

**SUNTREE UNITED METHODIST
SCHOOL HANDBOOK
2025-2026**



**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 35th 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 Suntree United Methodist Church ministry, we are committed to sharing the good news of God's love throughout our school.

Our school's mission statement 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 using an engaging, challenging, and differentiated curriculum. We will encourage your child to grow in his/her relationship with God, ask questions, explore his/her ideas, work collaboratively, and become independent learners.

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. Occasionally, 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 Bailey Schreiner, welcome you to the church and 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. They will be accepted for who they are, respected, and loved.

As adults, we are entrusted by God to create a nurturing environment for our children where they can grow in a manner that reflects the principles Jesus taught. This includes fostering their physical, social, emotional, mental, and spiritual growth.

Each child has the potential to build positive learning experiences, grow in self-concept and self-esteem, and gain problem-solving abilities. These areas of learning will help the child realize their full potential and lay a biblical foundation upon which they can build.



OUR PRESCHOOL PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

Our program is built on a positive approach to learning, which includes centers, creative play, and many hands-on experiences. We believe that children learn best through experiences that use all their senses, and our curriculum, Wee Learn, is designed to reflect this. **Worksheets are not appropriate at this age.**

Our curriculum areas:

Bible Stories	Christian Concepts	Pre-Reading
Pre-Math	Social Studies	Creative Cooking
Language Arts	Science Experiences	Music
Dramatic Play	Creative Art	Sensory and Motor Development

Rest assured, we continually assess and develop our curriculum throughout the year, ensuring that your child's learning needs are met. You will receive a schedule of curriculum units that will be presented in your child's class throughout the school year. All classes participate in weekly chapel time.

OUR TEACHER-STUDENT RATIO

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

OUR ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Here at SUMS, if a child turns three on or before September 1st and is potty trained, he/she can attend our 3-year-old Program. If your child turns four 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 three 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. However, we expect the parents to work diligently with the children at home, and our teachers do the same 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 before final registration.

Florida Law requires each child to have the DH 3040 and the DH 680 Forms 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 himself/herself, then our teachers can oversee this. If they cannot 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 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 them to leave school for a week or so to enable the families to work with them more constantly 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 Suntree United Methodist School is not paid for specific days, your child can be removed from our school. If you cannot meet the attendance requirements 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 at 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 cannot play outside that day, he should not attend school, as outdoor activity is part of our daily school program. A doctor must examine a child who has been absent because of a contagious disease before returning to school. Children should be fever-free 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 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 the child's typical 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 require a doctor's note.

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

Ringworm must be covered; if it is on the scalp, it 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 were obtained from the Child Care Association of Brevard County, Inc.

The staff cannot provide your child with any medication without the parent filling out and signing a consent form. If your child needs medication regularly, 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 concerns 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.

Our discipline approach for young children aims to help them learn appropriately through the preschool years so they can mature and function as responsible, ethical, well-adjusted individuals who can effectively communicate their 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 that what works for one child may not work for another. Children who find themselves in need are allowed to leave the group to a “safe place” and are free to return to the group at their 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 and undesired behaviors are a call for help and will be addressed immediately. If such behavior continues, a plan of action must 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. Florida state law requires us 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.

Occasionally, a program is not optimal 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- This is payable at the time of registration. It is **non-refundable** and will be used to buy expendable goods for your child, such as paper, paint, and glue, in addition to paying our enrichment staff, which is comprised of Science at SUMS, Fun Trail, and Music.

Activity Fee- This donation can be paid at the time of registration. It will be used for extra programs at our school, such as Science at SUMS, Fun Trail, and Music. The Donation is not a requirement for the child's participation in our programs.

TUITION and SCHOLARSHIPS

Tuition is due on 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 your tuition to the school front desk staff, use the Communication Folder, or give it to the assistant if you use the drive-by method for drop-off.

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 be absent on the 5th, you must pay before the 5th of the month. If tuition has 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 are 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. The director and pastoral staff handle the disbursement of scholarship money. 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 itself 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 must notify the school 30 days in advance if withdrawal is necessary. There can be no reimbursement for children withdrawing during the month. A \$20.00 fee will be charged for all checks returned from the bank. Cash payment for the check and the \$20.00 fee will be due one week after the check is returned to the school.

The fee schedule for the school year 2024-2025 is as follows:

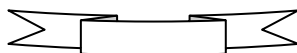
Class	Registration/Activity Fee	Tuition
Wee Three	\$300.00	\$300.00
3-Year-Old		
2 Day	\$300.00	\$300.00
3 Day	\$350.00	\$350.00
VPK 4-Year-Old		
3 Day	\$325.00	Fully State Funded
5 Day	\$325.00	Fully State Funded
5 Day Extended Day	\$325.00	\$350.00
VPK Self-Pay**		
3 Day VPK/5 Day VPK	\$325.00	\$400.00
5 Day VPK Extended	\$325.00	\$550.00
Kindergarten	\$500.00	\$550.00

**VPK Self-Pay—Fees are for children who previously utilized the VPK Program, and the funding is no longer available. They are 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 paid monthly. If your child attends our school during 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: The above fees and tuition are only good for School Year 2024-2025.





LUNCH BUNCH



Lunch Bunch will be until 2:00 p.m. and offered each school day (with a few exceptions, such as party days, staff meetings, etc.) beginning the second week of school. If you need 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 limited spots are available in the Lunch Bunch program. Your child will be required to come on the days you sign 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. You will be charged for that day if your child does not attend school on the assigned day and we do not receive a call. If your child is in school on the day he or she 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, 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 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, your child can be placed on a waitlist, and we will call you if there is an opening. If you need to sign your child up for Lunch Bunch or take your child's name off the list, you can come in or call the office, and we can help you with that process.

Lunch Bunch will cost an additional \$17.00 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 must 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 with 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 before 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)

You must have your child(ren)'s drive-by card in your car window at pick-up time. At pick-up, please leave your drive-by 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 drive-by card.

It is never comfortable having to remind people of rules that are not being followed, but your child's (ren) 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 we sometimes have substitute teachers working. For your children's and our staff's safety, the teachers will only unload and load from the curbside. The teacher will bring your child(ren) to your car for you to buckle him/her 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. Open communication with our families is essential, but such conversations should not occur 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 must be held in the parking lot and hallways.

We love your children like family and 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

All school doors remain locked during school hours for your child's safety. 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's 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 accommodation is available for 10 minutes after school ends. We allow 10 minutes in case there are differences between 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. The fee will be doubled if you are late more than five times.

CAR SEATS

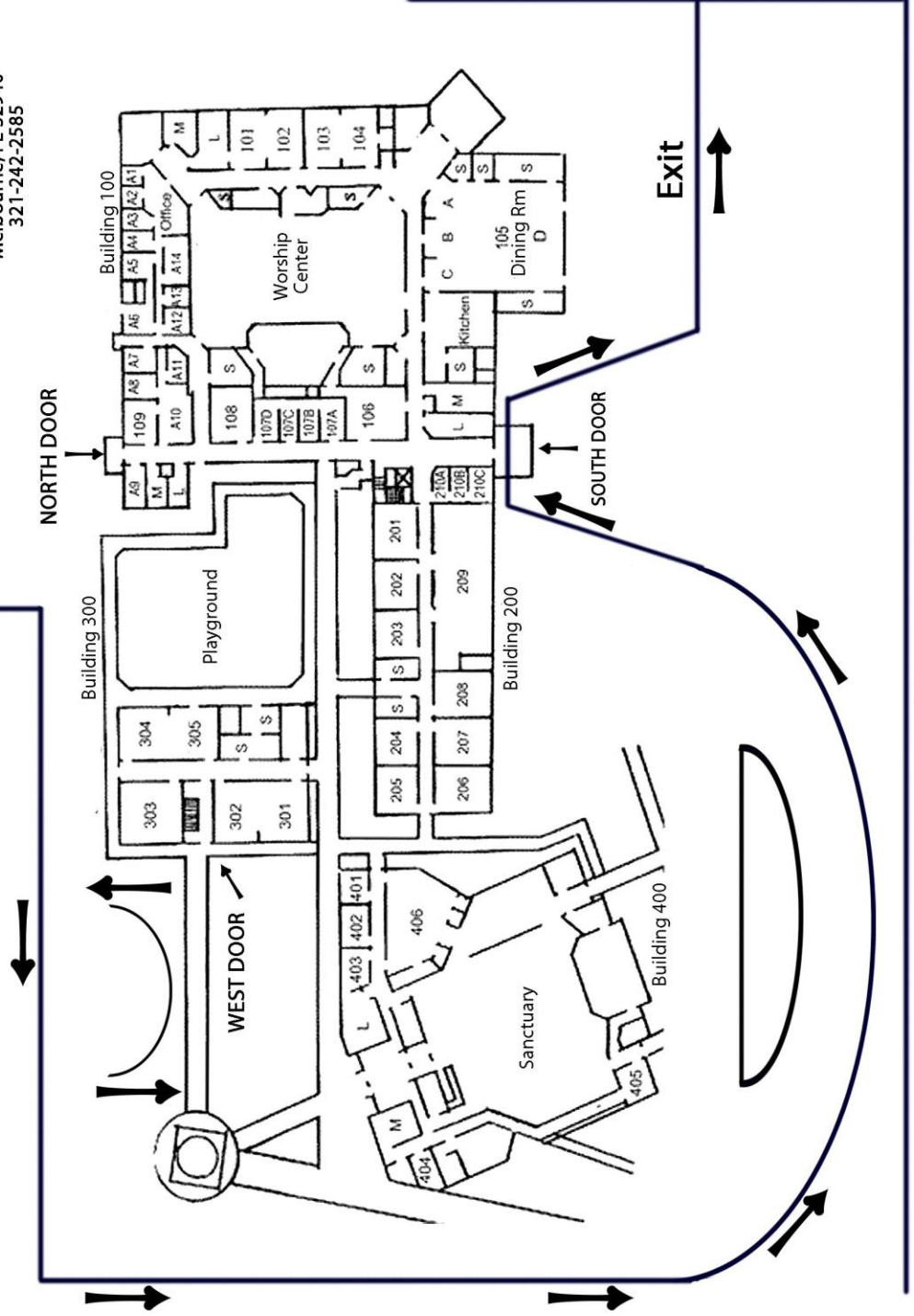
We would like our families to leave car seats at school if someone else is picking up their child after school. We request that the person picking up come into the building to retrieve the car seat and install it in their car. As you know, incorrect installation is the number one liability for car seats. Since there are many different styles of car seats, we feel that it is in your child's best interest and safety 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



VERBAL MESSAGES

The staff cannot accept verbal messages brought by children. All changes must be in writing with a parent's 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 many toys and activities for the children each day. They may bring educational items to share on "Show and Tell" days, which your classroom teacher will announce.

Children may not bring violent toys to school. Toys of violence will be taken up by the Director and returned to the parents. These toys include any play items, 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 principle 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 general education of young children. 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 want to meet with her or need an additional face-to-face conference.

VOLUNTEERING

If you volunteer in your child's classroom or school-wide, please stop by the front desk to be let into the school wing.





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 before the trip for you to sign.

Parents who drive other children from the class on a field trip must provide the teacher with a current copy of their driver's license and proof of liability insurance. Advance notice is always given for these trips, and 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 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, occur 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" sent in during this season.

In individual classrooms, Christmas is celebrated as Jesus' birthday. Here at SUMS, we feel 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 at different times on different days of the week. We have these drills on alternate days so all children can practice safety measures. Families may also want to practice what to do in 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 at our school front desk throughout the school year.

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 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 can only be used by the school between 8:30 and 2:00.
2. Have bikes travel clockwise on the cement if they are used.
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—do not climb 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 in 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 on 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, not 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. Students may only enter the Science Exploration Area and class gardens when accompanied by a SUMS teacher.

