

Signal Mountain Christian School

Christ Centered Education...Educating For Life!



SMCS HANDBOOK
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SMCS HISTORY

In the fall of 1996, six families from Wayside Presbyterian Church 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 which would glorify Him.

We firmly believe it was God's will that Signal Mountain Christian School ("SMCS") be formed. The great success SMCS has enjoyed thus far is due solely to God's grace and blessing.

Prior to beginning operation, the organizational committee spent 1½ years studying other Christian and private secular schools, agreeing upon a philosophy, approach, style and structure, analyzing curriculum, hiring staff and preparing to open. SMCS opened in September 1998 with a kindergarten and 1st grade. In 2001 it became a full elementary school (K—5th).

SMCS is now in its 17th year of operation. Although begun as a ministry of Wayside Presbyterian, the school became an independent 501(c)(3) entity in 2005. The school grew until it strained the available facilities at Wayside, and in October 2014 moved to its new campus nearby. The new site was selected, and the buildings were designed, to facilitate the school's Charlotte Mason style of education. The buildings resemble homes, and a large wooded area is available for student hikes, outdoor classes, nature studies and imaginative free-play. These facilities will allow SMCS to accommodate approximately 150 students and staff.

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

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 they teach.

We believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and earth.

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 rose 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.

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, who calls, convicts of sin, regenerates and sanctifies all who believe in Jesus.

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.

We believe that Jesus commands His Church to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world and to disciple the nations.

We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

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, the small number of students per teacher, and our strong parental involvement result in a high quality and quantity of learning.

The following 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 which encourages students to learn Christianity as a way of life.
2. God has given parents ¹ the primary responsibility for educating their children and therefore, the school is to function as an extension of the home.
3. 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 under the influence and direction of their parents. There are several reasons for this:
 - a. More time can be spent outdoors.
 - b. There are more opportunities to learn by doing, experimenting, and observing.
 - c. Working with parents in cooking, cleaning, gardening, going for short trips or walks, studying art, music, and natural phenomena are important learning venues.
 - d. Young children have not yet matured enough to internalize their family's values. Thus, the more time spent with age-mates, the more they copy their behavior and family values are diluted.

We believe this family-oriented portion of a child's education is just as important as the formal education provided by the school.

4. The development of Christian character which leads to wisdom takes priority over the accumulation of knowledge and is our primary emphasis. Therefore, we have incorporated a "Charlotte Mason" holistic approach to education. This in no way diminishes the school's commitment to excellence in the academic disciplines. The primary focuses in the early grades are Bible, reading, writing, and arithmetic. As students proceed to the upper elementary grades

¹ The term "parent" is used to refer to legal guardian as well.

(3-5), a full slate of core academics is offered.

5. 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 on Parent-Teacher Conferences, Parent-Teacher Prayer Meetings, and Parent Involvement] The school's Board of Directors will provide oversight in these areas.

6. Because our school functions as an extension of the home and the definite educational benefits, generally the maximum number of students allowed per class is twelve. An attempt will be made to keep a male/female balance in class enrollment.²

7. 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 engage the students' curiosity 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.

8. We do not believe that in the early grades (K-2), 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 gain useful knowledge and skills, students may become focused on the importance of grades. Students will be regularly assessed for performance and competency. Parents will receive quarterly narrative reports covering academic, spiritual, physical, and social development.

In Grades 3-5, 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 growth and development of children created in the image of God. Thus, a modified narrative report is provided in the first and third quarters.

Parent-teacher conferences are held at the end of the first and third 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 progress requires.

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

SCHOOL BOARD AND ADMINISTRATION

Believing that God has given parents the primary responsibility for educating their children, and that the school functions as an extension of the home, parents must commit themselves to giving feedback 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 (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. The Board has

² SMCS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national or ethnic origin.

developed standing committees to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. The Board relies on parents to serve on these committees or in a volunteer position where their God-given gifts will best fit.

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 Principal. 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 Principal who will either resolve the issue or present the issue to the Board for final resolution.

PROFESSIONAL MEMBERSHIP

SMCS is a member of the Association of Christian Schools International. 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. 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 helps the school partner with parents to best meet each student's needs—mentally, physically, and spiritually.

Other criteria for teachers 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 committed 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.³

³ 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.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

1. SMCS admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.
2. SMCS exists as a ministry to the children of Christians. Family devotion and prayer should be a part of each family's activities. Parents must be committed Christians and 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 August 15 of that year.
4. The Tennessee Certificate of Immunization for all incoming students must 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. The only exception to this a religious exemption or note from physician.
5. Priority in admission to qualified families/students is given using these factors in the following order:
 - Siblings of SMCS students
 - Children of Wayside members
 - Students of Wayside Preschool
 - Overall needs and best interests of the school and the classes (including factors such as teacher/student ratios and 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.
 - Completion of a student screening.
 - 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.
 - Parents reading For the Children's Sake, a book that describes our Charlotte Mason approach to education, provided by the school.
 - Completed meeting with SMCS Board Representatives.
 - Approval of admission by the Board.
 - Payment of enrollment fee.
7. Notice of acceptance or non-acceptance will follow the screening sessions and interview.

WAITING LIST

As the classes at SMCS are filled to capacity, new applicants are placed on a waiting list. 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. The family will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the remaining tuition if withdrawal occurs on or after July 1. **Student records will be released only when accounts are made current.**

SCHOOL DAY SCHEDULE

The school hours for Grades K-2 are 9 AM to 1 PM every day except Tuesday. These students stay until 2 PM on Tuesdays for enrichment opportunities. School hours for Grades 3-5 are 9 AM to 1 PM Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and 9 AM to 3 PM Tuesday and Thursday.

ARRIVAL AND PICK-UP POLICY

Students must be dropped off between 8:40 and 8:55 AM each day at the designated drop-off points 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 inside. To ensure student safety, no student should be let out of the car without an adult present. 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. Pick-up in the afternoons should run no later than 20 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 prohibited from picking 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 in the classroom after 9 AM 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 fine. Should a student accumulate an excessive number of tardies, the Principal or the Board will contact 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 1PM or even 3PM would prohibit the family from enrollment because of work or other requirements. SMCS has adopted an After-School Program. It is directed by an experienced teacher and includes study time 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 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 on Tuesdays and Thursdays and until 3:15 PM on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. (Exceptions will be posted in advance). Penalty fees begin after 5:30 or 3:15 PM respectively. No more than fifteen students will be accepted on any day to ensure appropriate supervision and safety. 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 desiring to use the program must notify the student's teacher or the office. 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 is available in 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 your 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 other adults. They are also expected to be respectful to all students 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. 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.
5. "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 his/her 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.
6. 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.
7. 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, toys, 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, contacted to schedule a conference 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 teach students to glorify God in all areas of life. Outward appearance is not as important as the condition of our hearts, but it is a reflection of how we view ourselves and adhere to Biblical principles of proper dress. The school has established a dress code that reflects this philosophy while allowing students to be active. SMCS colors are green, blue, yellow, and white. Green represents life, blue represents

renewal, yellow, the light Christians are to the world, and white, Christ's purity. T-shirts, polos (navy, Kelly green, or white), and outerwear with the SMCS logo are available for purchase.

Regular dress: Any color pants, capris, shorts, skort, jumper, or skirt
SMCS logo shirt [T-shirt, polo (navy, Kelly green, yellow, or white)], or outerwear
(The SMCS logo must show in class)

Please note: 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade girl's skirts, shorts, skorts, and jumpers must be mid-thigh or below. Shorter shorts with leggings underneath are NOT acceptable. We are not being legalistic...only trying to teach our young ladies to dress modestly and prevent a stumbling block for our young men. Please ensure that your K – 2nd grade daughters are also dressed modestly.

Enforcement: The first time the dress code is violated, a reminder note will be sent home. The second time, the parent will be contacted for a change of clothes. Should the problem persist, the Board will meet with the parents.

Field Trips: Boys: Khaki pants or shorts, navy SMCS polo
Girls: Khaki pants, skirt, skort, shorts, or jumper, navy SMCS polo

Christmas program: Boys: Black slacks and white dress shirt
Girls: Black slacks or skirt with black tights or leggings
and white blouse or shirt
Dark dress shoes

Grandparents' Day: Boys: Khaki or navy pants and white or navy SMCS polo
Girls: Khaki or navy pants, skirt, or jumper and white or navy SMCS polo
Dress shoes

Graduation: 5th grade Boys: Long-sleeved white shirt, tie, slacks
5th grade Girls: Dress or skirt and blouse (dress or blouse with sleeves or sweater)
Other students: church clothes
Dress shoes

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 Principal's office. After a period of time and after general notice is given to SMCS families, unclaimed items will be donated.

SCHOOL LUNCHES

SMCS does not have a school cafeteria. All students must bring their lunches 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 Principal's office 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

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 teachers of students in K-2nd. In grades 3rd-5th, shorter narratives will be done after the 1st and 3rd quarters. Additionally, 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.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES

Twice 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 these two conferences, more frequent conferences may be scheduled to address the academic, spiritual, or behavioral needs of a student.

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 consistently explores and reviews 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 Principal. 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 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. However, we will not criticize belief in or celebration of such things and students and parents must refrain from doing so.

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

SMCS employs the holistic educational methods pioneered by British educator Charlotte Mason whenever feasible. Ms. Mason understood that, as God-created image bearers, each student is uniquely gifted and that students have different learning styles. Thus, a variety of teaching methods are used. Teachers and parents partner to help each student meet or exceed learning objectives. A Charlotte Mason educational approach focuses on classroom atmosphere, the discipline of habits, critical thinking, understanding God's big and noble ideas, and developing personal relationships with the Christ Jesus and healthy relationships with others. Children's natural curiosity is fostered through a hands-on approach, by using both indoor and outdoor classrooms. All instruction should include visual, auditory, and tactile (seeing, hearing, touching) methodologies.

Indoor classroom activities may include:

- Learning centers
- Separate and group reading assignments
- Group projects and presentations
- Student partners
- Discussions and debates
- Cooperative learning experiences
- Individual activities appropriate for each child
- Enrichment activities such as art, music, computers, library and cooking

Outdoor classroom activities may include:

- Physical education
- History and literature studies
- Outdoor chapel
- Nature hikes and studies (bird studies, creature habitat studies, plant and tree studies, weather studies, insect studies, conservation and earth science studies)
- Nature notebook sketches
- Gardening
- Free-play⁴

PARENT-FACULTY 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 child(ren). 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-faculty 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.

⁴ Our campus woods are designed to be used, and are used, as the playground. We intentionally did not build a commercial-type playground believing, as Charlotte Mason did, that children develop imagination and creativity through free-play in the natural world.

Paper newsletters and emails contain important school announcements, updates, prayer requests, and event information. It is important to review the newsletters carefully. Both the newsletters 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 family is asked to commit a minimum of four days of their time each semester 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 outlined by the SMCS Board;
- Substitute teaching in the absence of the teacher;
- Assisting the teacher upon request given adequate notice;
- Participating 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 its teaching methodology on 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 Principal, 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 holds weekly chapel sessions. A teacher, member of the administration, or guest speaker usually offers a brief message. In Grade 5, the students are given an opportunity to lead chapel. All chapel programs are non-denominational. Daily devotions, prayer, scripture memory, and Bible studies also are a regular part of our curriculum.

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 students.

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 outside of the school day in addition to the SMCS-sponsored events.

VISITORS

Visitors are always welcome at SMCS, but are asked to check with the teachers or the Principal before visiting classrooms.

ILLNESS

If a student becomes ill during school, this should be reported immediately to the teacher. Each classroom has a first aid kit. 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). SMCS will provide a copy of the Illness/Injury Notice to the parents and place one copy in the student’s medical 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 and permission is given by the Principal. 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.

ACCIDENT/INJURY PROCEDURE

In the case of minor accidents involving injury, the teacher will administer first aid. An Illness/Injury Notice will be completed for all injuries; a copy given to the parents and one placed in the student’s medical 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.

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 unless they have a qualified exemption. 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 staff will administer no internal medicine of any kind unless specific written instructions and permission are given personally to the staff by the parent or as provided on the medical emergency card. Additionally, parents must inform the staff of 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.

FIELD TRIPS

Throughout the year, classes go on educational field trips. Our teachers and administrators prayerfully and carefully plan these trips to ensure adequate supervision and safety. Permission slips are sent home in advance of the trip. If you wish to join in, you may make the request on the form. The permission slip will contain information regarding sibling attendance on the trip.

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

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 consumable paper products 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 family's cost. Parents are responsible for ensuring such damages are corrected.

CLEANING

Because custodial work is such a big project, 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 and ensure all waste is disposed of properly. SMCS is a very pleasant place to be when it is appropriately maintained.

Students are expected to share in maintaining the cleanliness of the school building by periodically being assigned a particular responsibility 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 required to help in our corporate responsibility when parent workdays are scheduled.

SUPPLIES

The school will provide some of the necessary supplies for students. A supply fee may be charged for general supplies used by all students. A list of additional materials needed by students will be sent home in the summer mailing and periodically during the year.

EMERGENCY WEATHER CONDITIONS

If weather conditions make it impractical or dangerous to hold 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, via email, and on the school's message machine 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.

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.