

**SUNTREE UNITED METHODIST
SCHOOL HANDBOOK
2024-2025**



**SCHOOL TELEPHONE: 321-254-3866
7400 N. WICKHAM RD.
MELBOURNE, FL 32940
LICENSE #C18BR0149
PRIVATE SCHOOL #2566**

WELCOME

Dear Families,

Welcome to Suntree United Methodist School! We are so excited to be celebrating our 34th year as a school. We are happy to welcome you for the first time or welcome you back as part of our school family. As a ministry of Suntree United Methodist Church, we are committed to sharing the good news of God's love throughout our school.

The mission statement of our school is "to provide a safe and nurturing environment with developmentally appropriate experiences so that children can develop mentally, physically, spiritually, and socially to their greatest potential". We pride ourselves on our use of a curriculum that is engaging, challenging, and differentiated. We will be encouraging your child to grow in his/her relationship with God, ask questions, explore his/her own ideas, work collaboratively, and become an independent learner.

For your child to enjoy and benefit from all our learning opportunities, we ask you to partner with us by preparing them for each day. This handbook will help explain how you can support them, what you can expect from us and what we can expect from you. On occasion, we may find it necessary to add or change information in this handbook. In that case, we will provide you with a printed addendum.

We welcome your questions, comments, and ideas. Our preschool is a learning environment - not only for children but also for parents and staff. We look forward to partnering with you in your child's education. Our pastors, Annette Stiles Pendergrass and Allee Willcox Wood, also welcome you to our church and we invite you to worship with us on Sundays if you do not already have a church home. We are dedicated to serving the families of our church and community, and if we can serve you in any way, please let us know.

Blessings,

Denise Schilling
SUM School Director



OUR PHILOSOPHY

Each child is a unique gift from God and will be accepted for who he/she is and will be respected and loved.

As adults, we are responsible to God to see that our children are nurtured and allowed to grow in an atmosphere true to the principles Jesus taught. This includes growth in these areas: physical, social, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual.

Each child will have the opportunity to build positive learning experiences, grow in self-concept and self-esteem, and to gain ability in problem solving. These areas of learning will be used to help the child be all that they can become and will help to lay a foundation upon which they can build.



OUR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

Our program stresses a positive approach to learning including centers, creative play, and many hands-on experiences. Research shows us that, for the early childhood years, children learn best through experiences that utilize all their senses. **Worksheets are not appropriate at this age.** Our curriculum, “Wee Learn” as well as teacher-selected research-based supplemental resources, incorporate a variety of multi-sensory approaches to address the following curriculum areas:

Christian Concepts
Mathematics
Growth Mindset
Dramatic Play

Problem Solving
Social Studies
Science Experiences
Creative Art

Literacy
Creative Cooking
Music
Sensory Explorations

You will receive a schedule of themed units that will be presented in your child’s class throughout the school year.

OUR TEACHER STUDENT RATIO

The ratio in our 3-year-old classes is 2 adults per 8– 12 children. The ratio in our 4-year-old, VPK classes is 2 adults per 11 – 15 children. The ratio in our Kindergarten classes is 2 adults per 15 children.

OUR ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Here at SUMS if a child turns 3 on or before September 1st and is potty trained, he/she can attend our 3-year-old Program. If your child turns 4 on or before September 1st and is potty trained, he/she can attend our Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten Program. Enrollment in our VPK Program also requires a Certificate of Eligibility from the State of Florida.

Our Wee Three Program is the only exception to that policy. The children in our Wee-Three program turn 3 years old between September 2nd and December 31st. The children in this class do not need to be completely potty trained when they start school in August. We do, however, have the expectation that the parents are diligently working with the children at home and our teachers are doing the same here at school. By January of the school year, we expect the little ones in our Wee Three class to be fully potty trained.

All Kindergarten students new to SUMS will participate in an interview/assessment prior to final registration.

Florida Law requires each child to have the DH 3040 Form and the DH 680 Form filled out by a physician and parent or guardian. Both completed forms must be given to the school front office or your child's teacher before the start of school.



ACCIDENTS DO HAPPEN

If a 3- or 4-year-old child has an accident and can change him/herself, then our teachers can oversee this. If they are unable to help themselves, it will be necessary to call Mom or Dad to come and change them so they may return to class. We do not by any means consider this a punishment and would never punish the children for these accidents. We remind the children of the importance of going like a big girl/boy in the bathroom.

If a child has more than three accidents in quick succession, we may ask for them to leave school for a week or so to enable the families to work with them on a more constant basis to ensure they are fully potty trained. This is usually highly effective. Unfortunately, due to the strict guidelines dictated by the state, if a child consistently has accidents, our only recourse will be to suggest that they are not ready for preschool at this time. This situation is very rare and will only be our last resort.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

All our classes mostly follow the Brevard County Public School (BCPS) Calendar and closure requirements determined by BCPS and the Early Learning Coalition of Brevard.

In the VPK classes, if your child exceeds Florida State guidelines for attendance and it results in Suntree United Methodist School not being paid for specific days, your child can be removed from our school. If you are unable to meet the attendance requirements as provided by the state funded VPK program, you are welcome to transition into being a private pay student.

HEALTH POLICY

Children are to be kept home when they show any of the following symptoms: runny nose, open sores, sore throat, fever, rash, excessive coughing, diarrhea, or earache. If you feel your child is unable to play outside that day, he should not attend school, as outdoor activity is part of our daily school program. A child, who has been absent because of a contagious disease, must be examined by a doctor before returning to school. Children should be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school.

You will see many symptoms and illnesses showing up in school. Please keep children at home if they do not feel well enough to participate in school activities. We want to keep our environment as free of contagions as possible for the sake of all that attend. Here are some guidelines for when your child should not attend school:

Positive Covid, Flu, or Strep Tests

Vomiting – 1 or more times in the past 24 hours

Fever – Oral temperature over 100°.

Impetigo* – until 24 hours after treatment is started

Suspicious Rash* – with fever or behavioral change

Uncontrolled Diarrhea – increased number compared to child's normal pattern

Pink Eye/Conjunctivitis – redness of the eye(s) with drainage

Head Lice/Scabies* – 24 hours after treatment has begun and no live lice or nits are present. Only Scabies requires a doctor's note.

Chicken Pox – 6-10 days after onset of rash and until all lesions are dried and crusted

Ringworm – must be able to be covered, if on scalp needs oral medication

Signs of Possible Severe Illness* – unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, uncontrolled coughing, stiff neck, unusually dark urine & gray/white stool

Hepatitis A Virus/Jaundice* – yellow skin or eyes, excluded until symptoms are gone



Guidelines obtained by the Child Care Association of Brevard County, Inc.

The staff is unable to provide your child with any medication without the parent having filled out and signed a consent form. If your child needs medication on a regular basis, please see the Front Office for these forms. Medication should be in the original container, and it will be kept in an area inaccessible to children.



DISCIPLINE POLICY

Discipline comes from the same root as “disciple”, which has to do with teaching and learning and is not synonymous with punishment. There is no place for punishment in our Christian program. Our policy will be to use a loving guidance approach to discipline.

The goal of our discipline approach for young children is to help them learn appropriately through the preschool years so they can mature and function as responsible, ethical, well-adjusted individuals that are able to effectively communicate his/her needs.

The staff will provide an atmosphere of loving guidance by providing guidelines/expectations, nurturing positive behavior, employing interventions when needed, and focusing on individualized personal growth through healthy communication practices.

Many children are learning to work together in a social setting for the first time. Often the focus as a child progresses through school is his/her academic growth, but here at SUMS we focus on the growth and development of the whole child. This whole child focus encompasses every aspect of the child from academics to social/emotional development and everything in between.

We employ a loving guidance approach to discipline in the following manner:

1. Universally within each classroom we provide a “safe space” for the child to calm herself/himself using breathing and other exercises employed within our school family. Teachers invest in knowing what each child requires during their time of need, knowing that each child is an individual and what works for one child may not work for another. Children who find themselves in a time of need are given the choice of leaving the group to a “safe place” and are free to return to the group at their own discretion.
2. It is essential that children become familiar with naming and managing their emotions. Within our school we will discuss alternative behaviors with the child who needs guidance and allow them the opportunity to communicate his/her needs.
3. Aggressive behaviors and other undesired behaviors are a call for help and will be addressed immediately. If behaviors such as these continue, a plan of action will need to be determined between the family, teacher, and Director.
4. A child will be transitioned to a new location if he/she is putting himself/herself in physical danger or endangering others.
5. The above Discipline Policy statement is for your information, and we are required by Florida state law to provide a copy of this policy for each family to read.

Discipline Policy cont.

The Director is empowered to remove a student from the room and/or from the program whose presence threatens the health and safety or orderly conduct of the Suntree United Methodist School program.

On occasion, a program is not an optimal fit for a child or family. SUMS is a school that will make every effort to work collaboratively with families to resolve any challenges that arise. Additional resources may need to be used to support a child's success in the school environment. If, after all reasonable efforts are exhausted, and it is determined that SUMS is not the best fit for the needs of a child, SUMS reserves the right to suggest an alternative placement.



FEES

Registration Fee will be payable at the time of registration. This fee is **non-refundable** and will be used to buy expendable goods for your child such as paper, paint, and glue in addition to our enrichment staff comprised of Dr. Diana, Fun Trail, and Music.

Activity Fee Donation can be paid at the time of registration. This fee will be used to pay for our extra programs at our school such as Dr. Diana, Fun Trail, and Music. The Activity Fee Donation is not a requirement for the child's participation in our programs.

TUITION and SCHOLARSHIPS

Tuition is due the first school day of every month. If we are on holiday during the first of the month, tuition is due immediately upon returning to school. You may bring in your tuition to the school front desk staff, use the Communication Folder, or if you use the drive-by method for drop off, you may give it to the assistant there.

A full tuition payment for August will be due on the first day of school. The tuition for September through May is due on the first of each month. If tuition is not paid by the 5th of each month, a \$20 late charge is assessed. If your child will not be here on the 5th, you will need to pay prior to the 5th of the month. If tuition has still not been paid after the 10th of the month, your child will not be allowed to return to school until that balance and late fee is paid in full. If you should have a specific and unavoidable problem, please contact the Director immediately.

Tuition pays for staff salaries, educational aids, and building usage. SUMC offsets part of the building, utilities, and playground expenses as a ministry to our community so that we may offer a quality program at a reasonable cost.

A scholarship fund is established each year through gifts and some fundraising. Disbursement of scholarship money is handled through the Director and Pastoral Staff. Please speak with the Director if you feel you may be eligible for some assistance and/or would like additional information concerning scholarship opportunities. SUMS accepts various state scholarships (FES-EO, FTC, FES-UA) and we would love to help you with your scholarship needs. SUMS prides ourselves on individualized opportunities for our students, allowing their specific needs to be met. Scholarship funds can be used for registration, tuition, supplies, curriculum, additional staffing needs, assessments, and other resources necessary for individual student growth.

TUITION and SCHOLARSHIPS cont.

Families need to notify the school 30 days in advance if withdrawal is necessary. There can be no reimbursement for children withdrawing during the month. There will be a \$20.00 fee charged for all checks returned from the bank. Cash payment for the check and the \$20.00 fee will be due one week from the date the check was returned to the school.

The fee schedule for the school year 2023-2024 is as follows:

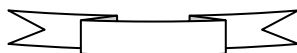
Class	Registration/Activity Fee	Tuition
Wee Three	\$270.00	\$270.00
3-Year-Old		
2 Day	\$270.00	\$270.00
3 Day	\$320.00	\$320.00
VPK 4-Year-Old		
3 Day	\$300.00	Fully State Funded
5 Day	\$300.00	Fully State Funded
5 Day Extended Day	\$300.00	\$300.00
VPK Self-Pay**		
3 Day VPK/5 Day VPK	\$300.00	\$350.00
5 Day VPK Extended	\$300.00	\$475.00
Kindergarten	\$350.00	\$475.00

**VPK Self-Pay — Fees are for children that have previously utilized the VPK Program, and the funding is no longer available. It is also available for parents who want to wait another year to start the State Funded Program.

If your family has two or more children enrolled in our school, you may take a 5% deduction from whichever child's tuition is the lowest being paid each month. If your child attends our school during the month of April, you must also pay tuition for May if applicable.

For income tax purposes, if you claim child-care expenses, our "Provider Tax" number is #59-2424288.

Please note: Above fees and tuition are good for School Year 2023-2024 only.





LUNCH BUNCH



Lunch Bunch will be until 2:00 p.m. and will be offered each school day (with a few exceptions, such as party days, staff meetings, etc.) beginning the second week of school. If you need for your child to stay on certain days each week throughout the year, you can sign up on our permanent list at Open House at the school front desk. This will be done on a first come, first served basis, as there are limited spots available in the Lunch Bunch program. Your child will be required to come on the days in which you signed up unless we are otherwise contacted. If your child is sick, you must call the school front office at 321-254-3866, first thing in the morning, for the fees to be waived. If your child does not come to school on the assigned day and we do not receive a call, you will be charged for that day. If your child is in school on the day he or she is signed up for, and they do not stay, you will be charged for that day. If you do not need Lunch Bunch for a specific day, you will need to remove your child from the list at least 24 hours in advance.

If your child does not use their permanent Lunch Bunch spot for more than two consecutive weeks, unless it is due to illness or vacation, we will inform you that we will be forced to find a permanent replacement.

A monthly calendar sign-up is posted on the hallway bulletin board, and space will be limited to the number of openings we have available on that day. Therefore, sign-up will be on a first come, first served basis for those not already on our permanent list. If the class that day is full, you can place your child on a waiting list, and we will call you if there is an opening. Please do not move up names from the waiting list without notifying the office. If you need to sign your child up for Lunch Bunch or take your child's name off the list, you can come in and update the board, or call the office and we can help you with that process.

Lunch Bunch will cost an additional \$16.00 per session for preschool children. A Lunch Bunch statement will be sent home monthly, based on attendance. Payment must be made by the 10th of the month or a late fee of \$10.00 will be charged. If your child does not come on the 10th, you will need to pay before the 10th. Payment may be made by placing your child's money in their class communication folder, or at the school front desk.



DROP OFF AND PICK UP PROCEDURES & DIRECTIONS

Every class will be assigned a drop off and pick up location around our campus. Families will be provided a map at the beginning of school to explain where their arrival and dismissal area is located. Please call the front office at 321-254-3866 if you need to pick up your child prior to the end of school. Your child will then be walked to the overhang outside the 200 building by the school front office. (See SUMS/SUMC Map below)

At pick uptime you must have your child(ren)'s pickup card in your car window. At drive by, please leave your pickup card in the window until your child(ren) is/are brought to your car. We will ask to see identification if the person picking up does not have the pickup card.

It is never comfortable having to remind people of rules that are not being followed, but your child(ren)'s safety is more important than that discomfort. Please help us make the drive by time more efficient and safer by following these rules:

1. Please drive through the school campus **slowly and in the required direction**. Children are out among cars, and we need your full driving attention for the safety of our students.
2. Stay in your vehicle and hold up your child(ren)'s name card. Leave your child(ren)'s name card in your window until your child(ren) is/are brought to your car, because at times we have substitute teachers working. For the safety of your children and our staff, the teachers will unload and load from curbside only. The teacher will bring your child(ren) to your car for you to buckle them into his/her car seat. The teacher must hear the child's seat belt "click" before you drive off.
3. Please refrain from pulling around a car that is in line.
4. Having open communication with our families is very important to us, but conversations such as these should not be taking place during dismissal. Please call, email, or send a note if you need to make an appointment or speak with a teacher.
5. Please refrain from talking on your cell phone when going through drive by for safety reasons and because your child cannot wait to tell you about their day.
6. Keep children in their car seats, not on your lap while waiting for drop off.
7. Please do not allow your child to stand and look out of the sunroof while in the drive-by line.
8. Please remember there is no smoking on our school campus which includes drive-by.
9. If you have a child(ren) in your care his/her hand needs to be held while in the parking lot and hallways.

We love your children like family, and we want to keep everyone safe. Our school has an open-door policy, and you are always welcome. Please help us as we strive to make this a safe, happy year.



LATE DROP OFF

For your child's safety, all school doors remain locked during school hours. If you arrive at school after the staff has left the drive by area in the 200 Building, you will need to enter the school through the North Door and you or someone from the office staff will walk your child(ren) to his/her classroom. If your child's class is in the 300 Building, you will need to enter through the North Door of the 200 Building and go to the school front desk. At that time, someone from the front desk staff will escort your child to class and you may join them if you wish.

LATE PICK-UP POLICY

Please pick up your child promptly at dismissal time. Drive By accommodations are available for 10 minutes after school ends. We allow 10 minutes in case there are differences in your clock and ours. Families arriving later than 10 minutes after our dismissal time will be charged \$1.00 per minute that you are late. If you are late more than 5 times, the fee will be doubled.

CAR SEATS

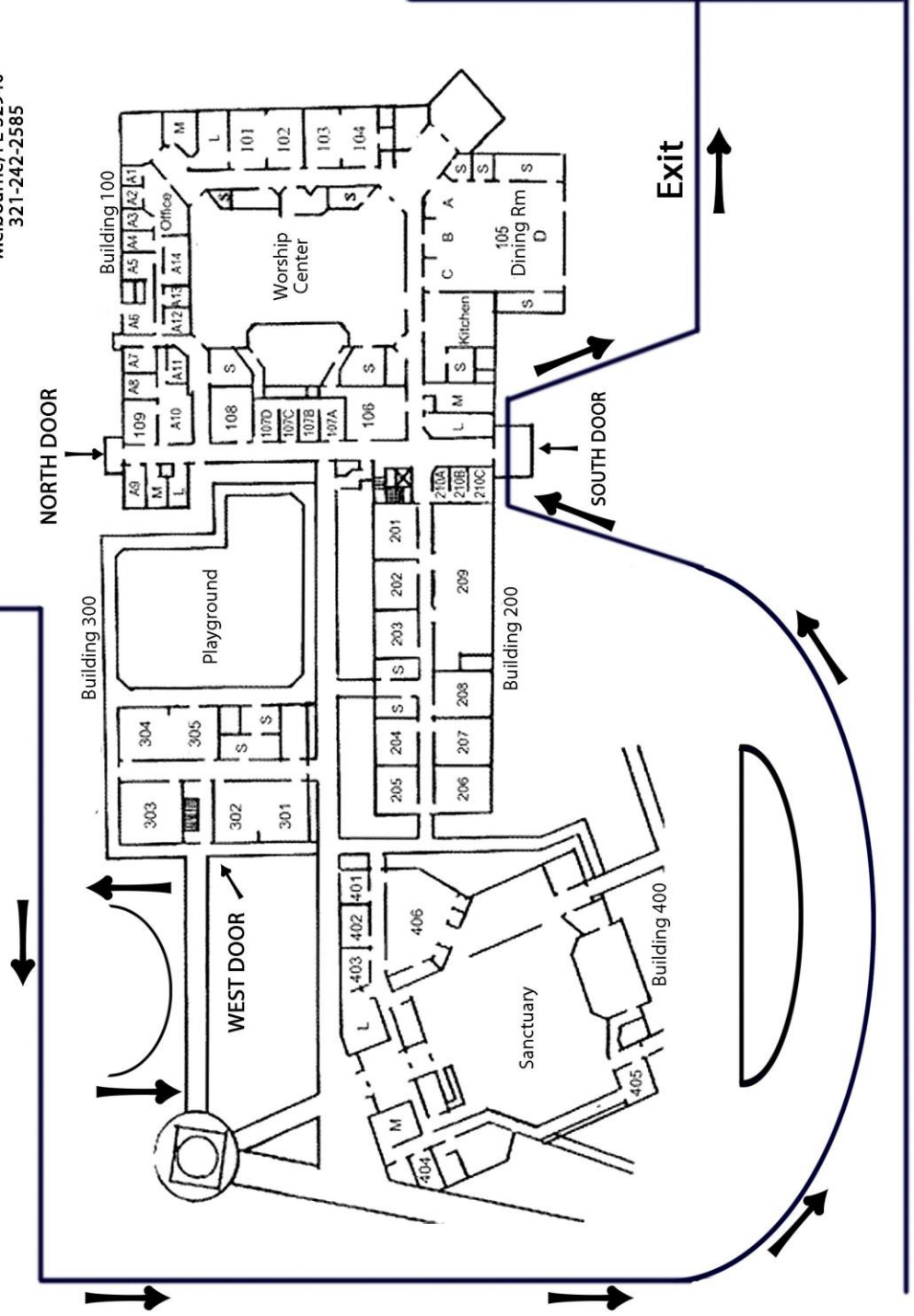
We would like our families to leave car seats at school if someone else is picking up their child after school. Because of the high number of families that need to do this, we are requesting that the person picking up come into the building to retrieve the car seat and then install it in their own car. As you know, the number one liability with car seats is incorrect installation. Since there are many different styles of car seats, we feel that it is in the best interest and safety of your child if it is installed correctly by the person transporting your child home.

Suntree United Methodist School Pick up and Drop off map

Pinehurst Avenue



Suntree United Methodist Church
7400 N. Wickham Rd.
Melbourne, FL 32940
321-242-2585



Wickham Road

VERBAL MESSAGES

The staff cannot accept verbal messages brought by children. All changes must be in writing with a parent signature and date. Please put notes to teachers or school staff in your child's communication folder.

PERSONAL ITEMS

Children may not bring personal items such as toys to school. We will have a large assortment of toys and activities each day for the children. They may bring educational items to share on "Show and Tell" days, which will be announced by your classroom teacher.

Children may not bring toys of violence to school. Toys of violence will be taken up by the Director and returned to the parent. These toys include any play item such as swords, knives, guns (in any form), and action figures who use such items. We realize these toys have a useful place in the play-acting of young children, but here at school we will be stressing the biblical principal of "love one another". (John 15:17)

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONFERENCES

Parent/Guardian Conferences will be held during the year. A note will be sent home in advance to notify families of the date. The conference is intended to better inform you about your child's school progress and the education of young children in general. We hope the conference will be attended as it takes parents/guardians and teachers working together to maximize the quality education your child deserves. Please don't hesitate to contact your child's teacher if you would like to meet with her or if you need an additional face to face conference.

VOLUNTEERING

If you volunteer in your child's classroom or school-wide, we ask that you stop by the front desk to check-in. Certain larger school-wide events will have an alternative sign-in procedure due to the number in attendance.





FIELD TRIPS

Several field trips for our VPK and Kindergarten classes will be planned during the year. The permission slip for these trips will be given out prior to the trip for you to sign.

Parents who drive other children from the class on a field are required to provide the teacher with a current copy of their driver's license and proof of liability insurance. Advance notice will always be given for these trips. Parents are encouraged to come along with their child's class.

BIRTHDAY PARTIES

Children's birthdays will be celebrated as their "Special Day". Please plan and coordinate this day with your child's teacher. This special celebration may occur on or around his/her birthday. However, we want all the children to have a "Special Day", so if your child has a summer birthday, please contact the teacher and together you may choose a convenient day.

It is school policy that party invitations may be given out on the school grounds **IF every child in the class is invited**. Otherwise, classroom rosters with names and addresses will be made available so that invitations to private parties can be mailed.

SEASONAL PARTIES

Seasonal parties such as Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter, take place on the date nearest the holiday. Parties will be planned for these seasonal holidays.

As a policy, we do not celebrate Halloween in our school. Please help us with this policy by being sensitive to "share items" that are sent in during this season.

Christmas is celebrated as Jesus' birthday in the individual classrooms. Here at SUMS, we feel in our ministry that we should uplift the season for its true reason – that, of course, is the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Parents are invited to many of our parties, and some are just for the children. At times, our teachers will ask for volunteers on party days.

FIRE, INCLEMENT WEATHER AND LOCKDOWN DRILLS

Our school has regular drills once a month. Our first drill will be in August, and they will continue throughout the year. Fire, inclement weather, and lockdown drills occur on different days of the week at different times of the day. We have these drills on alternate days so that all children can practice being safe. Families may also want to practice what to do in case of an emergency at home!

DRESS

Polo shirts are encouraged for our preschool and VPK classes on chapel and field trip days. On **Mondays or Tuesdays**, we ask that preschoolers wear their polo shirts for chapel, and we ask that children wear them for field trips and special days, as notified by the school or your teacher. Polo shirts will be available to pre-order during registration and thereafter at our school front desk.

Since children learn best by doing, please dress your child in comfortable clothes that can get dirty and can be used in painting, cooking, outdoor play, etc.

For the safety of your children during the outdoor playtime, **closed toe shoes** such as sneakers with nonskid soles are required. Children will not be allowed to participate on climbing equipment with sandals or smooth-soled shoes such as cowboy boots, dress shoes, etc.



PLAYGROUND RULES

Keeping schools safe allows children to look forward to being in an encouraging environment that promotes social and creative learning. Promoting school safety creates an open space for children to explore, learn, and grow. Thank you for assisting us in keeping all our children safe during and after school hours.

What it sounds like...

1. Be kind and play nicely with each other.
2. Be polite. Use thoughtful words and actions.
3. Be careful with others and the equipment.
4. Show respect for others and follow instructions given by teachers.
5. Use equipment safely, sensibly, and appropriately.

What it looks like...

1. The playground is closed and only to be used by the school between the hours of 8:30-2:00.
2. If bikes are being used, have them traveling clockwise on the cement.
3. No pets are allowed on the playground during or after the school day.
4. Please use the appropriate exit and entrance to the playground. No climbing on or over the fence.
5. All gates are to remain locked when children are present on the playground.
6. When going to or playing on the playground, always walk on the sidewalks and around/on equipment.
7. Please only one person at a time when using the climbing wall.
8. Swings are to be sat on with everyone swinging the same direction. Only adults can push children on the swings.
9. Leave rocks, bark, sticks, and other dangerous objects on the ground. Only throw appropriate sports equipment.
10. Real or pretend fighting and rough play are not allowed.
11. On the slide, slide down; it's one-way only. Go up the stairs and sit down the slide facing forward.
12. Stop what you are doing immediately when the teacher signals that is time to go in and go to your line.
13. Show pride in your school and neighborhood by keeping the building and grounds litter-free.
14. The round stepping stools on the playground are to be used as bongo drums, and not used for entering/exiting the playground equipment or for standing/climbing.
15. If the sandbox cover is closed, please do not walk on the cover. Sand stays in the sandbox.
16. Children must always be supervised by an adult while playing on the playground or walking around the SUMC campus. If a child must exit the playground area to go to another area (bathroom, water fountain, etc.) they must be accompanied by an adult.
17. Please wear appropriate closed toe, rubber soled shoes when playing on the playground.
18. The Science Exploration Area and class gardens are only to be entered when accompanied by a SUMS teacher.

