

“Independent Schools for Independent Minds”

Salmon Creek Community School Handbook

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1. ABOUT THE SCHOOL

OVERVIEW:

S.C.C.S. was conceived in 1970 by a small group of parents in rural Salmon Creek who wanted to provide an education for their children in the community where they lived. The school changed locations over the years, and became a California 501(c)3 in 1984. Its non-profit tax ID# is 94-2430-973. As a private community school, it has offered a TK-8 education to local children. It is also a site for community events, workshops and meetings, and has been designated by FEMA as an emergency evacuation site for the neighborhood.

The school is located at 3598 Thomas Road in Miranda, California, and consists of several buildings on five acres leased from Mr. Jerry Juan. The conditions of the most recent version of the land lease are on file in the school library. The school's water is deeded through another neighbor, Nat Childs, and the tanks and line are shared with Mr. Juan. (see maintenance).

Communication is provided by 101 Netlinks; our phone number is 707-943-1500. Email is salmoncreekcs@gmail.com. The website is salmoncreekcommunityschool.org.

The founding philosophy is reflected in the school's motto, "Independent Schools for Independent Minds". The curriculum is intended to promote community as well as independence, critical thinking and creativity. The program strives to involve parents and to integrate local history, neighbors and environment as resources in the curriculum.

A year-by-year curriculum guide has been developed that is compatible with State standards, informed by the school's founding philosophies and grounded in the most current, best practices of child development.

HOW IT WORKS:

S.C.C.S. is a private, independent, community-supported school. Funding is achieved through tuition and donations. As a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, it is overseen by a volunteer board of directors. The board holds monthly meetings and provides the community with annual reports. The board is subject to the parameters outlined in the school's bylaws and articles of incorporation, as well as nonprofit, employment and private school laws. Any community member may attend board meetings, and may become a voting member after attending three consecutively. The board will annually nominate and elect its officers at the August meeting.

The President should conduct meetings in a timely and democratic manner.

- Set and post the monthly agenda to prioritize school business.
- Conduct meetings, call for (but not make) motions, vote only to break a tie
- Delegate detailed work to committees.
- Verify compliance with all state, county and federal requirements.
- Promote policy and practices that will improve the functioning of the school.
- Encourage community participation in school activities and student involvement with the community, presenting a state-of-the-school report annually.
- Act as spokesperson for the school and its interests.

The Vice President serves in the absence of the president, acts as the staff liaison to the board and student families, and chairs the hiring committee. The Secretary keeps and posts the monthly minutes. The Treasurer presents monthly financial statements, makes deposits, writes checks, keeps records of all transactions and attends all budget meetings.

Staff may not hold officer positions. No member of the board shall vote on nor act in matters in which a perceived conflict of interest exists. Minutes of the board may be posted for community viewing on the website, or on the school bulletin board. Notice of monthly meetings and agenda are encouraged to be shared with the community through these and any other means.

2. USE OF THE SCHOOL

Salmon Creek Community School grounds are available for activities that promote community interaction, education, health and, safety. Board approval is required for all activities except casual daylight use of the meadow and playground. During daylight hours, when school is not in session, it is an open campus where the Salmon Creek community can play at their own risk. A donation is requested and a release of liability must be signed by a responsible person for use of the buildings, meadow, tent and/or other equipment.

Consent of immediate neighbors is requested for after-dark events.

NO fires or free-running (pooping) dogs!

Beer and wine may only be served with a liquor license, signed by the landowner.

Events may not be publicized outside the Salmon Creek community as per our lease agreement.

3.EXPECTATIONS OF PARENTS:

The school is a community composed of families, staff and neighbors.

All members of the school community have the rights to:

***be safe *be respected *be included**

To ensure these rights, you have the responsibility to:

***behave safely *respect others and the school *stay informed and involved.**

Parents are expected to:

- Read this handbook.
- Complete all enrollment forms by given deadlines.
- Keep informed of events and issues; participate in reviews of teachers.
- Keep in direct and regular communication with your child's teacher.
- Inform the teacher in advance of any anticipated absences, tardiness, or early dismissals. Advance notice for absences longer than two days should be equal to the length of the absence, if the parent is requesting any missed work be provided.
- Bring children to school and pick them up on time, make arrangements with another adult for their supervision before 8:30 or after 3:00, and during meetings.
- Send children in good health, with adequate lunch and appropriate clothing.
- Volunteer at fundraisers and work days when possible,
- Pay tuition. Make arrangements for an individual payment plan, and complete all payments by May 1 of that school year.
- Register for next year's enrollment by May 1. (Parents who do not register by that date will be put on a waiting list.)

Parents are urged to consult the "Whom to Ask" chart to be familiar with the appropriate parties to bring issues and questions to. Presently Kym Kemp and Shanna Archibold are community mediators willing to help resolve conflicts.

4.EXPECTATIONS OF TEACHERS:

- Present a curriculum plan at the August board meeting, providing an overview of the coming year and detailing the first six weeks of daily activity and lesson plans.
- Schedule and arrange family nights, field trips and special guests.
- Conduct class activities in accordance with the school's values.
- Meet with other teachers regularly to develop educational/personal improvements.
- Maintain a cumulative file for each student.
- Write twice-annual evaluations for each student and go over them in meetings with parents, setting educational/personal goals for students.
- Be available for additional consultation during given hours.
- Keep attendance records for absences, tardiness and early departures.
- Put together homework assignments for missed class time.
- Prepare at least one performance by the children for presentation to the community.
- Keep in frequent and clear communication with parents, using discretion.
- Bring personnel issues to the vice president. Request a mediator if conflict arises.
- Be present at school before students arrive.
- Keep a tidy, welcoming classroom environment.
- Start and maintain wood fires, unless a volunteer is designated for this.
- Supervise recess, unless a volunteer is designated for this.
- Buy materials for the classroom, both instructional and functional (office and teaching supplies, as well as toilet paper, dish soap, etc.) based on a given budget of \$25 per month per student. Turn in receipts to the treasurer.

EXPECTATIONS OF PLAYGROUP LEADERS:

5. SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

SCCS board meetings are the second Saturday of each month at 11 am.

AGENDA: Posted before the meeting. Anyone can introduce items, but issues are prioritized according to the categories below.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: This is time to share info that requires no input.

PREVIOUS MINUTES: The previous meetings minutes are either accepted as read or amended. Final copies of the minutes are available from the secretary.

STAFF REPORTS: Teacher concerns, news, updates.

COMMITTEE/PROJECT REPORTS: These include fundraising, events, maintenance, projects, budget reports, and bank statements. It's not the time for committees to do their actual work, but to present information for discussion, or proposals for approval.

OLD BUSINESS: Any discussions/decisions that had to be tabled from previous meetings; time-sensitive issues. Before there can be a vote, there must be a motion: it can be seconded or it can be amended (then seconded) before being open for discussion and vote. Stating a motion helps us clarify the specific decision being made. (Example: I move that we install smoke detectors in all the buildings-- discussion would open to consider the cost, timing and solicit a volunteer).

NEW BUSINESS: Just like it sounds: upcoming events, new proposals, etc.

PUBLIC COMMENT: If we're joined by a non-board member, their chance to address the group is fit in to suit their time restraints. It may pre-empt the above items.

ADJOURNMENT: Meetings rarely exceed 2 hours. If there is a personnel issue, the board must excuse staff and go into a closed session before adjourning.

6. OTHER MEETINGS

There is a difference in our roles as school board members and as parents of students. Board business includes the school's financial, legal, social, academic and physical well-being, its transactions and policies. The board often forms committees who hammer out detailed work of scheduling events, projecting budgets, planning maintenance projects, etc.

For some purposes, parents may meet separately from the board. Any parent may call a parent meeting by notifying the other parents. One parent should be selected as a moderator, another to keep a record of discussion, questions that need follow up or decisions made.

While the board settles questions by vote, parents may choose to reach consensus (for example, on issues like hiring recommendations). This often means delaying decisions until all parents can be reached, and sometimes means multiple meetings to reach agreements that everyone can live with.

There are areas that overlap between these roles, and still other issues that should be addressed between private parties, directly to a teacher, or through a particular board officer or committee. For example, concerns about a student should be directed to the teacher, at a time outside of school hours. The vice-president is the liaison for staff/ personnel issues if your issue is with the teacher him/herself. The board itself is ultimately answerable to the state of California.

A chart is at the end of this booklet to help direct you to the appropriate party for any concerns. If you're uncertain how to bring up a matter, just ask. If a situation becomes difficult, we have qualified community members who have offered to act as mediators. Matters may be brought to the board in written form. The main thing is to speak up about things that concern you in a way that solutions can be found. The most important element in our functioning together is direct, honest, and timely communication!

7. DISCIPLINARY POLICY

SCCS's discipline policy prioritizes safety, respect, and inclusion. Teachers must be well-versed and supported in the principles and philosophies that underlie this policy. Further study materials include Non-Violent Communication, Parent Effectiveness Training, "Positive Discipline," and "Taking Charge."

Adults must model behavior that is safe, respectful, and inclusive. We also provide a clear set of expectations, firm boundaries, and consistent consequences. See below for details. Families and staff are advised to review these regularly.

In responding, we first consider the level of behavior, and what is developmentally appropriate for the age of the child. A simple way to respond to most misbehavior is the "3-D" approach: Disapprove (of the action, not the child), Describe (the words or action, not a label on the behavior of the individual, and how it affects others), and Do-over (give them a chance to re-try or repair, though perhaps not in the midst of an emotional reaction).

Whatever the offense, consequences should be Relevant, Reasonable, and Respectful. Missing recess, being publicly shamed, etc. do little to teach the desired behavior and everything to create resentment in the child. The solution should give the parties involved a chance to repair the damage. Replacing a broken toy, helping redraw a torn picture, etc., go further than a mere verbal apology. Apologies have a specific format that acknowledges the damage done and describes what will be done differently in future situations.

The most successful discipline strategy is in preventative measures. In the classroom (and in the home): Plan the space and schedule for their success. Make expectations clear and practice doing the right thing often, especially in the beginning. Keep present even when not interacting (point to periphery attention) and acknowledge them at positive and neutral times: a ratio of four appreciations (not blanket praise) for every criticism, modeling the behavior we want to see. Class meetings give opportunities for apologies and appreciations, discussion of fairness, and teach effective ways of conflict solving.

Teachers and families staying in touch regularly is an important factor in discipline. The more clearly and openly we communicate, the better. The more school and home life echo each other, the more secure the child feels about the expectations of him. The more teachers understand about individual students' home lives, the better they can meet them at school.

General school rules:

Leave any place better/cleaner than you found it.

No personal toys, costumes, make-up, or electronics at school.

Parents, please put phones away while in the school yard as well!

No guns at school. Not pretend, not nerf, not water. No guns.

Tree climbing with supervision & parent approval.

No food or drinks in the yurt or library.

“You can’t say you can’t play.” No excluding.

Go DOWN the slides, UP the stairs.

Shared snacks must meet all diets- check with teacher before donating.

Serious Behavior Problems

Behavior that is dangerous, including leaving the school grounds, physical violence, theft, misuse or damage of property, will be dealt with as follows:

The first incident of intentional violence (to persons or property) will result in an immediate call for the child to be picked up from school and suspended for the following day. The parents, child and teacher will meet to create a behavior management plan for that child. The second such incident will also require the child to leave school immediately, be referred to local resources for counseling and result in a four day suspension. A third such occurrence will merit another week of suspension and be referred to the board for expulsion.

8.WHOM TO ASK

Who is involved in which conversations (for efficiency, transparency, discretion):

Teacher, privately	Teacher, anytime	Board Officer	Board Meeting	Whole Community
Any concerns for your student in the classroom (schedule specific time to meet)	Absences, tardiness, early departures or other person picking up	School functioning* (see below)	Concerns, questions and proposals about fundraising, maintenance, policy or practices	School cancellations or health alerts; calendar, contact list, meeting notes
Personal information that may affect your child at school	Questions about homework, upcoming projects or field trips	Enrollment requirements, including tuition	Use of the grounds, buildings, tent, tables, etc.	Call for volunteers for work days, events, quilts, etc.
Questions or concerns about discipline or other policies	Offers of materials, resources, time	Staff or volunteer concerns	Donations that may require labor, maintenance, expense or storage	Invitation to events

*Maintenance, hiring, tuition and budget; bylaws, procedures, history and events may be addressed to board officers; actionable items may be put on the agenda for the next meeting. The school board meets each month and you may submit information, proposals, questions, opinions, and votes by proxy if unable to attend. Staff issues are dealt with in closed sessions.

9. MAINTENANCE:

Regular maintenance of the grounds and buildings is typically assigned to volunteers. In years when no such volunteers are available, it is recommended the board hire assistance in maintaining the solar power system, water system, lawn and trees, buildings. Whenever financially possible, it is also recommended that professional labor be sought for maintenance that requires experience and/or expertise, such as electrical, plumbing or construction issues.

Regular maintenance, regardless of daily use, includes cleaning the building interiors (cobwebbing and mousetraps especially), checking and adjusting the battery health (keeping a high enough charge may require running the generator, adding distilled water to the cells as needed), reducing fire hazards (cutting grass, cleaning chimneys, clearing gutters & roofs of debris) and watering the fruit trees and flowers.

The water system begins on Nat Child's property. It consists of two storage tanks, one 1550 gallon primary and a 500 gallon overflow for back up. The line is a half-mile of poly-pipe that weaves through dense undergrowth and has several gate valves and bleeder points. It is recommended that at least two individuals yearly be appointed to know and maintain this system. It is shared with the landowner, whose storage tank is located behind the kitchen building with a float valve. It's an indicator of the flow at any point in time.

The composting toilet system must be regularly maintained when the school is in regular use. One person monthly may be responsible for knocking the pile down, adding bacteria, providing sawdust/charcoal mix to add to each use. The entire bathroom area, as well as the kitchen and any other space used, must be cleaned at the end of the day's use.

10. BOARD CALENDAR:

September: File Immunization records with Health Department, conduct classroom observations for teacher performance review, hold auction, plan harvest ball

October: File Private School affidavit with DOE, File Student National Origin Report; review any staff on probationary contracts, hold harvest ball

November: student evaluations/parent meetings, teacher evaluations, plan holiday fair

December: Hold holiday fair

January: Budget committee to meet with recommendations for following year

February: Determine next year's staffing needs; draw up teacher contracts, bake sale

March: Form hiring committee if necessary, begin any advertising for hiring, loopathon

April: File taxes, review teacher evaluation format & provide to families, plan spring fling, collect enrollment deposits/applications for following year by May 1

May: Plan commencement, final student evaluations due, close application process for hiring, deliver address/report to public at Spring Fling, schedule hiring interviews if needed

June/July: Update phone tree, email list, next year's calendar, handbook, set curriculum meeting, teachers to present self-evaluations and sign contracts, close school (shut off systems, etc.); renew 501(c)3 status

August: Purchase materials and coordinate sufficient work days to prepare classrooms & grounds for school; officer nominations taken, request/approve curriculum/contracts from teachers, order firewood, hold board training, review bylaws & policies, plan auction

SPORADICALLY: schedule work days, inventory/order merchandise, clean/organize the storage container, refill gas/propane tanks, linseed/citrus oil wood every 4-5 yrs.