

Parent Handbook 2022-2023

DRAFT 9/23/2022

Fort Worth Sudbury School
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We are continuing to update this handbook.
Please contact Board Members for input.

Our Mission

Fort Worth Sudbury School strives to encourage each student to reach their full personal potential. The school, through use of the democratic process and self-directed education, will respect the development of the whole child at their own pace and in their own way. It is our mission to provide access to a high quality, student-centered environment that embraces diversity, creativity, health and the joy of living and learning.

Our Goals

1. Provide an environment that allows students to feel safe and loved
2. Create life-long lovers of learning
3. Inspire children to follow their passions and dreams
4. Promote personal responsibility and integrity
5. Develop meaningful relationships between students, mentors, and the community
6. Demonstrate an appreciation for the gifts, talents, and abilities of each student
7. Encourage community service, entrepreneurialism, **democracy** and a commitment to social justice.

Our Curriculum

With no set curriculum, no age-based standards and no grades to hold them accountable, how do students possibly learn anything at this school?

Student-Led Projects and Activities

At Fort Worth Sudbury School, students have a host of passions outside of traditional classes. Whether a student is interested in science, music, or art, mentors will be there to support them on their path. Students can create committees, clubs, schedule field trips and pursue learning opportunities based purely on their interests. Their own imagination and initiative are the only limits.

Interest-Based Classes

Students are allowed to submit course ideas and decide what is taught at the school. This allows for a great diversity of educational experiences. If a class is not as interesting as they thought, the class is re-structured or ditched in favor of more interesting topics. Engagement and buy-in are inherent in a system where students are picking the content. With that being said, students also create courses based on their goals. If they want to go to college and need

to perform well on the SATs, they may start a mentor-led study group to prepare for the exams. AP courses can also be offered as part of college prep.

Self-control and Regulation

There are plenty of rules at a democratic school. They are enforced by the student body. However, there is a lot of flexibility and freedom as well. Students determine what they do with their time each day. It requires a great deal of self-awareness and self-control to exist within that freedom and not lose control. Students must learn how to be bored, to be focused, to succeed, to fail, and to try a whole variety of skills just because they want. It is a skill that serves them through life.

Field Trips and Adventures

Students learn through experiences. Frequent trips to museums, state parks, libraries, and local businesses help immerse students in the culture of their community. They are exposed to art, science, life skills, and communication through these outings. Experiences and hands-on activities are invaluable when it comes to learning and creating true understandings about a wide variety of content.

Free Play

Younger children (though older children benefit as well!) depend on play to learn and develop relationships. Too often this vital element of childhood is removed in favor of reading programs and math drills. Children learn to emulate the adults around them and build a community through free play.

Mentor-Facilitated Experiences

School mentors come with a variety of backgrounds and strengths. They share these with their learning community allowing students to engage as much or as little as they want. Students may also elect to enlist certain mentors to grow programs and develop courses for them to take.

School Administration and Leadership

Students run the school. They take leadership responsibilities by presiding over School Meetings, administering consequences as Judicial Committee officers, determining the needs of the school, and overcoming the challenges of living in a thriving community. These are high order skills that students develop by actually participating in the operation of the school and living in a community of learners. While adults may be needed to facilitate some of these operations, they are mirrored by a student holding the same position, who is learning while leading in our community.

Administrative Policies

Attendance

The community asks that students attend at least 2 days/week. Families can propose to school meeting for extended absence for various reasons (e.g. long family trip.) Please do so at least one week in advance.

Absences- Please let the community know when students will not be attending unless it is part of your family's normal schedule. You can do this through Discord-base camp or email the school at info@fwsudbury.org

Health and Safety Policies

Illness and Exclusion- If your student is sick, please have them stay at home. If they have been exposed to Covid, the flu or any other highly contagious disease and we are not masking, please have them mask.

Medication- Please let the administrator know if your student has medication they take during the school day.

Procedures for Handling Emergencies

Inclement Weather Policies- A determination will be made by the board in consultation with administration and school officers by 8 pm for the following day. The decision will be circulated through Facebook and Discord.

Emergency Plan- Fire drills and disturbance in the community will be held quarterly and any absent students on that day will be informed of our procedures. The community will be informed one week prior to these drills.

School Safety Policies- Entry and exit from the school is only through the front door of the school, which is always locked. Only Mentors are allowed to open the doors, and we ask parents to stay in the foyer as your student(s) gather their belongings and leave.

Parent Responsibilities

Sign In and Release- Please sign your student in and out using the tablet in the foyer of the school.

Parent Participation- The community welcomes parent participation and there are many different positions to hold including: Board Members, Mentors, Volunteers that teach a class, Volunteers that help Board Members, Volunteers that help with social media, special events and field trips,

as well as cleaning and laundry. In addition to holding positions and volunteering you can stay up to date on our community via the DISCORD app as well as the Facebook and Instagram.

Custody Situations- If there are any stipulations of a custody agreement that impact the school in any way, please inform the administrator when applying for admission and provide any relevant documentation that includes the particulars that impact the school (e.g. pick-up.)

Confidentiality- The community takes confidentiality very seriously. We do not share any pictures of people in the community without their express permission.

Parent Referrals- The community grows and prospers through the goodwill of our parents. Please share your wonderful experiences at the school with anybody, but especially with families that have school age children. In the event that you're unhappy with something in our community please reach out to us so we can learn from it and help to rectify the situation.

Food Service and Preparation- Students will bring their own lunches, and the school provides snacks from the budget by way of vote at school meetings. If a student wants to cook in the kitchen, they will inform a mentor who may observe or facilitate based on the student's individual needs.

Animals- Only service animals are allowed. Please provide documentation.

Questions or Concerns- All questions and/or concerns can be addressed with the administration, unless it is about the administration. In which case the board may be contacted directly.

Promotional Material and Communication Materials

Unless a student or parent specifically requests to not have their image used in promotional or communication materials, the school administration and mentors are the only ones who can distribute images of students to the general public.

Student Conflict Resolution

Fort Worth Sudbury School works as a community to help its members resolve their conflicts. This includes an escalation process beginning with gentle help from friends and witnesses that goes all the way through to a community run court system. All conflicts referred to the Judiciary Committee (JC) will be adjudicated through their policies and procedures. The JC is made up of two JC Clerks (elected for one month,) two randomly chosen students, one mentor and anyone else in the community that wishes to attend the proceedings. All members of JC interview defendants, plaintiffs and witnesses, and then a discussion may happen and a vote is held to determine consequences. The focus is not on discipline, but on conflict resolution and consequences that are in line with the conflict. Decisions made by JC can be appealed to School Meeting.

Hours of Operation

Monday- Friday
8-4

Tuition and Fees

There is a non-refundable Registration Fee for each student who is considering enrollment, payable in advance of the trial for that student. The fee entitles the student to a one week trial period at the school. This registration fee will be applied to the first month's tuition for students who enroll. The current fee is \$100.

For each family there is a \$300 monthly enrollment fee plus an additional monthly student fee (\$100 per student 11 and under and \$75 per student 12 and over). For a family with one student enrolled tuition would be \$400 per month, a family with two students would pay \$500 and so on. However, Fort Worth Sudbury relies on volunteers and tuition may be offset by hours volunteered by parents/guardians in service of the school and students. Tuition is reduced at a rate of \$8.00 per hour volunteered. For example, annual tuition for a single student based on monthly volunteer hours are as follows;

- Hours volunteered per month: 0 Annual tuition: \$4,000 (\$400/mo x 10 months)
- Hours volunteered per month: 16 Annual tuition: \$2,720 (\$272/mo x 10 months)
- Hours volunteered per month: 32 Annual tuition: \$1,440 (\$144/mo x 10 months)

Tuition will be calculated each month based on pre-scheduled volunteer hours and may be paid in bi-monthly installments. Discrepancies in tuition due (if volunteer hours worked differ from those scheduled) will be addressed in the following month.

If tuition is not paid in a timely manner after invoices are sent, and arrangements have not been made, that student's enrollment will be suspended, and the student will be considered to have been unenrolled until their due tuition is paid or arrangements are made, at which time their enrollment will be reinstated; or until the anniversary of their enrollment, at which time the enrollment will end. In any case, due to suspension of the enrollment, unenrolled time will not count towards attendance should the student consider becoming a candidate for a diploma in the future.

There are no refunds, under any circumstances, of all or part of the annual tuition paid by an enrollee.

No one shall be allowed to re-enroll until all of that person's prior debts to the school have been paid in full.

A student whose family is experiencing financial difficulties may be allowed to extend their enrollment up to one extra month upon approval at School Meeting and Parent Board meeting.