



# The Miami Sudbury School Handbook

## 2018-2019

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Miami Sudbury School (TMSS) provides a democratic education that empowers students to learn and grow through freedom and responsibility, preparing them for college, career, and citizenship.

### **VISION STATEMENT**

To create a nurturing and inclusive learning environment which fosters a strong sense of responsibility, interpersonal skills, and the capacity for self-directed, lifelong learning with the initiative and analytical abilities necessary to adapt to and create the future of our world.

### **NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY**

The Miami Sudbury School does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion/creed, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, national and ethnic origin/ancestry, or ability. Students, families, and employees have access to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available. It does not discriminate on the basis of any of the above in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, tuition assistance programs, employment, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

### **CONSTRUCTIVIST LEARNING MODEL**

The Miami Sudbury School uses a constructivist model (sometimes called need-based, project, or problem-based learning), where the problem or project is at the center of the learning, instead of the teacher. One example of a project might be "I'd like to build a canoe," and an example of a problem is "I found this caterpillar but I don't know what to feed it." In each case, the drive to learn is in solving a problem the learner has identified. Skills that need to be acquired to complete the project or solve the problem are learned along the way, rather than in a decontextualized or arbitrary way. This student-centered approach puts learning in the hands of the learner. Teachers are guides, facilitators, and mentors. Plenty of resources, including experts, books, electronic media, mentors and peers, are available to support the learner in their projects.

## **DEMOCRATIC IMMERSION**

Democratic schools help students develop into self-confident, self-directed, lifelong learners. Democratic schools empower students to vote on decisions that affect their lives and their school, imparts a sense of responsibility for themselves and others, and builds higher-order thinking in preparation for a full, active citizenship. Sudbury schools allow each student to follow his or her own individual education path. Students engage in academic projects and pursue interests from the riches the world has to offer without limiting relationship with peers, teachers, and the school community. We offer a supportive, resource-rich school environment where people of all ages learn from and with each other.

## **GOVERNANCE**

School Meeting is the primary decision-making body at school. The School Meeting Chair facilitates the meetings using Robert’s Rules of Order and an elected Secretary maintains the Record. These positions are elected annually or whenever there are vacancies.

## **SCHOOL MEETING (SM)**

At weekly School Meetings, students and staff propose and create new rules, amend existing rules, and abolish rules. Once a rule change has been approved, it’s documented in the Lawbook and List of Rules. Each School Meeting member agrees to abide by these rules upon enrolling. In general, the rules cover issues related to safety and community standards. Violations of state and federal laws are forbidden. The Lawbook and rules are made available to all voting members and are available upon request. School Meeting is also the time and place for students and staff to make motions to conduct entrepreneurial businesses, plan school-wide activities, or take on other projects.

## **JUDICIAL COMMITTEE (JC)**

When violations to school rules occur, they are resolved in the Judicial Committee (JC). JC is a peer court model of justice made up of an elected JC clerk, students appointed from the general student body (all students serve on a rotating basis), and a member of the staff. They process all complaints daily.

Students, staff, and volunteers may “write up” a complaint if they witness a violation of school rules by any member of the community. The JC will discuss the circumstances of the violations and determine consequences. Accused who plead “not guilty” are entitled to a trial at School Meeting. In the event of a serious violation, which may involve a violation of state or federal law, the JC may order suspension or expulsion. All JC decisions are posted for review by the school community. If a voting member feels a JC sentence was too harsh or too lenient, they can request that the decision be reviewed at School Meeting. School Meeting may request that the case be retried at the next JC with a different jury if so requested.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

Certain conflicts occur that do not rise to the level of the JC but must be addressed. Because interpersonal relationships are at the core of learning at TMSS, the ability to resolve conflicts is an essential skill for students and staff. Interpersonal conflicts may be resolved with a facilitated mediation technique called “problem solving,” in which both parties air their concerns and perspectives, are heard, and have their conflict mediated in a mutually-agreeable way. Participants devise new agreements so they are able to move out of conflict. Not all conflicts can be solved in this way, and may still be referred for hearing at JC.

## **SCHEDULE AND ATTENDANCE**

School is open from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Students are expected to arrive between 8:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. Those coming late should call the office. Those not in attendance by 10 a.m. are marked absent and staff will contact a parent or guardian to determine the reason for the absence. (See Appendix A for Attendance Policy.) Florida State Law requires 170 days with 5 hr minimum per day. Students are afforded 8 “personal days” that do not require explanation (but Staff do need to be made aware).

## **PARENT VOLUNTEERING**

Parents are encouraged to lend their time and talents for the benefit of the school community through independently-organized “Friends of The Miami Sudbury School” organization. Parents may also offer their skills in the form of “Subject Matter Consultants,” a list that students and staff can draw upon in requesting seminars and workshops.

## **MEALS**

Students can bring their own food to school. Limited kitchen facilities are provided: students may use the microwave once they have been certified. As refrigeration space is limited, students are asked to keep food cool with ice packs in their own lunch boxes and keep lunches, like all their possessions, in their personal storage area. All food and drink must be tightly sealed. Students can snack and dine whenever they like, except during JC and School Meeting. Students may eat at tables and outside but not on couches or the floor/rug, or in another designated ‘no food zones.’ They must clean up after themselves. Student may not ask others for food. Those with food restrictions must monitor themselves. Families may sign up for the campus meal plan through Palmetto Presbyterian Church and will get that meal in the cafeteria at designated times.

## **MEDICATION**

TMSS recognizes that administering medicine to students or allowing them to self-administer medication is sometimes necessary when failure to take the medication would jeopardize the health of the student or make it impossible for the student to attend school. Therefore, students may be permitted to take non-injectable prescription or nonprescription medication at school on a temporary or permanent basis. Because of the mixed-age environment, medication must be held by Staff during school hours. (See Appendix B for medication policy.)

## **ATTIRE**

Because we are on a mixed-use campus, we are required to have all students and staff wear a Voting Member t-shirt. Apart from the required t-shirt, we allow for freedom of expression in attire and trust that Voting Members will make good choices for themselves and their community.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

In order for students to be prepared for college, career, and citizenship, they must be able to use digital tools responsibly and effectively. TMSS provides access to school computers for study, research, and entertainment. All students may use the computers, depending on availability, and provided the student is certified. A signup system is in place when demand exceeds available computers.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Excursions into the community are a vital part of the Sudbury educational model, and students and staff may propose an excursion in School Meeting for enrichment, physical activity, or entertainment. Parents must have a permission slip on file or they may opt to sign permission slips prior to each excursion.

## **STUDENT AND PARENT AGREEMENTS**

Each student and parent or guardian must sign a agreement outlining their understanding of and their responsibility for abiding by the Sudbury model. (See Appendix C and D.)

## **Appendix A: Student Attendance Policy**

**Why is attendance important?** Beyond the legal reasons of compulsory education, The Miami Sudbury School is a school community that depends upon the regular participation of all members in many aspects of community life, including JC jury duty and chores. Voting members must also be available to be held accountable through the JC process and irregular attendance erodes that important process. Students may hold offices that are essential to the smooth running of the school or may have positions in committees and corporations that depend on their participation. Sudbury Schools also recognize the importance of learning that can happen on family trips, but notice must be given for the sake of community accountability and participation.

Students are expected to: Attend school 3-5 days a week (depending on full time or part time status). Sign in immediately upon arrival at school. Have a parent/Guardian call school by 10:00 am if they are going to be absent. If it is not possible to call, please send a note on the first day your student returns to school stating the reasons for the absence. If the school does not receive a note or a call, the absence will be considered a personal/unexcused absence. Students must sign out upon departure.

All students are expected to attend on School Meeting day, whether or not they choose to participate in School Meeting that particular day.

**Definition of an Excused Absence:** The school is notified by 10:00 am or a note is received within 24 hours. Must be for one of the following reasons: 1) Student illness (either temporary or with a doctor's note for prolonged or ongoing medical issues) 2) Doctor/dentist appointment 3) Family illness 4) Family or other emergency 5) Other reason pre-authorized by School Meeting (see below). School Meeting may excuse absences for other reasons where satisfactory arrangements are made in advance of the absence. Please plan ahead in order to make a motion and have it approved before the planned absence. A half-day absence shall be recorded when a student misses more than 3 hours but less than 5.

**Definition of Irregular Attendance:** Six unexcused half day absences in any four-week period during which the school is in session shall be considered irregular attendance. Five unexcused absences in a term of three months or ten unexcused absences in any term of six months shall be considered irregular attendance.

**Noncompliance with the Policy:** The Attendance Clerk will call home to check in with Student/Family after 10am daily. The Attendance Clerk will call an official conference with the student reiterating the school's attendance policy AND an email will be sent to the family outlining the policy and the laws: 1) After three consecutive unexcused absences OR 2) After five unexcused absences in a three month period OR 3) After ten unexcused absences in a six-month period.

## **Appendix B: Medication Administration Policy**

Administering non-injectable medicines to students, The Miami Sudbury School recognizes that administering of medication to students and self-medication may be necessary when the failure to take such medication would jeopardize the health of the student or the student would not be able to attend school if medication was not made available during school hours. Consequently, students may be permitted to take non-injectable prescription or nonprescription medication at school, on a temporary or regular basis.

All requests for the The Miami Sudbury School to administer medication to students shall be made by their parents in writing, using the Medical Consent Form. Requests shall include the specific instructions of the physician for the administration of a prescription medication to a student or the written instructions of the parent for the administration of a nonprescription medication to a student. A prescription label will be deemed sufficient to meet the requirements for written physician instructions. The Miami Sudbury School will designate school staff authorized to administer medication to students. All medication, prescription and nonprescription will be kept in the office and retrieved by the student with the assistance of designated school staff.

The Miami Sudbury School reserves the right to reject a request to administer prescription or nonprescription medication when such medication is not necessary for the student to remain in school.

**Administering Injectable Medicines to Students:** Injectable medicines may be used at school only when it is necessary for students to attend school. Staff will receive specific training, as required by law, by either the student's sponsoring district's health staff or a practicing health care provider.

This policy and administrative regulation shall not prohibit, in any way, the administration of recognized first aid to students by school employees.

### **Self Medication Administration Policy**

All requests to The Miami Sudbury School for a student to self-administer non-injectable medication, shall be made by the parent in writing. Medications must be in the original container (prescription) or package (nonprescription.) Requests shall include the written instructions of the physician for the administration of a prescription medication or the written instructions of the parent for the self-administration of a nonprescription medication by a student. A prescription label will be deemed sufficient to meet the requirements for written physician instructions.

The Miami Sudbury School reserves the right to reject a request to self-administer prescription or nonprescription medication when such medication is not necessary for the student to remain in school. All prescription and nonprescription medication will be kept locked in the office and given to the student by staff when needed, based on the recommended dosage on the label or package.

This policy and administrative regulation shall not prohibit, in any way, the administration of recognized first aid to students by school employees.

## Appendix C: Student Agreement

- I am free to choose how I spend my time at The Miami Sudbury School. As a full voting member of the School Meeting, I am responsible for the general welfare of the school, through actions that contribute to preserving the atmosphere of freedom, respect, fairness, trust, and order that is the essence of the school's existence.
- I understand that I am an equal citizen with all of the rights, privileges, responsibilities, and access therein. I know that my vote is equal to all others within the democratic governance of the school.
- I understand that although the school has no expectations about how I spend my time or what activities I choose to pursue, the school does expect that those pursuits will be of my own design and choosing.
- I am willing to participate in the Judicial Committee when called to serve as juror, accused, or witness, and if elected as a member, and I am willing to make a good faith effort to resolve conflicts through problem-solving.
- In signing below, I agree to abide by the The Miami Sudbury School Lawbook, List of Rules, Policies, and Procedures, and to treat others with respect, which is inherent in the democratic principles that the school is founded on.
- I understand that any violation of this agreement may result in a judicial complaint being filed.
- I willingly choose to attend The Miami Sudbury School.

---

Student Signature

---

Date

## Appendix D: Parent/Guardian Agreement

The role of parents and guardians in the educational lives of children is of primary importance. We commend family support for democratic education. The job of Staff at a Sudbury School is to create and maintain a safe environment where students are free to discover and pursue their own interests in their own ways. To succeed in this task, we need the full support of every parent and guardian who is part of the school community. It is essential to the school that families understand and embrace our methods and principles before your child begins attending The Miami Sudbury School. In order for the students to get the most from their experience at The Miami Sudbury School, we ask that parents do their part to support their children in the following ways:

- ❑ **Learning About the Sudbury Model:** Making a good faith effort to understand the democratic governance structures of the school, judicial processes, and noncoercive philosophy.
- ❑ **Supporting Student Decisions:** The decisions students make are real and meaningful, both individually and democratically. The Miami Sudbury School holds that placing specific educational expectations on children negates the powerful opportunities offered by a self-directed educational environment. Additionally, sending children to school with assignments interferes with the development of self-motivation, self-direction, self-assessment and self-regulation. It also affects the school environment for other students. Although I may or may not always be comfortable with this, I am supporting my child(ren)'s right to make those choices for themselves.
- ❑ **Understanding the Environment:** The Miami Sudbury School is an environment where students learn to be responsible for themselves and to be accountable to each other. I acknowledge that though there are many procedures in place to ensure safety, I understand that my child(ren) may not be under direct supervision by an adult at all times and that this is part of learning independence and personal responsibility at age-appropriate levels.
- ❑ **Expressing Confidence:** There may be times when parents have concerns about their children's educational progress. All parents experience moments of apprehension and the staff is here to support you. You can make an appointment with the Admissions Clerk to raise a concern specific to your child or discuss broader issues at community forum meetings. Expressing your confidence in your child and in their school in the community and among family and friends is also an important and powerful way to show your support for your student.

I have read and understand the above. I agree to make a good faith effort to support my child(ren) in ways that will enhance their ability to benefit from the educational experiences offered by The Miami Sudbury School.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Student Name(s)

\_\_\_\_\_  
The Miami Sudbury School Representative

\_\_\_\_\_  
Position