



Spruce Pine Montessori Family Handbook



Spruce Pine Montessori School
67 Walnut Avenue
Spruce Pine, NC 28777
828-765-7779

Dear SPMS Families,

It is because of your commitment to our school that we are thriving and flourishing, and I thank each and every one of you for the chance to educate your children in The Montessori Way.

I invite you to come visit, observe, participate and share your ideas for how to make Spruce Pine Montessori the best possible learning and growing environment for your children.

This handbook includes a brief history, a description of your role as an SPMS parent and community member, information about our policies and procedures, and Montessori educational resources. Please take the time to read through your handbook in its entirety. Even if you are a returning parent, please commit to reading through this year's handbook as there are some changes of which you should be aware.

I hope you find this handbook informative and helpful. Please contact me with questions, comments, or ideas at any time.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Meghan Lundy-Jones". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Meghan Lundy-Jones
Head of School

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SPMS Overview

History

Spruce Pine Montessori School was established in 1972 as a preschool (for children ages 3-5) by three parents who desired a creative, active learning environment for children instead of a traditional daycare. For over twenty years the program was housed in several rooms in the basement of the Episcopal Church, serving thirty students with two teachers and parent volunteer participation. In 1993 several involved parents decided to help the school expand by creating and staffing an additional space for our 6 to 9 year-old classroom that began with four students. 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 sixteen students in attendance. The following year saw the creation and staffing of a 9 to 12 year-old classroom, thus completing the expansion of the school into the elementary grades.

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 two acres 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 made by parent volunteers and through donations from foundations as well as in-kind services provided by local merchants, business, foundations, and contractors.

In 2007, the elementary program was quickly outgrowing its space and the need to further expand was identified. A rental house on the property was renovated to create a classroom space for the 9 to 12 year-old classroom. The 6 to 9 year-old class also received some improvements, including a new front door and the addition of a new exit and exterior stair.

During the 2008-09 school year, the SPMS board made the exciting decision to expand our Montessori program to include a toddler program. During the summer of 2009, space in the main building was renovated to house a new toddler program for children ages 1 1/2 to 3 years of age.

Over the school’s 44-year history, the program has grown 10-fold from 6 students in one room in a church basement (operated as a parent cooperative), to the present 65 students in five classrooms.

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. A list of all Board and Staff members can be found on our website.

Our Values

At SPMS, We Believe:

Each child is doing the best s/he can at the moment. The best a child can do changes from one day to the next and sometimes from one moment to the next. Beginning from this premise we seek to understand what each child needs and to help guide his/her natural efforts to learn and to grow.

A beautiful and interesting learning environment, both indoors and out, combined with the freedom to explore and to choose purposeful activity are key to a child's physical and intellectual development.

Capable teachers create and continuously improve such an environment and guide children toward every opportunity in the vast Montessori curriculum.

A community of friends and the support of a loving, capable adult guide are the foundation for developing a positive sense of self, the security of belonging, and the social and emotional skills needed to play and work with others.

A school is a community of learners when it includes the active involvement and loving support of its parents, grandparents, neighbors, and local businesses.

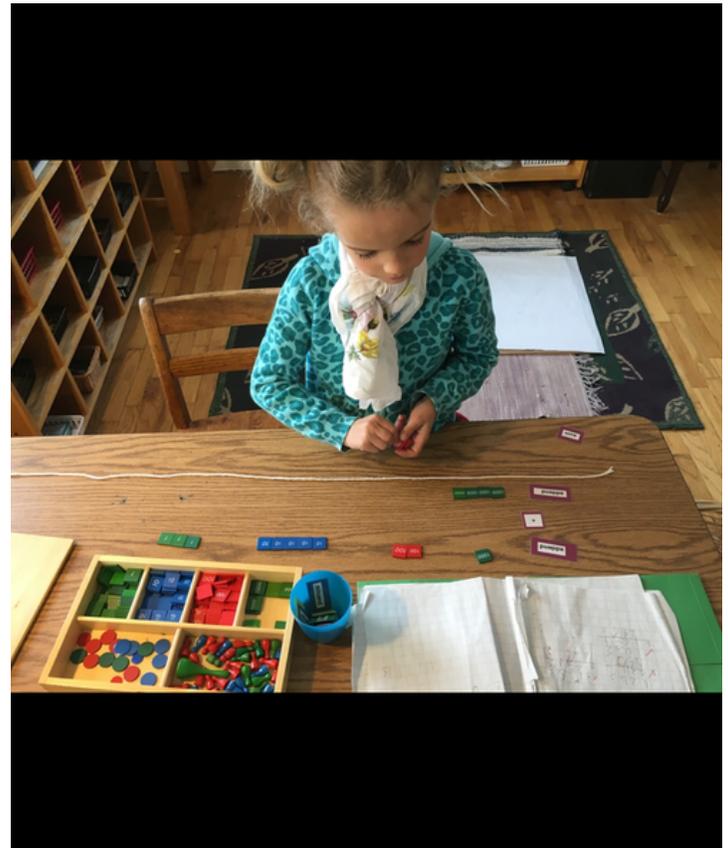
Our Mission Statement:

Education is preparation for life.

We are committed to making a Montessori-based education accessible to all children. Nurturing children's curiosity and creating an experiential learning environment fosters future success.

Using the Montessori model, we empower children to become confident and self-motivated individuals with a strong sense of respect for themselves, others, and the world around them.

“We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being.”
-Maria Montessori



Admissions

The admissions process includes: a tour of the school, completion of the Application Form, and payment of the accompanying \$50 non-refundable application fee. Upon acceptance we need the Enrollment Form and payment of the \$300 parent participation deposit. Prior to your child starting school we need the Medical and Emergency Information Form, your signature indicating acceptance of this Family Handbook and receipt of the NC Child Care Laws Summary. Within 30 days of beginning, we need the Physician Examination Form and a copy of your child's Immunization Record. Also prior to starting school parents must attend an Orientation Conference with their child's teacher.

In making commitments to enroll students, the school gives priority 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. Placement in a specific classroom is made based upon available space and consideration of needs for each classroom.

In general, admissions after the start of the school year are considered if space is available. The first payment will be due upon notification of acceptance and in accordance with the Fees and Tuition Schedule. The amount of money owed for the remaining period of instruction will be based on the premise that Spruce Pine Montessori has a 40-week school "season," or period of instruction. Late entrance tuition and associated fees will be based on pro-rated fractions of the 40-week school year. Example: a student desires to start four weeks after school has started. Their tuition and fees will be $\frac{36}{40}$ or 90% of the full tuition for the year.

Admissions and Transition Policy

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. This is why we ask families to spend a good length of time with us during the admissions process, so that we can be sure the match is a good one before the child arrives.

The first six to eight weeks in a new classroom is a transition period for all students. During this time, the guides work closely with new students to adopt the norms of the classroom and the school environment on the whole. Once the first six to eight weeks of the school year have passed, your child's guide or you as parents may request a meeting to discuss any concerns and develop a plan of action for issues that persist beyond this transition period. The Head of School will likely attend the meeting. Once a plan of action has been decided upon, a timeline will be set to assess progress.

Typically, we find that concerns arise due to learning differences, behavior, or both. For specifics on how we handle these issues, please read on for further policies.



Working with Children's Social/ Emotional Development at School

Spruce Pine Montessori School has over the decades of its existence developed a distinctive way of looking at and working with conflict in the classroom - one that seeks to uphold the best practices in Montessori education, child psychology, contemporary conflict-resolution studies and education for peace. Our approach to this and all topics related to our work with children is one of action on behalf of the child and the community of children as well as open-ended inquiry and learning. We fully expect our work to continue to evolve. Nevertheless, we wish to describe our current policy and promise to update this description as our school and our understanding evolve.

Our work with children's conflict has always been and will continue to be tailored to the specifics of the situation, but it proceeds from the following core principles.

- We aim for the Montessori classroom to be a safe place, both physically and emotionally, for children to explore the limits of their current capacities and knowledge and stretch to new abilities, while refining their social and emotional skills.
- Children's behavior proceeds from positive, universal human needs. The role of the adults in a child's life is to help the child find healthy, age-appropriate, pro-social ways to meet those needs.
- The child's physical, intellectual, social and emotional development proceed together, and solutions to delays, obstacles or complications in any area often involve giving extra support in all or several areas. No single area is more important than the others.
- The Montessori materials for social-emotional development include lessons in grace and courtesy; classroom customs and procedures which illuminate how to balance individual and community needs; collaborative work in groups of mixed gender and age; and the children's many interactions, both joyful and challenging. The social frictions that naturally arise in this very rich environment of interaction are "teaching moments" for the guide to observe and respond with particular support to all involved. Guidance given for values, character, and social-emotional development is woven throughout the curriculum. It is given not in the abstract but in the context of the children's real-life relationships.
- In any situation involving interpersonal conflict, all parties hold part of the solution; focusing on only one party or the other is counterproductive and often harmful to the full development of all parties.
- As in all aspects of Montessori education, adults at school and at home are committed to helping children take as much ownership for their social-emotional learning as they are willing and able, observing carefully before intervening and intervening in ways that empower the children to be more self-reliant in future situations.

Any time a child gives or receives aggression perceived by the guide as excessive, whether it be physical or verbal, the guide will respond with changes in the prepared environment, materials, discussion, mediation, problem-solving sessions, relationship coaching and/or

natural or logical consequences, as deemed appropriate by the guide, in consultation with the Head of School.

The guide will contact parents of the children involved within 24 hours of the incident. Guides will describe what was actually observed or reported, what they expect to see in children in a particular situation, and how they worked with or will work with the children to develop a plan for bringing about positive change. They will confer with the parents on how to support the children at home and throughout subsequent school days.

When a child receives or gives aggression repeatedly (i.e., there is a pattern of such interaction), the guide will get help from the Head of School, and they together will decide when to involve other staff members. This group, together with the parents of the children involved, will form a Support Team for the children in question, working together until the negative pattern has been replaced with a neutral or positive pattern and the children have the tools they need to maintain the positive pattern on their own.

If the school concludes that the children and their families need more support than the school can give, the school may require that the family engage outside professionals to work with the child and the Support Team. Depending on the area(s) of development that need support, such professionals could include family counselors, children's counselors, occupational therapists, parenting educators, or academic tutors.

If the family is not willing or able for any reason to engage the needed professionals, it may be necessary that the family withdraw the child from the school.

The school will do its best to ensure that all communications from the school in relation to children's conflicts are respectful, professional and offered in the spirit of working together. The school will expect the same from parents. Because solutions to conflictual situations often involve working with several families and the whole community of children, the school needs to know that all parents are modeling for their children respect for and willing cooperation with the school's policies and procedures, the guides, the administration, and the other children and families - both in speech and in actions.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Spruce Pine Montessori School invites students, ages 18 months to 12 years, of any gender, 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 gender, race, religion, color, sexual orientation, or national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational or admissions policies.



Toilet Independence for Ages 3-6

Children new to SPMS are required to be out of diapers and/or pull-ups before entering our Primary (3 to 6) program. We expect all children in the 3 to 6 year-old class room to be independent in use of the toilet. We have a toileting independence questionnaire you can use to help you and his/her teacher assess your child's readiness. 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 uncooperative 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 has gained toilet independence if there is space available. Children transitioning into the 3 to 6 program from our toddler classroom at age 3, in compliance with N.C. state childcare regulations, and who are not yet using the toilet independently will be returned to the toddler classroom just for changing if an accident occurs.

Toilet Learning for Ages 1-3

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 of his/her own toileting needs and cycles. This awareness is the first step towards toileting independence. Unlike disposable diapers or "pull-ups", these alternatives also give the child an opportunity to 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 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 gains toileting independence. This includes the following steps: 1) awareness of when s/he is wet; 2) anticipation or feeling the need to go; 3) interest in how older children and adults go to the bathroom; 4) trying the toilet; 5) using the toilet when invited by the teacher or parent and 6) initiating use of the toilet on his/her own.

It is the parents' responsibility to provide a supply of labeled training pants or cloth diapers 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. Likewise, to prevent accidents in a car seat on the way home, we are willing to change your child into a disposable diaper at the end of his/her day.

Tuition Process

Because we rely so heavily on tuition payments to meet our operating expenses, tuition payments must be paid on time. Payment is due the first of the month and is overdue after the 10th of the month. Payments can be sent in the mail to 67 Walnut Avenue, delivered to the school office, or placed in the green transparent folder on the bulletin board to the right of the 3-6 nap room entrance or in the purple folder by the Elementary entrance. Any payments received after the 10th 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. Multiple instances of temporary dismissal may result in your child not being invited to return to school.

Enrollment fees and tuition do not include optional charges associated with Before or After Care or Summer Programs. Please see our Tuition and Fee Schedule for details. Spruce Pine Montessori School relies on tuition income to meet ongoing expenses. For this reason, the School must be assured that its tuition payment contracts will be fulfilled in their entirety. Hence, no reduction or remission of fees can be allowed by the School for absence, withdrawal, or dismissal. Tuition rates for Primary and Elementary are for the school year and monthly installment payments do not correspond to actual days school is in session. The fact that tuition may be paid in multiple installments does not constitute a fractional contract.

ALL PRIMARY AND ELEMENTARY CONTRACTS ARE FOR THE ENTIRE SCHOOL YEAR.



Financial Aid

We are committed to making a Montessori-based education accessible to all children. We accept Department of Social Services child care vouchers, offer work exchange for discounts in tuition, and award scholarships for eligible families. We do not accept NC Private School Vouchers, aka "Opportunity Scholarships." See below for more details on each of these options.

Scholarships and Work Exchange

A scholarship may be in the form of a financial aid award to be applied directly to tuition or fees, a tuition reduction, or a work exchange agreement. Scholarship awards are made by the Board Scholarship Committee after review of your Financial Aid Application. Work exchange is limited and available on a first come, first served basis. It involves doing needed work for the school in exchange for a specific reduction in tuition scholarship. There is a place on your enrollment form to indicate your interest in work exchange or you may inquire at the school office.

Child Care Vouchers

Your NC county Department of Social Services has state and federal funds available for child care subsidy that may be applied towards tuition for children under Kindergarten age (age 5 by August 31 of any school year). The school has set a reduced tuition rate for families receiving DSS child care subsidies. DSS does not pay for any fees and does not pay for days SPMS is closed. Fees and the cost of care on days we are closed are the obligation of your family. Apply at the DSS office for your county of residence.

Mayland Community College has a Child Care Project that provides partial or full payment of child care tuition for children under Kindergarten age (age 5 by August 31 of any school year). Apply at Mayland Community College.



Please make payments to:
Spruce Pine Montessori School
67 Walnut Avenue
Spruce Pine, NC 28777

Tuition Policies, cont.

Additional Costs of Attendance

The Board and Staff at Spruce Pine Montessori School strive to keep the cost of attendance as low as possible while still providing a unique and quality learning environment for the children. In addition to tuition, the following fees are payable prior to the beginning of the school year, or if a student begins mid year, prior to their entrance into the classroom.

Parent Participation Deposit and Materials Fees

There is a \$300 parent participation deposit per one child (\$450 parent participation tuition deposit for two or more children) to be used as a credit toward tuition for the last month your child attends our school, based on the level of completion of your parental participation hours that final year at the established rate of \$10/hour.

Upper Elementary materials fees are \$175, Lower Elementary materials fees are \$125, Primary materials fees are \$75, and Toddler materials fees are wrapped into the monthly rate.

Payment Plans

Three payment plans are offered:

- Full Payment - Parents who pay in full by July 1st are allowed a 2% discount on their amount owed.
- 10-Month Payment - 10 equal installments due by the 10th of each month from August to May.
- 12-Month Payment - 12 equal installments due by the 10th of each month from June to July.

Tuition payments may be made by cash, check or money order, or by credit card. Payment made by credit card will incur a 3% fee. Please indicate with your payment the name and whether payment is for tuition and/or other fees. Toddler families are billed on a monthly schedule. All payments are due by the 10th of each month; late payments will incur a \$20 per month late fee. Toddler families must provide 30 days notice or payment prior to withdrawal.

Full-Year Contract: The School enrolls Primary and Elementary students for an entire academic year at a time. Tuition is due for the entire year, and no adjustment of fees can be made by the School for absence, withdrawal, or dismissal.





The fact that School fees are paid in multiple installments does not constitute a fractional contract. So, for example, the first month's tuition on the ten-month payment plan, is the first of ten payments and does not represent payment for the specific days the school is in session the first month.

First Payment on monthly payment plans: The first tuition payment cannot be refunded should a student not matriculate. Failure to pay the first tuition installment by the dates specified will result in the student being placed at the bottom of the enrollment waiting list and the slot to which s/he was admitted will be made available to another applicant.

Monthly Payment Plan: Monthly installments are permitted by designating this choice on the contract. Monthly installments are due on or before the 10th of the month. Please observe the due date as the school operates on a cash basis and has regular monthly obligations.

Late Payments

If a tuition payment is overdue for one month, the School will remind the family. If by the next tuition due date a previous monthly payment is still overdue, the child must be withdrawn from the School unless payment is made in full or mutually acceptable alternate arrangements have been made in writing. Parents who need more than two consecutive reminders of monthly payments may be required to pay by the semester. A monthly late fee of \$20 will be charged each month payment is overdue.

Returned Checks

Parents whose tuition check is returned for insufficient funds more than once a year will be required to make subsequent payments by certified check or money order. There is a \$12.00 service charge for any check returned for insufficient funds.

Start of Year

Students will not be allowed to begin a new school year until previous year's tuition and all financial obligations are paid in full.

Records

Student records will not be forwarded to parents or to other parties until all financial obligations are paid in full.

Communication Between Home & School

Contacting Your Child's Teacher

We value open communication with you about your child. We will use many media to communicate with you, including phone, email, newsletters, written notes, conferences, parent gatherings, etc. For regular, routine communication, you can expect an email response from us within 48 hours or on Monday, if over the weekend. For concerns and grievances, please read on below this section.

For most ongoing communication about your child's progress in the classroom, please log on to our software program, "Montessori Compass." Teachers will upload images, comments and progress reports here as often as possible.

The Head of School will send out an e-newsletter to the entire school community at least once a month with information on upcoming events and happenings at the school and may send out additional emails with timely school announcements.

If you need to communicate with another parent, you may message them using the Montessori Compass software or request a class list. Messages left with teachers or the Head of School can't always get where they need to go as quickly as expected.

The Head of School typically holds office hours between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm on school days. However, the Head of School does help and check in with the classrooms on a daily basis and will not be immediately available at all times. 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. Because the guides work with the children without a formal break, they are unavailable to answer phone calls or speak to you in person during the school day. Please call between 3:00 - 4:00 PM to reach them. If you need to speak with the after school teacher after 4:00 PM, please call them on their cell phone; the number will be provided to you once you enroll.

Concerns & Grievances

Many times a child's development presents challenges to both parent and guide. Working directly with the guide in a spirit of collaboration is the most effective way to resolve any issue and to build a solid partnership between school and home for future work on behalf of the child. Speaking to anyone else about the issue may be tempting at the time, but it is not in the best interests of your child, the guide or your child's community.

Some popular literature asserts that to advocate for their children, parents must take an adversarial relationship toward their school. In fact, our experience is that such an approach is always counterproductive. You are, by definition, your child's advocate. At the same time, the school is also an advocate for your child; we each bring our own view of what is happening and what is in the child's best interest. Guides' experience and training help them to evaluate and make sense of their observations of your child. We want to work together with you—on the same side of the table rather than from opposing sides—to develop mutual understanding in the interest of your child. The children in our Montessori community

approach their own problem solving in this collaborative way, and we, their adults, owe it to them to model the same productive behavior.

If you have a concern or grievance, please make an appointment with the guide and/or Head of School to speak with us in person, rather than sending an email listing your concerns. We find that email communication can often be misinterpreted and that these difficulties have outweighed the convenience of email communication. Teachers are available Monday-Friday from 3:00- 4:00 and the Head of School is available for appointments from 8:30- 4:30. While it is possible for us to rearrange our schedules to be available at other times, we hope you will respect our home life and try to accommodate these times. In that regard, we ask that you not contact us on our personal cell phones for work related business.

If you simply have day-to-day information to share, such as doctor appointments, illnesses, etc., email is still an appropriate way to communicate with us.

Each guide will let you know how best to contact her or him.

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.

Parent- Teacher 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 in the Montessori curriculum. 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-teacher conferences are held twice a year. Students in the Upper Elementary lead these conferences for their parents. Conferences are important meetings to discuss 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.

Testing

As a non-public school in the state of North Carolina, we are required to administer a nationally standardized test to all 3rd and 6th graders enrolled in our school. We do not believe that this test is an authentic assessment of your child's intelligence, range of abilities, nor a comprehensive assessment of the skills they have gained as a Montessori student. Rather, we believe that these scores may reflect an aptitude for test-taking. As you are likely aware, this is not a skill that we spend time honing within the Montessori curriculum. If you would like your child tested at another time, ask the Head of School for information regarding home testing.

Food & Nutrition

Breakfast

The children's work at school is directly affected by the nutritional quality of their meals. Please provide your child with a nutritious breakfast each morning. A high-protein breakfast that includes a generous portion of meat, eggs, cheese, nuts, or beans is essential to the child's development, learning, and enjoyment at school. This is both the universal experience of our guides as well as the finding of well-respected public health research studies. A child who has not had a high-protein breakfast is not ready to come to school.

Read the labels of the foods you buy, and avoid sugar, corn syrup, artificial sweeteners or coloring, artificial flavoring, and other additives. Most nutritionists believe that these substances interfere with the child's ability to learn and ability to have acceptable behavior. Such things as Pop-Tarts, sweet rolls, and pre-sweetened cereals may be convenient, but not only are they very poor foods, they may be hazardous to your child's emotional, mental, and physical growth. Good nutrition directly affects a child's health, concentration, and behavior.

Snacks

For the Toddler and Primary classrooms, a simple and nutritious snack is provided by the school (with parent participation assistance) and is served each morning. Elementary students pack their own snacks as a part of their lunch and are welcome to take snack breaks throughout the morning.

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 his/her daily snack from home. You can leave snacks for your child at school as long as they are labeled with the date they were brought to school and stored properly.

Lunch

In our school, the guides have lunch with the children. Lunch is a social experience and an opportunity to refine manners. It is a time to enjoy pleasant conversation and good food. Children, guides, and assistants all bring their lunches from home.

Each classroom reflects the particular guides approach to lunch procedures. However, as a school, we share common attitudes and expectations about lunches. We help the children become consciously aware of flavors and textures of their food. This expands their vocabularies as well as their eating pleasure. We may discuss the sources of the foods we eat. If it comes from a plant, we discuss the part of the plant we are eating: stem, leaf, fruit, or root. Other discussions may cover the way the food product is made, where or how it grows, its nutritional value or group, etc.

Although we bring our lunches, we do not eat out of our lunch bags. Lunch is set up pleasantly with placemats, plates, and cloth napkins. The children enjoy learning to prepare for, serve, and clear away after a meal. They learn to wait for everyone to be ready before beginning to eat. The children are helped to peel and pour for themselves. They also learn to offer help to one another and to request, accept, and decline help as needed.

Each child is encouraged to eat only as much as his/her hunger requires, although generous time is provided. When a child is through eating, s/he wraps uneaten food and returns it to his/her bag or box. Cores, pits, and peelings are put in the compost bucket. If you find old

peelings or unwrapped leftovers in your child's lunchbox, it would be a helpful reinforcement if you would make an appropriate comment reflecting your understanding of the lunchtime procedure.

We send home all leftover food so that you and your child can determine from it the amount appropriate for the following day. Continue decreasing portions of any food left over each day. When no food comes home, you will know for the present time that you have determined the proper amount. Of course, there will always be fluctuations. If for days your child continues to bring home an empty lunchbox, ask if s/he would be hungry for a slightly larger lunch, or try sending a little something extra. Continue to increase the size of the lunch until something leftover comes home; then cut back just a bit. We hope these suggestions will help us to be sure each child has enough, but not too much, for his/her own individual needs. The more we do, taking lead from the needs shown to us by the child, and the less we say about the size of his/her appetite, the better we will be able to help him/her to eat what is really needed.



All students bring their lunches from home. Nutritious foods (whole grains, vegetables, fruits, cheese, and meat) and beverages (water, 100% fruit and vegetable juices, and milk) are to be brought in reusable containers.

For our Toddler and Primary classrooms, the state requires that lunches 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. The same guidelines apply to lunch for toddlers with slightly smaller quantities of food.

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.

To respect individual family food choices, children will not be permitted to share food.

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. Extra large lunch boxes are difficult for us to accommodate.

Birthdays & Holidays

If your child is having a birthday, you may want to provide a simple treat such as fresh fruit, fruit pops, cupcakes or cookies (low-sugar, unprocessed and appropriate for children with allergies) 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.

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.



Health Policies

Health Forms

Prior to the first day of class, the office must have your child's completed health forms. S/he will be unable to attend school until the completed health form is received. This is in accordance with the licensing agency whose representative visits our campus at the beginning of each year to personally check all health records.

Medicines

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. Diaper rash cream and sun screen are considered "medication" by the state and require individual, labeled dispensers and a written permission form. Parents are asked to apply sun screen before their child comes to school as we cannot apply it every time a child goes outdoors.

Prescription Medicine

Please send the dosage needed for one day only, in the original container from the pharmacy with the child's name on it, and fill out our Medicine Administration Form, listing the times and amounts to be given that day. Prescription labels are not a substitute for the form. A child may not carry medication; a parent or other adult must personally hand it to the guide or assistant. This medicine needs to be handed directly to the guide, so that the medicine can be properly stored out of reach. When you have your prescription filled, you may ask the pharmacist to put the medication into two labeled containers, explaining that you need one to keep at school.

Non-Prescription Medicine

In general, we strongly discourage the sending of over-the-counter medicines. Medicine, including children's Tylenol and cough drops, may not be given to a child by a staff member, except when it absolutely must be taken during school hours, and the parent has filled out the appropriate paperwork. The note must include the amount, time, duration, and under what circumstances the medication is to be administered. Send only the dosage needed for that day in the original container (so we know what it is).

Illness

State licensing mandates that a child with any of the following symptoms be isolated and the parent(s) notified and asked to remove the child from the school as soon as possible.

- Fever of 100.5° F
- Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool per day)
- Vomiting
- Chicken pox or a rash suggestive of chicken pox
- Scabies or lice
- Red eyes with white or yellow discharge until 24 hours after treatment
- Tuberculosis until a health professional states that the child is not infectious
- Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment has started
- Pertussis until one week after antibiotic treatment

- Impetigo until 24 hours after treatment

If your child is not feeling well in the morning, please observe them closely before sending them to school and risking the health of other children.

Children must be free from symptoms for **24 hours** before returning to school. If your child develops any of these symptoms while at school, you will be called immediately. If a child has mild cold symptoms that do not impair his/her functioning, the child may remain in the classroom and the parent(s) notified when they pick up their child.

If your child is diagnosed with any communicable disease (chicken pox, whooping cough, fifth disease, pink eye, etc.) or head lice, please report this at once to the office as well as your child's guide.

If a child is injured while in school, parents will receive an incident/accident report in their lunch box. If the injury is severe or located on the face/head, a call will be made to the parent to notify them immediately.

In the event of an accident requiring emergency 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. 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.

Child Abuse Prevention

For a child's needs to be met, he/ she needs healthy nutrition, protective shelter, proper medical care, good hygiene, love, intellectual stimulation, appropriate discipline and 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.

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.

Operating Policies

Days and Hours of School

Toddler Program (year round):

Full Day: 8:30 AM - 2:45 PM

Part Time: EITHER

1) Mon-Fri, 8:30 AM- 12:15 PM *OR*

2) 3 consecutive days per week, 8:30 - 2:45 PM

After- care: 2:45 - 4:00 PM

Primary and Elementary Programs:

School year: 8:30- 3:00 PM

By separate enrollment + additional fees:

Before-School Program:

7:30- 8:30 AM

Primary and Elementary After-School Program:

3:00- 5:30 PM

Summer Program:

8:30- 2:45 PM

Summer Program After-School:

3:00- 5:30 PM

Office Hours

Due to the small size of our administration, it is not always possible for someone to be in the office. Typically, our Head of School is available between the hours of 8:30 and 4:30, Monday through Friday, but may also have meetings already scheduled. Please make an appointment to speak with staff members in person or call and leave a message on our answering machine any time.

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 five times, your child's guide will ask you to meet for a conference. Excused absences are given for sickness, funerals and inclement weather.

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. Please understand that, for safety purposes, dropping your child off without escorting him/her to the office and/or classroom is not allowed.

The first six to eight 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 challenges. 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 scheduling vacations to happen during our breaks.

Snow days

During periods of inclement weather, we will try to hold school as often as possible. It is typical for us to have around five snow days per year and several morning delays. If we have more than ten snow days, we will schedule make-up days in the summer. In order for school to be open, our teachers need to be able to get to school safely. Teachers live in different counties and the microclimates vary widely in our region, so please understand that if the weather where you are doesn't match our decision to delay/close, it may be very different in another part of the county. Your patience with the difficult decision of when and whether to open school is appreciated.

If school will be closed or delayed due to inclement weather generally the decision will be made by the Head of School by 7:00 a.m. On the rare occasion when the weather is still changing in the early morning and the forecast is uncertain, the school may initially be scheduled to open late and then a later decision could be made to close for the day. There is no Before School Care on late opening days.

You will receive an automated phone call regarding delays and closings. In addition, an announcement will be made on WLOS TV (channel 13 in Asheville) and on their web site at www.wlos.com as well as on WKYK radio. 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.

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.

North Carolina Child Care Law

The NC Division of Child Development requires that we provide each parent with the "Summary of the North Carolina Child Care Law for Child Care Centers" and that we post the same 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 room of SPMS. Your copy can be found at the end of this handbook. Please review the summary if you have any questions regarding NC Child Care Law.

Outdoor Play

If a child is well enough to attend school, the child will be expected to go outdoors with classmates for scheduled playtime. Teachers make the decision when to go outside and your child is likely to go outside when it is cold and/or there is light rain. Separate staff supervision is unavailable for children to remain 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. It is imperative that you provide the proper clothing for your child to play outdoors each day.

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). Soiled clothing will be sent home and needs to be replaced the following school day. Toddler parents will receive a special list from the Toddler Guide of what to bring.

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.

Primary children who rest or nap will need a light blanket and may bring a small pillow and one cuddly toy. These items will be sent home for laundering once every two weeks (or more often, if necessary). Please return or replace these items the following school day.

Students must leave toys, weapons, jewelry, money, cards, electronic games, cell phones, 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 leave these at home or in the car. Please feel free to discuss specific needs or concerns with your child's guide.

Cell Phones & Other Technology

Students who bring cell phones, tablets or MP3 players to school are asked to keep them turned off and left in their backpacks in the coat room. If this technology 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 these devices on field trips.

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.

Cleaning Schedule for Classrooms

Each SPMS classroom has class specific guidelines for daily, weekly, monthly and deep cleaning schedules posted in each classroom. We use EPA approved disinfectants and liquid hand soaps to decrease the spread of communicable diseases. The Lead Teacher and Assistant Teacher are responsible for cleaning. The school also has parent volunteer cleaners based on work exchange agreements. In general the following are the school cleaning guidelines:

Daily: Desk, table and counter surfaces; chairs as needed; sinks, toilets, bathroom fixtures, paper towel dispensers and doorknobs or push bars; floors (swept and mopped or vacuumed); trash containers emptied and wiped down as needed. For Toddlers also stair railings, low door windows, and diaper trash container; also laundry. In kitchen all counters, sinks, fixtures and floor.

Weekly: Shelving on a rotating basis such that each shelving unit is cleaned once a month. Wall areas behind and beside toilets are washed. Walkways swept as needed. For Toddlers all shelving is cleaned weekly. Also Toddler board books are cleaned weekly or more often if needed.

Monthly: Materials are cleaned as they are rotated to or from storage; chair and table legs; remove cobwebs and dust windowsills. Three times a year, usually at year beginning, mid year and year end: windows; closet and other storage areas; refrigerators; under large furnishings; furnace filters checked and changed if needed; floor waxing. Surfaces are cleaned with Seventh Generation EPA approved disinfectant.



Arrival & Departure

Teachers go on-duty for morning drop-off at 8:15 AM. We do offer a before-school care program for Primary and Elementary students during the school year by prior enrollment, and with a limit of 10 children, beginning at 7:30 AM each morning. The Before School Program is generally not available on a drop in basis. Children needing before school care should be walked in by their parents and will be cared for either in the multi-purpose room or on the playground until 8:30 AM. If you drop off your child between 8:15 - 8:30 am, please be sure they have appropriate clothing for outdoor play before the classrooms are open.

Before school 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), send your guide an e-mail, or send a note requesting an appointment.

Afternoon pickup is scheduled to occur from 2:45 to 3:00 PM for Primary and 3:00-3:15 PM for Elementary students. Families with children in both programs should pick up Primary Students first, then drive around the block to pick up Elementary Students. 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. If you need to pick your child up early, please call the school office so that the teachers and child can be prepared. Toddlers in need of an early pickup time should be picked up before 12:00 noon so as not to interrupt the napping time of the rest of the class. We strongly discourage pick up during nap time (for toddlers from 12:15 - 2:30 and for napping Primary children from 12:45- 2:15) because it disrupts the sleep of the other children. If you need to pick up your napping child early, please let your teacher know and make a plan to do so immediately before or after your child's lunch period.

If you are unexpectedly late picking up your child at the end of the day, 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 drop-in rate. 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 late fee will also be charged for each additional minute after 5:30 in the regular after-school program. This fee can be paid that day or can be charged on your regular tuition statement.

The After Care Program is available for enrollment and may have limited spaces available. It is sometimes available on a drop-in basis. 24-hours notice and approval is needed for drop-in after care to ensure adequate staffing. Requests for drop-in after care can be made via email or phone call to the Head of School.



Drop Off and Pick Up Processes

The school has specific processes for safe drop off and pick up. These will be covered in your orientation meeting with your child's teacher and at the beginning of the school year orientation meeting for parents.

Please inform anyone dropping off or picking up your child for you of our pick up and drop off procedures. It is very important that during pick up and drop off times we do not have cars backing up into the street and attempting to turn around and that parents do not leave their cars parked in the street, possibly causing other cars to go around them. During drop off and pick up all cars on Balsam Street in front of the school must proceed up Balsam when leaving.

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. This is extremely important when there are children on the playground who have not been picked up and there are parents and teachers opening and closing the gate to the street. 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 Medical and Emergency Information Form. 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 question.

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 in the afternoon as we cannot guarantee that we'll 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 each child's safety. The guides and office staff will be very strict in following these procedures.

It is our responsibility to comply with car seat safety laws. The current NC child seat safety laws can be found by following the link on our school website.

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 your child's teacher or are bringing something into the school, please park in the lot across the street from the main building on Balsam Ave. out of the flow of traffic. If you are late (after 9:00 am or after 3:00 pm) and we have finished escorting children, park across the street and come to the school office so we can unlock the doors and you can 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. 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.

Arrival/Departure Patterns

Toddler Program:

Please drop off any older children first before bringing your toddler to his/her class. Toddler parents should park in the lot across Balsam Street from the school and walk their children to the classroom each day. (We have permission from J.J. Jones to use these spots for short-term parking.) A teacher will come to the door as quickly as possible to greet you and your child. Please say a quick goodbye at the door. If you need to communicate something with the toddler teacher, please write a note and pass it over at this time so that the goodbye is not prolonged.

3 to 6 Year-old Program:

Enter Walnut Avenue at the second light on Oak Street, and then turn left onto Balsam Avenue. Drive slowly onto the concrete pad outside the wooden gate at the corner of the building, stopping parallel to the fencing so you do not have to back up to pull out. School staff or a parent greeter will help your child out of the car and into the building. You will be asked to initial and record arrival time on your child's page in the sign-in notebook. Exit the drop off area by driving forward up Balsam Street and around the block. For safety reasons, please do not back up or turn around in the drop off area. Follow the same pattern to pick up your child in the afternoon. Someone will help your child get ready and into the car seat. 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. If you want to escort your child to the door, please park in the Jones Auto Body parking lot on Balsam Avenue and walk them up; do not park your car and leave it unattended on Walnut Avenue.

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. An Elementary teacher will be at the classroom door from 8:15 - 8:30 am to greet children as they arrive. You may escort your child to the classroom door or watch him/her until the teacher waves that she has received your child into her care. If you arrive before or after the time the teacher is at the classroom door, please escort your child into the classroom and receive the teacher's acknowledgment that your child is present before leaving.

Parent Involvement

Expectations for all Parents

Spruce Pine Montessori School was founded to be a community of learning for children, their parents and the guides (Montessori teachers). 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 fundraiser, 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.

Parents are a very important part of making our school successful. Each year, the parents of SPMS are asked to contribute to the enrichment of the school environment - assisting daily in the Primary classrooms, driving on field trips, assisting or leading fund raising events, helping with maintenance, repairs, and landscaping and helping with numerous other activities. Your contributions ensure a reasonable fee policy and allow children to witness parental involvement with their education.

Parents are asked to provide at least 30 hours of parental participation per family during the tuition schedule school year. Families with more than one child are asked for 45 annual hours of participation at SPMS. There will be a current list of volunteer needs/jobs in the school office; classroom newsletters and letters to all parents from the Head of School will also include volunteer needs. You may always check with your child's teacher for classroom specific tasks. Parents are responsible for logging participation hours. Log-in sheets can be found in the parent participation notebook in the SPMS office and/or you may e-mail your volunteer hours to headofschool@sprucepinemontessori.org.

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, and volunteer at least once during the year with a special event. Toddler parents are encouraged to help with fundraising, maintenance, and other duties outside the toddler classroom because we have found that generally it is too difficult for a toddler to see his/her parent during the day and not to go home when the parent leaves.



Observations & Montessori Education

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 window 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.

In addition, we ask that you take the time to read and attend workshops on Montessori education. The more you know, the more impressed you will be with the level of education your child is receiving. You may count workshops, book group meetings and movie showings here at school as part of your Parent Participation, as educating yourself is one way to support the work of the school.

Conferences

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year. Students in the Upper Elementary lead these conferences for their parents. Conferences are important meetings to discuss 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.

Work Days

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 reasonable. They are also a fun way to meet other SPMS parents and build community.

Fund Raising 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 fund raising keeps tuition reasonable and gets everyone involved in the active and rewarding process of educating our children. Throughout the year, various fund raising projects and events will be planned based on ideas and feedback from staff, parents, and the board finance and communications committees. Please contribute to the annual fund if possible and help us reach out to extended family members who are supportive as our program as well. It is our goal that every parent have some involvement in fund raising for our school. Please call about volunteering. Your involvement in this aspect of the school is deeply appreciated. Our biggest annual fund raising event is our spring auction. All families are expected to participate in helping make this event a success.



Resources

Recommended Reading List for Parents

(Many of these titles are available at the school office.)

The Absorbent Mind by Maria Montessori

Montessori – A Modern Approach by Paula Polk Lillard

Montessori-The Science Behind the Genius by Angeline Stoll Lillard

Montessori Madness by Trevor Eissler

The Montessori Way by Tim Seldin and Paul Epstein

A Parents' Guide to the Montessori Classroom by Aline Wolf

At Home With Montessori by Patricia Oriti

The Hurried Child by David Elkind

Children Who are Not Yet Peaceful by Donna Bryant Goertz

The Secret of Childhood by Maria Montessori

The Montessori Method by Maria Montessori

Helpful websites

www.montessori.org

www.michaelolaf.net

www.montessori-namta.org

www.montessori-ami.org

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.

