



# SEA PINES MONTESSORI ACADEMY

## REQUESTS FOR EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY TO BE EXCUSED

**To Parents:**

**South Carolina law requires that all absences be coded lawful or unlawful. According to S.C. Code Ann. Sections 59-5-65 and 59-65-90 statutory requirements, only the following reasons may be coded as lawful:**

1. **absences caused by a student’s own illness and whose attendance in school would endanger his or her health or the health of others,**
2. **absences due to an illness or death in the student’s immediate family,**
3. **absences due to a recognized religious holiday of the student’s faith, and**
4. **absences due to activities that are approved in advance by the principal (Head of School).**
  - a. **The absence may be excused when it is demonstrated that the purpose of the absence is to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity, such as travel. Approval by the Head of School must be gained fifteen (15) days prior to the absence.**
  - b. **SPMA defines a pre-approved extended absence as an Independent Study (Policy and Teacher/Student Contract available upon approval).**

Therefore, if your family has planned a trip that provides an educational opportunity and you wish to request consideration for the trip to be an excused absence, please complete the following form.

Child’s Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of Trip \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_

Destination \_\_\_\_\_

I believe this trip will provide the following educational opportunities:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Request \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Approved

\_\_\_\_\_ Denied

Head of School’s Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## ***SEA PINES MONTESSORI ACADEMY***

### **REQUIREMENTS FOR INDEPENDENT STUDY**

***The Sea Pines Montessori Academy (SPMA) community is comprised of multicultural and entrepreneurial families with immediate relatives and business opportunities across the world. While honoring the South Carolina law requiring school absences to be coded lawful or unlawful, SPMA has created an Independent Study for absences that are pre-approved by the Head of School and provide a valid educational opportunity, such as travel.***

While SPMA supports the Independent Study, it is vital for the parents and students to understand that they may fall behind on their Montessori curriculum and correlated South Carolina State Standards. This can lead to frustration and confusion when re-entering their Montessori classroom after a traveling experience. Since our Authentic Montessori curriculum doesn't allow for the students to take their Montessori manipulatives with them on their travels, they will naturally fall behind in their classroom studies. The staff of SPMA will work with the students to re-enter them into their classroom lessons and curriculum upon their return to school. However, from time to time, their re-entry can produce stress and anxiety; which can be interpreted in many ways for the students. Parental partnership is vital to the success of the creation, implementation and conclusion of an Independent Study. If the student doesn't meet the criteria established in the Independent Study by their classroom teacher(s), the entire or a portion of the days absent may be converted to an unexcused absence. By law, and accreditation standards, a private school must offer a minimum of 175 days of instruction or the equivalent in hours. SPMA offers 180 days. The SPMA Independent Study was designed to accommodate a student's learning during an educational opportunity; a minimum of seven (7) days and may not exceed 20% (36 days) of the SPMA in-school instruction days during any given school year's calendar. Any time period in excess of 10% (18 days) will require an evaluation during the school year to ensure that the student is able to successfully complete the school year and progress to the next level.

Head of School will review the following in determining Independent Study approval: Educational Opportunity Request Form, teacher input, number of days and attendance/tardiness of student.

The Head of School will also work with the lead teacher(s) upon return of the student to schedule an evaluation, which will take place no later than 30 days prior to the conclusion of the school year.

The carefully planned Independent Study gives students the framework for making

choices and decisions about their learning. It teaches them how to communicate their newly attained knowledge. We feel it is important to remind our students that they are privileged to be able to travel, especially at their age. With that privilege comes the responsibility of increasing their level of understanding. The purpose of an SPMA Independent Study is to allow the students an opportunity to learn the research process by exploring a topic of interest over an extended period of family travel time.

It is important to have the parents assist their Primary and Lower Elementary children without taking over the project or assigned work/lessons. This plan will be developed on a case by case basis depending on age and ability of the student.

The Upper Elementary and Middle School students are expected to complete the following with minimal parent intervention:

**identify** a topic relative to your travel destination he/she wants to learn more about;  
**discover** what he/she knew and didn't know about it;  
**determine** a method of study (e.g., descriptive, experimental, research);  
**gather** information using books, interviews, surveys, experiments, the internet and so on;  
**organize** the information;  
**develop** a method of sharing the information (a product); and  
**evaluate** the project using the established criteria.

The ultimate objective of the Independent Study Program is to encourage and prepare the individual student working on his/her own initiative, to undertake, to direct and to complete successfully his/her own study activities in areas that are of interest and value to him/her. An Independent Study program should meet students' needs and interests and may originate from any of the following:

**Self-selected studies:** Students individually select a topic of study based on their own interests or needs.

**Related studies (spin-off studies):** Students select a topic of study after having been exposed to a subject through teacher-directed lessons.

**Curricular studies:** Students select a topic of interest from a list of topics the teacher has prepared based on the subject matter to be studied by the entire class.

#### **Requirements of the Independent Study are:**

***To introduce the student to the techniques of organizing, researching, and presenting the results of his/her Independent Study in a variety of areas and interests.***

***To stimulate critical thinking, logical analysis, and continuity of focus.***

***To encourage the development of abilities and individual initiative.***

***To develop a sense of individual responsibility for the pursuit of goals, and to develop a sense of personal achievement and satisfaction in pursuing a goal with success.***

#### **THE PROCESS**

Students begin by selecting a topic of interest, in coordination with their teachers. They immerse themselves in the topic by first reading to build a knowledge base. Once they have a sense of their topic and what they want to find out, they pose questions; which will lead to solution statements.

Students learn to involve people and places as resources, develop and execute a plan to achieve goals and objectives, evaluate and assess their own work, and find outlets to communicate their knowledge. At this point, higher-level thinking skills are applied.

Once a knowledge base is established and information gathered, students are ready to approach their Independent Study project by developing solution statements that arise from the analysis of information gathered through research.



## ***SEA PINES MONTESSORI ACADEMY***

### **INDEPENDENT STUDY AGREEMENT**

**STUDENT'S NAME** \_\_\_\_\_

**Class/Teacher(s)** \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher and student agree to the following terms:

The student may learn the key concepts or the information described on the study guide independently.

The student must demonstrate mastery at appropriate checkpoints to continue this arrangement for the rest of the unit of study.

The student agrees to complete an independent project by \_\_\_\_\_ (date) to share with the class.

Project description: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Teacher(s) Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_