

# SMCS HANDBOOK

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## **SMCS HISTORY**

In the fall of 1996, six families from Wayside Presbyterian Church, P.C.A. (“Wayside”) met to discuss their common desire to provide a Christian education for their children. Together they prayed that God would make it unmistakably clear to them if He wanted a *new* school to be formed and, if so, that He would lead them to adopt a philosophy, structure and organization that would glorify Him.

We believe Signal Mountain Christian School (“SMCS”) was formed in accordance with God’s will and timing. Its success is solely because of God’s grace and blessing. SMCS opened in September 1998 with a Kindergarten and a First Grade, adding a split 2nd and 3rd Grade class in September 1999. By September 2001, SMCS was a full elementary school, offering grades K—5.<sup>1</sup>

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of SMCS is to assist Christian parents in educating their children so that they understand God’s Word and His world, acquire a Christian world and life view, develop Christian character, and prepare to serve Him for a lifetime.

## **DOCTRINAL STATEMENT**

1. We believe that the sixty-six books of the Bible alone are the written Word of God, verbally inspired, infallible and inerrant in all that it teaches.
2. We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth.
3. We believe in God the Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, and died as the Lamb of God, shedding His blood for our sins. We believe that Jesus arose again from the dead on the third day, and ascended bodily into Heaven, where He now sits at the right hand of God the Father. We believe that He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
4. We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who calls, convicts of sin, regenerates and sanctifies all who believe in Jesus.
5. We believe that there is but one Church, the body and bride of Christ, which consists of all individuals everywhere, in all ages, who have a saving faith in Jesus.
6. We believe that Jesus commands His Church to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world and to disciple the nations.
7. We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

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<sup>1</sup> SMCS began as a ministry of Wayside Presbyterian Church. As of July 2005, SMCS began operating as an independent non-profit corporation named Signal Mountain Christian School, Inc.

8. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust; either to eternal life with Christ, or to eternal damnation.

## **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

SMCS is a non-denominational, non-profit ministry to Christian families. Our students are taught that every academic subject is fully understood only when its relationship to God is grasped, and that faith in Jesus Christ and reverence for God are the beginning of wisdom and knowledge. SMCS seeks both to educate the students' minds, and to influence their spirits and wills to trust in Jesus Christ, and to walk daily with Him. We believe that our approach to teaching and discipline, our small number of students per teacher, and our strong parental involvement result in a very high quality and quantity of learning. One of our goals is to have a parent present in every classroom at least once a week.<sup>2</sup>

The following ten principles summarize our philosophy and how it is implemented in our school operation:

1. Biblical truth is the foundation for all aspects of our school. God's truth is integrated into a balanced curriculum in such a way as to encourage students to learn Christianity as a way of life.
2. God has given parents the primary responsibility for educating their children and therefore, the school is to function as an extension of the home.
3. This school exists primarily as a ministry to the children of Christians. When there are vacancies, these will be filled only with committed Christian families. Family devotion and prayer should be a priority in each family's activities. Families also must be active members in good standing of a Christian church.
4. The school day will be no longer than required by law and the school's academic goals. We believe that children need to spend more of their time at home. There are several reasons for this:
  - a. They can spend more time outdoors.
  - b. They can have more opportunities to learn by doing, experimenting, and observing.
  - c. They can learn by working with parents in cooking, cleaning, gardening, going for short trips or walks, studying art, music, natural phenomena, etc.
  - d. Young children have not yet matured enough to internalize their family values. Thus, the more time spent with age-mates, the more they copy their behavior and family values are diluted.

We believe this part of a child's education is just as important as the formal education provided by the school.

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<sup>2</sup> The term "parent" is used to refer to legal guardian as well.

5. The development of Christian character takes priority over the accumulation of knowledge and therefore, is the primary emphasis. This in no way diminishes the school's commitment to excellence in the disciplines of education. The primary focuses in the early grades are Bible, reading, writing, and arithmetic. As students proceed to the upper elementary grades (3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup>), a full slate of core academics is offered. In all grades, Spanish, computer, art and music are provided for enrichment.

6. Since character development is the highest value in the student's life, parent involvement in the school is critical. Parents will attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences, parent-teacher prayer meetings, and volunteer time for other activities. (See pages 12-13 – Parent-Teacher Conferences, Parent-Teacher Prayer Meetings, and Parent Involvement). The school's Board of Directors will give oversight in these areas.

7. Because our school functions as an extension of the home, and because of the definite educational benefits, the number of students allowed per class is small. In the early grades, the maximum number of students per class is between 8 and 10. The class ratio is expanded as the students mature and become capable of more independent study. Third to fifth grades allow up to twelve students per class. By keeping classes small, students can achieve academic excellence while spending less time in a formal classroom setting. An attempt will be made to keep a male/female balance in class enrollment.<sup>3</sup>

8. Because the ultimate goal of the school's existence is to teach students to glorify God and enjoy Him forever, the educational process should be positive and fun for the students. We use curriculum and methods that attract the students' imaginations and touch their emotions, leading toward a lifelong desire to learn more about God and His world. Our curriculum includes Bible teaching that is consistent with our Doctrinal Statement.

9. We do not believe that in the early grades (K-2<sup>nd</sup>), numerical percentages and letter symbols are the best form of student evaluation. This type of grading may cause students to work for grades rather than goals. Instead of working to understand useful knowledge and skills, students may become too distraught over the importance of grades. Students will be tested and evaluated for performance and competency. Because of the close parent-teacher relationship, parents will be informed on a regular basis about the student's strengths, weaknesses, areas to work on, etc.

In 3<sup>rd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> grades, proper use of letter/numerical grading may act as a motivation and standard of objective assessment of student progress. Even here, however, we recognize the inability of grades to fully evaluate the effort and achievement of children created in the image of God. The narrative report is used along with letter/numerical grading.

Parent-teacher conferences are held at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter grading periods to review each child's progress. Intermittent conferences can be scheduled at the request of the parent or teacher as a student's needs require.

10. Parents are expected to take an active role in the educational experience. Each parent must commit to support the school as set forth in this handbook and in the Statement of Family Commitment.

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<sup>3</sup> SMCS does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, color, national or ethnic origin.

## **SCHOOL BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION**

We believe that God has given parents the primary responsibility for educating their children. The school functions as an extension of the home, so parents must commit themselves to giving direction to the school while delegating authority to the classroom teachers and the SMCS administration.

SMCS is a non-profit corporation governed by a Board of Directors (the “Board”). The Board is made up of individuals who have chosen SMCS as a special ministry to the Lord Jesus Christ. Board members who are strongly committed to the school philosophy and purpose will serve terms on a rotating basis consistent with the school’s by-laws. The Board has developed standing committees to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. Parents are encouraged to use their God-given gifts when evaluating where they might serve most effectively.

Consistent with Matthew 18 principles, parents are asked to use proper channels of communication by first expressing any classroom concerns directly to their child’s teacher rather than to another parent or to a member of the Board. If, after this step has been taken, the matter requires further attention, the next person to approach would be the On-site Director or Board Liaison. The final step would be to present the issue before the full Board whose decision is final. Board members are open to suggestions for school improvements and policies. If the question or concern is a general school policy, the parent may go directly to the On-site Director or Board Liaison who will either resolve the issue or present the issue to the Board for resolution.

## **PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP**

SMCS is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International (“ACSI”). This is the largest coalition of Christian schools in the nation for purposes of state approval, legal advice, student activities, and teacher conferences. ACSI does not control the individual philosophies of its members other than affirming their belief in the same tenets espoused in our Doctrinal Statement.

## **TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS**

SMCS administration carefully selects teachers who exemplify strong Christian character qualities. Our teachers must love the Lord Jesus Christ and children, and have the gift of teaching. Also, they must be able to communicate with and understand the concerns of parents. Remaining available and approachable to parents will help the school partner with parents to best meet each student’s needs—mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Some other criteria for a teaching position at SMCS are as follows:

- have a bachelor’s degree or above in an area of education;
- be willing to upgrade their knowledge and skills through continued training in Christian education;
- be state-certified or certifiable in an area of education commensurate with their responsibilities;
- see their job at SMCS as a ministry to Christ for the children’s sake;
- be a Christian in agreement with the SMCS Doctrinal Statement;

- comply with the SMCS Staff Policies and the Student-Parent Handbook; and
- be willing to submit to the authority of the SMCS Administration.

We believe that the redeemed personality of the teacher is the most important catalyst to learning at SMCS. Therefore, our teachers are selected with much care and prayer.<sup>4</sup>

## **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

1. SMCS admits students of any race, color, sex, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities, generally accorded or made available to students at the school.
2. This school exists primarily as a ministry to the children of Christians. Family devotion and prayer should be a part of each family's activities. Parents also must be members in good standing of a Christian church.
3. SMCS reserves the right to deny admission to a child if his/her abilities, behavior or emotional development indicates that s/he could not be best served by our school program. To enter kindergarten, a child must be at least five (5) years old on or before September 1 of that year.
4. The Tennessee Certificate of Immunization for all incoming students should be submitted to the school before the first day of the school year. This form can be obtained either from the family doctor or the county Health Department.
5. Priority in admission is given using these factors in the following order:
  - Siblings of SMCS students
  - Students of Wayside Preschool
  - Siblings of current students of Wayside Preschool
  - Overall needs of the School and the class (including factors such as male/female ratios)
  - Order of application
6. Enrollment Procedure includes:
  - Completion of application and submission of a non-refundable application fee.
  - Submission of executed Doctrinal Statement, Family Commitment, and Financial Commitment forms.
  - If required, completion of a screening test.
  - If required, submission of completed teacher recommendation forms.
  - If required, submission of prior school records.
  - Submission of completed Pastor Recommendation Request form.
  - Review of and submission to the SMCS Parent-Student Handbook.
  - Review of For the Children's Sake, provided by the school.
  - Completed meeting with SMCS Board Representatives.
  - Approval of admission by the School Board.
  - Payment of enrollment fee.

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<sup>4</sup> SMCS does not discriminate in its hiring practices or in any aspect of employment on the basis of sex, race, color, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, or veterans' status.

7. Notice of acceptance or non-acceptance will follow the interview and screening sessions, but will not be made until school records are received if the student is transferring schools.

### **WAITING LIST**

As the classes at SMCS are filled to capacity, new admissions are placed on a waiting list. Students are accepted into the program from those lists as soon as space is available. Priority for moving students into the program is based on the admission priority criteria.

### **WITHDRAWALS**

If it becomes necessary for the parents to withdraw their child(ren) during the school year, written notification must be received in advance of the withdrawal date. Fees are **not** refundable, regardless of the date of withdrawal. SMCS develops its budget based on enrollment commitments. Withdrawal impacts the school's ability to meet its financial commitments. If withdrawal occurs after enrollment or re-enrollment, the family will be assessed a withdrawal penalty equal to 25% of the tuition per enrolled family member. If withdrawal occurs on or after July 1, the family will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the remaining tuition. **Student records will be released only when accounts are made current.**

### **SCHOOL DAY SCHEDULE**

For grades K-2<sup>nd</sup>, the school hours are 9:00 am to 1:00 pm every day except Tuesday. K-2<sup>nd</sup> grade students stay until 2:00 p.m. on Tuesdays. The late stay is an opportunity for parent enrichment and adds to our snow day reserve. School hours for grades 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> are 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday.

### **ARRIVAL AND PICK-UP POLICY**

Students should be dropped off between 8:45 and 8:55 a.m. each day at the designated drop-off point and should remain in their grade's designated waiting area until dismissed to their classrooms. In the case of inclement weather, the students will be allowed to wait in their classrooms. To ensure student safety, no student should be let out of the car without an adult. If, in special cases, earlier drop-off is needed, please contact the school. Though teachers are in their rooms prior to the start of the school day, this time is used for preparation and prayer.

All students should stay in their designated pick-up areas at the end of the school day so as not to hold up the carpool line. Pick-up in the afternoons should run no later than 15 minutes after dismissal. If a later pick-up is anticipated, please contact another SMCS parent to make special arrangements and let the school know of the change. Late pick-up should be done only in emergencies. **If a parent needs to pick up a student during school hours, please notify the teacher or SMCS administration in advance if at all possible.** If there is a person who is not allowed to pick up a student, please notify the teacher and SMCS administration in writing.

## **TARDY AND ATTENDANCE POLICY**

Punctuality is greatly encouraged to teach our students to be dependable and good stewards of their time. Since we have a shorter day schedule than most schools, our students must arrive on time, ready to learn. Students who arrive after 9:00 a.m. will be considered tardy. It is important that parents ensure that tardy students make it safely to their classrooms. Teachers will keep a record and notify parents of tardies. For every three tardies, the family will be assessed a \$5.00 fine. Should a student accumulate an excessive number of tardies, the On-Site Director or the SMCS Board will contact the parents to resolve the problem.

As part of their commitment to SMCS, parents agree to have the students in attendance on designated school days. Since the number of school calendar days is limited, it is imperative that families plan to miss as few of these days as possible. Though we want families to spend time together, it is difficult for our teachers to meet the educational objectives of our school without consistent attendance. All students are expected to attend school regularly unless ill, under doctor's orders to remain at home, or involved in a parent-sanctioned absence for a wedding, death in the family, or educational opportunity. If a student is going to miss more than two consecutive days for a planned trip, prior notification to the teacher is required so that schoolwork can be assigned in advance. Students must make up all work and tests missed during the absences. Students missing 20 or more days of school for any reason may be subject to grade retention.

## **AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM**

While the school philosophy is designed to maximize time at home with the student(s)'s family, SMCS understands that there are some family situations in which picking up the student(s) at 1:00 pm or even 3:00 pm would prohibit the family from enrollment because of work requirements. These families desire for their child(ren) the type of Christian education in a small nurturing environment offered by SMCS. For this reason, SMCS has adopted an After-School Program. It is directed by an experienced teacher and includes study hall where homework is done under teacher supervision, directed creative activities, snacks, and recess time. Our hope is that, while the student(s) will have time to relax, they will also complete most, if not all, of their homework, thus enhancing the family time once the student(s) are picked up by the parent. The hours are from the end of the school day until 5:30 pm all days SMCS is in session. Penalty fees begin after 5:30 pm. No more than fifteen students will be accepted on any day to ensure appropriate supervision and safety. Sign-up can be on a weekly or monthly basis, choosing between one and five days per week. Since space is limited, priority for the program is given in the following order: (1) single parents; (2) families in which both parents must work; (3) drop-ins based on availability and on a first come, first served basis. A parent wanting to use the drop-in option must contact the On-Site Director to determine if space is available for the desired day. There is a discount for families with more than one student enrolled. Once a family has signed up to use the program for a particular week, program fees will be assessed according to their commitment even if the student(s) do not stay for the program. The program fee varies according to the day since our school day ends at different times for different grades. A copy of the fee schedule and sign-up form may be obtained from the SMCS office.

## **CONDUCT & DISCIPLINE**

When asked, Jesus said, "The greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. And the second commandment is like it: Love you neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." Matt. 22:37-40 (NIV). Every classroom at SMCS holds these two commandments as the foundation for school conduct: "Love God, Love Others." Students are expected to observe these commandments as a way of life.

All rules are meant for the good of each student and for the school as a whole to the glory of God. The ultimate goal is that students learn self-discipline and obedience so that they can submit to the will of God.

The following are guidelines for acceptable and appropriate conduct for all students. Teachers and the Administration will assist a student in correction or discipline if he/she fails to exhibit proper behavior.

- 1) Pleasant and orderly conduct will be maintained in the classrooms and throughout the school and grounds. All students are expected to be obedient and respectful to their teachers, Administration, and any other adult. They are also expected to be respectful to all students of and visitors to SMCS.
- 2) Students are expected to come to school on time and be prepared with completed homework. Students should ask permission before leaving the room for any reason, including using the restroom.
- 3) As part of the SMCS community, all students have a responsibility to keep the classrooms, general school areas and grounds clean, picking up litter even if not left by the student. Books and supplies should be kept neatly on hooks, in cubbies or in desks.
- 4) To minimize interference of the day to day operation of Wayside Presbyterian Church, students should not travel through the sanctuary or use other parts of the building that are not designated for school use except with SMCS permission.
- 5) Students are expected to treat others with civility and respect and should not administer or tolerate harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Examples of such acts include: physically harming another person or his/her property, causing a person to be in fear of physical harm or otherwise creating a hostile environment. If a student experiences or observes such behavior, he/she should immediately seek help from a teacher or other responsible adult. All concerns will be promptly investigated.
- 6) "The Lord ...delights in honesty." Proverbs 11:1. It is important that all students do their own work on tests and homework. Though parent supervision and guidance may be appropriate with more difficult assignments and projects, it is important to assist in a way that encourages the student to develop confidence in their own abilities to work through the assignments. If a student is struggling with a particular concept, please let his/her teacher know so it can be worked through at school.
- 7) Matches, lighters, pocketknives, and weapons of any kind are not allowed at SMCS or any school-sponsored event. If a student wishes to bring a toy weapon to school for use with a particular project, please request approval from the teacher in advance.
- 8) Electronic devices, cell phones, personal music players, etc. are not to be used during the school day or on school field trips unless prior approval is given. Additionally, videos, DVDs, and magazines are not to be brought by students for use at school or any school function without prior approval of the teacher. Violation of the rule will result in the teacher collecting the item(s) to be returned to the parent at pick-up.

The teachers will handle discipline in harmony with his/her own methods and abilities, consistent with the SMCS philosophy. We encourage that the corrective measure fit the

offense. Our teachers will not administer corporal punishment to the students.

If a student causes a severe or on-going disciplinary problem, the parents will be sent a disciplinary form or may be contacted immediately and expected to pick up the student and correct the problem. If excessive disciplinary problems continue, suspension, and ultimately expulsion, will occur upon approval of the Board.

### **PERMANENT RECORDS**

A confidential, cumulative record of each student's progress is kept in the school files. This includes progress reports, previous school records, medical forms, disciplinary notes, etc. These records are always available to the parents of the student and kept primarily for legal documentation in case of transfer and/or promotion. The school does not release permanent records when outstanding balances remain on the family's tuition or fee accounts.

### **DRESS CODE**

One purpose of a Christian education is to encourage our students to glorify God in all areas of life. Though the outward appearance is not as important as the condition of a child's heart, it is a reflection of how one views him or herself and adheres to Biblical principles of proper dress. The school has established a dress code that will reflect this philosophy, while allowing students to get involved in creative activities without fear of harming a special outfit. Our school colors are green, blue and white. Green represents life, blue represents renewal, and white represents Christ's purity. Polo shirts, T-shirts, sweatshirts, fleece jackets, and hoodies with the SMCS logo are available for purchase from SMCS at a reasonable cost.

Regular Dress: Any color pants, capris, shorts, skorts, jumper, or skirt. (There is an SMCS-approved plaid skirt available for purchase through Land's End). Shorts, skorts, jumpers, and skirts must be of modest length and shorts must be worn under jumpers and skirts. An SMCS logo shirt (T-shirt, Polo, or sweatshirt). Tennis shoes should be worn on Wednesday for P.E.

Special Dress: Khaki pants (cotton, twill, or chino) or skirt, Polo shirt with SMCS logo and dress shoes. Parents will be notified in advance of Special Dress occasions.

The first time a student fails to wear the school uniform, a reminder note will be sent home. On the second occasion, the parent will be contacted and required to bring the school uniform to the student. If the problem persists, the Board will meet with the parents.

## **LOST & FOUND**

Parents are encouraged to label ALL items of clothing and other personal possessions before they are brought to school so that misplaced items can be returned promptly. Unlabelled items that are lost or misplaced at school will be put in the SMCS Lost & Found basket in the On-Site Director's office closet. A student may ask permission to look for lost items at the end of a school day. After a period of time and after general notice is given to SMCS families, unclaimed items will be donated to the Signal Mountain Social Services.

## **SCHOOL LUNCHES**

SMCS does not have a school cafeteria. All students must bring their own lunch unless they opt to purchase a lunch on days when meal options are provided. Since students usually eat their lunch in the classrooms, it is important that the lunches are not messy and are ready to eat without needing to be refrigerated or heated. There should be no eating without teacher approval.

## **SCHOOL TELEPHONE**

Each of the SMCS buildings is equipped with a telephone. The telephones are primarily for the use of SMCS business. Students may use the school telephone in the school buildings or the On-Site Director's office only with permission of a teacher or other authorized personnel.

## **SCHOOL OFFICE**

Although the school office and its personnel are always accessible to students and parents, students should not enter the school office or the office supply closet without permission.

## **REPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS**

Most educators agree that the use of a traditional grading system in the early grades (K-2<sup>nd</sup>) is unnecessary and could be harmful to the development of students. At SMCS, our desire is for students to be motivated to learn by an intrinsic interest in the creation of God; to become lifelong self-educators. When extrinsic motivation is needed, we believe that the encouragement and discipline of Christian parents and teachers will provide the necessary catalyst. A performance rating of letter or numerical grades is often not properly understood by young students. Therefore, we hope to build a foundation where students learn to work for the enjoyment of learning, doing all things as unto the Lord. To provide greater communication with the parents and for verification and in case of transfers, a progress report in narrative form covering all areas of the student's performance is completed quarterly by the teacher. From 3<sup>rd</sup> grade on, in addition to the narrative report, letter ratings of A, B, C, and F with corresponding numerical ratings are used and issued to the parents every 9 weeks. SMCS's grading scale is as follows: 94-100 = A; 85-93 = B; 70-84 = C; 69 and below = F. All progress reports are kept in the confidential permanent records and copies are given to parents.

## PROMOTION AND RETENTION

The philosophy of SMCS includes the acknowledgment that students often develop at different rates and so chronological age is not the criteria to determine either readiness for school or grade placement. Parents and teachers will determine the best grade placement for each student, including promotion or retention each year. Our desire is for the best situation emotionally, academically, spiritually, and physically for each of our students. If the parents and teacher cannot agree, the situation will be reviewed by the Board whose decision will be final.

## TEXTBOOK POLICY

SMCS is constantly exploring and reviewing available texts for use in its classes. Our desire is to use the best available textbooks in each subject area that meet our criteria of presenting God's truth while captivating the students' natural curiosity. Our criteria does not limit us to using books only by Christian publishers but rather to those books that best present the truth of God's creation in an academically sound and morally acceptable manner.

## QUESTIONABLE CONTENT POLICY

It is the policy of SMCS to guard against the use of materials in which God's truth is distorted. The school faculty and Board must use their discretion and pray for wisdom to screen reading materials. If a parent has some concern over a specific book, display, or illustration, s/he should report his/her concern directly to the teacher or school librarian. Though it is difficult to remove every instance of material that would be inappropriate to every parent, it is our desire to make reasonable decisions that avoid offensiveness.

Regarding fables and fantasy such as Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, our policy is to downplay these concepts as much as possible so as not to **diminish or exceed** the parents' teaching regarding such characters.

Regarding evil characters such as witches, ghosts, and goblins, we recognize their use in both fiction and non-fiction as forces of Satan. Caution is used to keep them in proper perspective as to what they are: EVIL, not allowing them to be presented otherwise. As in **The Chronicles of Narnia**, we do believe that such beings are necessary to certain literature to produce conflict. Elimination of all evil forces in literature is not realistic to true life. However, we guard against extremes of this principle.

Caution is taken to screen materials that thrust students into roles and situations that are not age-appropriate. It is our desire to provide literature that does not depict children as miniature adults, no matter how clever they may seem.

## INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Because students are gifted differently and have different learning styles, a variety of teaching methods are used so that each student can achieve basic goals and go beyond those objectives when possible. Basic objectives will be established for each grade level. Teachers and parents will work together to help the student meet these goals. All instruction should include visual, auditory, and tactile methodologies (seeing, hearing, touching) to appeal to each

student's individual learning style.

Such instruction may include:

1. Learning centers;
2. Separate reading assignments or groups;
3. Cooperative learning experiences;
4. Interaction with students, teachers, and material through well constructed activities using oral interpretations and visual aids; and
5. Individual activities appropriate for them, not each student doing the same activity.

### **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Three times during the school year, teachers will schedule conferences with parents to discuss student progress. When possible, both parents are encouraged to attend, but only one is required. At higher grade levels, students may be requested to be present to see the parents and teacher working together to help them learn Christian character and academic skills. In addition to the quarterly conferences, more frequent conferences may be scheduled to address the academic, spiritual, or behavioral needs of a student.

### **PARENT-TEACHER PRAYER MEETINGS**

By signing the Family Commitment Form during the application process, families indicate that they agree with and commit to the SMCS philosophy that includes parental involvement in the educational life of their student(s). SMCS feels that meeting with teachers and other parents on a regular basis for prayer, communication, planning, and fellowship is an essential part of the life of the school. For this purpose, we have established monthly parent-teacher prayer meetings. Both parents are encouraged to attend but only one is required for confirmation of enrollment or re-enrollment. The school provides childcare for SMCS students and siblings during these meetings.

A monthly newsletter with important school announcements, updates, prayer requests, and event information will be sent home with each student prior to the monthly prayer meeting. It is important to review the newsletter carefully before attending the meeting so that any questions can be clarified. Both the newsletter and the monthly prayer meetings are vital parts of our SMCS communication system. As in any relationship, communication is key to maintaining our community.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

SMCS believes that parents have the ultimate responsibility and authority for the education of their children (Deuteronomy 6, Ephesians 6:4). Consequently, we do not believe that the school has the right to undermine the authority of the parent. However, as long as the student is enrolled, it is important that the parents work in cooperation with the teacher and submit to school policies. Parents of SMCS students accept the responsibility given by God who says, "Train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6).

We believe parents play the most significant role in determining our students' spiritual character, academic capabilities, social convictions, and physical conditioning. Thus, each parent is asked to commit a minimum of four days of their time during the school year to assure earnest involvement in their child's school education, amplify their child's learning experiences and promote the growth and betterment of SMCS. Parental involvement may be contributed via any combination of the following activities:

- Teaching specific skills or performing presentations in the classroom;
- Planning and supervising outside activities and field trips (Note: assisting, driving, and chaperoning duties need to be shared by all families.);
- Coordinating fundraisers for the school as approved by the SMCS Board;
- Substitute teaching in the scheduled absence of the teacher;
- Assisting the teacher upon his or her request given adequate notice;
- Participation in parent workdays;
- Serving on a Standing Board Committee; and
- Research or special projects in a parent's area of expertise or field given mutual agreement of the parent and the teacher.

Both parents are encouraged to participate in the student's learning experiences since SMCS bases our teaching methodology around parental role models and as an extension of the home. Activities that benefit SMCS students should be shared between parents since we stand to grow and improve through concerted efforts of families toward our common goals. The teacher, aided by the SMCS Board, will document parental involvement time and encourage participation in the event that adequate support is not rendered.

### **CHAPEL AND DEVOTIONS**

While all academic subjects are taught from a Christian worldview, SMCS also has weekly chapel. Pastor St. John, a teacher, or guest speaker usually offers a brief message. In Fifth Grade, the students are given an opportunity to lead chapel. All chapels are non-denominational. Daily devotions, scripture memory, and Bible studies also are a regular part of our curriculum.

### **VISITORS**

Visitors are always welcome at SMCS, but are asked to check with the teachers or the On-Site Director before visiting classes. Parents are especially encouraged to visit and to give 24-hour notice when possible.

## **ILLNESS**

If a student becomes ill during school, this should be reported immediately to the teacher. Each classroom has a first aid kit and a thermometer is available. If the student is ill, the parent(s) will be contacted to provide transportation home, to the doctor or, in the case of an emergency, to the hospital, by ambulance if needed. Teachers will provide a copy of the Illness/Injury Notice form to the parents and place one copy in the student's file.

If a student has been sick at home, he/she should be fever free for 24 hours before returning to the school unless a doctor has confirmed that the cause of the fever is not contagious. If the student vomits in the morning prior to the start of the school day, the student should be kept home for the day. If the student vomits at school, the parent(s) will be contacted immediately to take the student home. Any student who misses school due to illness may not attend the After School Program that day.

## **INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL**

SMCS will work cooperatively with local, county, state and federal agencies to enforce and adhere to State Health Codes for prevention, control and containment of infectious diseases in the school. All students should be in compliance with the required immunization schedule. SMCS also may exclude student(s)/staff who are suspected or diagnosed with an infectious disease, or exposed to an infectious disease that presents a significant safety risk to that person or others.

## **USE OF MEDICATIONS**

The school or teacher will administer no internal medicine of any kind unless specific written instructions and permission are given personally to the teacher by the parent or as provided on the medical emergency card. Additionally, parents are asked to inform the teacher concerning any allergies or other conditions that might require special attention.

## **ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

SMCS carries accident insurance on its students, which covers all injuries that occur during school hours or on field trips. This is an excess policy that covers medical bills beyond the family's medical plan. If a family has no individual coverage, this policy is primary.

## **ACCIDENT PROCEDURE**

In the case of minor accidents involving injury, the teacher will administer first aid. An accident report will be filled out for all injuries; a copy given to the parents and one placed in the student's file. In cases of more serious injury, parents will be contacted immediately. Where emergency on-the-spot treatment is needed, both parents and emergency crews will be summoned immediately. If neither parent can be reached, and medical treatment is needed, the school will rely on the executed "Consent for Medical Treatment" form which permits the school administration to use its best judgment in contacting a physician or transporting the student to a hospital, by ambulance if needed.

## **EMERGENCY WEATHER CONDITIONS**

If weather conditions make it impractical or dangerous to have school, SMCS will close the school. SMCS does not necessarily follow the public school system's closings. SMCS will announce closings and delays on Channel 3 and on the school's message machine usually by 8:00 am of the day in question. Parents should keep in touch with the school when severe changes in the weather occur during the school day. If the school is closed for inclement weather, there will be no After School Program that day.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Throughout the year, classes will go on educational field trips. Our teachers prayerfully and carefully plan these trips to ensure adequate supervision and safety. Permission slips are sent well in advance. If you want to join in or want your child to ride with a certain student, you may make the request on the slip and the teacher will try to honor it. However, we encourage our students to get along with all their classmates and to be content in all circumstances.

Once the teachers have finalized the plans, we request that no changes be made except in emergency situations. Unless prior approval is given by the teacher, no personal music devices, electronic games, books, magazines or movies may be brought by students on a school field trip.

## **FOCUS ON MISSIONS**

The Great Commission requires all Christians to go out into the world and spread the good news of redemption through Christ. Accordingly, SMCS encourages its students to support our SMCS "adopted" missionaries with prayer, letters and donations raised by the students themselves. Each spring, the school places special emphasis on missions by having guest missionaries speak to the classes.

## **COMMUNITY SERVICE**

God teaches that we should all have a servant's heart, as did our Lord, Jesus Christ. One way of encouraging a positive attitude toward serving others is through community service projects. Therefore, the school will include community service projects appropriate for each grade throughout the school year. Students also will be encouraged to provide community service in addition to the SMCS-sponsored events.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

Students are urged to honor, respect, and obey governmental authorities and to be patriotic (Romans 13). When reciting the pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag, students are taught to stand erect, face the flag and place their right hand over their heart. We encourage parents to reinforce these daily rituals in real life situations.

Part of good citizenship also includes conservation of God's generous resources. We encourage the students to keep the school grounds neat, turn off lights, and be conscious of the number of paper towels, etc. they use.

## **CARE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY**

All students are expected to use the school and Wayside church as carefully as they would any other public or private building. Abuses of the school or church, its books, supplies, equipment, fixtures, or any facilities utilized will require immediate correction at the student's cost. Parents are responsible for ensuring such damages are corrected.

## **CLEANING**

Because custodial work is such a big project, requiring hours of work each day, students are reminded to take every opportunity to aid in keeping the school neat and clean. We encourage them to take pride in the buildings, pick up scraps of paper and making sure all waste is disposed of properly. SMCS is a very pleasant place to be when it is appropriately maintained.

Each student is expected to share in maintaining the cleanliness of the school building by periodically being assigned a particular task that is to be completed before leaving school. All assignments can be completed within the school day if the student is diligent. In addition to student efforts, parents are encouraged to help in our corporate responsibility when parent workdays are scheduled.

## **SUPPLIES**

The school will provide some of the necessary supplies for the students. A list of additional materials may be sent home at the beginning of the year and/or when the need arises.

## **FIRE DRILLS**

Our primary concern during a fire is that the buildings be vacated **quickly and safely**. Rules and escape routes will be discussed in each room. Drills and inspections, both announced and unannounced, are held regularly. Similarly, evacuation in the unlikely event of a tornado or other severe weather will be reviewed with the students periodically.