



The Miami Sudbury School Handbook

2020-2021

MISSION STATEMENT

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

The Miami Sudbury School develops life-long learners and successful, confident young people. We are an innovative alternative school in Miami self-governed by all of our students themselves who learn like entrepreneurs, exercise full voting rights, and still enjoy their childhood

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 and thrive in today and tomorrow's society.

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 learning), where exploration of the problem or project is at the center of the learning, instead of the "teacher." This powerful form of learning has been shown to be not only extremely effective, but meaningful and fun. The drive to learn

is in solving a problem the learner has identified themselves or come across. Skills that need to be acquired to complete the project or solve the problem are learned along the way in context, rather than in a decontextualized or arbitrary way. This self-directed approach puts learning in the hands of the learner. Staff 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. We highly recommend reading *Free to Learn* by Dr. Peter Gray for more information and insight into self-directed learning and why it is so important and effective.

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 relationships 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 (Standard Parliamentary Procedure) 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 laws and policies, amend existing laws and policies, and abolish laws and policies. Once a change has been approved, it's documented in the Lawbook and List of Policies. 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 policies are made available to all voting members and are available to families 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 chairperson, 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. JC may refer a particularly difficult case or cases of repeated violations of JC sentences to School Meeting which can vote on

suspension or, in extreme cases, expulsion. All JC decisions are posted daily 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. **Participation in the JC process is a truly required element at school.** Students must serve on JC jury when it is their turn and must appear in JC when summoned for a case. If a student significantly delays or disrupts JC either by not appearing or causing disruption during a hearing, they may be held in contempt of JC and will have to appear at the next School Meeting for a sentence. School Meeting may give a warning, require a family conference, or even recommend a short suspension from school depending on the severity and number of prior contempt cases.

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 The Miami Sudbury School, 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. JC may also sentence or recommend mediation between Voting Members.

SAFETY POLICY

Everyone on campus should feel safe at all times. All students are empowered to bring complaints to JC. For the rare instance when a situation or person poses a real threat to the safety and wellbeing of a Voting Member or other person and the above mechanisms do not contain and resolve the issue:

- **Take Control:** School Meeting authorizes a staff member to take control of the unsafe situation in the calmest but most effective way possible (always maintaining their own personal safety and the respect of the person involved). All Voting Members should follow the school de-escalation plan to maintain calm.
- **Call for Removal:** School Meeting authorizes a staff member to call for a clearly unsafe person to be removed from campus or the field trip for the safety of the community.
- **Special School Meeting Review:** If any of the above should happen, a Special School Meeting will be called on the following school day to process what happened and to review the decision of the staff member as a community.

SCHEDULE AND ATTENDANCE

Note: The start of the 2020-2021 School Year is highly exceptional given the COVID-19 pandemic still at large in the community at the time of the school year beginning. Families agree to abide by all the unique policies decided upon by School Meeting in regard to online and on campus attendance and interaction.

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 email the Registrar. Those not in attendance by 10 a.m. are

marked absent the Registrar will contact a parent or guardian to determine the reason for the absence.

Typically, all Voting Members must: (COVID-19 modifications may modify these requirements)

- Attend school 5 days a week for at least 5 hours per day.
- Sign in on the computer immediately upon arrival at school and sign out right before leaving.
- Have a parent/guardian email the Registrar by 10:00am if they are going to be absent or tardy and by 1:00pm if they plan to leave early.
- Attend School Meeting decision review, whether or not they attend the meeting to vote.
- Students are afforded 10-12 “personal days” (depending on the academic calendar) that do not require explanation (but Staff do need to be made aware before 10am that day).
- Students in attendance more than 3 hours but less than 5 hours will have a “half personal day” counted.

PARENT VOLUNTEERING

Parents are encouraged to lend their time and talents for the benefit of the school community through participating in community events such as potlucks, meet & greets, etc. 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. Students may use the microwave once they have been certified. All food and drink must be tightly sealed and kept tidy. 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 other designated ‘no food zones.’ They must clean up after themselves. If any student has medical food allergies, it will be discussed at School Meeting to ensure safety. Families may sign up for the campus meal plan through Palmetto Presbyterian Church and will get that meal from the cafeteria at designated times. Students may also order food to be delivered to campus as long as it’s not delivered during JC or School Meeting.

MEDICATION

The Miami Sudbury School 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

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. The Miami Sudbury School 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 for any shared computer usage. The Technology Committee of School Meeting provides support and certification for technology used at school and all Voting Members must agree to the terms of acceptable use in order to use school and personal electronics at school as well as technological services provided by the school, such as email and other online products under the school domain.

TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY

The use of technology is an important part of education in the 21st century. Students must agree to the following stipulations in order to be allowed to use school technology and electronics at school (the acknowledgement of this policy in this school handbook will serve as agreement).

1. Students shall use the Internet and all forms of school technology responsibly. School technology includes, but is not limited to, computers, tablets, printers, copiers, cameras, and interactive web resources. This agreement extends to use of technology that students may be able to use off site as well as school email and related services provided by the school for student use.
2. Students shall respect the rights of copyright owners by limiting copying to essential materials and providing attribution (citations) for images and text. Students shall avoid plagiarism by ensuring that their papers and projects reflect their thoughts and ideas as well as cited paraphrases, summaries and quotations. Students will ask for assistance if they have questions regarding these terms.
3. Students shall understand that they may use a personal device on the school network, that they may be required to provide information about their device to the technology department to ensure that it can operate safely without disrupting others, that all school policies apply to them whether they are using their own device or school technologies, and that this privilege may be limited or revoked.
4. Students shall understand the network is a valuable resource. Students shall understand that downloading large files or attachments may compromise network speed and they will avoid this type of activity without permission even if they are using a personal device. Students shall limit their use of downloading large files on campus.
5. Students shall understand that their participation in school interactive web resources--using a personal device or not--must represent what is expected from a student in The Miami Sudbury School. Therefore, anything that is considered inappropriate in the school is also inappropriate in all uses of email, blogs, podcasts, social networking sites, messaging/chat sites, or other digital communication tools. This includes, but is not limited to disrespectful, profane, racist, sexist, derogatory, or other discriminatory remarks. Additionally, students shall promptly inform the Judicial Committee, School Meeting Chair, or a staff member if any messages received or material reviewed is inappropriate.
6. Students shall understand no form of bullying or manipulation is tolerated, including in online/electronic

form.

7. Students shall understand and shall comply with all personal technology guidelines associated with the school and as they are updated by School Meeting and the Technology Committee.
8. Students shall understand that school provided access to the Internet has to be filtered. If they need access to a blocked site, they shall work with the Technology Committee to explore options available. Students shall not attempt to bypass any blocked sites or circumvent the filter in any manner.
9. Students shall not impersonate nor attempt to impersonate another nor use or attempt to use somebody else's accounts on any device. Students shall not delete or tamper with anyone else's files, folders, or work. Students shall not let another student use their accounts on any device.
10. Students shall understand that files, services, and devices provided by and/or managed by the school are not private from oversight. There is no expectation of privacy when students use the school's network, devices, and services and anything they do can be viewed by JC or staff at any time.
11. Students and their families shall understand that unless superseded by the liability schedule of a specific program, they will be liable for full repair and replacement costs for damage to school property, whether intentional or through negligence, including electronic devices.
12. Students shall understand that attempts to override, disable, alter, or circumvent security restrictions, management systems, or device firmware will be considered intentional damage. All issues will be brought to the attention of JC and possibly School Meeting.

Students shall understand that should they be found in violation of this policy, the consequences could include, but are not limited to; restricting access to the device, disabling device features or applications, the revocation of all network access, suspension or exclusion from school, or legal action by the authorities. Students or parents should contact school staff if they have any questions about this agreement or its implementation.

This policy will be reviewed when necessary due to significant change in technology access or usage by students.

EXPANDED CAMPUS

Families will be provided with information regarding the unique opportunity at The Miami Sudbury School for various levels of permission for students to expand their learning beyond the campus during the school day. Please refer to the Expanded Campus Agreement for more information.

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 an agreement outlining their understanding of and their responsibility for abiding by the Sudbury model. (See Appendix C and D.)

Appendix A: Student Attendance Policy

Hours and Attendance Policy

School hours are from 8:30am - 3:00pm Monday through Friday. Voting members are expected to arrive between 8:30am - 10:00am and be in attendance at least 5 hours per school day.

All matters pertaining to attendance will be monitored strictly by the Registrar; please do not contact other staff members. **If your child is going to be late, leave early, or be absent, please EMAIL (preferred) by 10AM Daily): welcome@miamisudburyschool.org Please put "Attendance" in the subject line by 10:00AM Daily**

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to:

- Attend school 3-5 days a week (depending on full-time or part-time status) for at least 5 hours per day.
- Sign in on the computer immediately upon arrival at school and sign out right before leaving.
- Have a parent/guardian email or text the Registrar by 10:00am if they are going to be absent or tardy and by 1:00pm if they plan to leave early.
- All students are expected to attend on School Meeting day(s), whether or not they choose to participate in School Meeting that particular day.

Personal Days Policy

We understand that situations may come up from time-to-time, whether it is an immediate family emergency, sick day, or a much needed day off. These will be considered Personal Days to which each full time Voting Member is afforded **10-12** per school year. Part-time Program 4-day Voting Members are afforded 9 personal days per school year. 3-day Voting Members are afforded 8 personal days per school year. The Registrar does need to be made aware, preferably prior to the Personal Day or before 10:00am of the Personal Day. **Students/Families can email the Registrar to receive the current balance of a student's Personal Days.**

Half Day Absence Policy

If a Voting Member attends school more than 3 hours but less than 5 hours in a day, this will be considered a Half Day Absence. 2 Half Day Absences will be considered 1 Personal Day. If a voting member attends less than 3 hours a day, then it will be considered a Full Day absence and marked as 1 Personal Day.

Approved Absences: Medical Emergencies & Trips Policy

We want our Voting Members to have learning opportunities throughout the larger community and we understand that unforeseen events such as extreme illnesses or accidents happen, but we do expect communication in regard to these circumstances. Family trips during normally-scheduled school days must receive approval from the School Meeting at least 1 week prior to the start of the trip. Approved trips will not be deducted from the Personal Day allowance for the school year if approved by the School Meeting. Extreme/extended illnesses or accidents must be reported to the Registrar and an ER or doctor's note will be

used to approve the incident and not deduct from a personal day (pre-planned doctor/dentist appointments do not fall into this category and will be considered “personal.”)

Sign In/ Sign Out Policy

If a student fails to Sign In or Sign Out on the computer repeatedly (more than 3 times in a month), a complaint will be filed with the JC by the Registrar the following day. If a student forgets to Sign In or Sign Out on the computer but a Staff member and/or other students can confirm that they were indeed in before 10am and did not leave until around 3pm, the Registrar will manually enter the student’s “Sign In” time as 10:00am and/ or “Sign Out” time 3:00pm. If a Voting Member changes their Sign In/ Sign Out time (ex: signing out when they are still there) a complaint will be filed immediately.

Irregular Attendance

If a student:

- Has more than 5 personal days in a month
- Has 2 consecutive days where there are not in school and no communication has been received
- Have exceeded their 10-12 allotted Personal Days in the School Year
- Other extreme attendance irregularities

The Registrar may:

- Send an email to the Family and may request a Family Meeting to discuss Attendance
- Make a motion to discuss the student’s irregular attendance at School Meeting

Since this is a community, regular attendance is part of how the community functions well and as such is taken seriously. There is ample opportunity for absences to be approved (see Approved Absences), and a habit of missing days either without communication or without regard to the disturbance that unplanned absences can cause in the community will require discussion and possible examination by the community as to whether the Voting Member truly wishes to be part of the school community.

Registrar Contact:

welcome@miamisudburyschool.org

Please put “Attendance” in the subject line

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 non prescription 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.

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 chairperson 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.