



A Charter School Within the Sparta Area School District

**429 N.Black River St.
Sparta, Wisconsin 54656**



Board Approved: 5/26/21

Sparta Area School District

Student/Parent Handbook

Sparta Montessori School



2021-2022

The Spartan Way

Respectful

Responsible

Safe

429 North Black River Street
Sparta, Wisconsin 54656

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Visit the Sparta Area School District website at

www.spartan.org

Dr. Wendy Bernett, Principal
Alicia Gaunky, Secretary
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Marc Nelson, School Liaison Officer

Procedures and expectations for all students district wide are provided in the The Sparta Area School District Student/Parent Handbook. This handbook references information and expectations specific to Herrman Elementary School. These items are IN ADDITION TO the information provided in the District Student/Parent Handbook.

You may view the District Handbook at [Sparta Area School District Student/Parent Handbook](#). You may view all Board policies on line at [BoardDocs® LT](#). Click on the POLICIES button in the top right corner of the Board of Education home page. A copy of a Board policy can also be requested at any Sparta Area School Office.

Non-Discrimination Statement Regarding Students ([Board Policy Article 517](#))

It is the policy of the Sparta Area School District to comply with all applicable state or federal laws concerning non-discrimination and, therefore, no person may be denied admission to any public school in this District or be denied participation in, be denied the benefits of, or otherwise be discriminated against in any curricular, extracurricular, pupil services, recreational, or other program or activity on grounds that include the person's sex, race, color, national origin, ancestry, creed, socio-economic status, homeless status, religion, pregnancy or marital or parental status, sexual orientation, or physical, mental, emotional, or learning disability or handicap, or any other factor outlined in state or federal law. Complaints and/or requests for the complaint procedure should be directed to the District compliance officer: Amber Kulig 900 E Montgomery St, Sparta, WI 54656, (608) 366-3400. In accordance with Title IX, the Sparta Area School District does not discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or employment practices. For administrative procedures relating to grievances under Title IX, contact your school principal

Welcome from the principal

Hello! My name is Dr. Wendy Bernett, and I am the principal of Sparta Montessori School.

My goal as the principal is to make sure your students are safe, happy, and loved.

Ensuring these things makes it far easier for them to learn.

In terms of learning, my priority is the Montessori Way. As a public charter school, we have to abide by state statutes, but we are able to offer an authentic Montessori experience with a few additions.

Students will have a work block in the morning where they have uninterrupted time to explore their lessons from the week and work on it as much as they like.

I wish to keep communications as open as possible within our community. I am open to any feedback from you and look forward to conversations regarding how we can improve our practices.

Thank you for being a part of our Montessori family!

Sparta Montessori School Mission Statement

To nurture students in partnership with their caregivers to support their becoming the best version of themselves by providing seamless, high-quality Montessori education.

Vision Statement

Sparta Montessori strives to become the child's home away from home and to be a beacon for setting the standards of excellence in education of the whole child and family.

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ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

CHILDREN'S HOUSE:

MORNING only for PreKindergarten 8:00-10:45, Full Day for Kindergarten 8:00-3:10PM (may vary by year)

E1 & E2 PROGRAMS are Full Day: 8:00-3:10PM

Because there is no adult supervision provided, students should not come to school prior to the start of the school day. Please make arrangements for your child to arrive no earlier than 7:30 a.m.

When students enter the school grounds, they must stay there. Leaving the school grounds will only be allowed with parental permission or if the school initiates the student departure. Students shall be released only to a pre-approved individual. Please alert the classroom teacher and/or the office by sending a note or calling if your child will be leaving during the day.

Students are expected to leave the building and school grounds at the close of the school day, unless they have permission from a teacher and are under the supervision of that teacher.

ATTENDANCE, TARDINESS, TRUANCY

[Reference Board Policy Article 501-Student Attendance](#)

Families should allow extra time and patience for young children to prepare for school. To assist children in forming a good habit of promptness, we ask that each child arrive promptly and be ready to settle into the daily school routine. Not being rushed adds greatly to the young child's peace of mind.

Children are expected to regularly attend the program for which they are enrolled. This is for the child's own welfare; in addition, Wisconsin law states that children six and older who do not attend school regularly must be reported as truant (Wis. Stats. 118.15 (1)(a)). A student is considered absent if they are not in attendance for **all** or **part** of the school day for which the student is scheduled. The building administrator may excuse absences for **medical reasons** (doctor's appointments, student illness, and family medical emergencies), family religious observances, deaths in the family, or school-related events.

Parents may excuse their child up to a total of 10 days within the school year for planned absences. However, once the count is beyond ten, a note from a physician will be required before a medical absence will be considered excused.

Over 45 minutes in any half-day is considered a half-day absence. If a student is absent from school for **less than 45 minutes in any half-day**, it is considered a *Tardy*. **Tardies** may be **excused** or **unexcused**. Reasons for excused absences are listed above. Absences beyond these exceptions will be recorded as unexcused.

If a student misses all or part of five or more days without an acceptable excuse within a semester, a plan must be developed with the parent to address the truancy. If the family refuses to meet with school officials and/or the student continues to be truant, a report will be filed with the Monroe County Corporate Counsel.

CLASSROOM HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS AND TREATS

[Reference Board Policy Article 700-District Wellness Policy](#)

HOLIDAYS

Holidays can provide a chance to experience foods, traditions, crafts, and activities from all cultures. Any activity related to a holiday at Sparta Montessori will be curriculum-related, and religious holidays will be treated in an “educate, not celebrate” way, but there may be activities related to holidays in our classrooms.

Important community activities such as making cards for veterans or nursing home residents will be left up to the classroom but will not span an entire day of learning.

Holidays such as Pi Day and Read Across America Day will be celebrated as a school with dress-up days, etc., and classrooms are welcome to have special academic activities to celebrate.

TREATS

Snack time is an opportunity for children to socialize and use grace and courtesy as they sit at a small table for two. Some teachers ask for parent volunteers to bring in snacks; others ask for a donation up front to offset the cost for them. We try very hard to make our snack choices as nutritious as we can. A typical snack might be fruit, applesauce, and crackers with unprocessed cheese, whole grain bread with a natural spread, or vegetables and dip. We avoid chips, candy, food with processed sugar and white bread. Check with your teacher if you would like to make a snack contribution; the teacher will provide you with a list of acceptable snacks for our children.

PARENT/TEACHER ORGANIZATIONS

[Reference Board Policy Article 617-Parent Teacher Organizations & Booster Groups](#)

Sparta Montessori School encourages families to get involved in the school of their choice. We have an excellent PTO that is a wonderful way to jump into the action at our school. Each parent is a vital part of the school organization as a whole. No dues are collected; we simply ask for your participation, interest, and support. The PTO will send out a list of opportunities to volunteer at the beginning of the school year. Please let the principal or a member of PTO know if you are interested in helping out.

CONFERENCES

Parent teacher conferences are held twice per year for all levels. Parents have the opportunity to attend in person or meeting via Zoom if that is more convenient. If parents feel the need to meet with their child's teacher outside of normal conferences, they may contact their child's teacher at any time to plan a meeting.

GOVERNANCE

Sparta Montessori School is a charter school within the Sparta School District. We maintain a legal contract with the Sparta School Board, offering school choice to parents of children between Pre Kindergarten through 6th grade. The Principal handles the day-to-day operations of the school. The school is accountable to the Sparta School Board and the Montessori Governance Board.

STAFF

Each Montessori classroom is directed by a Montessori trained teacher, trained at a Montessori training center. All teachers hold Wisconsin state teaching licenses and many hold Master's degrees. Each classroom also has an assistant. Staff also includes: - Special Education; Music, Phy-Ed, Art teachers, School Counselor, LMC Director, Nurse, Health Aide, Food Service and IT support. Some of these positions are shared throughout the district. We have a full time secretary and custodian.

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

Parents and guardians of students in the Sparta Area School District have the right to know the professional qualifications of the classroom teachers who instruct their child and have the right to ask for the following information:

- Whether the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has licensed or qualified the teacher for the grades and subjects he or she teaches.
- Whether the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction has decided that the teacher can teach in a classroom without being licensed or qualified under state regulations because of special circumstances.
- The teachers' college majors, whether the teacher has advanced degrees and, if so, the subject of the degrees.
- Whether any educational assistants or similar classroom aides provide services to their child and, if they do, their qualifications.

- If you would like to receive any of this information, please forward a written request to your child's building principal.

HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL

Montessori education in Sparta started as a single preschool classroom of 36 students in 2000 (half attended in the morning, the other half in the afternoon) and was housed in the Sparta Senior High School as part of the newly formed Sparta Charter Preschool. The following year the preschool moved to the AEC building on Franklin Street.

In 2004, Montessori Charter School was formed as a result of parents wanting a Montessori-based education for their children. It consisted of two classrooms at Maplewood Elementary, serving 30 students. In 2005, all Montessori programs in the district merged into one building and became the Lakeview Montessori School, serving over 100 students. In 2009, an E2 classroom (4th & 5th & 6th grades) was started at Meadowview Intermediate.

In 2020, Montessori moved to a larger facility, resulting in all Montessori classrooms being in the same building, and the school name was changed to Sparta Montessori School, housed in the Lawrence-Lawson building. Levels include: Children's House (Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten), Elementary 1 (1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades), and Elementary 2 (4th, 5th and 6th grades).

THE MONTESSORI APPROACH TO EDUCATION

Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first female physician, opened her first "school" (*Casa dei Bambini*) in 1907. Based on her observations of children, she developed what has become known as the Montessori approach to education. Fundamental to all of Dr. Montessori's ideas is a deep respect for a child's ability to learn. She recognized that children go through certain phases she called "*sensitive periods*" between birth and age six in which they learn more easily than at any other time in their lives. This potential to learn is dependent on a loving environment that encourages the active pursuit of knowledge.

Dr. Montessori's developmentally appropriate approach to learning is designed to

fit each child instead of making each child fit into a preset program. She believed that learning should take place in multi-age classrooms where children who are at various stages of development can learn from and with each other. This learning should take place in a non-competitive atmosphere in order for each child to develop at his/her own speed. Children are grouped from ages 3-6 or Pre-K and Kindergarten in the Children's House, from 6-9 years old, or grades 1-3 in the E1 program, and from 9-12 or grades 4-6 in the E2 program.

Dr. Montessori observed that the way young children learn best is through active, hands-on experiences. She developed the idea of the *prepared environment*, where the classroom contains a wide variety of materials that encourage learning in many areas. The purpose of the materials is not just to impart knowledge to children, but also to help them acquire something infinitely more precious—the unfolding of their human potential and value to mankind.

To aid in this process, classrooms are set up according to these concepts:

- Free flow of socialization and movement within the classroom
- Freedom of choice in selection of materials
- Respect and guidance on self-initiated activities
- Large blocks of work time to allow for full access and development of projects
- Individualized expectations and goals
- Provision for real life experiences and presentation of expanded subject matter

*"Our care of the children should be governed
Not by the desire to 'make them learn things'
But by the endeavor always to keep burning
Within them the light which is called
Intelligence"-Maria Montessori*

CURRICULUM OVERVIEW

Dr. Montessori designed a number of multi-sensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials which facilitate the learning of skills and concepts. The teacher serves as a facilitator who guides the child in the use of the materials and who is trained to be an unobtrusive observer, role model, designer of the environment, and resource person.

The entire program of learning is purposefully structured and follows a 3-year cycle of curriculum as set forth by Dr. Montessori. Therefore, optimum results cannot be expected either for the child who misses the early years or for one who is withdrawn before he/she finishes the cycle with the basic materials.

The process of learning includes three stages:

1. Introduction to a concept by means of a lesson, presentation, something read in a book, etc.
2. Processing the information and developing an understanding of the concept through work, experimentation, creation.
3. Knowing or comprehending the concept, demonstrating by the ability to teach another, to express with ease, or pass a test with confidence.

Stage Two is the most important and the longest with its emphasis on developing, working, experimenting, creating, and transforming. This enables the child to really learn and remember what he/she learned.

Allowing the child freedom to select individual activities which correspond to his or her sensitive periods of interest facilitates the ultimate opportunity for development in every area available to the child. Activities will promote emotional growth, social skills, physical coordination, and academic preparation.

This is a brief outline of curriculum areas. For more complete information, the Parent Library in our building LMC has several works by Maria Montessori and those who have studied her methods.

PRACTICAL LIFE

This area includes preparatory activities such as dishwashing, scrubbing tables, pouring, dusting, buttoning, sewing, and cooking. Activities enable the child to develop his or her own inner discipline through the use of his or her hands. The child learns to care for him(her)self and the environment. Grace, courtesy, and table manners are also emphasized.

SENSORIAL AREA

These activities help children order and classify all the impressions they've taken in since birth. They also encourage the child to make comparisons, reason, make judgments, and develop reason skills. They indirectly prepare the child for math and writing by heightening perception skills.

MATH

Number concepts are presented, beginning with concrete materials and leading the child slowly toward abstraction. Recognition of the quantity and symbol are developed through hands-on manipulatives that encompass the decimal system, fractions, square roots, cubing, use of the abacus, etc. All four-math operations are pursued.

LANGUAGE

The child is prepared sensorially for writing and recognizing the alphabet sounds, and these lead the child into an "explosion" of reading. Grammar, speaking, and enjoyment of literature are also an integral part of the curriculum.

SCIENCE

Plant and animal life are of high interest in the Montessori classroom. Activities covering the different orders of animals and experiments with plants form the cornerstone of the science area. Microscopes and the natural elements and forces, including magnetism, electricity and gravity pique children's interest through the

activities in this area. Outside gardens are cared for by all the children.

GEOGRAPHY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

The child is made aware of the world through physical exploration of maps, landforms and items from other cultures. Students will assist in charity and community projects to provide practice in social responsibility when projects are available.

Students are exposed to and celebrate cultural holidays within the classroom; this participation does not represent a school-wide endorsement of a particular holiday.

HISTORY

The child develops a sense of history through an interdisciplinary approach. Timelines are used to provide a visual overview of change. The child may work within a cycle of historical study, and may choose incidents and concepts of most interest to pursue.

ART, MUSIC, PHYSICAL EDUCATION, AND LMC TECHNOLOGY

The preschool child is exposed to practical art, fitness, and LMC activities within the classroom designed to interest him or her and invite discovery; movement to music and songs are part of Circle Time. K, E1, and E2 children attend formal art, music, phy-ed, and LMC classes taught by a licensed teacher. Regular recess is available daily. The recess matrix is attached [here](#).

On days when students have formal Phy-Ed classes, we have the following expectations:

- Children are expected to wear tennis shoes in the gym.
- Children with long hair must tie it back.
- Pierced earrings may be worn at the child's own risk.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips enhance any study done in the classroom. Families are alerted to an upcoming field trip by receipt of a permission slip. Parents must sign a consent form requesting their child's participation. Parents available to chaperone field trips are welcomed. Siblings are not allowed to come along as the District's insurance does not cover them. Families will be notified if there is an extra cost for the field trip.

ENTRANCE REQUIREMENTS

CHILDREN'S HOUSE

MORNING: Sparta Montessori offers an AM preschool program. Children must be four on or before September 1 in order to qualify. Children who qualify for special needs or speech education or speech/language support are accepted at three years of age. Parents of children entering preschool need to participate in the child's toilet training if the child is not already trained. Bussing is available both to and from school within the school district.

FULL DAY: Children who are five by September 1 qualify for full-day multi-age Children's House program. Children are encouraged to participate in the breakfast and lunch program at school. An extended three-hour uninterrupted work time is provided according to Montessori guidelines, followed by lunch and recess. Small group lessons are used to introduce curriculum with either art, music, LMC, or Phy-Ed rounding out the day.

LOWER ELEMENTARY I (E1)

The Montessori curriculum supports the development of children at this level. The child of 6-9 years enters a time when being part of a group is their main concern; therefore, the environment meets the child's need by providing more project-oriented activities and research. The familiarity of Montessori materials in the E1 class enables children to continue their individual growth at their own speed, while challenging them to greater heights with expanded materials that incorporate higher thinking and organization skills. This is a full day program with a three-hour uninterrupted work block, a similar schedule to the full-day Children's House program.

UPPER ELEMENTARY II (E2)

The Elementary II (E2) curriculum is a continuation of the Montessori educational experience. Students attending the upper elementary program acquire a strong foundation in academic skills and a genuine love of learning. Students are placed in a multi-age grouping consisting of ages 9-12 (4th-6th grade equivalent). The goal of the

Elementary II (E2) curriculum is to lead the students to abstract work. Montessori materials at this level are used to promote classification and organization of information. Students continue to learn through experience and discovery. They explore the wider community through visits, field trips, and community service. They are responsible for planning activities within and outside the school. They do their own research, analyze their information and reach their own conclusions. By the end of the Elementary II (E2) Montessori program, students are expected to be independent learners who have learned how to learn.

The core curriculum for Elementary II (E2) students consists of the following areas of learning:

- Language
- Mathematics
- Science
- Cultural Studies
- History
- Geography
- Social Skills

HOURS

CHILDREN'S HOUSE:

**MORNING only for PreKindergarten 7:45-10:30, Full Day for Kindergarten
7:45-2:00PM (may vary by year)**

E1 & E2 PROGRAMS are Full Day: 7:45-2:00PM

Because there is no adult supervision provided, students should not come to school prior to the start of the school day. Please make arrangements for your child to arrive no earlier than 7:30 a.m.

When students enter the school grounds, they must stay there. Leaving the school grounds will only be allowed with parental permission or if the school initiates the

student departure. Students shall be released only to a pre-approved individual. Please alert the classroom teacher and/or the office by sending a note or calling if your child will be leaving during the day.

Students are expected to leave the building and school grounds at the close of the school day, unless they have permission from a teacher and are under the supervision of that teacher.

IN THE CLASSROOM

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS, INVITATIONS

We enjoy celebrating each child's birthday if they choose with a simple observance and candle lighting ceremony. If you would like to send in a treat, you may send in something that was purchased from the store and has the ingredients listed. Children with birthdays in the summer months may celebrate their "half birthday" during the school year with their class. Children are very aware of being left out. Therefore, in deference to the feelings of all children, party invitations may not be sent or handed out at school.

TESTING

Each year the teacher evaluates all children and discusses their progress and plans for entering the next program with the child's parents. Tests are given to children for several reasons, primarily to help the teacher work towards the best interests of the child. Tests will not be used for comparison of children with themselves and to inform teachers about which lessons students need. Student testing is a required part of being a public school, but it is only one way to measure a student's progress, and one test does not come close to telling the student's whole story. We understand this and do not see testing as a value measure.

Our multi-age classrooms and developmentally appropriate activities allow children who are advanced to pursue academic work at their own pace. This is especially beneficial for those who miss the cut-off date for Kindergarten but who are developmentally ready for more challenging work.

DISCIPLINE AND GROUND RULES

Questions about a child's experiences at school should be directed first to the child's teacher. The teacher is in the best position to answer parent questions. The teacher observes each student as an integral part of his or her role. Our educational approach is based on the following ground rule:

- No one may hurt themselves, another, or the environment. This includes verbal and physical and mental abuse.

The Student Code of Conduct (Board Policy Article 509) can be found [here](#).

STUDENTS

BRIDGING CEREMONIES

When a Montessori student finishes their kindergarten, third grade, or sixth grade year, they get to participate in a bridging ceremony. This ceremony symbolizes the growth of the child and the connection between what they have learned and what they will learn in the future. The bridge is a representation of the child moving from one plane of development to the next. Parents and family are welcome to attend, and the whole class joins the celebration.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

The school is not responsible for the condition or loss of personal items brought to Sparta Montessori. We welcome, however, artifacts from nature or travels or items that extend the classroom learning (books, clothing, photos, music, etc). Toys and stuffed animals, jewelry, cosmetics, etc. should be left at home. Teachers or staff may remove and send home any items, which are deemed inappropriate for the classroom. Toy guns or weapons of any kind (including squirt guns) are not allowed and will be confiscated upon discovery until the parent makes arrangements to pick up.

SNACKS

Snack time is an opportunity for children to socialize and use grace and courtesy as they sit at a small table for two. Some teachers ask for parent volunteers to bring in snacks; others ask for a donation up front to offset the cost for them. We try very hard to make our snack choices as nutritious as we can. A typical snack might be fruit, applesauce, and crackers with unprocessed cheese, whole grain bread with a natural spread, or vegetables and dip. We avoid chips, candy, food with processed sugar and white bread. Check with your teacher if you would like to make a snack contribution; the teacher will provide you with a list of acceptable snacks for our children.

DIAPERING

The child's parent should bring all diapering supplies for children not yet potty-trained. School personnel will notify parents when a child is running low on diapers/wipes, etc. **It is the parent's responsibility to replenish these in a timely manner so the child's needs can be met.**

PARENTS

COMMUNICATION

Every child is provided a Take Home folder in which correspondence between parent and teacher is located. It is the duty of both teacher and parent to check this folder daily for any correspondence from the other party. Teachers may place correspondence that might need parent attention in student folders.

Ways to receive information:

- Principal's newsletter
- Facebook
- Email
- Skyward
- www.spartan.org
- Contact your child's teacher

- Contact the school office

It is important for parents to communicate any changes in a student's life that might affect his or her demeanor at school. Any significant changes should be reported as soon as possible to the child's teacher and/or the office. In addition, parents should notify the school of any changes in address, telephone number, who is picking up the child, etc.

RESOURCES

Many resources exist where families can learn more about Montessori education. Below are some websites and a few book suggestions.

American Montessori Society:

What Is Montessori?

<https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/What-Is-Montessori>

History of Montessori

<https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/History-of-Montessori>

Inside the Montessori Classroom

<https://amshq.org/About-Montessori/Inside-the-Montessori-Classroom>

Understanding Montessori: A Guide for Parents by Maren Schmidt

<https://marenschmidt.com/resources/books/understanding-montessori/>

The Absorbent Mind by Maria Montessori

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/60511.The_Absorbent_Mind

Montessori: The Science behind the Genius, 3rd edition by Angeline S. Lillard, PhD

https://www.montessori-science.org/montessori_science_genius.htm

APPENDICES

Appendix A-[2021-2022 District Calendar](#)