

Sir Alexander Mackenzie Elementary School **Family Handbook** **2023-2024**



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Message from SAM School’s Administration Team

Welcome to Sir Alexander Mackenzie (SAM) Elementary School and to the beginning of our 2023–2024 school year! It is exciting to consider each new school year as a great new challenge—one that calls upon us to come together as we collectively learn, grow, and achieve.

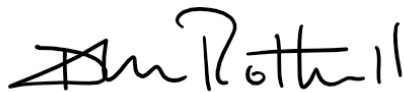
Our journey at Sir Alexander Mackenzie Elementary School weaves together three stories: who we have been, who we are now, and who we might become. The voices of our stories include our students, parents, staff, and community. Through our stories of past, present, and future, SAM is a school that:

- empowers learners to lead
- values equitable and inclusive learning opportunities
- creates environments of mutual respect and belonging
- dedicated to meeting the diverse learning needs of our students
- engages our whole community in the joys of teaching and learning
- prioritizes opportunities for students to discover and explore their passions in learning

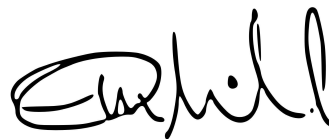
By engaging *all* members of the diverse SAM community—students, students’ families, staff, and members of the wider community—we endeavour to innovate creative ways to support our learners’ academic and social-emotional development. Doing so recognizes the value of knowing and being in many different ways with many different perspectives.

So, from our beginning days of cultivating new connections and relationships in September to the June days of celebration and reflection, please join us as we walk alongside each other—learning, growing and achieving *together*.

Empowering Learners to Lead



Dawn Rothwell
Principal



Cam Makovichuk
Assistant Principal

Sir Alexander Mackenzie Elementary School: Our Story

Our Yesterday: Who we have been

Sir Alexander Mackenzie Elementary School has been a vibrant neighbourhood school since 1958. SAM School has evolved with our surrounding community and has been “a home away from home” for generations of students. For 65 years, our hallways have been filled with the sounds of students, staff, and families laughing and learning alongside each other. You often hear staff speak of their SAM Family (“SAMily”) with pride and it is observed everyday in every classroom. As a result, SAM has a reputation for being a safe, friendly, and welcoming community dedicated to meeting the **diverse learning needs of all our students**. Recognizing that we all have different ways of constructing understanding and connecting to learning, SAM has created spaces that value inclusivity, diversity, innovation, and leadership. SAM is a place where students and staff alike are seen as learners, teachers, and leaders, all having essential, reciprocal impacts on each other. Together, we can take risks in our learning because we have built a solid foundation of trust, respect, and relationship. As such, SAM has been, and will continue to be, a community school that prioritizes opportunities **for students to discover and explore their passions in learning** while becoming our learners and leaders of tomorrow.

Our Today: Who we are now

At SAM, we continue to have a long standing tradition of both academic excellence and **empowering our learners to lead**. Today, SAM school continues to build upon a legacy of student driven leadership and we continue to recognize the importance of student voice and agency to create opportunities to learn what it means to be a leader and good community partner. Through participation in our Student Leadership Club, our students develop their leadership skills, build confidence in their abilities, and foster relationships with our community. Additionally, SAM continues to enrich student learning through varied curricular and extracurricular opportunities throughout the school, including our STEAM lab, Academic Challenge program, land-based learning experiences, as well as various collaborations with our Indigenous partners.

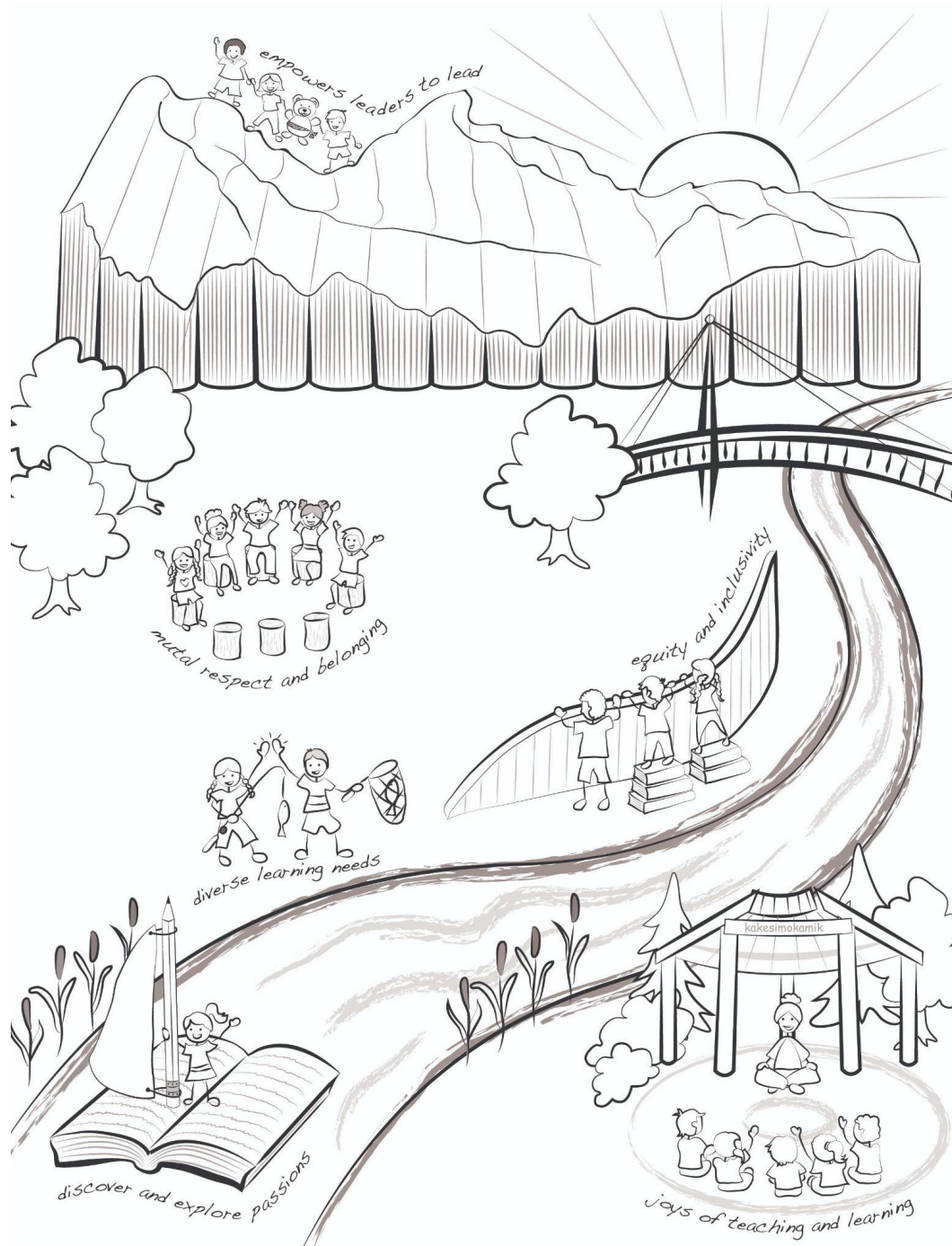
Connected to our strong culture of community and leadership, SAM has made recent commitments to reconciliation and equity in education. Taking the words of the Honourable Murray Sinclair to heart, “Reconciliation is about establishing a relationship of **mutual respect**,” we are in the process of re-imagining how we come together, plan together, and engage with each other. Through our growing relationships with our Indigenous communities, we start to understand a variety of viewpoints and ways of knowing that allow us to re-examine our pedagogical and assessment practices. Accompanied on our learning journey by Asiniwaciy, our *Ambeartist*, we reconsider the ways we can teach with a recognition of diversity of histories, experiences, and learning needs within the classroom.

Our Tomorrow: Who we might become

As the community around us changes, so do the learning needs and priorities of our SAM school community. As we move forward, SAM will continue to explore the different ways we teach and learn together using a variety of perspectives and lenses. To create more **equitable and inclusive learning opportunities** for our students, it will be important for us to consider: “Whose voices are missing from these experiences?”, “What counts, what matters, what is most important for our young learners and leaders as they move beyond this point in time with us?” Families have shared that one of their primary reasons for choosing SAM has been the sense of love and respect embracing *all* students, families, staff and visitors; as such, a central priority for SAM will be to continue **engaging our whole community in the joys of teaching and learning**.

Our Living Map

Our Living Map at SAM School continues to guide us along our journey of learning and growing, reminding us of the values our community has voiced as central to their children's learning experiences.



Artwork created by Amy Watson

Bell Schedule 2023–2024

Mondays–Fridays

Period	Time
Entry & Registration	8:45 a.m. to 8:50 a.m.
Period 1	8:50 a.m. to 9:22 a.m.
Period 2	9:22 a.m. to 9:54 a.m.
Period 3	9:54 a.m. to 10:26 a.m.
Period 4	10:26 a.m. to 10:58 a.m.
Period 5	10:58 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Period 6	11:30 a.m. to 12:02 p.m.
Morning Recess	12:02 p.m. to 12:32 p.m.
Lunch	12:32 p.m. to 1:02 p.m.
Period 7	1:02 p.m. to 1:34 p.m.
Period 8	1:34 p.m. to 2:06 p.m.
Afternoon Recess	2:06 p.m. to 2:21 p.m.
Period 9	2:21 p.m. to 2:53 p.m.
Period 10	2:53 p.m. to 3:25 p.m.
Dismissal	3:25 p.m.

Early Dismissal

Period	Time
Entry & Registration	8:45 a.m. to 8:50 a.m.
Period 1	8:50 a.m. to 9:24 a.m.
Period 2	9:24 a.m. to 9:57 a.m.
Period 3	9:57 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
Morning Recess	10:30 a.m. to 10:50 a.m.
Period 4	10:50 a.m. to 11:24 a.m.
Period 5	11:24 a.m. to 11:57 a.m.
Period 6	11:57 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
Dismissal	12:30 p.m.

NO kindergarten classes on early dismissal days

Kindergarten

Morning 8:45 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Full Day 8:45 a.m. to 3:25 p.m.

Our Commitments to Learning Together

Consideration for others, cooperation, and a sense of personal responsibility help us to work successfully together. At SAM, we have some shared commitments that we all hold ourselves, and each other, accountable:

- Respect yourself, your peers, your teachers, and the SAM School community.
- Meet your responsibilities - both as a student and as a good citizen.
- Do your best to make SAM School a well-respected place.
- Observe good safety practices and use them while travelling to and from school.
- Keep the building and grounds clean and tidy.

Every school has their own approach to discipline. At SAM School, we focus on using restorative practices that shift the focus of student discipline from punitive punishment to reflective learning using a community conferencing approach. These practices emphasize accountability, making amends, and facilitating dialogue between the affected individuals. Restorative practices and community conferencing work to repair harm done by:

- Helping students take responsibility
- Make students aware of consequences
- Teach students conflict resolution
- Build emotional skills
- Help students practise empathy
- Teach students to embrace forgiveness
- Show the importance of communication
- Build strong relationships
- Teach students how to respect different cultures and beliefs
- Help build community

At SAM School, collaboration and communication between students, teachers, and families is vital in this process.

Other Frequently Asked Questions

Can I bring bicycles, rollerblades, skateboards and scooters to school?

All of these items may be used to and from SAM School. Please wear appropriate helmets and lock bicycles securely in the school bike racks. For safety reasons, students are asked to dismount and not ride on school grounds from 8:40am-3:45pm. SAM School is not responsible for damage to, or loss of, bicycles; students should ensure their equipment and belongings are secured with a lock. Other items should be brought into the school and stored in homerooms or lockers until the end of the school day.

Can students use personal cell phones at school?

It is important to us at SAM to create an environment conducive to optimal learning; as such, personal cell phones are not permitted to be used on SAM School property (*or on school outings*) as they are distracting for all students. If a student needs to bring a cell phone to school, they will need to turn it off and check it in at the office (*or keep it locked securely in their locker*). We ask that students/parents contact each other through the school phone.

When are drop-off and pick-up times?

School supervision for children begins when the bell rings at 8:45am. Please do not leave your children unsupervised at school before this time as there is no staff supervision arranged for them. Similarly after dismissal, there is no playground supervision by school staff and it is important that families pick-up their children in a timely manner.

Can students leave SAM School grounds during the school day?

It is important that students stay on SAM School grounds throughout the school day.

- Parents or guardians must pick up their children at the office if they are to leave the school during the school day.
- Students must sign out in the school office when leaving early.
- Students who stay for lunch are not permitted to leave the school grounds during lunch time.

Can I bring my own personal Chromebook?

Students are welcome to bring their own Chromebooks to school and use them under the direction and guidance of our teachers. At all times, students will be expected to follow our division's acceptable use of technology agreement. Students who do choose to bring valuables (i.e. cameras, personal computers, or other electronics) to SAM School are responsible for their safety and care. Electronics that are not used for learning experiences in the classroom must be locked securely in students' lockers. The school does not take responsibility for any potential loss or damage to these items while they are at school.

SAM School Programming

SAM School follows the Alberta Program of Studies which consists of eight subjects with objectives and goals set by Alberta Education:

- English Language Arts and Literature
- Mathematics
- Science
- Social Studies
- Physical Education and Wellness
- Music
- Art
- French (*taught to students in Grades 4, 5 and 6*)

SAM School is also excited to be able to complement our students' curricular learning with opportunities in:

- Drama
- Outdoor Education
- STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics)

Academic Challenge & Enrichment (ACE) Program

The Academic Challenge and Enrichment (ACE) program offers in-depth explorations and extensions of the curriculum to help keep your gifted child engaged and motivated to reach further. The program offers unique learning opportunities that challenge your children and feed their curiosity and passion for knowledge and growth. Students who qualify for this program might exhibit such characteristics as:

- Demonstrating strong problem-solving ability, logical thinking, and creativity;
- Easily grasping underlying principles and need minimum explanation;
- Having exceptional curiosity and constantly want to know why; and
- Looking for leadership opportunities at school.

This Division Program (Grades 4-6) provides students with extended academic opportunities in research, independent and group projects, communication and decision-making skills. Students learn the regular curriculum and teachers supplement students' learning with enriching activities by expanding topics of interest. Science Olympics, extended field trips, project-based learning, performances, and use of integrated technology are a few highlights of the ACE Program.

The ACE program might be right for your child if they receive:

- A recommendation for current school administration and teacher, AND
- A full-scale IQ score of 120 or higher on a psychoeducational assessment.

Co-Curricular & Extra-Curricular Activities

We are proud to offer many clubs and activities that are scheduled throughout the year for students. These will be communicated through student-created announcements and the SAM Explorer (our digital newsletter).

There are many ways for students to become active at SAM School. We appreciate the generosity and cooperation of all SAM students who are willing to donate their time to make SAM School a better place! Check out some of the clubs and activities at SAM:

- Student Leadership Club
- SAM AM (student news broadcast)
- Coding Club
- Terry Fox Run
- Track Day & Running Club
- Winter Carnival
- SAM Hockey League
- World Cup Soccer
- Hoop It Up Basketball
- Volleyball
- Science Olympics
- Handbell Choir
- SAM Chorus
- Cross-age buddies
- Family Dances
- Family Movie Nights
- Family Coding Nights
- School Council
- In-classroom volunteer opportunities
- Field Trips
- Wall Climbing Club
- Grade 5 & Grade 6 Camps
- Book Fairs
- Ski & Snowboard Days
- Intramurals
- SAM Songsters

Special Events

Events are designed to promote school spirit and unity, as well as to provide a service to the students and the community:

Meet the Staff Evening occurs at the very beginning of the year and facilitates parents and staff meeting each other and for the parents to receive information regarding school programs and activities.

School Hot Lunch Days (offered by the SAM Fundraising Society) allow families to pre-purchase lunch for their children from different restaurants via Healthy Hunger. We always welcome more parental help!

School Pictures - A professional photographer takes individual pictures early in the school year. Class pictures are taken in the spring.

Field Trips - Learning experiences gained outside of school enhance classroom instruction. SAM School offers many educational field trips which are determined by teachers. Parents will be notified of all field trips, including the purpose, cost, and other requirements of the trip. Many presenters and artists are invited to perform at SAM School as well. We are proud to say that many guides and operators comment about SAM School students' exceptionally positive behaviour.

Library Program and Services

All students from Kindergarten - Grade 6 have access to SAM School's extensive library and resources through our computer-based cataloguing system. Assistance is provided by a library technician. In addition to having regular opportunities to exchange books for recreational reading, students receive instruction in basic library skills and literary appreciation. Paired reading, volunteer tutoring, small group educational assistant support, and several cross-age activities are just a few highlights of the many activities that occur in SAM School's library every day. Book exchanges occur during scheduled library periods once per week.

Home/School Communication

At SAM School will believe in strong communication between the school and the home. Teachers will provide timely and ongoing communication throughout the school year to families using a variety of methods. At the beginning of the year, your child's homeroom teacher will clearly outline when and how classroom information will be communicated to you. Additionally, please always feel free to reach out to your classroom teacher or the school using email or phone. Other ways we look to strengthen home-school communication includes:

Progress Reports - Assessing and reporting student progress is a big part of academic success. A Division Report Card provides consistent descriptions of your child(ren)'s progress in relation to the Alberta curriculum. Achievement, work habits and effort are each reported separately. Report Cards are issued twice during the year. Please contact your child's teacher if you have any concerns about their progress.

Student-Parent-Teacher Conferences - These information-sharing sessions are set up on a school-wide basis and will occur twice during the year. Conferences can also be scheduled by contacting SAM School.

The SAM Explorer - The SAM Explorer is our bi-weekly electronic newsletter that is emailed to families on every second Friday afternoon. The SAM Explorer contains information on past and future activities, as well as articles of interest pertaining to educational issues, parenting information, fundraising initiatives, and other community events.

Student Agenda Use - Teachers often write notes to students or parents in student agendas or sign them, indicating that homework was recorded or completed correctly. We certainly encourage parents to do the same. Please use the Agenda as a two-way communication tool.

SAM School Website - Our website has a variety of information for students and parents to access from home. Please visit our website at samschool.spschools.org.

SAM Twitter & Facebook & Instagram - Live updates are also provided via Twitter, Facebook and Instagram. Follow us at...

Twitter @SAMSchool
Facebook @SAMSchool
Instagram @SAM_Elementary

Parent/Community Bulletin Board - In the front entrance, we have a bulletin board dedicated to volunteers and community groups. Information about community extracurricular events will be displayed.

Illness and Accidents

Normally, children who are too ill to go outside for recess are too ill to be at school. Our infirmary is intended for emergency use or unanticipated illnesses only. In the event of a serious accident to a student, the school will endeavour to contact the parents (or emergency contact) immediately. If this is not possible, the injured student will be transported to the hospital and parents will be contacted as soon as possible.

Medical Information

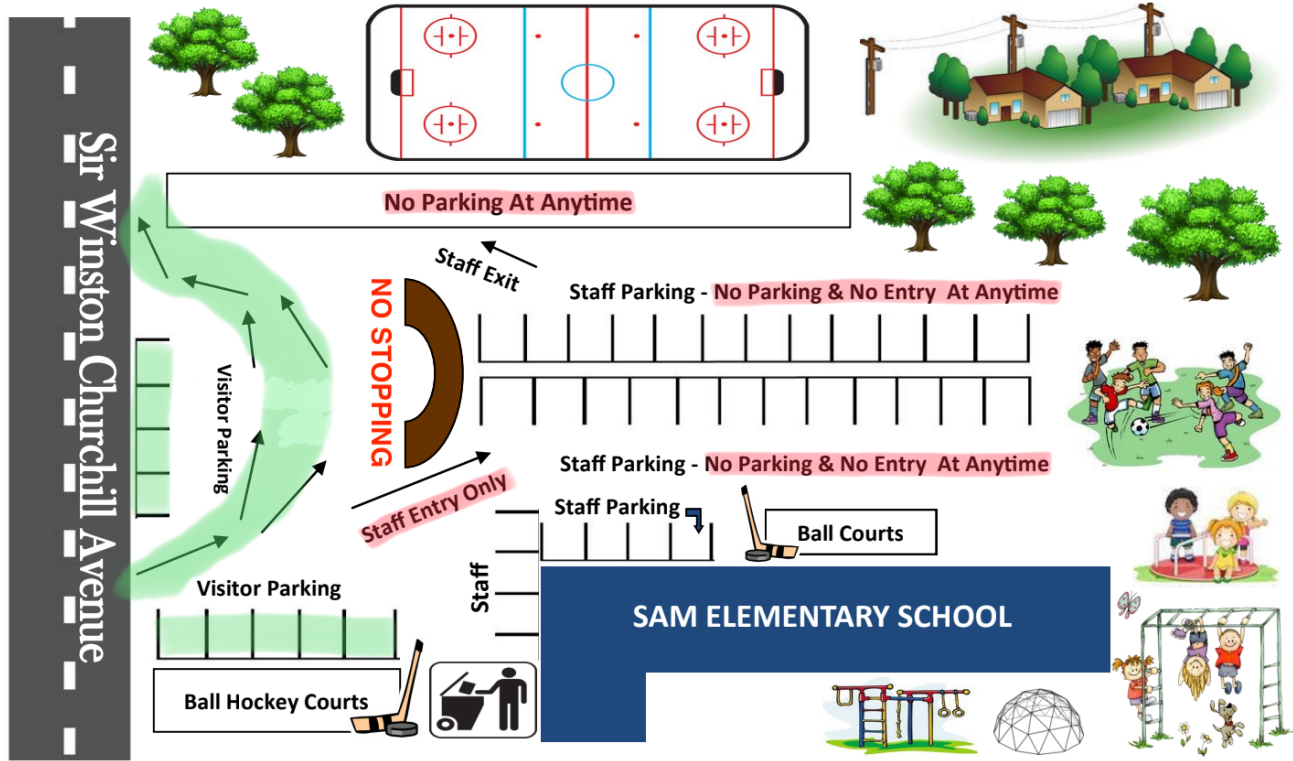
Please forward pertinent student medical information to the school. SAM School keeps a list of students with severe allergies, diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, etc. Parents' cooperation is necessary in keeping updated medical information on file.

Student Medication

School Board policy outlines staff responsibilities regarding the proper procedure for administering medication to students. If a student requires staff to assist with medication during the school day, parents must provide the medication (stored in the office) in the original labelled container with the division medication form filled out by your doctor. Severely allergic or asthmatic students should have their medication with them at all times.

Parking

Children's safety in and around SAM School is paramount! At peak times, the parking lot becomes very congested with traffic and children. Please use the parking lot located southeast of SAM School as the main pick up or drop off point for students and to park for the day. Parents entering the main parking lot in front of the school are asked to please only park in visitor stalls. NO PARKING in front of barricades (flag poles). For student safety, please DO NOT enter the staff parking area. And in our efforts to continue positive relationships with our community neighbours, please DO NOT park at the nearby Braeside Presbyterian Church; they have a daycare and it is important that their parking lot is available to the staff and families attending there.



Attendance and Punctuality

Regular attendance is a condition for success at SAM School and is addressed by law in Alberta's Education Act. Every child must attend school. Parents are asked to have children maintain regular attendance and help them take responsibility for any missed assignments.

Please inform us (email or phone call) if a student is going to be late or absent. Non-reported absences will be followed up by a phone call to parents. Students who arrive late are required to sign in at the office. Students leaving SAM School for any reason during school hours must sign out at the office.

(Absence Line: 780.459.4467 or sam.spschools.org)

Cold Weather Practice

Morning and afternoon recess provide breaks from regular school routines, fresh air and a release for excess energy. As outdoor breaks are very important for children, recess will normally be held indoors only when extreme weather exists. Any student who feels ill at any time while outdoors should report to a supervisor or to the office. During inclement conditions, a shortened outdoor period may occur with some recess time provided indoors. Students must dress appropriately for outdoor conditions!

Lunch Routines

Students are expected to eat while seated in regular homerooms, respect their classroom rules, **and must remain at school during lunch time.** \$60.00 per student for the year works out to cost less than 35 cents per day! This enables other staff to lead extracurricular activities during lunchtime, while maximizing outdoor supervision at a minimal cost to parents. SAM students who stay for lunch are expected to remain on school grounds during the entire day.

Allergy Awareness

At SAM School, we have several students who have severe allergies. We ask parents to refrain from sending any products with nut ingredients as they can cause severe reactions for those with allergies. Nut products could cause a very serious reaction for an allergic student. For treats to be shared at SAM School, please send allergy-aware products. If a student does bring nut products, please notify the homeroom teacher or the office for an alternate eating space. Thank you for helping us to make SAM School a safer place for all students.

Visitors

Visitors must check in at the office and obtain a “Visitor” or “Volunteer” lanyard. Parents who bring lunches or class projects should leave them at the office and SAM staff will notify students at a convenient time; this procedure helps to reduce classroom interruptions.

Student Dress

Students are expected to uphold the high standards of SAM School and community by not wearing clothing that may be offensive to others. Students are required to wear appropriate shoes at all times (non-marking soles, please for indoor use). Students are asked to remove outdoor footwear at their entry door and put their indoor shoes on. For emergency evacuations or fire drills, students will not have time to put shoes on. Physical education classes also require appropriate non-marking indoor shoes.

Guidelines for Parent Volunteers

Plain and simple, **we LOVE parent volunteers!** We could not do all the fantastic things that we do with children without the high level of parent volunteerism at SAM School. Keep up the great work! Please sign in at the office and obtain a “Volunteer” lanyard and sign a Confidentiality Undertaking & Declaration for Volunteers. This will only be required to complete once a year. Parents who volunteer regularly are asked to obtain and share a Criminal Record Check (usually no charge for volunteers) with SAM School administration.

Parents have a chance to play a larger role in education by volunteering at SAM School. Parents assisting teachers on a voluntary basis benefits all children and strengthens the ties between SAM School and the community. Volunteers can look forward to interesting and rewarding experiences while at the same time, learning first-hand about SAM School.

As important role models, we ask that all volunteers and visitors demonstrate mutual respect and follow a code of conduct. These elements are critical to the operation of SAM School:

- Respect the confidentiality of the teachers and the children.
- If you have any questions or concerns, please share them as soon as possible. We’re here to help!
- Acceptance and understanding towards the children with whom you come into contact are essential as we work together to represent the best interests of all children.
- Take note of and become familiar with general school rules and procedures so that you are a positive role model for the students.
- Consistency is vital, but we know that emergencies do occur. If you might be absent or late for scheduled volunteering, please call the school office to let us know so that staff may make adjustments.
- Volunteers’ attention is required by the students in that particular class or grade. Normally, we ask that younger siblings remain at home, under the care of another caregiver.

We will certainly call you if there has been a scheduling change or if you are not needed on a certain day. We hope that you will enjoy a very satisfying and rewarding experience. **Children are certainly worth the extra effort. Thanks for volunteering!**

Voluntary Parent Groups

School Council - Meetings occur in the evenings on a monthly basis. They provide opportunities for all parents and community members to:

- share information, ideas, concerns between the community and school,
- assist the school administration in an advisory capacity, and
- serve to facilitate the exchange of ideas and concerns between the community and the Board.

SAM Fundraising Society - Parent members provide services and raise funds to enhance learning and enrich the educational experiences of SAM School students. In addition to casinos, projects might include cupcakes, school-wide lunches, silent auctions, raffles, family dances, etc. Funds are raised and allocated to benefit the entire school population as opposed to individual classes or initiatives. Funds have been used to assist with the purchase of technology (computers, multimedia projectors, digital cameras, music and sound equipment), math and science manipulatives, physical education equipment, library materials, and playground items.

We absolutely LOVE our School Council and Fundraising volunteers, and need more! Please consider volunteering - every little bit helps!

SIGIS Child Care

SAM School's SIGIS Child Care provides both before and after school care and includes non-school days. For information, contact SIGIS directly at 780-459-1333 or online at sigischildcare.ca. Other day facilities and homes are available within our SAM community. Please check our Parent Information Bulletin Board or in the office for more information.



Finally, *thank you!* We know that you have a choice about where your child goes to school - and we appreciate that you have chosen SAM. We are grateful for the special place we have here, and it is made all the more amazing with you being a part of our learning community. Our collective efforts in the service of all children's growth helps to create a successful year of learning! Thanks for joining the SAMily!