

# **Spruce Mountain School District**

## **Student/Parent Handbook**

### **2018-2019**

## **Spruce Mountain Primary School**



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# Spruce Mountain Primary School 2018-2019

## Principal's Welcome

Dear Students and Parents:

This handbook provides specific information about our school's activities and policies. We urge all students, parents and staff to become familiar with this material and refer to it whenever questions arise. Of even more importance, we ask all parents, students and staff to endorse our core values to be kind, be safe, be respectful, and be responsible. By embracing these values and allowing them to guide our actions we believe each of us can attain the greatest possible success in our education, in our service to the community and in our personal lives.

At Spruce Mountain Primary School we expect the best and we achieve the best.  
At SMPS this is what you see:

- High academic standards and high academic achievement
- Courtesy and respect for all students and staff members
- Commitment to personal excellence
- Adherence to the rules & procedures of the classroom
- On time attendance to every class, every day
- Dedicated involvement in co-curricular activities
- Service to the community outside of school
- A drug free, alcohol free and tobacco free campus
- A school free of harassment, bullying and teasing
- A school where every student feels safe

Sincerely,

*Kevin Harrington*

Kevin Harrington  
Principal

The material covered within this student handbook is intended to convey general information, rules and procedures to students, parents and staff. It is not intended to either enlarge or diminish School Board policy, administrative regulation or negotiated agreement. Any information contained in this student handbook is subject to unilateral revision or elimination from time to time without notice and may also be superseded by Federal/State law Board policy, administrative regulation or negotiated agreement.

# Student/Parent Handbook

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2018-2019**

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## RSU 73 VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT

**Spruce Mountain School District Vision:** To ensure success through personalized learning.

**Mission:** Spruce Mountain School District is committed to providing all individuals with quality educational experiences in an academically, physically, socially and emotionally safe setting.

### **To help ensure success:**

- We will foster independent thinkers who take ownership and accountability of their learning.
- We will cultivate effective communicators.
- We will build a partnership with families and the community to carry out our shared responsibility for education.
- We will promote responsibility, respect, empathy and compassion throughout our schools and greater community.

### ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL TIMES

Busses will be dropping students off at SMPS at 7:35 am.

Parents transporting their children should drop them off by the main entrance between 7:35 am and 7:50 am.

Walkers and students being picked up will be dismissed at 2:05 pm, directly after announcements.

Wave one students will be dismissed to load busses at approximately 2:05 pm, and the second wave of students will be dismissed as soon as the second wave of busses arrive.

**Pre-K arrival is 8:20 am and dismissal at 1:20 pm.**

**Delayed start Wednesday 8:35am 7:35am coverage is available for families in need.**

### ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

The RSU #73 School Board requires a safe and healthy learning environment for district students, free of the detrimental effects of drugs and alcohol. Accomplishing this requires a cooperative effort among district staff, students, parents, law enforcement and organizations concerned with the use of drugs and alcohol by school-aged youth.

In order to promote the safety, health and well being of students, the Board endorses a three-pronged approach to address drug and alcohol use, abuse prevention and education, intervention and discipline. The superintendent or his or her designee is responsible for developing appropriate administrative procedures, curricula and programs to implement this policy.

### ASSEMBLIES, FILMS, FIELD TRIPS

Students are provided with a variety of assemblies, films, and field trips throughout the year to enrich their learning. It is important to know how to act during these events, and the general rule is courtesy. Parent chaperones are expected to ride the bus on field trips and may not bring pre-school children with them.

### ATTENDANCE

Regular school attendance is the first step in achieving academic success. Parents should help their children take responsibility for regular attendance.

Parents should call the school before 7:30 a.m. if their child is going to be absent.

#### Excused Absences

1. Personal illness – a note or phone call from a parent/guardian is required.
2. Professional health appointments that cannot be made outside of the regular school day – a note must be provided from the health care professional.
3. Observance of recognized religious holidays when the observance is required during the school day.
4. Emergency family situations (severe illness or death in the family).
5. Personal or educational absence which has been **APPROVED IN ADVANCE** by the Principal
6. Educational disruption.

Unexcused absences are all absences that are not included as excused absences.

Students are expected to make up work missed during any absence. Students may not attend extracurricular activities or special school events on any day of an absence from regular classes.

## BEHAVIOR/DISCIPLINE

An effective school climate is one that is nurturing, safe, and conducive to learning. In establishing a discipline policy, it is important to focus on encouraging students to make good choices and in being responsible for their behavior. In making these decisions, students learn that there are rewards and consequences for their actions. Our job as educators and parents is to guide students to rewards for appropriate choices and to assist them in learning from their mistakes. Within this framework, the teachers at Spruce Mountain Primary School have established a school-wide behavior management plan that supports the school's philosophy. It is hoped that this consistency provided by the school-wide plan will assist students in realizing their potential, thereby making the learning environment as productive as possible.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports is the school wide discipline plan that we use to make our school a great place to learn. PBIS uses proactive measures and school-wide expectations to enable students to achieve social and academic success in school. Such supports and expectations are developed, implemented, and monitored by all staff members working in the school. Implementing these expectations school wide can reduce frequency of students who engage in problem behavior.

First, there must be a set of clearly described expectations for student behavior. In the classroom, this includes a set of classroom expectations that set the parameters for student behavior in social and academic areas. In the school, behavioral expectations and limits for student behavior include rules for each common area: cafeteria, halls, bathrooms, playground, and dismissal. All of the behavioral expectations for RSU 73 schools have been placed into specific categories such as be kind, be safe, be respectful and be responsible.

Second, the expectations must be taught to mastery. This is accomplished by explaining the rules, giving and eliciting examples, then engaging students in both guided and independent practice of each rule.

Third, a system of cues and prompts during the time the students are learning the expectations can facilitate student success. All RSU 73 classroom teachers use a behavior chart in their classroom to help facilitate student success in following the expectations of the PBIS school wide system.

Finally, continuous monitoring of the fluency with which students demonstrate those appropriate and desired behaviors gives the staff needed feedback.

What happens when students begin to demonstrate inappropriate behavior again? Review and re-teaching are a critical piece of an effective system of positive behavioral supports. Taking time at periodic intervals based on data to bring students back to mastery on a specific behavioral expectation will enable the classroom and school to function as a safe and orderly learning environment.

When our PBIS bucket is full (located in the main office) the PBIS Committee determines a school-wide activity. Should any student receive three (3) or more Behavioral Slips from one school-wide PBIS activity to the following PBIS school-wide activity, that student does not participate in the current school-wide PBIS activity. Once the current school-wide PBIS activity is complete, the student not participating due to three (3) or more slips begins the process with zero (0) slips.

[See the PBIS Handbook for additional information.](#)

## BICYCLES

Walkers are allowed to bring bicycles to school. Riding bicycles on the school grounds is prohibited during school hours. Students are not to touch, sit on, or ride a bicycle that does not belong to them.

“Maine Law requires that anyone under the age of 16 operating a bicycle, or riding in a bicycle seat or trailer must wear a properly fitting bicycle helmet. A bicycle helmet reduces the risk of head injury by as much as 85% if you are in a bicycle crash.”

## BOMB THREATS

The Spruce Mountain School Board recognizes that bomb threats are a significant concern to the school unit. Whether real and carried out or intended as a prank or for some other purpose, a bomb threat represents a potential danger to the safety and welfare of students and staff and to the integrity of school property. Bomb threats disrupt the instructional program and learning environment and also place significant demands on school financial resources and public safety services. These effects occur even when such threats prove to be false.

No person shall make, or communicate by any means, whether verbal or non-verbal, a threat that a bomb has been, or will be, placed on school premises. Because of the potential for evacuation of the schools and other disruption of school

operations, placement of a bomb or of a "look-alike" bomb on school premises will be considered a threat for the purpose of this policy.

Communicating by any means that any toxic or hazardous substance or material has been placed, or will be placed, on school premises with the intent to endanger the safety and welfare of students or staff and/or to disrupt the operations of the schools is also prohibited. For the purpose of this policy, "toxic or hazardous substance or material" means any material or substance, including biomedical materials or organisms, that, when placed as threatened, could be harmful to humans.

## BUS RULES AND POLICY

General:

The right of pupils to ride on the school bus is conditioned on their behavior and observance of the rules pertaining to proper conduct. Drivers are authorized to enforce these rules and to make suggestions in line with good citizenship. Misbehavior on the bus jeopardizes the safety of everyone. Poor behavioral issues are dealt with most seriously.

Provision:

Meeting the bus:

1. All pupils must be on time.
2. Pupils walking on the highway to a bus stop should always walk on the left, on the shoulder of the road, facing traffic.
3. Pupils, when crossing the highway, should walk, not run.
4. Pupils shall not run alongside the bus when it is moving.
5. Pupils shall not push and crowd into the roadway when waiting for or entering the bus.

On the bus:

Expected Bus Behavior

### Level I Behaviors

- Be seated when the bus is moving
- Always share seats with others
- Speak quietly at all times
- Use only appropriate language
- Do not speak in a way that teases, hurts or harasses others
- Keep the bus clean
- Do not eat or drink on the bus without permission of the driver
- Do not use cell phones at any time on the school bus during regular bus trips.

### Level II Behaviors

- Keep hands, head and feet inside the bus
- Do not throw any object on the bus or out of the bus
- Do nothing to threaten the safety of others on or off the bus
- Do not vandalize the bus or anyone's personal property
- Do not hit, punch, kick, or physically assault another student

### Level III Behaviors

- Possession or use of the following:
  - Weapons
  - Matches or lighter
  - Controlled substance including drugs, alcohol and tobacco
  - Threaten or strike the bus driver

- Cell phones may be used with driver permission on all co-curricular trips.
- Follow the bus driver's directions as soon as they are issued.
- Do not act in a disrespectful or defiant manner toward the bus driver.
- Do not use sexually explicit, inappropriate, or derogatory language or obscene gestures.

### Consequences of Level I Misbehavior

- Parental notification and one or more of the following:
  - Warning, Assigned seat, Behavior Contract

### Consequences of Level II Misbehavior or Continued Level I Misbehaviors

- Parental notification and one or more of the following:
  - One to five days bus suspension
  - One to three days school suspension

### Consequences of Level III Misbehavior or Continued Level II Misbehaviors

- Parental notification and one or more of the following:
  - Five day or longer bus suspension
  - Three to ten days school suspension
  - Expulsion hearing
  - Contract with policy

Adopted by RSU 73 Board: December 13, 2012

Bus stop changes will be made only when there is a change in legal residence or a change in childcare location. When it is necessary for a student to ride a bus other than his/her bus home, the student must bring a signed note from his/her parent/guardian to the school office. There it will be approved and a bus pass will be given to the student to take to the bus. The bus driver must be presented with an approved bus pass before allowing the student to ride the bus. \*\*\*The office should be made aware of bus changes before noon. Attempting to make bus changes during dismissal can lead to bus errors due to the hectic nature of dismissal time.

School bus fire and evacuation drills will be conducted periodically on each bus. If you do not wish for your child to be a

leader and assist in bus evacuations please send a letter to the Transportation Director.

### CLASSROOM REQUEST

Parents/guardians may request a student class assignment on or before April 1<sup>st</sup> of the current year.

### COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Children who have been home ill with a communicable disease may be required to provide a physician's statement before returning to school.

Strep Throat: Children diagnosed as having strep throat are excluded from school until 24 hours after the treatment started. Please contact our school nurse with any questions.

### COMMUNICATION

Education is most effective when it is a partnership between parents and teachers. Teachers are encouraged to contact parents regularly. Formal Parent/Teacher Conferences are held each November. Parents are encouraged to call if there are questions concerning their child's progress

Report cards will be sent home once a trimester. The reports will be accompanied by a comment sheet that explains what your child has demonstrated over the trimester.

Each year, the staff invites all parents to an evening program in their classroom. An Open House allows teachers to know their student's parents, inform parents of curriculum and student behavior goals, establish the means for communicating student progress, and share thoughts about their programs. We encourage parents to communicate anytime that they have a question, concern or suggestion about their child's education.

### CONFIDENTIALITY

Students are allowed to share confidential information with administration, social worker, faculty, and support staff personnel employed by the school. Any information that is shared in a confidential manner is expected to be kept confidential. Only in the case of an issue related to personal safety would a school department employee be exempt from the requested status of confidentiality on information shared with them by a student.

### CONTACTING STUDENTS AT SCHOOL

To minimize the interruptions of classes in session and the school day in general, we ask your cooperation in requesting messages be forwarded to students only in cases of extreme emergencies.

### CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS

Spruce Mountain School District recognizes that the consideration of controversial issues has a legitimate place in the public school curriculum. Therefore, the Board has developed a policy which addresses the role of the school, the teachers, the students, and the parents in those matters where opposing viewpoints exists. The policy includes procedures for modifying any student's participation in any activity, which may be deemed controversial.

### CRISIS MANAGEMENT

In the event that there is a crisis affecting the Spruce Mountain community, the RSU 73 Safety Committee will meet. The purpose of the team is to gather information about the event, design a plan to assist members of the school community in dealing with the event/incident, and implement/monitor the plan.

### DISMISSALS

Dismissal arrangements must be made through the office. Please call or send a note in advance. You will need to stop at the office and sign your child out when you arrive. Children will only be released to their parent/guardian unless the parent/guardian has authorized the school in writing to release the child to some other responsible adult. Students will not be called to the office until the adult arrives, therefore if the child has an appointment, please plan accordingly. Once students have been signed out in the office – parents will wait in the foyer of the main entrance. This will help maintain a secure environment for our students and to minimize interruptions as teachers are completing instruction, processing the day's events with their classes, and getting all students prepared for the end of the day. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.



## DRESS CODE

Students should be properly dressed for the weather. Students are required to go outside during recess time, weather permitting, unless there is a medical reason for them to remain inside. Persistent requests will require a note from a doctor.

Students are expected to dress appropriately for daily activities; i.e., recess, physical education, field trips, etc. If student clothing is inappropriate, dangerous or distracting, parents will be called. Tank tops with oversized arm openings, short shorts, and short tops are not appropriate dress for school. Midriff (belly shirts) and spaghetti strap tops are not allowed and shorts must extend from waist to fingertips when arms are extended. There should be no skin visible between a student's shirt and pants/shorts. No clothing with alcohol or cigarette advertisements, guns, or violence will be allowed. Hat Rule: Students are not to wear hats in the building. Students should refrain from wearing high heels, flip flops, platform shoes, and heelys as they propose a safety hazard for primary students. Students are not allowed to bring make up to school. (i.e. eye shadow, lipstick, lip gloss).

## ELEVATOR USE

The elevator is to be used only by those students who are physically unable to use the stairways. Only those students approved by the office may use the elevator.

## FIRE DRILLS

A fire drill evacuation map is posted in each room. Students are expected to familiarize themselves with proper exits in each of their classrooms. The teacher in each classroom will give instructions on proper evacuation procedures. Students will evacuate the building in a quick, quiet, and orderly fashion. Running and loud disturbances will not be tolerated. All driveways, roads, and parking areas are to be kept clear of any obstructions so that emergency vehicles may move freely.

Fire drills will be conducted as to provide students with practice of how and where to evacuate each of our facilities.

- Fire drill will be indicated by a continuous buzzing sound. All clear for return to the building will be sounded on the outside speaker.
- Please walk briskly, but do not run.
- Teachers: All teachers should instruct students assigned to their homerooms and daily classes on the proper procedures for leaving the building from the various locations in the building.
- The teacher should be the last one out of the room after closing all windows and doors. Once outside the teacher is responsible for attendance of assigned students. Any missing students are to be reported immediately to administration.
- Lockdown drills may occur periodically throughout the year.

## FLOWER/BALLOON DELIVERIES

The delivery of gifts, flowers, balloons, etc. during the school day is discouraged. Any gifts, flowers, balloons, etc. that are delivered to the school will be held in the office until the end of the school day. At the end of the school day, any deliveries will be made to the appropriate classroom/student.

## FOOD

Throughout the school year students may participate in activities that include the use of food. We ask that parents complete the "Edibles Permission Slip" to ensure your wishes regarding food are known and that no safety concern exists. Please also ensure that the school nurse (897-3355 x305) is aware of any concerns.

## FOOD SERVICE

The Spruce Mountain Nutrition Program offers students a variety of food choices. A hot meal with fruit and vegetable choices may be obtained daily. Meals served meet the federal meal pattern requirements of the National School Lunch Program.

Students may also apply for free or reduced lunch by filling out and submitting the appropriate form. The forms are available in the main office. Students will be notified whether they qualify for one of these programs.

**Breakfast Program:** Breakfast is free for all students. The cost of adult breakfast is \$2.50. The menu varies.

**Lunch:** Lunches may be paid for daily, weekly, or monthly. School lunch personnel maintain a record of lunches purchased and lunches provided. No tickets are distributed. Students will be notified when there are limited funds available in his/her account.

Parents are also reminded that the school board does not endorse the charging of lunches. Students without lunch money should bring money for lunch on the next school day. The cost of meals (subject to change) is:

Adult Lunches:	\$4.00	Reduced Student Lunches:	free
Student Lunches:	\$2.45	Single milk purchase:	\$0.50

Checks should be made out to the Spruce Mountain School Lunch Program for individual students or all students in the family attending RSU#73 Schools.

### HARASSMENT

Spruce Mountain School District recognizes the rights of each student to work in an atmosphere free of intimidation, ridicule, hostility and offensiveness. In order to insure such an atmosphere students are prohibited from harassing other students where harassment is based upon race, color, sex, religion, age, national origin, or handicap. Acts of this nature are not only a violation of this policy but also constitute illegal discrimination under state and federal laws. Examples of prohibited harassment include unwelcome sexual advances, gestures, comments or contact; threats; offensive jokes; and ridicule, slurs, derogatory action or remarks.

If students feel they are being harassed they should tell the person doing it that his or her behavior is not welcome or appropriate and that the behavior needs to stop. If a student is uncomfortable with confronting the alleged harasser, he or she should go to a teacher, social worker, or administrator with the complaint. Also, if a student has confronted the alleged harasser and the behavior has not stopped, the student should go to the social worker or administrator. The social worker or administrator will determine the extent of the harassment and begin an investigation if necessary.

During a harassment investigation, the student will complete a harassment report and the principal or his or her designee will interview the alleged harasser. The purpose of this investigation is to determine the facts and to get any harassing behavior to stop. If the behavior does not stop, disciplinary measures will be applied.

At any time in this process, the student who feels he or she is being harassed and/or his or her parents can contact the principal or the District's Affirmative Action Officer, Chris Hollingsworth (897-5719) for advice on the various options available to them. If the student and/or parents do not feel the situation has been resolved, they may also contact the Director of the U.S. Office of Civil Rights, Department of Education, Washington, D.C. and/or State House Station #51, Augusta.

RSU 73 recognizes its responsibilities to address, investigate and take action relative to violations of individual Civil Rights, Hate Crimes, Intolerance and Prejudice that may occur on school grounds or at school sanctioned activities. In addition to school related discipline involving these specific areas, victims of such violations may be encouraged to go outside the school district and file their specific complaint with the Maine Department Attorney General.

### HEALTH SERVICES AND SAFETY

The school nurse provides health services and programs that are beneficial to the students' physical and emotional well being in the school environment. Health counseling and free health pamphlets are available. Students not in compliance with Maine law concerning immunizations may be excluded from school until the matter is resolved.

For emergency first aid and illness during school, assistance is available from the school nurse who will determine a course of action. When the nurse is not present, students should go to the main office. Students must not leave the building because of illness without authorization.

Physical examinations are recommended for all students entering kindergarten, grade six and grade nine, and are to be done by the students' own physicians. A school physical form should be filled out by the student's physician, returned to the school nurse, and kept in the student's health record. Records shall be retained according to the current State schedules pertaining to student health records. The school nurse will report any identified medical problems to the principal for that student. Information regarding a student's wellness, allergies, medications, precautions, and restrictions during physical education or school athletics should be given in writing to the school nurse and any of his or her athletic coaches.

The school will make every effort to inform the parents of an accident or illness occurring at school that may need care or observation at home. However, no students will be sent home unless a responsible adult is there to receive them.

### MEDICATION POLICY:

If your doctor requests that a medication be administered to your child at school, it must be left in charge of the nurse or school official. The following information is required:

1. Student's name
2. Parent's Signature
3. Dosage, time, duration to be given
5. Name of medication
6. Condition for which drug is prescribed
7. Side effects, if any

4. Doctor's signed request or the bottle with the prescription on it

It is against school policy for students to carry medication/drugs on school property. Medications must be transported to school by an adult. Medications such as cough syrup, cough drops, Tylenol and "over-the-counter" drugs will not be given at school. Please give these around school hours. Children with a persistent cough should be home.

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's health, please contact the school nurse.

### **SCENTED PRODUCTS/ESSENTIAL OILS**

We discourage the use of scented products at school like perfumes, sprays, oils or lotions as they may cause an adverse reaction in others with sensitivities/allergies.

We are NOT allowed to administer items that are not FDA approved. Therefore, we cannot administer items such as but not limited to herbal supplements, essential oils, and other naturopathic items. These items have proven effective for many, and if used should be administered at home. Consider applying to locations, such as the soles of the feet that allow the user to reap the benefits while minimizing untoward reactions in those with sensitivities.

### **HOMEWORK**

It is important for parents to become involved in their child's homework. A specific study time and area are the responsibility of the parent and child. Parents are encouraged to inquire daily with their child about homework assignments. Generally, weekly spelling words and math facts are required as homework for grades K-2. All K-2 students should read nightly. A copy of the homework policy is enclosed for your information.

### **RSU 73 HOMEWORK POLICY**

The purpose of homework is to assist in skill development and to create interest in school subjects. It should have a positive effect on achievement and character development and can serve as a vital link between the school and family.

Homework should have different purposes at different grades. For younger students, it should foster positive attitudes, habits and character traits. For older students, it should facilitate knowledge acquisition in specific topics.

Efforts should be made to coordinate the amount of homework through departmental or grade level meetings. The frequency and duration of homework assignments should be reasonable. The following is recommended:

- A. Grade 1 to 3 A student's total daily homework assignments be an average of 15 minutes, one to three times a week.
- B. Grade 4 to 5 A students' total daily homework assignments be an average of 15 to 45 minutes, two to four times a week.
- C. Grade 6 to 8 A students' total daily homework assignments be an average of 30 to 60 minutes, three to four times a week.
- D. Grade 9 to 12 A students' total daily homework assignments be an average of 60 to 120 minutes, four to five times a week.

Students would be made aware of:

- A. The purpose of the assignment;
- B. How the assignment is related to the topic under study;
- C. How the assignment might be best carried out;
- D. What he/she needs to do to demonstrate that the assignment has been completed; and
- E. How all homework assignments will be evaluated.

Parents should be made aware of RSU 73's homework policy.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

Every year many personal articles of clothing remain unclaimed. Parents are encouraged to have their child check the lost and found hooks if anything is missing. Parents are also encouraged to ask about unfamiliar articles that your child may have as clothing sometimes gets mixed up and children may exchange things without parental knowledge.

Unclaimed clothing is donated to those in need.

### **NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

Spruce Mountain School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, age, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, religion, or physical or mental disability in admission to, access to, treatment in, or employment in its programs and activities. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

RSU 73 Affirmative Action Officer, Chris Hollingsworth.

Inquiries concerning the application of nondiscrimination policies may also be referred to the Regional Director, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, S.W. McCormack POCH Room 222, Boston, MA 02109-4557.

## PARKING

Parents are requested to park in the parking lot on the church side of the school. There is no parking near the school. This area is for emergencies and buses. NOTE: It is against state law to pass a school bus when its red lights are flashing, even in the school yard. The circle is for drop off only (stop and go). Please do not block the roadway. If coming into the building use one of the five designated parent parking spots or other available parking spots.

## PARTIES

School parties are scheduled by the classroom teachers and will be restricted to special occasions. Students wishing to have parties for teachers are requested to do so with the permission of the building principal.

## PERSONAL PARTIES

Your child will not be allowed to distribute personal party invitations at school unless they have invitations for every student in their classroom.

## PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOS

From time to time, student pictures are taken or videos made for various purposes at school including, but not limited to documenting projects, awards ceremonies, and special projects. If you ***do not*** wish to have your child's picture taken and/or published please contact the school and document your request in writing.

Your child's classroom teacher may choose to place classroom pictures on their classroom web page. This may indicate that your child's picture could be added to the web page. However, student names will not be used at any time on the web page (picture only). If you ***do not*** wish to have your child's picture on our school web page, please document this in writing to the school.

## PERSONAL PROPERTY

These items should be brought to school every day:

- Recommended supplies (pencils, crayons, markers, rulers, erasers, scissors, pencil box, folders, colored pencils, glue sticks, pencil sharpener, yellow highlighter, and other items identified by grade level staffs).

These Items must not be brought to school:

- Large items or live animals on the bus
- Dangerous articles (i.e. knives, guns, bullets, matches, etc.)
- Expensive/valuable articles such as radios, tape player, CD players, electronic games, trading cards, etc.
- Large amounts of money
- Any alcohol or tobacco product.
- Inappropriate literature and/or publications
- Other items as may be determined by the principal

## PICKING STUDENTS UP AFTER SCHOOL

Parents who are going to pick up their children after school should report to the office and sign them out. Please arrive by 2:00pm to ensure that your child is not dismissed to the bus. Once students have been signed out in – parents will wait in the foyer area of the main entrance. This will help maintain a secure environment for our students and to minimize interruptions as teachers are completing instruction, processing the days events with their classes, and getting all students prepared for the end of the day. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

## PLAYGROUND RESPECT AND SAFETY

1. No contact sports allowed.
2. No hardballs, bats, or skateboards.
3. Use equipment properly. (i.e. no walking up slide, standing on swings, jumping off swings, without walking across top of equipment)
4. Use trashcans. Do not litter.
5. Line up immediately at the teacher's instruction.
7. No gum, hard candy or lollipops.
8. Slide in correct forward manner.
9. Stay away from windows and all doors.
10. Do not leave the playground or enter the building teacher permission.
11. Do not throw ice or snow. Stay off icy areas.
12. Dress appropriately for each season.

6. Enter the building quietly.  
pants, do not slide on banks.

13. If without boots, stay on paved areas only. If without snow

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance will be conducted each morning. All students are encouraged to stand.

#### **PRE-K & KINDERGARTEN**

Students entering school for the first time must register during registration day in late spring if a resident of Jay/Livermore/Livermore Falls at that time. All incoming Pre-K and Kindergarten students will be screened, as mandated by state guidelines. The screenings consists of the following: a vision and hearing check, speech screening and academic testing. Parents will be provided information on this screening, especially if there are any possible problems noted.

### **QUESTIONING AND SEARCHES**

In order to maintain a safe and orderly environment in the school, administrators are authorized to question and search students. In addition, student use of all school storage facilities, including but not limited to lockers, desks, and parking lots, is a privilege granted by the school district. All storage facilities are district property and remain under the control, custody and supervision of the district. Students have no expectation of privacy in district storage facilities or for any items placed in such storage facilities. District staff has the authority to inspect and search storage facilities and their contents on a random basis, with or without reasonable suspicion, and without notice or consent.

If a search produces evidence that a student has violated or is violating the law or school or district policy, such evidence may be seized and impounded by the administrator and appropriate disciplinary action may be taken. Evidence may be forwarded to law enforcement authorities as required by law or as deemed appropriate by the administrator.

### **SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS, DELAYS OR EARLY DISMISSALS**

It is sometimes necessary to cancel school, delay opening or dismiss early due to poor weather conditions. When concerned about weather conditions, parents should listen to the following radio stations for special school closing announcements: WKTJ in Farmington, WPOR in Portland, WBLM in Portland, WGAN in Portland, WKCG in Augusta, WCSH-TV in Portland, and [www.rsu73.org](http://www.rsu73.org). School messenger will also be used by district personnel.

We encourage parents to provide specific instructions as to where your child will go when dismissed for inclement weather. As time permits, we will activate school messenger for parent notification.

### **SCHOOL EVACUATIONS**

School closing due to evacuation will also be broadcast as listed. A telephone network will be set up for evacuations only.

### **SCHOOL PROPERTY**

Students are responsible for all school properties, such as chairs, desks, and library books, which are assigned for their use. Reimbursement for any damage is at the current replacement price.

Students will be provided with storage for appropriate books, materials, and personal belongings of the students. However, the school shall remain the owners of such storage. Periodic general inspection of school storage space may be conducted by school authorities for any reason, at any time — without notice, consent, or search warrant.

### **SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS**

Spruce Mountain Primary School has an active school volunteer program. Parents are sent a volunteer sign-up form at the beginning of the year. In addition, forms are always available at the school office.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION**

Students with special education needs have the right to a free and appropriate educational program by law. The process by which these services are assessed in the public schools is by a referral to the Individualized Education Planning Team (IEP) of the school. The IEP is composed of teachers, parents, special educators and administrators. It is the assessments and recommendations of the IEP, which determine the kind and amount of services provided. More information may be obtained by contacting the special education director at 897-6722 X118.

Section 504 is part of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which was enacted by congress to combat discrimination against individuals with disabilities in services, programs and activities administered by any entity that receives federal funds, including public schools. Students found eligible under Section 504 will be provided with an equal educational opportunity to gain access to a free and appropriate public education.

## STUDENT RECORDS

The School maintains accurate, updated records on all students. Parents have certain rights and responsibilities and should contact the principal with any questions on this policy.

Parents are responsible for completing the Student Information Sheet and returning it to the school as soon as possible. Parents are also responsible for contacting the school if any of the information on this sheet changes. It is imperative that the school knows how to reach parents or have another designated person's telephone number to use in the event of an emergency.

Parents shall have the right to inspect and review any and all official records, files, and data related to their children, including the material which is part of student's cumulative record folder, and intended for school use or to be available to parties outside the school or school system, and specifically including — but not limited to — identifying data; academic work completed; level of achievement; attendance data; scores on standardized intelligence, aptitude, and psychological test; interest inventory results; health data; family background information; teacher or counselor rating and observations; and verified reports of serious or recurrent behavior patterns.

RSU 73 has established appropriate procedures for granting a parent request for access to their child's school records. Such requests should be made to the principal. The school shall provide a school employee to interpret the information within the folder to the parents. Parents may request copies of materials contained in their child's records at their own expense.

Information, which the school maintains for student identification purposes, may be released to other parties at the discretion of the principal. This information includes items such as name, address, parent's name, etc. Parents may request that this information not be released. These requests must be in writing and should be sent to the principal.

## STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Grade 3-5 students are administered a state student assessment. Grade K-5 students are administered the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) Test.

All students are given reading tests when appropriate. Teacher-made tests are given as announced by the teacher and students should be encouraged to study for them.

Parental permission is obtained prior to administering any individual test batteries to determine student ability, learning disabilities, etc.

## STUDENT TECHNOLOGY USE

The information technology and network use policy governs the use of computers and networks in Spruce Mountain School District. As a user of these resources, students are responsible for reading and understanding this policy. It protects the consumers of computing resources, computing hardware and networks, and the system administrator.

Spruce Mountain School District utilizes filtering technology designed to block any materials that are obscene or harmful to minors. The district is in compliance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) as mandated by federal law. Spruce Mountain School District is not responsible for internet use at home with equipment owned by the school.

Computers and networks can provide access to resources on and off school campus, as well as, communication with other users worldwide. Such access is a privilege and requires that individual users act responsibly. Users must respect the rights of other users, respect the integrity of the systems and related physical resources, and observe all relevant laws, regulations, and contracted obligations. Users must exercise care in acknowledging and respecting the work of others through strict adherence to software licensing agreements and copyright laws.

Users do not own accounts on RSU 73's computers but are granted the privilege of use. Technology staff will have access to users' files in the normal course of their employment when necessary to protect the integrity of computer systems or the rights or property of RSU 73. All employees, students, parents and community members are expected to observe the following rules of network etiquette:

- Do not disclose personal information about yourself or others.
- Give credit to copyrighted materials found on the world wide web.
- Use of e-mail must comply with Spruce Mountain educational policies. Threatening or harmful e-mail will result in loss of privileges and possible further legal action.

Computers, networks and the Internet are provided for educational curriculum and applied research consistent with the learning objectives of RSU 73. Each user is responsible for his/her actions and activities involving school unit computers, networks and Internet services, and for his/her computer files, passwords and accounts. Examples of unacceptable use that are expressly prohibited include but are not limited to the following:

- accessing inappropriate materials

- illegal activities
- violating copyrights
- plagiarism
- copying software
- non-school related uses
- misuse of passwords/unauthorized access
- malicious use/vandalism
- unauthorized access to chat rooms/news groups
- unauthorized games, downloads and software installation

RSU 73 assumes no responsibility for any unauthorized charges made by students, including but not limited to credit card charges, long distance telephone charges, equipment and line costs, or for any illegal use of its computers such as copyright violations.

Be mindful that the availability of the Internet as a research tool is a tremendous benefit to the students, parents, employees and community users. Any attempts to vandalize, destroy data, will be cause for revocation of privileges.

### STUDENT USE OF OFFICE TELEPHONE

Students will be allowed to use the office telephone only in emergency situations, and then only with the permission of the classroom teacher. Students cannot use cell phones during school hours.

### SUBSTITUTES

Our school is fortunate in having capable people to help us whenever our regular teachers are ill or are attending conferences. A substitute teacher is an important asset whose impression of our school will be carried into the community. Let us be certain that these are good impressions by being polite, helpful and as considerate as you would be to your regular teacher.

### TITLE IA SERVICES

Title IA services are provided in the areas of supplemental math and reading instruction at the K-2 level. Parents are notified of their child's eligibility and/or participation in this program.

### VISITORS

Parents are always welcome at school. Visits and meetings must be arranged with the classroom teacher prior to the visit. To help ensure the safety of our students, all visitors must report to the main office. They will be asked to state their business and issued a visitor's pass **PRIOR** to going to any part of the building. School staff has been asked to report any unauthorized persons immediately to the office.

Dismissal – once students have been signed out in the office – parents will wait in the foyer area of the main entrance. This will help maintain a secure environment for our students and to minimize interruptions as teachers are wrapping up instruction, processing the days events with their classes, and getting all students prepared for the end of the day. We appreciate your cooperation in this matter.

### WIRELESS COMMUNICATION DEVICES

Any communication device that is brought to school must be turned off and kept in the office or backpack until the end of the school day. If a student needs to call home (for instance, to arrange after school transportation: to pass on cancellation information; or to have something from home brought to school), they must first get permission from one of their teachers to use the office telephone.

### SPRUCE MOUNTAIN POLICIES

All schools in RSU 73 are subject to RSU 73 policies. If there is a conflict between a primary school procedure and a district policy, the district policy shall be updated to the SMPS handbook may occur throughout the year. In all cases the most up to date handbook will be on the school's web page.

### SPRUCE MOUNTAIN DISTRICT MEAL CHARGING POLICY

EFDB

All students in grades K-8 shall be allowed to charge their school lunches for up to three meals. Failure to pay after three meals shall result in the loss of charging privileges until such time as payment is received. Parents shall be notified of existing charges and be requested to render payment. A substitute meal provision may be made for students in the elementary school.

Adopted: August 22, 2002

**SPRUCE MOUNTAIN DISTRICT**  
**PROMOTION & RETENTION OF STUDENTS IN GRADES K to 8 POLICY**

**IKE**

Philosophy:

It is the intent of Spruce Mountain School District to offer appropriate instruction to all students in a developmental, progressive and sequential way. The grade placement of each child should be made on an individual basis and promotion should be tied to the attainment of academic and developmental criteria. Spruce Mountain believes that parents, teachers, and administration should be involved as early as possible in identifying areas of need.

Spruce Mountain Board of Directors  
School System Commitment to Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior Policy

ADAA

The Board of Directors believes that promoting ethical and responsible behavior is an essential part of the school unit's educational mission. The Board recognizes that ethics, constructive attitudes, responsible behavior, and "character" are important if a student is to leave school as a "responsible and involved citizen," as described in the Guiding Principles of the Maine Learning Results. The Board also recognizes that Maine law requires the adoption of a district-wide student code of conduct consistent with statewide standards for student behavior developed by the Commissioner of the

Department of Education in compliance with 20-A MRSA § 254(11).

The Board seeks to create and maintain a school climate in which ethical and responsible behavior can flourish. The Board believes that instilling a sense of ethics and responsibility in students requires setting positive expectations for student behavior as well as establishing disciplinary consequences for behavior that violates Board policy or school rules. Further, the Board believes that in order to teach ethical and responsible behavior, adults who interact with students must strive to model and reinforce ethical and responsible behavior. To that end, the Board supports an active partnership between schools and parents.

Recognizing that collaboratively identified core values are the foundation for a school culture that encourages and reinforces ethical and responsible student behavior, the Board is committed to the establishment and implementation of a process for identifying shared values and setting and enforcing standards for behavior, including prescription of consequences for unacceptable behavior. The process for identifying such shared values will invite and include the participation of Board members, school administrators, staff, parents, students, and the community. Core values will be reviewed periodically, with opportunity for public participation. The Board will direct the Superintendent/designee to develop a process to assess school system progress toward achievement of an ethical and responsible school culture.

Following the identification of core values, the Board, with input from administrators, staff, parents, students, and members of the community, will adopt a Student Code of Conduct consistent with statewide standards for student behavior<sup>1</sup> that shall, as required by law:

- A. Define unacceptable student behavior;
- B. Establish standards of student responsibility for behavior;
- C. Prescribe consequences for violation of the Student Code of Conduct, including first-time violations, when appropriate;



- D. Describe appropriate procedures for referring students in need of special services to those services;
  - E. Establish criteria to determine when further assessment of a current Individual Education Plan (IEP) is necessary, based on removal of the student from class;
  - F. Establish policies and procedures concerning the removal of disruptive or violent students from a classroom or a school bus, as well as student disciplinary and placement decisions, when appropriate; and
  - G. Establish guidelines and criteria concerning the appropriate circumstances when the Superintendent/designee may provide information to the local police or other appropriate law enforcement authorities regarding an offense that involves violence committed by any person on school grounds or other school property.
- The Student Code of Conduct will be reviewed periodically by the Board, with input from administrators, staff, parents, students, and members of the community.
- Students, parents, staff, and the community will be informed of the Student Code of Conduct through handbooks and/or other means selected by the Superintendent/designee.

**Ethics and Curriculum**

The Board also encourages schools, school administrators and staff to provide students with meaningful opportunities to apply values and ethical and responsible behavior through activities such as problem solving.

Legal Reference: 20-A MRSA §§ 254, 1001(15)

Adopted: September 13, 2012

<sup>1</sup>The statewide standards are the “core values” identified in the report of the Commission for Ethical and Responsible Student Behavior, Taking Responsibility: Standards for Ethical and Responsible Behavior in Maine Schools and Communities. The core values are: Respect, Honesty, Compassion, Fairness, Responsibility and Courage. The Code of Conduct must be “consistent with,” not identical to, the statewide standards developed under 20 M.R.S.A. § 254(11). This provides an opportunity for communities to identify their own core values and articulate what they “look like” when applied to behavior. The core values serve as a basis for school system expectations for student conduct.

## Appendix A

<b>SMPS Major Assessments</b>			
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Measures</b>	<b>Testing Date</b>
Pre-K	Owl, Brigance	Readiness	Sept
K	Fountas & Pinnell	Reading Achievement/Comprehension	Jan/May
	NWEA	Academic Performance in Math/Reading/Language Usage/Science	Jan/May
	Brigance	Readiness	Sept
	Observation Survey	Letter ID/Hearing/Recording Sound/Concepts of Print	Sept/May
1	Fountas & Pinnell	Reading Achievement/Comprehension	Oct/Jan/May
	NWEA	Academic Performance in Math/Reading/Language Usage/Science	Oct/Jan/May
	Observation Survey	Hearing & Recording Sounds/Letter Name Identification/Sound ID	Sept
2	Fountas & Pinnell	Reading Achievement/Comprehension	Oct/Jan/May
	NWEA	Academic Performance in Math/Reading/Language Usage/Science	Oct/Jan/May

## Appendix B

### Spruce Mountain Primary School PBIS School-Wide Rules and Expectations

	<i>Bathroom</i>	<i>Hallways/*Stairway</i>	<i>Cafeteria</i>	<i>Playground</i>
<b>Be Kind</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use kind words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walk around, not through, when there is a conversation in the hallway.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Assist classmates with opening packages, cartons, etc.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use kind words.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use please and thank you.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Invite others to play.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Share equipment.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Allow everyone to play.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take turns.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be an upstander</li> </ul>
<b>Be Safe</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wash and dry your hands.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Keep hands to yourself.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Put paper towels in the trash.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walk on the right side at all times.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Face forward when walking.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow the door policy.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Remain seated and facing forward.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Eat your <u>own</u> lunch.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clean up your eating area/floor.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Walk at all times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Wear appropriate clothing.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Only closed-toe shoes on the structure.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use equipment appropriately.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stay in designated areas.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be aware of people around you.</li> </ul>
<b>Be Respectful</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Give privacy.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use quiet voices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use quiet voices.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Maintain your place in line.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respect personal space and property.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Be respectful to others in the hallway and classrooms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Talk quietly and use inside voices.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use table manners.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Listen to adults.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respond politely.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow teacher's directions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respect personal space.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Stand in line quietly to enter and exit the building.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Respect the property of others.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Use appropriate language.</li> </ul>
<b>Be Responsible</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Flush the toilet when done.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Leave the bathroom area clean.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Shut off the faucet.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Report any problem to an adult.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Take care of business in a timely manner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Report any unsafe behaviors or concerns to an adult.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow the quiet rule in response to lighting change.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow directions.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Fill in each table until it's full.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Raise your hand for assistance.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Clean up your things and pick up after yourself.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Accept consequences without arguing or complaining.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Report issues to the duty teacher.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Follow the rules of the game.</li> </ul>

			<input type="checkbox"/> Wait to be dismissed to dump and line up quietly.	
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## Appendix C:

### The Parent-Teacher Partnership

The experts have been polled and the results are in: a positive parent-teacher relationship contributes to your child's school success.

"Easier said than done," you may be thinking. After all, there are teachers your child will love and teachers your child may not. There are teachers you'll like and dislike as well. There are teachers who may adore your child, and those who just don't understand him. But whatever the case, your child's teacher is the second most important person in your child's life (after her parents, of course). And you can help make their relationship a strong and rewarding one.

"A positive parent-teacher relationship helps your child feel good about school and be successful in school," advises Diane Levin, Ph.D., professor of education at Wheelock College. "It demonstrates to your child that he can trust his teacher, because you do. This positive relationship makes a child feel like the important people in his life are working together."

Communicating well is a key factor for making this relationship work. "Communication on both sides is extremely important," notes teacher Susan Becker, M. Ed. "The parents need information about what and how their child is learning, and the teacher needs important feedback from the parent about the child's academic and social development."

But communicating effectively with a busy teacher, who may have up to 20 kids in a class, can be challenging. When's the right time to talk — and when isn't? How can you get her attention? What should you bring up with her with and what should be left alone? How do you create a relationship with someone you may only see a few times a year? And how do you do this without coming across like an over anxious pain in the you-know-what?

#### Nurturing the Relationship

"Even if you disagree with a teacher, show her that you respect the profession because this will establish the basis for a productive relationship. A child can't really learn from a teacher if her parents don't respect the teacher and a teacher can't really teach a child if he thinks the parents don't respect him, so you want to create that trust, so those sacred learning moments will take place. In Finland, Italy and Japan, teachers are more respected by the entire culture, and as a result, kids perform better in school."

**Michael Thompson, Ph.D.**

*Author of *The Pressured Child*.*

#### Read School Memos

"Read the school memos, rules and schedules so you know what's happening and what's expected of your child and of you. Keep school information in one place, or better yet, in a loose-leaf binder so it doesn't get lost. This information should help you answer your child's questions about homework and school policies. This is the single most important thing you can do to foster a positive relationship with the school."

**Diane Levin, Ph. D..**

Try these strategies to build a positive relationship with your child's teacher.

**Approach this relationship with respect.** Treat the teacher-parent-child relationship the way you would any really important one in your life. Create a problem-solving partnership, instead of confronting a teacher immediately with what's wrong. "Meet with a teacher to brainstorm and collaborate ways to help your child, instead of delivering a lecture," recommends Susan Becker, M. Ed.

**Let your child develop his own relationship with the teacher.** "This is one of the first relationships with an adult your child may have outside the family unit. If you take a back seat and let the relationship develop without much interference, a special bond may develop," advises guidance counselor Linda Lendman. "For young children, the teacher-child relationship is a love relationship," adds Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "In fact, it may be their first love relationship after their parents and it can be pretty powerful and wonderful."

**Try not to brag.** Of course you think your child is brilliant, but bragging over her many accomplishments may send a message to the teacher that you think he may not be good enough to teach your child. "You don't need to sell your child to the teacher," notes Michael Thompson Ph.D., "you have to trust that your teacher will come to know what's important herself. Telling a teacher that your child loves to read will thrill the teacher. But challenging your teacher with statements like 'Susie read 70 books over the summer' or 'Matthew is a whiz at math,' may backfire."

**Remember how you liked (or disliked) your teachers.** Your experience at school is likely to affect your attitude toward your child's teacher. "It's important to leave your own baggage at the door, so you can talk about your child with the teacher (and not about you!)" adds Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

## Talking with Teachers

**Find the right time to speak to the teacher.** Always ask the teacher if she has time to talk at that moment, or better yet, when it might be convenient for her to do so. If a conference is not coming up soon, ask if you can make an appointment for a brief conversation. "Don't expect to have an extended conversation during drop-off and pick-up," advises teacher Susan Becker, M. Ed. "Mornings and after school can actually be quite hectic times. The teacher may appear free but she's not."

**Write short, effective notes.** If you want a quick response, keep your correspondence brief. Nobody (particularly teachers) has time to read more than one page, and a short paragraph will probably get the fastest response. Be specific about the issue and ask for guidance. For example, you might say, "Lucy's been having trouble with the math homework recently. She struggled for 30 minutes and then we stopped. Can we speak on the phone for a few minutes at your convenience about how to help?"

**Make sure your message gets to the teacher.** Handwritten notes, leaving occasional messages on teachers' voicemail or sending emails (if allowed by school policy) are effective ways to communicate. Sometimes mailing a note to the school can be the most reliable way to get information through, for parents who do not

### The Whole Child

"The teacher may have up to 25 kids in her class, and you may have only two or three at home. So don't expect her to know your child as well as you do, but respect what your teacher knows, as she sees your child function in ways you rarely will. The relationships are not equal, but each of you has something important to contribute to a picture of 'the whole child.'"

**Linda Lendman, M. S.W.**

Guidance Counselor, Family Coordinator, Rand School, Montclair, NJ.

take their kids to school. But don't be upset if you don't get an immediate response. If you don't hear back after a few days, make sure your teacher got your communication, particularly if you sent it via your child.

**Come prepared to conferences.** Make a list in advance of what you want to discuss. Let the teacher know you have some questions and be specific: give concrete details that paint an objective picture of a problem. Instead of sweeping comments like "Denzel is having a terrible year," offer tangible data, like "at least three days a week, Denzel melts down while trying to do his math homework. He says 'I don't understand' and 'I'm stupid.'" This way you can collaborate with the teacher on solutions.

**Discuss what matters most.** Your teacher wants to know about how best to teach your child, so share what your child loves to learn about as well as any struggles he may have. This way, you can look at the whole picture of your child together. "Instead of focusing just on grades, focus on what your child loves, how he learns, and what he struggles with. Think of specifics you can offer the teacher to help her teach your child and listen to what he has to say," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "If you have a report card to review, use it to brainstorm together how you can both support your child's learning, instead of dissecting each grade. Ask how your child functions in the classroom as a person. Does he make friends? How does he resolve conflicts?"

**Supply data.** Teachers will find comments from previous teachers useful, and giving this data is a non-threatening way to address issues. You might say, "Last year, Johnny's teacher noted he was struggling with attention issues. He was tested and this is how we are handling it." Or you might explain, "Betsy was put in a special reading group last year by Mr. Miller because he evaluated her and thought she needed more advanced books."

**Accept your differences with your teacher.** Recognize that your teacher may have a different style from you, but that doesn't make her a bad teacher. "Some teachers will be older and seasoned veterans, others will be younger and more idealistic. There are lots of differences in styles of communication and educational philosophy. You will need to really listen to your child's teacher to get a sense of who he is," notes Dalton Miller-Jones, Ph.D., professor of psychology at Portland State University and an advisor to the Portland School district.

**Ask what you can do to help.** When discussing a problem your child may have, ask your teacher for specific ways you can help at home. Ask her to define what your role should be in the problem-solving partnership, making sure the teacher, parent, and child all play important roles.

**Addressing Problems** There may be times when serious conflicts arise and you will need to meet with a teacher, a guidance counselor or principal to discuss them. Check out these ideas before you go to that meeting.

**Acknowledge your child's feelings.** "If you get repeated complaints that make sense, you do need to validate your child's feelings and then take some action," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "Unfortunately this may

### It's the Chemistry

"In the end, there is a fit between child and teacher. Some fits are good, some are not. Keep in mind that this is an arranged marriage and both sides have to work at it. The teacher can't expect that all children will adapt to her and parents can't expect that all teachers will adapt to their child. The teacher has to reach out to the child and the child has to learn the patterns and behaviors of the teacher. Parents have to help the child realize that the teacher is just a person with strengths and limitations. The teacher needs to learn the same about the child. Everything about good teaching is meeting in the middle." **Michael Thompson, Ph.D.** Author, *The Pressured Child*

interfere with the trust you want to exist between parent and teacher, but in these extreme cases, your child needs to know that you take her feelings seriously."

**Consider the teacher's point of view.** While it's important to acknowledge your child's description of an event, you should also keep an open mind and listen to what the school has to say before making a judgment, particularly when serious complaints and discipline issues arise. "The story you may hear from your child may not be the whole gospel truth," notes Lawrence Cohen, Ph.D., author of *Playful Parenting*. "It's usually a complex situation that requires a perspective from the teacher. But don't dismiss your child's complaint either."

**Evaluate teachers fairly.** There will be some teachers you may love and your child may dislike, there may be others your child may love, but you may not. "There are ways to work out a positive relationship with your child's teacher, even if you have issues about the teacher," advises Diane Levin, Ph.D. "Keep in mind that your child may feel very differently than you do, both positively and negatively. And your job is to advocate for your child and remember that you are not the one in the classroom, he is."

**Meet with the administration.** If a respectful meeting with the teacher does not produce solutions for your concerns, then you need to go to a guidance counselor or principal and say, "my child is having a difficult time," and explain why. Approach this meeting with specific information, and offer to brainstorm what can be done to help. Describe specific incidents in a factual way. "You cannot expect immediate action, but it's important to give the feedback, and to ask the school system to address these issues with the teacher and find a solution that works for your child," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

**Supporting Your Learner.** Caught in a battle over homework? Or working around the clock with your child completing a school project? Wondering what to do when your child forgets to hand in an assignment — a few days in a row? Baffled by experts who tell us we should help our children enjoy school and become independent learners? "Great," you might think, "but how?"

"Our children become independent learners very gradually," advises guidance counselor Linda Lendman, M.S.W. They learn at their own pace and you can support their process at home by nurturing what they are interested in and giving gentle guidance when they need assistance."

"What happens at home has a lot to do with supporting your child's success as a learner — and this goes way beyond making sure she gets her homework done or studies for the test. You want to help kids learn how to feel competent and positive about their learning. One way to begin is to help kids organize themselves (at their developmental level); create a schedule for doing their work and discover how they can follow it, so school

## The Learning Environment

"Parents can inspire kids to grow up to love learning and do well in school, by paying less attention to the actual specifics of the homework, but instead by creating learning-rich environments in and outside of the home. Flash cards and learning CD-ROMs are not the only things that promote learners. And they may not be the best ones. Instead, start by turning off the TV and limit the viewing. Read with your child. Experience the world together—take nature walks, go to museums and the theater, watch old movies, and then read some more."

**Michael Thompson, Ph.D.,** Author of *The Pressured Child*.

work becomes a rich part of their after-school lives, but not the only part," advises Diane Levin, Ph.D., professor of education at Wheelock College.

While there's no magic recipe, there are ways to help kids plan their time, complete their homework, and make the most of school. These strategies can help you help your child get excited about learning (or at least get you through some tough spots along the way).

## **The Parent's Role**

Although a parent's role in their children's learning evolves as kids grow, one thing remains constant: we are our children's learning models. Our attitudes about education can inspire theirs and show them how to take charge of their own educational journey.

**Be a role model for learning.** In the early years, parents are their children's first teachers — exploring nature, reading together, cooking together, and counting together. When a young child begins formal school, the parent's job is to show him how school can extend the learning you began together at home, and how exciting and meaningful this learning can be. As preschoolers grow into school age kids, parents become their children's learning coaches. Through guidance and reminders, parents help their kids organize their time and support their desires to learn new things in and out of school.

**Pay attention to what your child loves.** "One of the most important things a parent can do is notice her child. Is he a talker or is he shy? Find out what interests him and help him explore it. Let your child show you the way he likes to learn," recommends Dalton Miller-Jones, Ph.D.

**Tune into how your child learns.** Many children use a combination of modalities to study and learn. Some learn visually through making and seeing pictures, others through tactile experiences, like building block towers and working with clay. Still others are auditory learners who pay most attention to what they hear. And they may not learn the same way their siblings (or you) do. By paying attention to how your child learns, you may be able to pique his interest and explain tough topics by drawing pictures together, creating charts, building models, singing songs and even making up rhymes.

**Practice what your child learns at school.** Many teachers encourage parents to go over what their young children are learning in a non-pressured way and to practice what they may need extra help with. This doesn't mean drilling them for success, but it may mean going over basic counting skills, multiplication tables or letter recognition, depending on the needs and learning level of your child. "There may be times to review, but don't take on the role of drill master," adds Diane Levin, Ph.D. " And when you do review it should feel as if your child wants to be a part of the practice."

**Set aside time to read together.** Read aloud regularly, even to older kids. If your child is a reluctant reader, reading aloud will expose her to the structure and vocabulary of good literature and get her interested in reading more. "Reading the first two chapters of a book together can help, because these are often the toughest in terms of plot," notes Susan Becker, M. Ed. "Also try alternating: you read one chapter aloud, she reads another to herself. And let kids pick the books they like. Book series are great for reluctant readers. It's OK to read easy, interesting books instead of harder novels."

**Connect what your child learns to everyday life.** Make learning part of your child's everyday experience, especially when it comes out of your child's natural questions. When you cook together, do measuring math.

When you drive in the car, count license plates and talk about the states. When you turn on the blender, explore how it works together. When your child studies the weather, talk about why it was so hot at the beach. Have give-and-take conversations, listening to your child's ideas instead of pouring information into their heads.

**Connect what your child learns to the world.** Find age-appropriate ways to help your older child connect his school learning to world events. Start by asking questions. For example, ask a second-grader if she knows about a recent event, and what's she heard. Then ask what she could do to help (such as sending supplies to hurricane victims). You might ask a younger child if he's heard about anything the news, and find out what he knows. This will help your child become a caring learner.

**Help your child take charge of his learning.** "We want to keep children in charge of their learning and become responsible for it," says Dalton Miller-Jones, Ph.D. "We want them to be responsible for their successes and failures, show them how engaging learning is, and that the motivations for learning should be the child's intrinsic interests, not an external reward."

**Don't over-schedule your child.** While you may want to supplement school with outside activities, be judicious about how much you let or urge your child to do. Kids need downtime as much as they may need to pursue extra-curricular activities. "If a child has homework and organized sports and a music lesson and is part of a youth group in church or synagogue, it can quickly become a joyless race from one thing to another. Therefore, monitor your child to see that he is truly enjoying what he is doing. If he isn't, cut something off the schedule," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D.

**Keep TV to a minimum.** "Watching lots of TV does not give children the chance to develop their own interests and explore on their own, because it controls the agenda," advises Diane Levin, Ph.D. "However, unstructured time with books, toys, crafts and friends allows children to learn how to be in charge of their agenda, and to develop their own interests, skills, solutions and expertise."

**Learn something new yourself.** Learning something new yourself is a great way to model the learning process for your child. Take up a new language or craft, or read about an unfamiliar topic. Show your child what you are learning and how you may be struggling. You'll gain a better understanding of what your child is going through and your child may learn study skills by watching you study. You might even establish a joint study time.

## Helping with Homework

Wondering how to help your children with homework — or how to get them to do it without a struggle? Here's how.

**What's the point of homework?** "Homework is designed to help students reinforce key concepts, process and solidify new information, provide time for extra practice of skills, and reflect on how much they've learned," notes teacher Susan Becker, M. Ed. However, approaches to homework vary from district to district, school to school and teacher to teacher. Some schools don't give children homework until the 2nd grade. Others start in kindergarten. Some teachers create original homework, while other use or modify prepared worksheets.

"One of the best ways to help children become independent and responsible learners (and get their homework done) is to encourage them to take ownership over their work.

You might start by asking your child to make a homework schedule. Giving your child some control over this schedule will empower him to do his work. Be prepared to negotiate — but not too much — as you need to maintain approval. Once you set a schedule, stick to it.

Some children benefit by writing out their schedule and posting it. And when needed, change it."

**Diane Levin, Ph.D.**

Professor of Education, Wheelock College.



**Don't do the homework for your child.** Most teachers use homework to find out what the child knows. They do not want parents doing their children's homework but do want parents to make sure homework is completed and review any mistakes to see what can be learned from them.

**Don't take over your child's projects.** Teachers do not want parents doing their kids' projects. Instead, they want parents to support their kids' learning and make sure they have what they need to accomplish a task. Check with your child's teacher for his policy and review it with your child.

**Set up a good space to work.** All children need the same thing: a clean, well-lit space. But keep in mind that each child may work differently; some will do their work at the kitchen table and others at their desks in their rooms.

**Pay attention to your child's rhythms and help him find the right time to begin his work.** Some children will work best by doing homework right after school; others need a longer break and must run around before tackling the work. Most will need a snack. If your child does after-school activities, set a homework time before or after the activity, or after dinner. Whatever routine you choose, help your child stick to it.

**Find out how your child studies best.** "You should find the ways your child likes to study. For example, some kids will learn spelling words by writing them out, others by closing their eyes and picturing them and saying them aloud," advises teacher Susan Becker, M. Ed. "The sound environment is also important," adds Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "Some kids may want to listen to music, some are helped by being in the middle of noise, others need absolute quiet."

**Don't hover — but stay close by.** Keep in mind that it's their homework, not yours, but remain available in case you are needed. "The ideal set up would be for a parent to be reading nearby while the child is studying because then you both are doing your educational work together, but that's not always possible," says Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "A parent may be working out of the home, or need to be working in the home and cooking dinner. So if you are home, stay close, and if you are not there, have another adult check to make sure it's going OK. And remember that all homework is not equal, so not everything will need your rapt attention."

**Limit media exposure.** Turn off the TV and the iPod when your child does homework. Turn off the computer too, unless it's being used for research. You might start by asking how much time he thinks he should spend on this, and negotiate from there. Remember, you have the final word. And keep in mind that if you watch TV when your child can't, the plan may backfire.

**Let the teacher know if you gave your child a lot of homework help.** "If your child needs extra help or truly doesn't understand something, let the teacher know. Write on the assignment, 'done with parental help,' or write a separate note," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D. If your child resists, explain that homework is used to practice what you know and to show the teacher what you need help learning more about — so it's a parent's job to let the teacher know.

## The Tough Stuff

No matter how hard you try, your child may struggle academically at some point in his school career. Here are some strategies to help you both cope when the going gets tough.

**Let your kids get frustrated.** When kids are having a hard time with homework or a school-related subject, they often explode with anger. And parents wonder "What did I do wrong?" "You didn't necessarily do anything," advises Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "Sometimes when kids feel misunderstood at school or frustrated by a subject, they get angry or

## Don't Fix It

"As parents, we usually want to jump in and take our kids' pain and mistakes away, and find a solution. But what they really need is someone who understands and accepts their frustration or sadness, without changing it. Sometimes you just need to sit and listen to your child without solving it. A simple hug and words like 'I know,' 'I understand,' or 'I'm sorry it's so hard' may be what your child needs. Later on, you can encourage her to find a solution, but not in the moment of peak frustration."

**Michael Thompson, Ph.D.**

Author, *The Pressured Child*

provoke the parent — as a way of making you feel as helpless or angry as they feel. It's almost like your child is saying, 'would you hold my hopelessness for a while?' Or 'I need you to feel what I am going through, so I am going to make you angry.'"

**Take a break.** If your child says "I can't do it!" and throws the pencil down, take a little break. Maybe she needs to rant and blow off a little steam. Come back in five minutes and start fresh. (Those five minutes could save you an hour of struggle.) This also gives a child a chance to "save face" and start over, without even discussing the previous difficulty or outburst.

**Don't always try to have a rational conversation.** When kids get very upset about school, the upset may get in the way of their being rational. So wait it out instead of arguing or grilling children about the situation. Once they cool down, you might be able to talk it through.

**Let your child make his own mistakes.** It's hard not to correct a child's homework, but most teachers ask you not to take over unless your child asks for your help or the teacher requests it. Teachers generally want to know what the child understands, not what the parent understands about the material.

**Put a time limit on the work.** Most teachers will not expect younger kids to work longer than a half-hour on homework from any particular subject, but ask your teacher for a time limit. If your child struggles (while actively trying) and exceeds the limit, write the teacher a note explaining that's all that could get done.

**Contact the school.** If homework or a project is turning into a dreaded battle, talk with the school. Don't wait for your next conference. It's obviously time for some new insights and new strategies.

**Help your child learn how to organize himself.** This is a life-long skill that can be taught, but it can be challenging to do so. However you can help your child discover the organizational tricks that will work for him by sharing some of your own. "It's very difficult to teach children to be organized if it is not in their nature (or yours)," says guidance counselor Linda Lendman, M.S.W. "Encourage your child to label everything. Develop strategies, like the 'must-do list' before you leave school (put math book in backpack). Schedule a weekly 'clean out the backpack and clean off your desk' time so papers don't build up. Be patient, and try not to place blame."

**Recognize that school work will never be conflict-free.** No one ever raised a child without a homework battle. "There is no conflict-free homework strategy for most kids," says Michael Thompson, Ph.D. "At times, kids will find it fun and fascinating. Other times, it may be something they just have to do, and you have to help them find the structure for getting it done."

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**The Faculty and Staff at Spruce Mountain Primary School hope that these helpful tips allow you and your child to have a successful year at Spruce Mountain Primary School.**