants prior to the child's start of school. When you meet with your child's teacher, you will have the opportunity to discuss what will work best for your family with respect to what your child will wear when s/he arrives at school. For your family, disposable diapers may be the best alternative when leaving home in the morning. In that case, your child will change into cotton at school, either right away if that works for the child or when his/her teachers first learn s/he is wet during the morning.

If you choose to also put your child in training pants at home, the following guidelines may ease the transition from diapers to underpants.

- When the child wets his/her pants and the floor, stay calm
- Remember, there is no need to say, "Uh-oh!" It is not a mistake or a problem, it is a natural act. The child simply needs to learn where and how to perform it.
- Invite the child to go to the bathroom with you to sit on the toilet.
- As soon as s/he wants to get up, let him/her get up and choose some dry pants which are preferably kept in or near the bathroom.
- If s/he is interested, allow your child to assist in the cleanup process. It is nice to have child-sized tools for this purpose.
- To aid in his/her success, try to establish the routine of taking your child to the bathroom immediately before nap and bedtimes and upon waking.

### **Toilet Training for 3 to 6 Year-Old Classrooms**

Children previously unenrolled at SPMS are required to be out of diapers and/or pull-ups before entering our 3 to 6 program. We expect all children in the 3 to 6 year-old class room to be toilet trained. We realize that there may be a few accidents, particularly during the first weeks of school. After the child has gotten used to the school routine, if there are two or more accidents a week, the guide will call the parents to arrange a meeting to discuss the concern.

Parents will also be called if a child is defiant or controlling about issues relating to the toilet. If the problem continues, this may mean that the child is not ready for school. The child will be welcomed back to school when he/she is toilet trained. Children transitioning into the 3 to 6 program from our toddler classroom due to N.C. state childcare regulations who are not yet fully toilet trained will be changed by his/her regular classroom teacher or assistant if an accident occurs.

### **Goodness of Fit Policy**

The first six to eight weeks of school for all students is considered a trial period. In this time the guides closely watch new students to assess the goodness of fit between the child and the school environment. Respect, manners and cooperation are needed to function well socially within the classroom. Although most children thrive in a Montessori setting, it may not be the best fit for certain personalities or learning styles. Likewise, you as a family may decide that the Montessori environment is not a match for your child's individual needs. As necessary, your child's guide or you as parents can call a meeting or send a note to discuss any concerns and to develop a plan of action. The Head of School will likely attend the meeting. Immediate dismissal may result from especially uncooperative, disrespectful, or violent behavior. If you have questions, please talk to your child's guide.

### **Absences and Tardiness (Particularly relevant for our students ages 5-12)**

Excessive absenteeism and tardiness are detrimental to your child's educational experience. Guides and parents must be partners in providing the best environment for children to learn and to prepare for their next educational step. If a child misses more than 10 unexcused days of school or is tardy more than 5 times, your child's guide will ask you to meet for a conference. Excused absences are given for sickness and funerals. Excessive absenteeism affects your child's smooth integration into the classroom environment and may result in your family's not being invited back for another school year. Any elementary child arriving after 8:30 AM or 3 to 6 year child arriving after 9:00 AM is considered tardy. Because all classroom doors are locked after 8:30 AM (elementary) and 9:00 AM (3 to 6), if your child is running late you must walk your child onto campus and check in with the office to be admitted to class. (Toddler students arriving late may simply knock on their classroom door to sign-in there.) Elementary students are required to take a blue tardy slip to their teacher to show that they have checked in with the school office. Please understand that, for safety purposes, dropping your child off without escorting him/her to the office and/or classroom is not allowed.

### **Transportation**

To ensure the safety of our students and to ease the flow of traffic at drop-off and pick-up, if you need to talk to another parent or are bringing something into the school, please park in a parking space or in the lot across the street from the main building on Balsam Ave. out of the flow of traffic. If you are late, park and come into the school to drop off or pick-up your child. When entering the school grounds with your child, staying with them is the safest thing to do. Children should never be left unsupervised in your car, on school grounds or expected to find their own route to a classroom.

We ask that parents help us closely supervise their children during arrival and dismissal. It is recommended that children exit from cars on the "curb" side of the drive-up area. In the afternoon, once your child has been delivered to you, either into your vehicle or into your hands, you are responsible for staying with your child.

Toddler parents should park and walk their children in on a daily basis. You may park in an empty spot in front of the school or, if none are available, in the parking lot directly across from the school on Balsam Avenue. (We have permission from J.J. Jones to use these spots for short-term parking when needed.) As you enter the toddler classroom, please sign your child in on the sign-in sheet in his/her folder, being sure to write any notes to the teachers on these pages as well, and use your regular "goodbye routine" to indicate to the teacher that you are leaving. A teacher will come to the door as quickly as possible to greet you and your child. Please do not leave your child until he/she has been greeted by a teacher.

If you have a child in another classroom as well as in the toddler program, please drop your older child off first and then bring your toddler to his/her classroom.

**Please understand that, for your child's safety, your child cannot be released to anyone not on the approved pick-up list on the student information sheet.** If the person picking up your child is not listed as approved for pick-

up or has not been approved by a parent's permission, we will need to hold your child until we can contact a parent. If someone we don't recognize comes to pick up your child, we may ask them for a photo ID to make sure they are on your approved list for pick-up. **Please let anyone who may not be recognized by our staff know of this policy and that it is for the safety of all children so that they will not be offended by this ask.**

When contacting the school to arrange for your child to be picked up by someone other than a parent, an e-mail message, a written note, or a phone call are all acceptable. If e-mailing or telephoning your request, please contact the office. If you are contacting the office to make arrangements, try not to call or e-mail after noon as we cannot guarantee that we will be able to respond to last minute arrangements. If your child is going home with another student or being picked up at a different time, please put your requests in writing to the guides in advance. **These rules are designed to protect the children's safety. The guides and office staff will be very strict in following these procedures.**

**It is our responsibility to enforce car seat safety laws. The current NC child seat safety laws can be found by following the link on our school website's homepage.**

**Observe the following pattern when dropping off and picking up your child:**

**Toddler Program:**

All toddler families should plan to park and escort your child(ren) into the toddler classroom for sign-in as described above. Please remember to drop off any older children first at the appropriate location before bringing your toddler to his/her class.

**3 to 6 Year-old Program:**

Enter Walnut Avenue by Bank of America and then turn left onto Balsam Avenue. Drive slowly onto the concrete pad outside the wooden gate at the corner of the building. School staff or a parent greeter will help your child out of the car and into the building. Exit the drop off area by driving forward (past the playground) and around the block. **For safety reasons avoid turning around in this area.** Follow the same pattern to pick up your child in the afternoon. Someone will help your child get ready and into the car. Parent-to-parent conversations during pick-up and drop-off times often compromise our ability to ensure safety and flow of traffic. **Please do not leave your car unattended in the flow of traffic while you are in the drop-off or pick-up line.** While we encourage our families to promote a sense of community, we ask that you please be aware and respectful as you choose where and when to stop and converse.

**Elementary Program:**

Drive up to the school from the direction of the Spruce Pine Library so that your car is facing down the hill (on Walnut Avenue) when approaching the ramp to the elementary classes. **Please do not block or turn around in the Timberline Realty parking lot.** Follow the same pattern to pick up children in the afternoon. **Pull up as far as you can so other cars can do the same.** When you pull up, someone will help your child get ready and out of or into the car. Parent-to-parent conversations during pick-up and drop-off times often compromise our ability to ensure safety and flow of traffic. While we encourage our families to promote a sense of community, we ask that you please be aware and respectful as you choose where and when to stop and converse.

**Personal Belongings**

Each child needs: sturdy, comfortable play clothes; warm outerwear for cold weather (coat, hat, and gloves). For students in the 3 to 6 year-old program and toddler programs, extra changes of clothes (socks, underwear, pants, shirt, maybe even an extra pair of shoes) should be kept in their cubbies. Remember to switch items of clothing as the seasons change. Children in the 3 to 6 year-old program do not need a backpack. Please refer to your child's individual classroom needs list as presented by his/her teacher(s).

**Please label your child's belongings** with his/her name including lunch box, backpack, coat, gloves and hat. When soiled clothing is sent home, replacement clothing must be sent with the child the next day. We discourage children wearing dress shoes or shoes that come off easily, such as flip flops.

Students must leave toys, weapons, jewelry, money, cards, electronic games, and items of value or breakable things at home or in the car. Items from nature or books brought from home are welcome. Children starting school for the first

time often want to bring a blanket or soft toy from home. They will be asked to keep these items in their cubbies and to retrieve them only during the rest period where applicable. Children in our toddler classroom will not be allowed access to pacifiers or bottles during school hours. Please encourage leave these at home or in the car as well. Please feel free to discuss specific needs or concerns with your child's guide.

### **Cell Phones**

Students who carry cell phones are asked to keep cell phones turned off and left in their backpacks in the coat room. If a cell phone rings or is used during the day without permission, it will be held by the guide until the end of the day.

We ask that students not bring cell phones on field trips. If you think your child must have a phone, please talk to your child's guide in advance. Cell phones will be held by the guides during school trips and only made available through a pre-approved written plan between parent, child, and guide.

If you are a visitor or are volunteering at the school, we ask that you **please refrain from using cell phones in the classrooms**. If you must make or receive a phone call while you are here, please respectfully step outside or into the lobby or office to do so.

### **Snacks**

A simple and nutritious snack is provided by the "parent snack provider" for the 3-6 classrooms and is served each morning. Some suggestions include: fresh or dried fruit (grapes must be sliced), cheese, muffins, raw vegetables, peanut butter, bagels and crackers. (popcorn, peanuts or marshmallows are not permitted as these are choking hazards for young children). Whole grain snacks are preferred. We require snacks to come from two different food groups such as fruit and a grain or a vegetable and a protein. We recommend all choices be low fat, simple sugars and not be processed foods. Snack providers will be asked to record the snacks they provide on a chart in the snack basket to prevent the same snack being sent too frequently.

If your child has food allergies or other dietary restrictions, please provide his/her guide and the office a written explanation of his/her needs and please plan to provide for his/her daily snack. You can leave snacks for your child at school as long as they are labeled and stored properly.

Snacks in the Toddler Class will be provided, in part, by the school and will be purchased by the guides. Snacks each day will be comprised of at least two food groups. Associated costs are included in your materials fee.

Elementary families will be assigned several weeks throughout the year when they will be responsible for providing snack for their child's class. A list of recommendations will be distributed at orientation.

### **Lunch**

Children who stay for lunch bring their own packed lunch box. The state requires that lunches for children in 3-6 year-old classes include: 6 ounces of milk, milk substitute, water, or 100% fruit juice; one serving (1/2 slice) of grain product; one serving (1 1/2 ounces) of protein; and two servings (1/2 c. each) of fruits and/or vegetables. In the toddler class, the requirements are 1/2 cup milk, water, or 100% juice; one serving (1/2 slice) of grain product; one serving (1 ounce) of protein; and two servings (1/4 c. each) of fruits and/or vegetables. We ask that you send a nutritious, balanced lunch for your child each day. Guides will talk to parents if they notice a pattern of eating which they feel does not support the student's learning and physical activities through the day. Lunches will be inspected to ensure we are meeting the NC childcare center guidelines. We are required to substitute foods to meet requirements or remove drinks that are not milk, water, or 100% fruit juice. It will be necessary to charge \$1 for each supplemented food item. Each pre-primary classroom will have a pitcher of fresh milk and cups for children to serve themselves.

To respect individual family food choices, children are asked to not share food. Most children prefer small quantities of a variety of foods rather than a large quantity of one or two foods. If your child cannot finish his or her lunch the remaining food will be sent home in the lunch box. This will help you gauge the amount needed for your child. Please refrain from sending extremely sweet and overly processed foods and choose reusable containers as often as possible. Candy, soft drinks and gum are not allowed at school.

All lunches for the Toddler and 3 to 6 year-old children are refrigerated. Lunches for the 6-12 year-old children are refrigerated only if they contain perishable foods. Refrigerator space is limited. Small lunch boxes are recommended.

### **Birthdays**

If your child is having a birthday, you may want to provide a simple treat such as fresh fruit, fruit pops, cupcakes or cookies for his/her class. Each classroom has a special way to celebrate birthdays. Please ask your child's guide for more information. If you are hosting a private party outside of school, and are NOT planning to invite the entire class, we ask that you send birthday invitations via the US mail instead of distributing them at school. Too many times a child's feelings are hurt when they find others are invited to a party and they are not. An exception can be made if everyone in the class is invited.

### **Holidays**

Some holidays are presented as cultural events and as part of cultural studies. Children gain an appreciation of the world by exploring the customs, food, and music of other countries. One goal of our cultural studies is to help children gain tolerance, understanding and compassion for all people in the world. Parents are welcome to share their cultural knowledge through classroom presentations. Talk to your child's guide with your ideas. If you would like to send a holiday treat for your child's class, talk to your guide first, and remember to choose a low-sugar, unprocessed food and ask about student allergies. Handmade cards, drawings, or poems are encouraged when gift-giving.

### **Snow days**

If school will be closed or delayed due to inclement weather, an announcement will be made on WLOS TV (channel 13 in Asheville) and on their web site at [www.wlos.com](http://www.wlos.com) as well as on Fox Carolina and their website. As soon as the decision is made, if possible (depending on computer & internet accessibility), an all-school e-mail will be sent concerning our status. A "phone tree" will also be used to inform parents of delays and closings. Please help us make the phone tree successful by making sure you place a call to the next person on your list. If you are unable to reach them directly, leave a message and immediately call the following person on your list. As soon as you receive a recorded phone message, please return the call so the person knows you got the message. Also, verify that they called the next person after you on the list. **We will try to hold school as often as possible. However, it is necessary that enough staff is able to be present in order to have school. Remember, we serve a tri-county area and, as we all know, the weather patterns can vary greatly from one community to the next. Our teachers, as well as our parents, drive to SPMS from at least three counties, and we want everyone to feel safe in getting here. Your patience with this difficult decision is appreciated. We feel strongly that parents should always follow their own best judgment in determining their child's attendance on inclement weather days. Parents are always welcome to drop off late and/or pick up early, regardless of the administrative decisions, if they deem the road conditions unsafe. Absences for inclement weather are considered excused.**

### **Fundraising Events**

Each year parents and board members work to raise the additional funds needed to cover the operating costs of the school. Generally an additional \$1000 per child is our goal. This fundraising keeps tuition low and gets everyone involved in the active and rewarding process of educating our children. Throughout the year, various fundraising projects and events will be planned based on ideas and feedback from staff, parents and the board finance and communications committees. Announcements regarding dates and deadlines will come to you regularly via your child and/or e-mail. If you would like to gain some experience in fundraising, please call about volunteering. Your involvement in this aspect of the school is deeply appreciated.

### **Tuition**

Because we rely so heavily on tuition payments to meet our operating expenses, tuition payments must be paid on time (between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month). Payments can be sent in the mail to 67 Walnut Avenue, or delivered to the school office. Any payments received after the 15<sup>th</sup> of each month will incur a \$20/month late fee unless you have worked out an alternative payment plan with the head of school. A cost-of-living tuition increase can be expected each year. Parents will be informed of this increase before the enrollment process begins in the spring. Disputed tuition payments and fees will be settled in small claims court. Tuition statements will be sent on a monthly basis. In accordance with board mandated policy, any outstanding tuition balances sixty days or more overdue will result in the temporary dismissal of your student(s) from SPMS until all aforementioned outstanding balances are paid. Additionally, also in accordance with board policy, any offered and/or accepted financial assistance will be revoked for

both all past due amounts as well as for any future tuition payments. You will also be ineligible for consideration of any further financial assistance through the SPMS financial aid program, and may be subject to additional legal action necessary for the school to recover outstanding balances. Upon payment in full of all outstanding balances in excess of and including those sixty days late, your child would be welcome to return to his/her classroom at Spruce Pine Montessori School.

### **Withdrawal from School**

In the event that a child is withdrawn, the parents' liability for tuition payment continues through any payments scheduled up to and including the last day of the month of withdrawal. **Tuition paid up until the time of withdrawal will not be returned.**

### **Work-exchange**

A limited amount of money is available to help families pay tuition through our work exchange program. Our work-exchange program involves the performance of a necessary function on behalf of the school to be exchanged at a set hourly rate and taken off of a student's tuition balance. Most jobs involve housekeeping and maintenance. Financial aid decisions for work-exchange are made on a first-come, first-served basis. Work exchange applicants are not eligible for the 2% discount for annual payment in the fall. Please see the Head of School for more information.

### **Illness**

During the first 24 hours of an illness such as the common cold, sore throat, and gastrointestinal upset, students and staff are required to stay at home as this is the most contagious period. No one with a fever is to attend school for at least 24 hours after the fever ends. Students with communicable diseases (pink eye, chicken pox, mumps, measles, etc.) must be kept at home until the illness has run its course. Please notify us by calling the office when your child will be absent due to sickness. The answering machine is always on so you can leave a message the night before or early in morning if need be.

If a child suddenly becomes ill or a fever develops while a child is at school, parents will be contacted to pick up their child. We are unable to give full-day care to a sick child who must leave his/her classroom. Please have a backup plan in place if you cannot leave work or if there is no way you can pick up your child until the end of the day.

Please give over-the-counter and prescription medication directly to a guide instead of sending it in your child's lunch box. **By law, written permission must be on file before any type of medication may be administered to a child.** You may download and print all necessary forms for administering medication from our website or pickup a print copy in the school office. All medicine must be properly labeled and in its original container. Please ask your physician to have your child's medications set up for dispensing at home if possible. See the attached handouts for more information on administering medication at school.

In the event of an accident requiring medical care, the school will notify the parents. If parents cannot be reached, the child will be sent with a staff member or via ambulance to the emergency room to be treated by the physician on call.

### **Outdoor Play**

If a child is well enough to attend school, the child will be expected to go outdoors with classmates for scheduled playtime. Separate staff supervision is unavailable for children whose parents request they stay indoors. Children with fading cold symptoms, ear infections, etc. are considered by staff to be capable of outdoor play when dressed appropriately for weather conditions. Please remember to have your child dress appropriately for the weather.

### **Asbestos Testing**

In compliance with state law, our school was tested in 2004 and found to not contain any asbestos in the building. You can get a copy of our inspection in the office.

### **Cleaning Schedule for Classrooms**

Each SPMS has class specific guidelines for daily, weekly, and monthly cleaning schedules.

## **Parent –Guide Conferences**

SPMS does not issue traditional letter or number grades. The goal for each child is to achieve mastery of the skills and knowledge of the subject matter. We do not compare students against one another for the purpose of ranking their talents or achievements. As a result, traditional Montessori evaluations describe what the child has experienced or achieved as an individual without reference to other students or an arbitrary norm. Parent conferences in the 3 to 6 and elementary classes are held twice a year. Parents of toddlers will be offered the opportunity to meet with their child's teachers at one month, three months, six months, and nine months into each year.

Parent conferences are important meetings to discuss the guides' observations about your child(ren) and to ask questions. Put these dates on your calendar now and plan to attend. Because it is taxing on guides to hold these conferences at other times, please coordinate your schedule with these designated days. We encourage both parents to attend if possible. Remember, school is closed on conference days. See your annual calendar for the dates set for parent-guide conferences this year.

You are encouraged to observe your child's classroom at least once before your conference.

## **Learning Differences Policy**

SPMS serves children that represent a full range of academic abilities. SPMS does not specialize in dealing with specific learning differences, but will address the needs of students on an individual basis. Because we do not have specialists on our staff and our guides are not trained to accommodate the many special needs that may arise, parents need to assist guides by hiring professionals who are able to assess a child's needs and work with the guides to develop the best strategies for success. Reports from these meetings will be shared with all appropriate staff members as needed. We ask that parents who know or suspect that their child has special needs discuss options with the guide. If the level of support a child needs to find success with our curriculum exceeds the school's resources, parents may be required to seek outside assistance for their child such as private tutoring.

## **Elementary Homework Policy**

Homework is taken very seriously at SPMS. For your child to achieve optimal success, schoolwork must be reinforced at home. Your child will receive homework based on his/her age level, and he/she is expected to have it completed by its due date. Long-term assignments may also be given. Your student is expected to complete all assignments and have them turned in on the day they are due.

## **Testing**

Students are tested using the basic CAT test at the end of third and sixth grade. If you would like your child tested at another time, ask the Head of School for information regarding home testing.

## **Child Abuse Prevention**

For a child's needs to be met, he/she needs healthy nutrition, protective shelter, proper medical care, good hygiene, intellectual stimulation, appropriate discipline, love, encouragement, and a feeling of importance. When these needs are not met a child cannot easily grow and learn.

Spruce Pine Montessori is committed to providing an environment that meets the needs of each child. If you feel that the staff is not meeting your child's needs, please share your concerns first with your child's guide. Then, if necessary, make an appointment to talk with the Head of School. If you are having difficulty meeting your child's emotional or physical needs, we encourage you to ask for help. Our staff can help you find a community resource that can offer assistance.

In a rare instance when we think your child's needs are consistently not being met, our staff will work with you to identify your child's needs and help you meet those needs. If you are temporarily unable or unwilling to meet your child's basic needs, our staff is mandated by North Carolina State Law to make a report to the Department of Social Services (DSS) in your county. DSS will then ensure that your child's needs are being met.

It is important that you keep us informed about your child's health history, illnesses, injuries, etc., so the staff can be attuned to your child's needs. Please let us know if your child develops a new health problem, gets a communicable disease, is injured, or is under any new stress. It is most helpful to put this information in writing to your child's guide.

## **Discipline Policy**

The goal of Spruce Pine Montessori is to encourage appropriate behavior. From the beginning, children learn that this is their school and they can help make it a happy place. Many problems are a function of developmental needs, learning to share, and sometimes a clash in values. The guide is not a disciplinarian, but rather a facilitator for the individuals/groups to learn skills to regulate their own behavior. We practice group problem solving and mediation to

arrive at solutions that build on the class community and the child's personal growth. The staff uses positive approaches to help children behave constructively. We:

- Encourage appropriate behavior.
- Reason and set limits for the children.
- Model appropriate behavior for the children.
- Modify the classroom environment to encourage acceptable behavior.
- Listen to the children.
- Provide redirection for inappropriate behavior of the children.
- Respect the individual needs, desires, and feelings of each child.
- Explain things to the children on their level.
- Remain consistent in our behavior management program.
- Use short supervised periods where the child can sit and observe the classroom environment.
- Do not use corporal punishment.

Toddlers, who will sometimes impulsively push, bite, pinch, or otherwise hurt one another due, in large part, to a development inability to process their feelings in a more appropriate way or a lack in the language needed to communicate their needs, will be given comfort and help in developing alternative ways to express their needs. The goal is self-discipline to the degree the child is capable.

**On SPMS property, parents may not use corporal punishment with their children or any other child.**

## **Behavior Management Policy**

**\*Please note: The Toddler Classroom will be handled a bit differently based on developmental appropriateness. The policy will also be progressive and your toddler's teacher will note any behavioral concerns on his/her "How I was Today" worksheet.**

Our rules are simple and clear. Children are not allowed to hurt one another, disrupt the classroom or damage materials. Intentional aggressive behavior towards peers or staff which includes behavior such as: kicking, biting, fighting, defiance, pinching, poking, hitting, beating, shoving, spitting, tripping, scratching, profane language, verbal abuse, disruptive noises, taking the school's and/or other's belongings, will result in one of the following:

- Child's immediate removal from the environment.
- When the child has calmed down the guide will discuss the behavior with the child.
- Documentation of the repeated behaviors by the guide, which will be reported to the parents.
- Parents may be asked to take the child home for the remainder of the day; this request may or may not be optional.
- A conference of parents, guides, and Head of School may be requested.
- Dismissal of the child from the school.

## **Dismissal from SPMS**

It is at the discretion of the Head of School to ask a family to withdraw from the program. Tuition payments are non-refundable.

Prior to sending invitations for reenrollment for the subsequent year, guides will conduct an annual review of each student's growth to determine if the school can continue to meet the student's needs, and will discuss this with parents during parent conferences or during additional meetings.

It is always our hope that every child who begins their education at SPMS will graduate from our school, but this is not always possible. If a child continues to exhibit either a lack of progress or a pattern of inappropriate behavior that disrupts the student's learning or the learning of others, guides may suggest other educational options for your child.

### **Grievances**

If you have a concern about the school we would like to hear about it immediately. If something is bothering you, let's work together to find a solution; small problems can often become big if not addressed immediately. If you have a problem that involves your child's guide, talk to her directly. If you feel your concern is not being addressed, please make an appointment to talk with the Head of School by calling the office. The Head of School may ask you to describe the problem in writing, and then will make an appointment to have a conference between the people involved. For other administrative concerns, call the office Monday through Friday to leave a message for the Head of School.

### **Communication**

A parent newsletter, "The Flyer", is distributed monthly. It contains announcements and information you need to know. Please watch for this publication that will be sent to you via e-mail. If you have something you would like to contribute to this publication, please contact the office. Additionally, each classroom lead teacher sends a weekly classroom-specific e-newsletter to all class parents. If you would like to join the newsletter email list, please go to our "Newsletter" page on our school website and register.

If you need to communicate with another parent, you may leave a message for them with the school office. Messages left with teachers can't always get where they need to go as quickly as expected.

We try to always have someone in the office to answer the phone. However, if someone cannot answer your call, you will get the answering machine. You can leave a message any time of day or night. If you have an emergency, continue to call back until someone can get to the phone. Additionally, each staff member has a mailbox in the school office. You can leave written messages for them there. Teachers are usually not available to speak on the phone during school hours; please call after 3 PM to reach them.

SPMS encourages an "open door policy" between families and staff. When you need to speak to your child's guide, the accounts manager, or the Head of School, please call, e-mail, or stop by the office to schedule a meeting.

### **Communication with Second Families**

When parents are separated, divorced or for some other reason not residing in the same home, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and posted on school events. Please notify the office regarding the best way to ensure good communication between separate households. During conference days, each family is scheduled for one conference session per student. We ask that both parents attend this conference. It is important to communicate the same information to both parents at the same time.

### **Visitors**

Visitors may visit the school by appointment after school has been in session for at least one month. The best days to visit are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday.

### **Recommended Reading List for Parents (Many of these titles are available at the school office.)**

*The Absorbent Mind* — Maria Montessori

*The Secret of Childhood* — Maria Montessori

*The Montessori Method* — Works by Maria Montessori

*Montessori — A Modern Approach* by Paula Polk Lillard

*The Hurried Child* by David Elkind

*The Montessori Way* — Tim Seldin and Paul Epstein

*A Parents' Guide to the Montessori Classroom* by Aline Wolf

*Montessori: Planting the Seeds of Learning* — DVD available in the SPMS office

*Children Who are Not Yet Peaceful* — Donna Bryant Goertz

*Montessori-The Science Behind the Genius*—Angeline Stoll Lillard

*Raising Cain-Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys*—Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson

**Helpful websites**

[www.montessori.org](http://www.montessori.org)

[www.michaelolaf.net](http://www.michaelolaf.net)

[www.montessori-namta.org](http://www.montessori-namta.org)

[www.Montessori-ami.org](http://www.Montessori-ami.org)

[www.amshq.org](http://www.amshq.org)

**Our Lending Library**

You can find a variety of Montessori books and other educational resources in the school office. If you would like to borrow a book sign it out on the near-by clipboard and please remember to return it. We hope you will add to our library by donating books that you think would be helpful to other parents.



## Spruce Pine Montessori School

67 Walnut Avenue  
Spruce Pine, NC 28777  
828-765-7779  
sprucepinemontessori.org

I have read and understand the 2009-10 Spruce Pine Montessori Family Handbook, including the:

- Discipline Policy
- Financial Policy for early withdrawal

For toddler and 3-6 program parents, the Summary of NC Child Care Law is posted in our multi-purpose room as noted in the family handbook. \_\_\_\_\_(Please initial)

Parent/Guardian's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_