

Spruce Pine

Montessori School

Family Handbook

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Spruce Pine Montessori School

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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 family 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 family, 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.

Wishing you all the best in your time at SPMS,

Jennifer Rambo
Head of School

SPMS Overview

History

Spruce Pine Montessori School was established in 1972 as a preschool (for children ages 3-5) by three families 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 family volunteer participation. In 1993 several involved families 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 families 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 families, 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 family 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 elementary program is now in the upstairs of the main building and the office is in the house.

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 15 months to 3 years of age. In 2019, the toddler program expanded into the building adjacent to the main school property which became the “Toddler House”.

Over the school's 50-year history, the program has grown 10-fold from 6 students in one room in a church basement (operated as a family 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 they 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 their 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 families, grandfamilies, neighbors, and local businesses.

Our Mission Statement

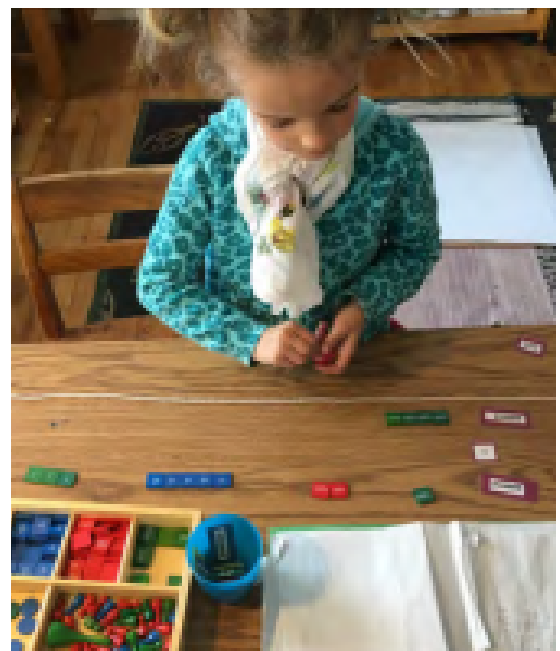
Education is preparation for life.

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 classroom(s), completion of the Application Form and payment of the accompanying \$50 non-refundable application fee. Upon acceptance we need an Enrollment Form and annual enrollment fee. Prior to your child starting school we need the Medical and Emergency Information Form, your initials indicating acceptance of this Family Handbook, receipt of the NC Child Care Laws Summary and Shaken Baby policy. Within 30 days of beginning, we need the Medical Report Form and a copy of your child's Immunization Record. Also prior to starting school families must attend an orientation meeting 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 pool, striving to maintain a balance of ages in each classroom. Placement in a specific classroom is made based upon available space and consideration of needs for each classroom.

Admissions after the start of the school year are considered if space is available in the Primary and Toddler Programs. The first payment will be due upon notification of acceptance and in accordance with the Tuition and Fees 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 $36/40$ or 90% of the full tuition for the year.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Spruce Pine Montessori School invites students, ages 13 months to 12 years, of any gender, race, religion, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities 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.

Admissions and Transition Policy

Although most children thrive in a Montessori setting, SPMS may not be the best fit for some children. 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 a family may request a meeting with family, guides, and Head of School to discuss any concerns and develop a plan of action for issues that persist beyond this transition period. Typically, we find that concerns arise due to learning differences, behavior, or both. Once a plan of action has been decided upon, a timeline will be set to assess progress. If progress is not made and the teachers, family, and Head of School decide it's not a good fit, the tuition contract for the remainder of the year will be canceled. There will be no refund for days already attended.

Working with Children's Social and Emotional Development

Conflict in the Classroom

Spruce Pine Montessori School has 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.

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, prosocial 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, 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 in consultation with the Head of School.

The guide will contact families of the children involved within 24 hours of the incident, either by phone or by email. 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 families 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 families 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 assess and 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 families. Because solutions to conflictual situations often involve working with several families and the whole community of children, the school needs to know that all families 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.

Occasionally, a student may exhibit extremely unsafe behaviors that jeopardize the wellbeing of students and teachers. Examples of unsafe behaviors are:

- Throwing furniture, materials, or other objects with intent to harm
- Punching, hitting, kicking, head butting, or biting a teacher or another student
- Stabbing a teacher or student with a sharp object
- Opening doors or gates with intention to run away

-Violent or threatening language

If a child engages in behaviors that are unsafe and/or disruptive which will endanger themselves, another student, or teacher OR which interfere with the daily program, the following procedures will be followed:

On the first and second occurrence the teacher will speak to the student about the behavior. The teacher will inform the child's family of the child's actions in an email or with a phone call.

On the third occurrence, the family will be contacted and the child will need to be picked up immediately from school. At this point, seeking assistance with the child's primary care provider and/or a licensed therapist is strongly recommended. The Head of School can provide information on how to access resources to support the child and family.

On the fourth occurrence, the family will be called and the child will need to be picked up immediately. The child may not return to school until a meeting, which includes the child's family, teachers, and Head of School, occurs to discuss a behavior plan to be implemented. The behavior plan may include support from outside sources, such as a licensed therapist or primary care provider.

SPMS reserves the right to remove a student from the program at any time if the behaviors deem it necessary for the safety and well being of the student, classmates, and/or staff.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behavior among **school aged children** that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behavior is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. In order to be considered bullying, the behavior must be aggressive and include:

- An Imbalance of Power: Kids who bully use their power—such as physical strength, access to embarrassing information, or popularity—to control or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time and in different situations, even if they involve the same people.
- Repetition: Bullying behaviors happen more than once or have the potential to happen more than once.

Toddlers and primary students may impulsively push, bite, pinch, or otherwise hurt one another due to a developmental inability to control their impulses, to process feelings, or because of a lack of language skills needed to communicate their needs. They will be comforted and helped to develop more appropriate ways to express and meet their needs.

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 learning differences that may arise, families will need to seek an outside assessment to determine a child's needs if the guide sees evidence of a learning difference. The results from these assessments will be shared with all appropriate staff and a plan for the student will be developed

based on the recommended accommodations. Families can meet with their child's teachers and/or Head of School to discuss their options for assessments and support. If the level of support that a child needs to find success with the curriculum exceeds the school's resources, families may be required to seek outside assistance for their child, such as private tutoring.

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. When the child's diaper is consistently dry, the teachers will recommend that they start wearing cotton underwear or training pants. In cotton underwear that is wet or soiled, the child becomes aware of "wetness" and therefore of their 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 themselves. They can quickly become proficient at pulling their pants up and down, which will greatly aid in the development of self-confidence and independence with toileting. It's the family's responsibility to provide a supply of cotton underwear.

Additionally, we will not require any child to use the toilet before they choose to do so. 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 they are 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 family member 6) initiating use of the toilet on their own.

You will have the opportunity to discuss with your child's teacher what will work best for your family with respect to whether your child will wear a diaper or underwear when they arrive 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 underwear at school, either right away or when their teachers first learn they are 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 the day.

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 classroom to be independent in use of the toilet. We have a toileting independence questionnaire you can use to help you and their 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 families to arrange a meeting to discuss the concern. Families 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 they have gained toilet independence if there is space available.

Tuition Information

Spruce Pine Montessori School relies on tuition income to meet ongoing expenses. For this reason, tuition payments must be paid on time. Invoices are sent out around the first of the month and are due within 10 days of receipt. Payments can be sent to 67 Walnut Avenue, delivered to the office, placed in the designated folders in each classroom, or paid directly through your Quickbooks invoice. Tuition statements will be sent on a monthly basis for those who choose a monthly payment plan and for those whose children attend the Before or After School programs and have chosen a Full or 50/50 payment option.

A cost-of-living tuition increase can be expected each year. Families will be informed of this increase before the enrollment process begins in the spring.

In addition to tuition, an enrollment fee is due with the enrollment paperwork. Elementary enrollment fee is \$150. Primary and Toddler enrollment fee is \$100.

Enrollment fees and tuition do not include charges associated with optional Before or After School Care or Summer Programs. Please see our Tuition and Fees Schedule for details.

Because we rely so heavily on tuition payments to meet our operating expenses, SPMS must be assured that its tuition payment contracts will be fulfilled in their entirety. No reduction or remission of fees are allowed for student absence, withdrawal, or dismissal. Tuition rates are for the ENTIRE 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. A signed tuition contract is required for a child to attend their first day of school.

The first monthly tuition payment due in August cannot be refunded should a student not attend when school begins. Failure to pay the first tuition installment by the dates specified will result in the student being placed at the bottom of the enrollment list and the slot to which they were admitted may be made available to another applicant.

Payment Plans

SPMS has three tuition payment options:

- Full Payment -Families who pay in full by July 1st receive a 5% discount on their annual tuition.
- 50/50 Payment - Families receive a 2% discount when tuition is paid August 1 and January 1
- Monthly Payment - 10 equal installments due by the 10th of each month August-May.

Full and 50/50 payments can be made by cash, check, money order or online through your invoice. Monthly tuition payments may be made by cash, check, money order, online through your invoice, or credit card. Payments made by credit card will incur a 4% fee. All payments are due within 10 days of the receipt of invoice.

Late Payments

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.

If a tuition payment is overdue for one month, the School will remind the family of the outstanding balance. Any outstanding tuition balances sixty days or more overdue may result in the temporary dismissal of your student(s) from SPMS until all aforementioned outstanding balances are paid or mutually acceptable alternate arrangements have been made in writing. Additionally, any offered and/or accepted financial assistance may be revoked for all past due amounts as well as for any future tuition payments. You will 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 their classroom at SPMS. Multiple instances of temporary dismissal may result in your child not being able to return to school the following school year.

Families who need more than two consecutive reminders of monthly payments may be required to pay by the semester. Students will not be allowed to begin a new school year until previous year's tuition and all financial obligations are paid in full. Student records will not be forwarded to families or to other parties until all financial obligations are paid in full.

Returned Payments

Families whose tuition payment 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 service charge for any check returned for insufficient funds.

Financial Aid

We are committed to making a Montessori based education accessible to all children. We accept Department of Social Services child care vouchers, Opportunity Scholarships through the NCSEAA, offer work exchange for discounts in tuition, and award scholarships for eligible families. Read on for more details on each of these options.

Scholarships and Work Exchange

A SPMS scholarship may be a financial aid award to be applied directly to tuition 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 with the Head of School.

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). DSS does not pay for any fees or after or before school care for Primary and Toddler students 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 in your county of residence.

Mayland Community College Scholarship

MCC has a Child Care Project that provides partial or full payment for parents enrolled at MCC. It may cover tuition for children under Kindergarten age (age 5 by August 31 of any school year). Any tuition that the MCC scholarship doesn't cover is the responsibility of the family. Apply at Mayland Community College.

Opportunity Scholarships

Scholarships are available through NC State Education Assistance Authority for students in their Kindergarten-6 grade year. You must apply through [NCSEAA](#).

Communication Between Home and School

We value open communication with you about your child. We will communicate with you by phone, email, newsletters, written notes, and conferences. Please allow 24-48 hours for a response to non urgent communication.

If you have day-to-day information to share, such as doctor appointments, illnesses, etc., email is the best way to communicate with us.

When families are separated, divorced, or not residing in the same home, we want to keep all family members informed of their child's progress and school events. Please notify the Head of School regarding the best way to ensure good communication between separate households.

For ongoing communication about your child's progress in the classroom, please log on to [Montessori Compass](#). You will receive an invitation to set up your account when your child enrolls. Teachers will upload images, comments, and progress reports here.

There will be a regular e-newsletter to the entire school community with information on upcoming events and happenings at the school, and the Head of School will send out additional emails with timely school announcements.

The Head of School holds office hours from 8:30AM-4:30PM but checks in with the classrooms on a daily basis and will not be immediately available at all times. If you call the office and no one answers, you can leave a message any time, day or night. If you have an emergency, leave a message on the school voicemail and email your child's teacher(s) and the Head of School.

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, texts, or speak to you in person during the school day. Please call between 3:00 - 4:00PM to reach them. If you need to relay a message to the after school teacher, please call or text

the school cell phone; the number will be provided to you once you enroll.

Concerns and Grievances

Many times a child's development presents challenges to both the family 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, families 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 behavior.

If you have a concern or grievance, please contact us by email, and we'll work together to solve it. We are available for phone calls or meetings Monday-Friday from 3:00-4:00pm.

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.

Conferences are held twice a year. They are important meetings to discuss observations about your child(ren) and to ask questions. Please put these dates on your calendar and plan to attend on these designated days. **There will be no conferences held outside of scheduled conference days.** We encourage all involved caregivers to attend. Each family is scheduled for one conference session per student, even in the case of divorced or separated parents, as it's important to communicate the same information at the same time.

Students in the Upper Elementary classroom lead their conferences for their families.

Remember, school is closed on conference days. See our [annual calendar](#) for the dates set for conferences each year. You are encouraged to observe your child's classroom 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 and to students who receive the opportunity scholarship in grades 4 and 5. 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 and 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 nutritious breakfast is often not ready to come to school.

We encourage reading labels on the foods you buy, and avoiding sugar, corn syrup, artificial sweeteners, food dyes, artificial flavoring, and other additives. Most nutritionists believe that these substances interfere with the child's ability to learn and affect their behavior. Such things as Pop-Tarts, sweet rolls, and pre-sweetened cereals may be convenient, but 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 and is served each morning. Elementary students pack their own snacks as a part of their lunch and are welcome to take a snack break in the morning.

If your child has food allergies or sensitivities or other dietary restrictions, please provide their guide and the Head of School a written explanation of their needs. We'll do our best to accommodate their needs but may need supplemental snacks from home.

Lunch

In our school, we bring our lunches from home and 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.

Each classroom reflects the guide's 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 food group, etc.

Although we bring our lunches, lunch is set up pleasantly. 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 their hunger requires, although generous time is provided. When a child is through eating, they wrap uneaten food and return it to their lunchbox. Cores, pits, and peelings are put in the compost bucket. We send home all leftover food so that you and your child can determine the appropriate amount 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 they would be hungry for a 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 their 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 their appetite, the better we will be able to help them to eat what is really needed.

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. **Please do not send cake, cookies, chocolate or granola bars or muffins that contain chocolate as part of your child's lunch.**

For our 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 ½ ounces) of protein; and two servings (1/2 c. each) of fruits and/or vegetables. In the toddler class, the requirements are ½ 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 families if they notice a pattern of eating which they feel does not support the student's learning and physical activities throughout the day. Lunches will be inspected to ensure we are meeting the NC child care 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 Primary children

are refrigerated. Refrigerator space is limited. Extra large lunch boxes are difficult for us to accommodate.

Birthdays and 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 their 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 email/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. We will be happy to distribute invitations 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. Families 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 food sensitivities or allergies.

Health Policies

Medical Forms

Prior to your child's first day of school we need a completed Medical and Emergency information form. Within 30 days of enrollment for new students, we must have your child's completed Medical Report and Immunization records. In accordance with NC child care licensing, they will be unable to attend school until these completed health forms are received.

Medications

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 pick up 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 sunscreen are considered "medication" by the state and require original, labeled containers and a written [permission form](#). Families are asked to apply sunscreen before their child comes to school as we cannot apply it every time a child goes outdoors.

Prescription Medication

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 the [Medication 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 family member or other adult must personally hand it to the guide, assistant, or Head of School so that the medicine can be properly stored. 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.

Over-the-Counter Medication

Over the counter medications, including children's Tylenol and ibuprofen, may only be given when the family has filled out the [Medication Administration Form](#). Over-the-counter medications must be in its original, unopened container. Although many families choose herbal or natural remedies, they aren't regulated by the FDA, and we are unable to administer them.

Illness

State licensing mandates that a child with any of the following symptoms at school be isolated and the family member(s) notified and asked to pick the child up as soon as possible.

- Fever of 100° F or higher
- 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 without medication 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 their functioning, the child may remain in the classroom and the family will be notified of symptoms when they pick up their child.

If your child is diagnosed with any communicable disease (flu, covid, chicken pox, fifth disease, pink eye, etc.) or head lice, please report this at once to the office as well as your child's guide. If there are 2 or more reported cases in a classroom, the classroom teacher or Head of School will send an email out to the classroom or program to let families know to monitor their child for symptoms and take extra precautions if they wish.

If a child is injured while in school, families will receive an incident report at pick up time. If the injury is severe or located on the face/head, a call will be made to the family to notify them immediately.

In the event of an accident requiring emergency medical care, the school will notify the family. If a family member or emergency contact cannot be reached, the child will go with a staff member or via ambulance to the nearest emergency room to be treated.

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.

Nut Aware Policy

SPMS has an environment that is "Tree Nut/Peanut Aware" to create a safe environment for children with life-threatening tree nut/peanut allergies. Our goal is to give children with life-threatening tree nut/peanut allergies a sense of comfort and provide the opportunity for the child to be included in all aspects of the school setting, such as parties and snacks. At the request of the family of a child with a tree nut/peanut allergy, any snack or treat provided by the school will be tree nut/peanut free and will not be processed in a facility where there may be a risk of cross contamination.

Families will be notified at the beginning of each school year whether or not there is a child with a tree nut/peanut allergy in their child's classroom.

Tree nut/peanut aware procedures include providing education and support resources to teachers, students, families, administrators, and any other persons affiliated within the school about maintaining a tree nut/peanut aware environment. However, even with every effort being made, please be aware that we cannot guarantee items brought into the school were manufactured in a nut-free facility. Therefore, family members should educate and guide their children about eating any shared food.

If there is a child with a tree nut/peanut allergy enrolled at SPMS, the following guidelines will apply:

Guidelines for Staff

- Teachers, support staff, substitutes, and all employees within the school will receive annual epi-pen training; including providing education on signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis.
- Teachers will be provided with an Emergency Care Plan of Action for each student possessing a life-threatening tree nut/peanut allergy.
- Teachers will incorporate allergy lessons into the curriculum and bring in outside professionals to educate on food safety.
- Before and after eating, teachers will wipe down tables with soap and water and will follow with a disinfectant, as is outlined in child care guidelines for appropriate food surface cleaning procedures. Chairs will be wiped down after lunch with soap and water.

Guidelines for Families and Students

- Speak with your child about the serious consequences of tree nut/peanut allergies so that they

are aware of the serious nature regarding allergies.

- Children will wash hands upon arriving at school and before and after eating.
- When packing your child's lunch, please consider tree nut/peanut free choices.
- If needed, a tree nut/peanut free table will be provided for lunchtime. Any child who has a tree nut/peanut free lunch is welcome to sit at the table. Friends can be invited as long as they have nut free foods. Please label your child's lunchbox if it is tree nut/peanut free so we know if your child may sit with the child(ren) with allergies.
- All snacks or treats brought into the school will be in packaging with an ingredient list. It is encouraged to check with your child's teacher 48 hours before you plan to send in food or beverages to the school.
- All snack shoppers will purchase the brand name snack listed on the snack shopping list to ensure that it meets tree nut/peanut free requirements.

Child Abuse Prevention

For a child's needs to be met, they need 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.

Nonsuicidal Self-Injury (NSSI) Policy

As a Nonpublic School without permanent positions for clinical staff, Spruce Pine Montessori School is not able to assume responsibility for students who engage in non-suicidal self-injury.

Definition: "Nonsuicidal self-injury (NSSI) consists of self-inflicted, deliberately destructive acts resulting in tissue damage that are not intended as an act of suicide, are not widely socially acceptable, and are not due to intellectual disability, autism, or other developmental disorders." (<https://educatorsandselfinjury.com/definition/>)

Students known to be at risk for NSSI are not permitted to attend SPMS without the current and ongoing care of an engaged clinician, the informed consent of their guardians, and the approval of staff, in that order. If a student engages in NSSI on school property after these conditions have been met, they will be asked to leave and will not be readmitted.

Reporting Concerns and School Response

If a staff member has a substantiated concern that a student is self-harming or is currently at risk of NSSI, it is their obligation to inform the Head of School as soon as possible. The student's teacher or Head of School will contact the student's family. All relevant information is to be shared with the student's family as soon as possible.

If a staff member feels curious about whether a student may be at risk of NSSI based on their observations, it is still their obligation to inform the Head of School as soon as possible. In this case the staff member will ask open-ended questions intended to determine whether or not there is risk of NSSI.

- If there is determined to be a risk, then the staff member will inform the Head of School and the student's family will be contacted.
- If unclear, this information is shared with the family and the family is asked to make arrangements for the student to be evaluated by a clinician as soon as possible.
- If the clinician determines that risk of NSSI is present, the student may continue to be enrolled if they are under the ongoing care of an engaged clinician, with the informed consent of their guardians, and the approval of staff, in that order.
- If no risk is present, it is up to the family to decide what course of action follows. At that point, all staff members will be instructed to pay extra attention for warning signs of NSSI but the student can remain enrolled unless a substantiated concern indicates that clinical support is required. Families may be encouraged at this juncture to evaluate whether or not some form of proactive and external therapeutic support for their child is appropriate.

Communication with Primary Caregivers

If a substantiated concern, suspicion, or curiosity about NSSI is discussed among the staff, then prompt, clear, and informative communication with the child's family is necessary. Information should be shared by staff and should be limited to direct reporting of observations or dialogue. Staff will refrain from offering any personal interpretation of the facts, even if asked to do so. When communicating with the student's family, staff will resource them with basic information about how to support their child. A fact sheet with information will be offered at this time. If able, staff will connect primary caregivers with a clinician who can better provide them with information and resources.

Privacy/Confidentiality

Information about particular students self-harming is never to be disclosed to other students by staff members under any circumstances. Information disclosed to the staff will be shared with other staff members on a need-to-know basis where it is relevant to maintaining the safety of students in their care.

Field Trips

When students participate in SPMS overnight field trips, a specific recommendation, in writing, for attendance on a trip is required from the clinician engaged with that student (if applicable).

Suicidal Ideations Policy

Definition: Suicidal ideations (SI), often called suicidal thoughts or ideas, is a broad term used to describe a range of contemplations, wishes, and preoccupations with death and suicide.

If a student expresses a desire to end their life, the student will be supervised by a staff member, and the parent/guardian will be notified as soon as possible. Any student who expresses thoughts that allude to or expressly state that they no longer want to be living will need to be evaluated within 30 days by a primary care provider or mental health professional to determine suicidal risk. If a risk is determined, the student, family, provider, and SPMS will work together to create a safety plan for the student, and the student will be required to continue with outside support with the primary care provider and/or mental health professional.

Tobacco Free Campus

Spruce Pine Montessori School is a smoke free and tobacco free campus. We prohibit the use of tobacco products, including vaping, on our campus.

Asbestos Testing

In compliance with state law, our school was tested in 2004 and found to not contain any asbestos in the building. A copy of our inspection is available in the office.

Operating Policies

Hours of Operation

Before School Program
7:30AM- 8:15AM

After School Program
3:00-5:30PM

Summer Camp
8:30AM-2:45PM

Toddler Program:
Full Time: 8:30AM - 2:45PM

Primary Program:
8:30AM- 2:45PM

Elementary Program:
8:30AM-3PM

Part Time:
Mon-Fri, 8:30 AM- Noon
OR 3 consecutive days per week,
8:30 - 2:45 PM

Before and after school programs require separate enrollment and additional fees

Office Hours

Due to the small size of our administration, it is not always possible for someone to be in the office. Typically, the Head of School is available between the hours of 8:30AM and 4:30PM, Monday through Friday. Please schedule a time to speak with staff members in person or call and leave a message on our voicemail any time.

Absences and Tardiness

Excessive absenteeism and tardiness are detrimental to your child's educational experience. Guides and families must be partners in providing the best environment for children to learn and to prepare for their next educational step. The first 6-8 weeks of school are a very important time in which relationships are formed and a foundation for the school year is set. Transitions may be difficult for children and families. Each child transitions differently and this time is essential to the child's feeling of confidence and comfort in the new environment. Absenteeism during the first week should be avoided as it can add to the transition challenges. In addition, attendance during the last weeks of school is vital. Many important activities that are tied to the curriculum happen in the last month of school. Please check the school calendar when planning family vacations. Make your child's education a priority by scheduling vacations to happen during breaks. 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. Please see our detailed attendance policy below.

Tardiness

Any elementary child arriving after 8:30 AM or primary or toddler child arriving after 8:45 AM is considered tardy. There will be a \$5 fee for each unexcused lateness, reflected in the next month's tuition statement. Because all classroom doors are locked after 8:30 AM (elementary) and 8:45 AM (primary and toddler), if your child is late you must call the office phone and someone will escort your child to their classroom. For safety purposes, dropping your child off without an escort to the classroom is not allowed.

Extended Day-6th Grade Attendance Policy

At SPMS every day is essential to the learning process; therefore, we encourage every student to be at school every day. Students are responsible for making up any work that they missed while they were out of school. Students or families may arrange to pick up work missed during an absence.

Absences that are considered excused absences in accordance with State Law will be excused for the following:

1. Illness/Injury
2. Inclement weather
3. Death of an immediate family member
4. Court proceedings
5. Religious observance
6. Medical, dental, or counseling appointments (a note from the practitioner's office is required to verify an appointment)

Absences must be documented in order to be considered excused. Please inform the school of your child's absence by emailing the Head of School AND your child's teachers by 9:00 AM on the day they are going to be absent. At any point in the year that a student's excused absences for an illness or injury are deemed excessive, the Head of School may require a statement from the student's licensed health care provider in order to excuse future absences. Absences will be considered unexcused if a student misses school for any other reason or if the proper documentation is not provided for the absence within 7 days of the absence. Absences will be handled in the following manner:

Number of Absences	Follow Up
Seven (7) unexcused	Written reminder of attendance policy
Fourteen (14) excused or unexcused	Meeting with teachers and HoS
Twenty (20) excused or unexcused	May no longer be able to continue the following year at SPMS

Any student with 20 or more absences in a school year without extenuating circumstances may not be allowed to return to SPMS the following year.

Students will be considered present for the day if they arrive before 11:30 AM or leave for the day at 11:30 AM or after.

Allowances will be made for educational family vacations or travel with prior approval of Head of School and student's teachers.

Three unexcused tardies will add up to one absence and will be calculated as such.

Emergency Closure Days

In order for school to be open, teachers need to be able to get to school safely. Teachers live in different counties and the microclimates vary widely, so please understand that if the weather where you are doesn't match our decision to delay or close, it may be very different in another location. 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, the decision will be made by the Head of School by 6:30AM, or even the night before. 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 text message through a school communication app and an email regarding delays and closings.

Families should always follow their own best judgment in determining their child's attendance on inclement weather days. Families are 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.

Occasionally, there will be an issue with utilities like electricity or water, and we may need to close or dismiss early. The same procedures apply as inclement weather.

It is typical to have five emergency closure days per year and some morning delays. If we have more than seven emergency closure days, we'll schedule make-up days either at the end of the school year or by scheduling a school day for a teacher work day.

NC Child Care Law and Shaken Baby Policy

The North Carolina Division of Child Development requires that we provide each family with the "Summary of the North Carolina Child Care Law for Child Care Centers" and that we post it in a place accessible to all families of toddler and primary students. This summary is located on the bulletin board in the primary multi-purpose room and the bulletin board in the Toddler House. There is a [link](#) on our website, too. We are also required to provide families with our Shaken Baby Policy. There is a [link](#) to this document on our website. If you would like a paper copy of either document, the Head of School will provide you with one. Please review both and initial that you have read them on your child's enrollment form.

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's imperative that you provide the proper clothing for your child to play outdoors each day.

Personal Belongings

Each child needs: sturdy, comfortable clothes and shoes that can get dirty; warm outerwear for cold weather (coat, hat, and gloves); rain jacket, rain pants and boots. We discourage children wearing dress shoes or shoes that come off easily, such as flip flops.

For students in the primary 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. Please refer to your child's individual classroom needs list as presented by their teacher(s). Soiled clothing will be sent home and needs to be replaced the following school day.

Please label your child's belongings with their name including lunch box, water bottle, backpack, coat, gloves and hat.

Primary children who rest or nap will need a crib sheet and a light blanket and may bring a small pillow

and one cuddly toy. These items will be sent home for laundering on Fridays (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 during rest time.

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 and Other Technology

Students who bring cell phones, tablets, or smart watches, etc. to school are asked to keep them turned off and left in their backpacks. 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 in the classroom, please respectfully step outside of the classroom 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. Surfaces are cleaned with Seventh Generation EPA approved disinfectant. The Lead Teacher and Assistant Teacher are responsible for cleaning. The school also has regularly scheduled cleaners. 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, vacuumed, mopped); glass in doors; trash containers emptied and wiped down as needed. For Toddlers: diaper trash container. 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. 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 window sills; HVAC filters changed.
- **Three times a year:** windows; closet and other storage areas; refrigerators; under large furnishings.
- **Annually:** floor waxing.

Emergency Preparedness and Response

SPMS has established an emergency plan that will be implemented in response to emergency situations on or off campus. Our first priority in the event of an emergency is to ensure that the children and school staff are safe. Our second priority is to contact families and to keep you informed. The Head of School will communicate with families via the school communication app. It is important that families keep emergency contact information up to date.

Reunification Plan

In the event of an emergency requiring children to leave campus (evacuation) or be picked up on campus following the resolution of an emergency, children will be reunited with their families or their families' approved emergency contacts using the following procedures:

- Using the emergency communication method (via phone call or text message), the Head of school will notify families of the emergency situation, and plans for evacuation if evacuation is required.
- The Head of school will send instructions (and address for pick up, if evacuation is necessary) when the situation is resolved and it is safe for families to travel to the school or the reunification site.
- Children will be reunified starting with toddlers and their siblings first, then primary students, then elementary students on a staggered pick up schedule which will be indicated in the emergency communication message.
- Children will be released to the person(s) on their emergency contact list. Staff will check IDs of any people who are not recognized at pick up.

Practice Drills

SPMS is required by the state of NC to conduct monthly fire drills and quarterly shelter in place/lockdown drills. Families will be notified of the shelter in place/lockdown drills.

Arrival and Departure

Teachers go on-duty for morning drop-off at 8:15 AM. We do offer a before-school care program for students by prior enrollment, with a limit of 10 children, from 7:30-8:15 AM each morning. Children needing before school care should be walked in by their families and primary and elementary students will be cared for in the multi-purpose room. Toddlers will be cared for in the Toddler House.

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 email, or send a note requesting an appointment.

Afternoon pickup is scheduled to occur from 2:45-3:00 PM for Primary and Toddler students and from

3:00-3:15 PM for Elementary students. Families with children in more than one program should pick up younger student(s) first, then drive around the block to pick up the older student(s). 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 time.

If you are unexpectedly late picking up your child at the end of the day, they 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 School 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 families.

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 families 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 families 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 families 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 family member's

permission, we will need to hold your child until we can contact a family member. 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. Students will not be released to any person who appears to be impaired in any way. Staff will contact approved emergency contact to arrange for someone else to pick up the child.

When contacting the school to arrange for your child to be picked up by someone other than a family member we need the information in writing via email message to the Head of School, a written note, or a text to the school cell. 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 Passenger Safety Law can be found by clicking this [link](#).

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 family or your child's teacher or are bringing something into the school, please park in the Jones Auto Body lot across the street from the main building on Balsam Ave. out of the 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.

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.

Arrival/Departure Patterns

Toddler Program:

Please drop off any older children first before bringing your toddler to their class. Toddler families should drive through the Toddler House driveway where a teacher will meet you at the car so you can say a quick goodbye to your child. If you need to communicate with the teacher, please write a note and hand it to her to keep the traffic flowing.

Primary Program:

Turn on Walnut Ave. at the light on Oak Ave., and then turn left onto Balsam Ave. Drive slowly onto the concrete pad outside the wooden fence alongside the playground, stopping parallel to the fencing so you do not have to back up to pull out. School staff will help your child out of the car and into the building. Exit the drop off area by driving forward up Balsam Ave. 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. Family to family 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 Ave. and walk them to the gate.

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 Ave.) when approaching the ramp to the elementary classes. Please do not block or turn around in the Toddler House 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 - 8:30AM to greet children as they arrive. You may escort your child to the classroom door or watch them until the teacher waves that they have received your child into their care.

Family Involvement

Expectations for All Families

Spruce Pine Montessori School was founded to be a community of learning for children, their families and the guides (Montessori teachers). From the beginning, our school has relied heavily on the participation and assistance of its families 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 families are involved in many aspects of school operations. Each family is encouraged to participate at whatever level they 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.

Families 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 families 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 families are asked to attend a classroom-specific orientation meeting. At that time, guides will review classroom procedures and policies. It is very important that all caregivers who are involved in their child's daily life plan to attend. Likewise, it is extremely important that your child attend the orientation week at the start of each new year.

Families are a very important part of making our school successful. Each year, the families of SPMS are asked to contribute to the enrichment of the school environment. Examples of opportunities to help include but are not limited to assisting in the classrooms; driving on field trips; assisting or leading fundraising events; helping with maintenance, repairs, and landscaping. Your contributions ensure a reasonable tuition rate and allow children to witness involvement with their education.

Families are expected to provide 30 Participation Hours (PH) during the August-May school year. Families with more than one child are asked for 45 annual hours of participation. Classroom newsletters and emails from the Head of School will communicate opportunities for fulfilling these hours. You can check with your child's teacher for classroom specific tasks, too. Families are responsible for logging PH on a Google doc provided by the Head of School at the beginning of each school year. All hours must be completed by the end of April. All hours not completed by the end of April will be billed at the rate of \$10 per hour in your May tuition invoice.

Elementary families are encouraged to drive on at least one field trip per year, help their child complete their homework, and volunteer at least once during the year with a special event.

Toddler families are encouraged to help with fundraising, maintenance, grocery shopping, and other duties outside the toddler classroom because we have found that it can be difficult for a toddler to see their family members during the day and not to go home when they leave.

Observations and Montessori Education

We ask that families observe in their child's classroom at least one time during the school year and preferably before conferences. Families of toddlers will make arrangements with the teachers as to how best to observe. Please call or email 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 the 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 any family enrichment opportunities at school as part of your Participation Hours, as educating yourself is one way to support the work of the school.

Work Days

Family workdays are planned twice each year, one in the fall and one in the spring. Please mark your calendar with the dates when the SPMS calendar is published. 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 families and build community.

Fundraising Events

Each year staff, families, 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 reasonable 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, families, and board members. Our regularly scheduled annual fundraisers are the Read-a-thon in February, Sweet Rewards Auction in the spring, and the Annual Appeal in December. It is our goal that every family has some involvement in fundraising for our school, whether it's making a donation, volunteering time to the events, or supporting your child while they read. Please also share our fundraising needs with friends and family who are supportive of our program.

Resources

Recommended Reading for Families

Many of these titles (and others) are available in the SPMS office in our lending library. We'll happily accept donated books that you think would be helpful to other families.

[The Absorbent Mind](#) by Maria Montessori

[The Secret of Childhood](#) by Maria Montessori

[The Montessori Method](#) by Maria 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 Families' 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

Websites

[Association Montessori Internationale](#)

[American Montessori Society](#)

[International Montessori Council](#)