



Somerset Academy Parent and Student Handbook

Somerset Vision

Empowering students to explore global learning opportunities to promote and enrich their communities and the communities we serve.

Somerset Purpose

Somerset Academy, Inc. promotes a transformational culture that maximizes student achievement and the development of accountable, global learners in a safe and enriching environment that fosters high-quality education.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION PROVISIONS

Somerset Academy's admissions and enrollment policies related to anti-discrimination follow Section 1000.05, F.S.- Discrimination against students and employees in the Florida K-20 public education system prohibited; equality of access required.

The statute prohibits discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability or marital status against a student or employee. This policy is in accordance with state and federal laws, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972, Sections 503 and 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Information relating to special accommodation, grievance procedures, and the designated official responsible for compliance with the Title VI, Title IX and Section 504 may be obtained by contacting Somerset Academy.

Section 1000.05 also referred to as the "Florida Educational Equity Act." is provided below:

(2)(a) Discrimination based on race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status against a student or an employee in the state system of public K-20 education is prohibited. No person in this state shall, on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any public K-20 education program or activity, or in any employment conditions or practices, conducted by a public educational institution that receives or benefits from federal or state financial assistance.

The criteria for admission to a program or course shall not have the effect of restricting access by persons of a particular race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status.

All classes shall be available to all students without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status; however, this is not intended to eliminate the provision of programs designed to meet the needs of students with limited proficiency in English, gifted students, or students with disabilities or programs tailored to students with specialized talents or skills.

Students may be separated by gender for a single-gender program as provided under s. 1002.311, for any portion of a class that deals with human reproduction, or during participation in bodily contact sports. For this section, bodily contact sports include wrestling, boxing, rugby, ice hockey, football, basketball, and other sports in which the purpose or major activity involves bodily contact.

Guidance services, counseling services, and financial assistance services in the state public K-20 education system shall be available to students equally. Guidance and counseling services, Somersetials, and promotional events shall stress access to academic and career opportunities for students without regard to race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status.

(3)(a) No person shall, on the basis of gender, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be treated differently from another person or otherwise be discriminated against in any interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intramural athletics offered by a public K-20 educational institution; and no public K-20 educational institution shall provide athletics separately on such basis.

Notwithstanding the requirements of paragraph (a), a public K-20 educational institution may operate or sponsor separate teams for members of each gender if the selection for such teams is based upon competitive skill or the activity involved is a bodily contact sport. However, when a public K-20 educational institution operates or sponsors a team in a particular sport for members of one gender but does not operate or sponsor such a team for members of the other gender, and athletic opportunities for that gender have previously been limited, members of the excluded gender must be allowed to try out for the team offered.

This subsection does not prohibit the grouping of students in physical education classes and activities by ability as assessed by objective standards of individual performance developed and applied without regard to gender. However, when use of a single standard of measuring skill or progress in a physical education class has an adverse effect on members of one gender, the educational institution shall use appropriate standards which do not have such effect.

An educational K-20 institution which operates or sponsors interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intramural athletics shall provide equal athletic opportunity for members of both genders.

NONSECTARIAN POLICY

Somerset Academy is committed to providing employees with the best work experience possible. SOMERSET is nonsectarian in its programs, admissions policies, employment practices, and operations as specified in Section 1002.45, Florida Statutes. The policies provided serve as a source of information about the policies and procedures for teachers, parents, and students participating in Somerset Academy. Somerset Academy, upon resolution by its Board of Directors, reserves the right to amend, add or change the policies, protocols, or procedures as it deems necessary or as required by law.

GENERAL ATTENDANCE AND PARTICIPATION POLICIES

Somerset Academy monitors student attendance, participation, and performance to ensure that students meet compulsory attendance requirements and are making progress toward successful completion of the course or program as specified in the program's attendance policies.

School staff, parents, students, and appropriate state agencies are expected to work together to ensure that all applicable school attendance laws are obeyed, including, but not limited to, referral to the state-designated agency for possible court action for truancy. Schools keep student attendance records per SBER 6A-1.044. Family vacations are not excused absences. (P-5.09) Students who have not been immunized from a communicable disease as required by F.S. § 1003.22, should not be allowed to attend school, absent a specific exception. To return to school, parents must obtain a doctor's note stating that the student is no longer contagious or proof of immunization, as applicable. (P-5.06) We expect our students to demonstrate excellent attendance.

Please make every effort to have your child attend school and arrive on time.

The instructional day for middle school students is 8:00am-3:00pm. Students must be in their classroom ready to learn at the start of the instructional day.

Tardiness

Any student arriving after the start of the instructional day will be issued a late pass and marked tardy.

- After **ten** unexcused tardies, the student will be issued a referral form that will be placed in the student's permanent record. (Receiving any 3 referrals a school year may impede a student from registering the following year.)
- An excused tardy will only be given if the child has a doctor's note.

Absences

- Parents are to contact the office if their child is going to be absent.
- On the day he/she returns to school, parents must send a note explaining the reason for their child's absence.
- For every five unexcused absences, the student will receive a School Based Team referral. Students may not exceed more than 10 unexcused absences per school year.
- An excessive number of absences may result in a student registering the following year and will result in a referral to the district truancy officer.

Make-up Work

Make-up work and homework must be completed within 24 hours (per missed day) after returning to school. All assignments must be made-up, or the student will be issued an incomplete. Incomplete assignments may affect the student's final grade. It is the parent's responsibility to contact the teacher regarding any missed assignments. If a student anticipates being absent for more than two consecutive days, it is the parent's responsibility to contact the school and pick up any class work/homework from the teacher.

ACADEMIC GRADING PERFORMANCE SCALE

GRADE	LETTER VALUE	VERBAL INTERPRETATION	GRADE POINT VALUES
A	90 - 100 %	Outstanding	4
B	80 - 89 %	Good	3
C	70 - 79 %	Satisfactory	2
D	60 - 69 %	Minimal; Improvement Needed	1
F	0 - 59%	Unsatisfactory	0
I	0	Incomplete (Secondary Only)	0

The academic grades in all courses are to be based on the student's degree of mastery of the instructional objectives and competencies for the course. The determination of the specific grade a student receives will be based on careful consideration of all aspects of each student's performance such as coursework, supplemental projects, tests, and other assessments. Progress reports and report cards will serve as the primary means of communicating student progress and achievement of the standards for promotion.

Somerset Academy uses the Florida Student Progression Plan as a guideline for promotion.

Students will be enrolled in English Language Arts, Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and additional elective courses as determined by the school. Students will earn 0.5 credit per semester for a passing grade.

If a student fails one or two core course(s), they may be conditionally promoted and will be required to complete credit recovery as directed by the school.

If a student fails three or more core courses, the student will be retained.

There may be promotion in extraordinary circumstances provided the school administration approves a feasible plan to recover credits from failed courses.

STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES

All students are expected to attend school, maintain an appropriate pace throughout the course and not fall behind. He or she must put forth their best effort to always attain proficient grades in each class by completing work and meeting deadlines.

If the student has difficulties with the course, assignments, or with time management, he or she should contact the teacher for support and guidance.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

Somerset Academy's Student Code of Conduct student expectations and possible interventions and consequences are listed below.

Please review the following additional online rules and expectations carefully:

- ☐ Students are responsible for good behavior. Always use a computer in a way that shows consideration and respect. It is not acceptable to use obscene, profane, threatening, or disrespectful language.
- ☐ We take integrity and authenticity of student work very seriously. Do not cut, copy, or plagiarize Internet content or the work of your online classmates. Teachers do utilize technologies to check for authenticity. Copying, knowingly allowing others to copy from you, and/or misusing Internet content could result in removal from our courses and other disciplinary action.
- ☐ Security is a high priority, especially when the system involves many users. If you can identify a security problem in the school's computers, network, or Internet connection, notify a system administrator.
- ☐ It is illegal to create harmful computer viruses.
- ☐ Email is not private. Never say anything via email that you wouldn't mind seeing on the school bulletin board or in the local newspaper.
- ☐ Beware of emails from anyone, particularly adults you don't know, asking for personal information, attempting to arrange meetings, or engaging in personal contact. Alert your teacher of any message you receive that is inappropriate or makes you feel uncomfortable.
- ☐ Email with your classmates should be course-related. It is prohibited to send unwelcome communication to your classmates.
- ☐ Students should only use the assigned Colegia email address for school communications.
- ☐ Protect your password. Keep it secret from anyone except your parents.

INTERNET USAGE POLICY

Internet access is required for all students, but access must be used in a responsible, safe, efficient, ethical, and legal manner. With expanded access to electronic information, availability of inappropriate material is not uncommon. Some sites contain illegal, defamatory, inaccurate, or offensive information. Although it is impossible to control such misuses, we believe that with responsible use, the benefits of the Internet as an educational tool outweigh the negatives. We especially appreciate partnering with parents to teach responsible Internet use.

All Internet data that is composed, transmitted, or received via our computer communications systems is part of the official records of Somerset Academy and, as such, is subject to disclosure to the parent, parents, administration or other third parties. Consequently, Somerset Academy both students and staff abide by the school's internet usage policy.

Data that is composed, transmitted, accessed, or received via the Internet must not contain content that could be considered discriminatory, offensive, obscene, threatening, harassing, intimidating, or disruptive to any other person. Examples of unacceptable content may include, but are not limited to, sexual comments or images, racial slurs, gender-specific comments, or any other comments or images that could reasonably offend someone on the basis of race, age, sex, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, sexual orientation, or any other characteristic protected by law.

Abuse of internet platforms and tools provided by the school in violation of school policies will result in disciplinary action. Employees may also be held personally liable for any violations of this policy. The following behaviors are examples of previously stated or additional actions and activities that are prohibited and can result in disciplinary action:

- ☐ Sending or posting discriminatory, harassing, or threatening messages or images
- ☐ Stealing, using, or disclosing someone else's code or password without authorization
- ☐ Copying, pirating, or downloading software and electronic files without permission
- ☐ Sending or posting confidential matter, trade secrets, or proprietary information outside of the organization
- ☐ Violating copyright law
- ☐ Engaging in unauthorized transactions that may incur a cost to the organization or initiate unwanted Internet services and transmissions
- ☐ Participating in the viewing or exchange of pornography or obscene materials
- ☐ Sending or posting messages that defame or slander other individuals
- ☐ Attempting to break into the computer system of another organization or person
- ☐ Refusing to cooperate with a security investigation
- ☐ Using the Education Portal for political causes or activities, religious activities, or any sort of gambling
- ☐ Jeopardizing the security of the organization's electronic communications systems
- ☐ Sending or posting messages that disparage another organization's products or services
- ☐ Passing off personal views as representing those of the organization
- ☐ Sending anonymous e-mail messages
- ☐ Engaging in any other illegal activities

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY POLICY

□ What is academic integrity?

Academic integrity is an ethical code, whereby the student guarantees that all work submitted is the student's own work.

Why is academic integrity important?

When students submit an assignment that is not their own original work, there are two issues involved:

- Students are earning credit for learning material for which they have not demonstrated mastery.
- They may be violating the policies of Somerset Academy.

What are some examples of academic integrity violations?

There are two kinds of academic integrity violations. One is "plagiarism" and the other is "cheating."

Plagiarism - To steal and pass off (the ideas or words of another) as one's own: use (another's production) without crediting the source. Some examples are, but not limited to the following:

- Copying and pasting a report from the Internet and representing it as your own work
- Copying any other work and not properly citing authorship

Cheating

- To influence or lead by deceit, trick, or artifice
- To practice fraud or trickery to violate rules dishonestly
- Providing questions/answers/ work to another student
- Receiving questions/answers/work from another student

Ensuring Academic Integrity

Somerset Academy uses a variety of tools to ensure the integrity of student work.

- CopyLeaks - This Internet tool compares student work with a variety of databases. The Learning Management System is now integrated with CopyLeaks, and most work is automatically uploaded to the system. This database compares students' work against other students' work, as well as work found on the Internet.
- Academic Integrity Database - Database of student integrity incidences or violations. This database is used to monitor the number of student integrity issues.
- Teacher Expertise - Instructors have extensive classroom experience. Their expertise is often a guide in identifying the level of originality in student work.

- Discussion Based Assessments - Each teacher regularly conducts discussion-based assessments with his or her students. These conversations occur at specific intervals as well as randomly in a course and are included in the assessment component of each course. The teacher discusses individual student work and extends the conversation to allow the student to demonstrate mastery of the content and to verify the authenticity of the student's work.
- Academic Integrity Reporting Policy - Community members, guidance counselors, parents, and students can call or email any academic integrity-related issue anonymously.

Consequences of Violation of this Policy

A variety of consequences will be administered when students are caught cheating or plagiarizing. These consequences range from resubmission of an assignment up to expulsion from coursework. Additionally, final grades may be rescinded if a student is found to have cheated or plagiarized after the grade has been posted to a transcript.

Students are responsible for submitting their own, original work and are expected to:

- Read and sign the Student/Parent Acknowledgement Form as part of the enrollment process
- Participate in a welcome call during which components of our academic integrity program will be discussed
- Ask any questions regarding plagiarism or cheating if they are not sure

Parents, as partners in supporting student learning, are expected to:

- Read and sign the Student/Parent Acknowledgement Form as part of the enrollment process
- Participate in a welcome call during which components of our academic integrity program will be discussed
- Ensure that their student's work is authentic and original
- Monitor grades and work through Colegia.
- Ask any questions regarding plagiarism or cheating if they are not sure

Teachers, as stakeholders in ensuring the highest standards of academic integrity, are expected to:

- Act as a resource for student questions
- Coordinate any academic integrity issues with the school administration
- Verify student mastery of content through discussion based and authentic assessments
- Participate in any mandated training or staff development

Instructional Leaders are expected to:

- Support academic integrity in each course
- Ensure that all teachers participate in academic integrity initiatives
- Support the administration of consequences
- Provide support to the instructional staff in the implementation of these policies

STUDENT CODE OF HONOR

A student should NEVER:

- ☐ Share their Username and Password with anyone other than their Parents
- ☐ Use anyone else's Username and Password
- ☐ Obtain or assist anyone to obtain unauthorized access to the network
- ☐ Post their or anyone else's personal information (i.e. address, email, telephone, etc.)
- ☐ Post private messages sent to them

HOME SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

A prime factor in our operation is the importance we place upon communication between home and school. The lines of communication must be always kept open so that we may be properly tuned into your child's needs.

Please notify us immediately if:

1. Your child has developed a communicable disease.
2. You will be out of town.
3. Your telephone number (home or work) has changed.
4. You wish to change or add to the emergency contact numbers we are to use.
5. IF THERE IS ANY CHANGE IN TRANSPORTATION. We will not allow a child to deviate from their regular departure routine without written or verbal verification. If there is a change in the person who is to pickup your child then we require the name of that person in writing.

Parent to Teacher Communication

Conferences with individual teachers must be arranged by directly contacting the teacher. Please make appointments for conferences before or after school hours. Teachers may also be available during their breaks; however you must make an appointment during this time.

PLEASE DO NOT ENGAGE IN PARENT CONFERENCES DURING ARRIVAL/DISMISSAL OF STUDENTS, IN THE HALLWAYS OR DURING CLASSROOM TIME.

Always attempt to resolve issues/conflicts with the teacher before coming to administration. Most issues can be resolved when you have open and honest communication with your child's teacher. Concerns or complaints should never be placed on the classroom group chat, email chain or on Somerset's social media pages. All concerns should be addressed with the teacher and if the parent feels the issue was not resolved by the teacher then he or she may make an appointment with the principal.

PARENT/GUARDIAN'S RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to:

- Encourage the student to manage their time in an effective way.
- Check progress in the online gradebook.

- Reach out to the teacher if there are any academic or learning behavior concerns.
- Report to the school or ForifyFL any threats of harm.

Academic Integrity is one of our core values and one of the most important areas of focus as a learning organization. Parents should support Academic Integrity. Students with Academic Integrity make decisions based on ethics and values that will prepare them to be productive and ethical citizens.

A parentally placed private school student with a disability does not have an individual right to receive some or all of the special education and related services that the student would receive if enrolled in a public school under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

PRIVACY POLICY

Somerset Academy will abide by student privacy guidelines inspired by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of the federal government of the United States. The following persons have access to student records:

- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Administrative Team
- ☐ Professional Staff (Teachers, Guidance Counselor, the General Counsel)

All students are provided a unique password to access online courses. It is the student's responsibility to keep his/her password in confidence.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Somerset Academy's admission and enrollment policies and procedures comply with anti-discrimination provisions.

Somerset Academy does not discriminate against pupils on the basis of sex, race, color, national origin, ancestry, creed, pregnancy, marital or parental status, sexual orientation, physical, mental, emotional, learning disability or handicap in its education programs.

Furthermore, the criteria for admission to a program or course shall not have the effect of restricting access by persons of a particular race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status. Discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, disability, or marital status against a student or an employee is prohibited.

BULLYING AND HARRASSMENT POLICY

Somerset prohibits harassment between students, Somerset Academy faculty and/or staff, and any third parties directly or indirectly related to Somerset Academy.

Somerset Academy is committed to maintaining a working and learning environment in which students, faculty, and staff can develop intellectually, professionally, personally and socially. Such an atmosphere must be free of intimidation, fear, coercion and reprisal.

It is an expectation that all students and employees will use all equipment and programs for the intended educational purpose.

Somerset Academy is committed to protecting its students and employees from bullying, harassment or inappropriate use of computers or programs to participate in bullying behavior. Bullying and Harassment will not be tolerated and shall be just cause for disciplinary action.

Conduct that constitutes bullying or harassment, as defined herein, is prohibited.

Bullying, harassment, and cyber stalking are defined as inflicting physical or psychological distress, and/or communicating words, images or language using electronic mail that causes emotional distress and for which there is no legitimate purpose.

Any action by a student or parent deemed inappropriate will be fully investigated by the appropriate school administrator.

Consequences for students for actions that violate the policy on bullying and harassment shall be determined by the administrative staff and may include a student/teacher/parent conference, suspension of email and/or removal from access to courses.

DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

Somerset Academy will determine the appropriate disciplinary action for student violations of the Code of Conduct as they arise. The severity of the offense will determine the appropriate consequence. Any inappropriate behavior, outlined in the student/parent handbook, that is reasonably considered detrimental in a school setting will result in immediate removal from Somerset Academy. Possible actions may include written and verbal warning and notification to the parents, temporary removal from class, suspension or expulsion from the school.

Items not permitted in school

Students are not permitted to bring toys, weapons, or non-educational electronic devices from home into the classroom. Any electronic device, such as cell phones, will be confiscated if visible to any staff member. Electronic devices that are confiscated will remain in the office until a parent comes to the office to retrieve it. The school is not responsible for any inconvenience this may cause parents. Somerset will not be responsible for any lost or stolen personal items brought to school. Students who continue to violate this policy will be issued a referral.

Electronics and Cell Phones

Students are not allowed to use cell phones, game consoles, smart watches, tablets, smart glasses, or any other similar personal electronic devices during the school day under any circumstances. In case of an emergency, students will be able to use the phone in the Main Office. Somerset Academy is not responsible for lost, stolen electronic devices, and/or damaged electronic devices on school property. Confiscated electronic devices are to be kept in a secure location in the Main Office by the end of the school day by parents (3:00 pm).

Use of Student Photographs or Videotape

Photographs or videos of classroom activities will be taken throughout the year and may be published on our website, public newspapers, and in any advertising the school may have. Please note that your child's full name may be posted on such mediums when he/she is recognized for accomplishments or participation in events. If you object to this use, please contact the main office upon registration.

PARENT ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

We have read the Somerset Academy Student/Parent Handbook and understand and agree to cooperate with all of the policies contained herein.

I understand the importance of this Handbook and agree to adhere to the policies and regulations of the Student/Parent Handbook. I understand that failure to follow school regulations and policies, will jeopardize student eligibility to register for the following academic year, and may result in dismissal from this program.

(Student's Name)

(Student's Signature)

(Parent or Guardian's Name)

(Parent or Guardian's Signature)

(Date)

DIRECTIONS: Please print, date and sign this form and email it to the registrar.