



STUDENT & PARENT HANDBOOK 2025-2026

**1 McRae Street
Okotoks, Alberta
T1S 1A5**

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SCHOOL INFORMATION

Operations & Communications

Board of Directors (Board):

The board operates as a governance model with dually elected members. The Board is the direct link to Alberta Education to ensure compliance to legislation, oversee daily operation and delivery of our education program.

Parent Involvement Team (PIT):

The PIT crew is a council of parents who support fundraising, special events, and volunteer opportunities within the school. All parents are members of the PIT Crew and are expected to contribute in some way; time, talents, and/or treasures.

SWIS Education Society

The SWIS Education Society is an independent legal entity where parents of children who attend Summit West Independent School (SWIS) elect an executive council that meets regularly and collaborates with the executive director on activities, needs and projects of the school. The focus of this group is both community building and fundraising. SWIS Education Society is a registered Charitable Society and can issue tax receipts for donations in accordance with their donation policy.

School Location & Hours

Summit West Independent School

1 McRae Street, Okotoks AB, T1S 1A5

Located downtown Okotoks across from Town Hall

Instructional time: Monday-Thursday 8:30am - 3:15pm, Friday 8:30am-12:30pm

Advisory class begins at 8:30am. Students will be marked absent if they do not arrive by 9:00am. Dismissal is at 3:15pm, with the exception of Fridays where dismissal is at 12:30pm.

Before School Care: 7:15 - 8:15a.m.,

After School Care: 3:45 - 5:00p.m.,

Friday Program: 1:00 - 5:00p.m.,

**Unlimited Use of Before/After School Care, including transportation to/
from school = \$275/m**

Please contact Tracey Forrester (tforrester@summitwestschool.ca) if you wish to register for before or after school care and complete a registration form.

School Days:

Summit West Independent School operates on a two-semester, five day (Monday-Friday) schedule.

Vision

Personal excellence through student success.

Mission

An independent school that offers an individualized self-directed learning approach for tomorrow's leaders that nurtures lifelong learning, engaged thinkers and ethical citizens within a spirit of entrepreneurialism.

Beliefs

- ❖ We believe in a community of learners that supports individual learning styles with a strong emphasis on choice, accountability, and responsibility.
- ❖ We believe in a safe and caring environment that fosters whole child development.
- ❖ We believe in fiscal responsibility.
- ❖ We believe in communication that is respectful, supportive and constructive and designed to facilitate student success.
- ❖ We believe in building collaborative relationships between parents, students and teachers to make a difference in the world.

THE SWIS DIFFERENCE

Choice, Pace & Levels of Complexity

Choice represents the student choosing how to learn. The choice is never not to work; the choice is how to get the work done. Students choose which Teaching Style to use and then how to complete the objectives. One student may choose to create a game, another student may make a power point presentation, while still another may choose to create a graph with documentation. How they do their work is up to them, but they must meet their own benchmark in neatness, depth and understanding.

Pacing is the speed at which the student is working. Students work at different paces: what takes one student 10 minutes to complete may take another student 30 minutes. Holding back the student that does it faster is not fair but, neither is rushing the student that needs the extra time. Through the objectives students accomplish as many objectives as they can before the class-time is over. The days objectives are to be completed on that day however, if you finish those before class ends, you continue on with the next day's work and so on. This will lead to earned time. The timeline is set to the Command students to ensure students complete the Alberta Program of Studies.

Levels of complexity is the degree of difficulty of the student's work. Some students want to know everything they can about a specific subject while others are content to know just the basics. Objectives and Teaching Styles allow students to take concepts as deep as they wish while still covering the required information. A pupil gifted in one area is no longer held back until others catch up. If challenged in a subject area, your child is not rushed nor denied the opportunity to form the skills necessary for future success.

Community of Learners

The Community of Learners is an essential part of the Self Directed Learning method. It is created by encouraging students to work collaboratively, acknowledge and utilize the individual talents of their peers, and share their learning with one another. Each student is given an equal position within the community and a sense of respect is instilled from the beginning. Within the Community of Learners we create a welcoming, safe and caring environment that enables students to gain self-confidence as a valued member of the SWIS family.

Teaching Styles

Teaching Styles are part of a system where the student tells the teacher what they need from the teacher to have successes in learning. Each Teaching Style has its own set of guidelines for both the teacher and student to work most effectively. The five Teaching Styles are:

Command

- Student listens to the lesson.
- They do the lesson exactly as they are told.
- The assigned work has to be completed in class.
- Students are allowed to leave the command area if they have permission

Task

- Similar to Command.
- Student is given more choice in how they complete their objectives.
- They must finish their work at the same time or ahead of the command group.

Peer Partner

- Student chooses a partner that they can work well with.
- They listen to the lesson if necessary.
- They must finish their work at the same time or ahead of the command group.
- Each student must provide an individual product.
- The student must make good choices.

Student Teacher Contract

- The contract must be written by the student and signed by the teacher.
- It must include objectives (what, when and how they will be completed).
- Students can listen to the lesson if necessary.
- Their work must be finished at the same time or ahead of the command lesson.

Self-Directed

- Student works on their own.
- They must find their own resources.
- Students must be finished at the same time or ahead of the command lesson.

Objectives

Objectives for students' learning at SWIS are in accordance with the Alberta Program of Studies, and are updated every school year. The specific skills and concepts to be learned, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, are taken directly from the program of studies for each subject area.

Benchmarks

What is a benchmark?

Benchmarks are academic goals (percentages) set by teachers with collaboration with students and parents. Beginning in Grade 4, students work towards their academic goals and are encouraged to rewrite perception checks if they do not meet their benchmark.

How do rewrites work?

If a student does not meet their benchmark, they have the option to write another test or complete another assessment on the same concepts after they have met with the teacher and reviewed concepts that were not solidified. It is at the teacher's discretion whether a student is able to rewrite an assessment.

Can benchmarks be modified?

Yes, if a student is consistently not meeting or exceeding their benchmark, a meeting will take place between the teacher, student and parent/guardian to discuss modifying their benchmark.

Assessment and Reporting

Students are regularly assessed through formal and informal methods in all subject areas. They will be differentiated to enable students to learn how to complete a variety of assessments, such as written tests, presentations, projects, experiments, and informal discussions.

Student, parents and guardians will receive feedback in the form of student-led interviews (Grade K-3), parent-teacher conferences (Grade 4-12), two interim report cards (percentage-based) and two report cards (anecdotal notes and percentage).

Student Code of Conduct

Summit West Independent School is committed to providing students and staff with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Students shall be treated with dignity, respect, and fairness by other students and staff. Students shall be provided with a learning environment that is free from any type of abuse such as: physical, emotional, and social abuse.

Students and parents shall be informed of the board's and school's expectations for student behaviour within the school, the school grounds, during school activities, and during SWIS provided transportation.

In the event of student misbehaviour, students and parents shall have the right to offer an explanation, and to be informed about consequences of misbehaviour.

All students have a right to:

- a. Work in an atmosphere that is physically and emotionally safe, in accordance with the Safe & Caring Policy;
- b. Work at their own level and pace;
- c. Develop their talents;
- d. Be treated with fairness and respect; and
- e. Have a voice in school affairs.

All students are expected to:

- a. Be a courteous and respectful member of the community;
- b. Treat each other and adults with respect;
- c. Follow the school rules and policies;
- d. Be accountable for your actions;
- e. Work to the best of your ability and put forth honest effort in all endeavours;
- f. Attend class regularly, arrive to class on time and be prepared to work;
- g. Check with the teacher before using office equipment;
- h. Care for the school and personal property.
- i. Remain in school classrooms during breaks, unless dismissed by a teacher;
- j. Wear clothing that meets Uniform Policy requirements;
- k. Co-operate with staff and other students;
- l. Maintain school spirit through a positive attitude; and
- m. Represent SWIS in a positive manner.

Attendance Policy

Alberta Education mandates regular attendance for all students, unless a student is prevented from attending school by illness or any other justifiable reason. Regular attendance is essential for satisfactory achievement in school, and students are required to attend school regularly unless excused in writing by a parent, for reasons defined in the School Act.

Procedure to Report an Absence

If your child will be absent from school, it is important the classroom teacher is informed of the absence to ensure accurate attendance records.

E-mail your child's teacher and include the following information:

- a) Full Name of child
- b) Date/Time of Absence and length of absence, if known.
- c) Reason for the absence

Health and Wellness

We ask that if a student has a contagious illness, he/she does not come to school that day, in order to prevent the spread of the infection.

In general, a child is too sick to attend school if:

- The child is unable to participate in routine activities (including going outside for recess/physical activity).
- The child requires intensive care beyond what a teacher can provide without compromising the needs of other students and members of the community.
- The child's presence poses an increased risk to other children and adults with whom he/she may come in contact.

SWIS highly recommends that children who display evidence of the following symptoms refrain from attending school:

- A temperature of 101°F (38.3°C) or above
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Severe nasal and chest congestion or uncontrollable coughing
- Highly contagious viruses, such as strep throat, etc.

We follow the recommendations of the Calgary Health Regional Authority regarding the contagious stage of any communicable disease and when a child may be readmitted into the community after beginning treatment. It is in the community's best interest to ensure that shared spaces are as safe and healthy as possible.

If a student becomes ill while at school, the student will be made to feel as comfortable as possible, and the parent(s) will be called. If we cannot reach the parent and we deem that the student is in distress, the emergency contact will be phoned. Please ensure that the front office has all contact information up to date.

Guidelines for Returning to School

A child must be free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea for at least 24 hours and no longer be in the contagious stage of a communicable disease. In order to return to school after a severe illness, a doctor's note may be required.

Public Health

Alberta Health Services offers its expertise to SWIS students. These services include inoculations, health education presentations, and regular visits and consultations by the school nurse. Consent forms must be filled out before any immunizations are administered. If you do not wish to consent, please attach a note to the consent form stating that this is the case. Parents may be contacted by the AHS from time to time.

Allergy Awareness Policy

Summit West acknowledges that due to current food processing practices, it is impractical to eliminate nuts and nut products entirely from an environment where there is food. The emphasis is therefore on raising awareness and adopting the reasonable procedures regarding nut awareness.

All students and families from each classroom will be made aware of any food-related allergies affecting students in that classroom so they can be cognizant of these allergies when packing snacks and lunches. A sign will also be posted on the outside and inside of the classroom indicating any student allergies. If there are no allergies in a classroom, students will be allowed to bring any food items for snack and such. However, if a student has food-related allergies, all students in the school will demonstrate respect for the student and refrain from bringing any foods that trigger any allergies into the classroom.

Homework

Students are responsible for completing their objectives and maintaining their pace of study even if they are absent from school.

Summit West Independent School provides students with choice in their learning style and teaching style, which enables them to maximize the use of their time while at school. Students can work complete all of their school work in class and work ahead to reduce homework requirements. However, if a student does not complete required objectives during school hours, they will be expected to complete school work at home. It is recommended that all students read every night and study prior to assessments.

Digital Citizenship and Use of Technology

The use of technology is an integral part of learning, especially for students in Grades 4-12. Students are eligible to access school technology and resources, including SWIS laptops, email, and internet. Students and parents may also elect to use personal devices, such as cell phones and laptops. All SWIS technology and personal technology used at school is intended for educational purposes only. Students are expected to practice positive digital citizenship when using both school and personal devices. Students must sign a computer contract prior to using a device in the school, whether it is a personal device or Summit West electronics.

The following activities are inappropriate for students:

- * Viewing or sending offensive messages, pictures, videos and using obscene language;
- * Harassing, insulting or attacking others;
- * Gaming without teacher consent;
- * Violating copyright laws;
- * Allowing others to use your account;
- * Trespassing into other people's folders, work or files;
- * Intentionally destroying other people's work;
- * Using electronic media for plagiarizing;
- * Academic dishonesty, including the use of AI technology for the purpose of cheating;
- * Intentionally misusing system technology

Personal Electronic Devices

Personal electronic devices, including cell phones, mp3 players, tablets, and laptops are only allowed in classrooms after having been approved by a student's parent(s), teacher, and management as an educational resource. Students must exercise courtesy, respect, and good judgement when using personal electronic devices as to not interfere with the learning environment.

Valuables

We do everything in our power to make sure that SWIS is as safe a community as possible, but theft and accidents do happen. Students are discouraged from bringing money or valuable items to school. If precious items are brought to school, SWIS cannot be held responsible for lost, stolen, or broken items.

Parking and Car Safety

Please drive with extreme caution when entering and exiting the parking lot, especially at the start and end of the school day, when there is increased traffic outside. Young students must be accompanied to and from the school building. Please do not leave your car idling while you are in the school, no matter how short the stay. Please do not park your car in the fire lane and never leave your children unattended in the car.

Smoking

Smoking and the use of e-cigarettes are not permitted anywhere within the school buildings or on school property. Students must also respect the property of neighbours in the community including Red Deer Lake Church.

Section 2 of the Prevention of Youth Tobacco Act states the no person under the age of 18 years may possess or smoke or otherwise consume tobacco products, including cannabis products, in public place. Violation of the smoking policy could result in a loss of privileges to leave school grounds during school hours, an in-school suspension, or home suspension.

Uniforms

- * Students are required to wear a collared shirt with the SWIS logo available in black, white, grey, burgundy, cobalt blue, or deep purple.
- * Students may choose to wear any pants or skirts as long as they meet the following criteria: not see-through, no holes, not dirty, cover the students' entire backside, and skirts need to be an appropriate length.
- * Students may choose any shoes or socks (colour is not important). Shoes must cover the students' toes in accordance with Alberta Health and Safety policy.
- * Jackets, sweaters, or hoodies with the SWIS logo may be worn over the SWIS collared shirt.
- * Gym strip is required for students in Grades 7-12 and consists of a SWIS t-shirt and their choice of athletic pants or shorts (no SWIS logo required).
- * All students must have gym shoes and outdoor shoes. They may not wear the same shoes outside and inside in order to keep our school floors clean.

Uniform Providers:

1. 3G Embroidery - families may purchase their own plain collared shirts, sweatshirts, or hoodies in one of our school colours, and 3G will embroider them with our logo.
2. Lands End - online ordering. Our preferred school number is: 900167644.

Uniform Infractions:

Students who do not comply with the uniform policy will be subject to the following infractions:

1. E-mail sent to parents describing the infraction, indicating this is the first infraction.
2. Action plan required by student and signed by parents.
3. E-mail sent to parents requesting a spare uniform shirt for student to keep at school.
4. A meeting with the student and parent to discuss if Summit West is the best fit for the student. Registration for the following year may be denied.

Safe and Caring School Policy

SWIS is committed to providing a safe, caring and respectful environment in which all students can achieve academic excellence, personal growth and responsible citizenship.

SWIS has expectations regarding student behaviour which are communicated to students and parents at the beginning of each school year.

All students are expected to adhere to the three school rules:

- 1) Respect
- 2) Don't disrupt learning (others' or their own)
- 3) Hands off (respect personal space and personal belongings)

Situations involving the following will be addressed in a timely, effective and consistent manner in order to maintain a safe and caring school environment.

- bullying, harassment, threat and intimidation
- verbal, physical or sexual abuse
- intoxicating substances
- weapons and explosives
- intruders or trespassers
- lying, cheating, or any other form of willfully harmful behaviour
- plagiarism

Effective management of student discipline is necessary in order to establish a safe and comfortable environment that fosters students' learning. Prevention and intervention strategies are applied at the school level and supported by parents.

Student Expectations

1. Be a courteous and respectful member of the community;
2. Treat each other and adults with respect;
3. Follow the three school rules;
4. Be accountable for their actions;
5. Work to the best of their ability and put forth honest effort in all endeavours;
6. Arrive to class on time and be prepared to work;
7. Check with the teacher before using office equipment;
8. Care for the school and personal property;
9. Remain in school classrooms during breaks, unless dismissed by a teacher;
10. Wear clothing that meets with Uniform Policy expectations; (see Uniforms);
11. Co-operate with staff and other students;
12. Maintain school spirit through a positive attitude; and
13. Represent SWIS in a positive manner.

All students have the right to:

1. Work in an atmosphere that is physically and emotionally safe;
2. Work at their own level and pace;
3. Develop their talents;
4. Be treated with fairness and respect; and
5. Have a voice in school affairs.

Students will refrain from the following:

1. Using portable electronic devices, such as cell phone, iPads, laptops, mp3 players, video games, etc., unless approved by staff;
2. Lying, stealing, and willfully destroying property;
3. Any form of fighting (wrestling, play fighting, etc). Students will keep their hands to themselves at all times;
4. The use of profanity or abusive language and gestures; and
5. The use or possession of tobacco, matches, lighters, alcohol, drugs, weapons, pocket knives, or any illicit or illegal substance at school.
6. Plagiarism

Student Searches

Section 33 of the Education Act states that a board, as a partner in education, has the responsibility to (1)(d) ensure that each student enrolled in a school operated by the board and each staff member employed by the board is provided with a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging. From time to time in order to discharge that duty it is necessary to conduct student searches (SWIS Policy: Student Searches). The Supreme Court of Canada decision in the case of R. v. M. (M.R.) established requirements for a school board when conducting a student search.

Principals must ensure that school handbooks advise students and parents that the following may be subject to search:

- (a) students,
- (b) school desks, lockers and school storage areas used by students, and
- (c) articles and objects belonging to or used by students either on school board premises or during off-site activities including, but not limited to, backpacks, clothing, purses, suitcases, and tote bags and
- (d) Electronic information resources used by students.

What does Search and Seizure mean?

When necessary, teachers must be able to quickly intervene, search students, and seize articles or items that interfere with the safety and maintenance of a learning environment. Student searches cannot be at the expense of students' basic rights. The Supreme Court of Canada's decision in *R. v. M. (M.R.)* found a balance between these two positions by requiring the search to be both reasonable at its inception, and reasonable in scope.

Discipline Cycle

Minor Offences

These generally include behaviours that disrupt the learning process, either for the child or for other students in the community. Some typical examples include:

1. Inattention to instruction or direction;
2. Non-participation in learning activities;
3. Disrespect or lack of cooperation;
4. Mild infractions of the three school rules; and
5. Lying, cheating, or other forms of willfully harmful behaviour.

Major Offences

These are behaviours which are clearly and strongly damaging to the educational environment. Possible examples include:

1. A series of repeated minor offences;
2. Fighting or physical abuse/assault (play fighting will not be tolerated);
3. Disrespect for property (theft or vandalism);
4. Verbal abuse or inappropriate language;
5. Willful disrespect of other students, adults and staff;
6. Willful misdirection, omission, or lying to a teacher or staff member;
7. Any criminal offence under the Young Offenders Act
8. Plagiarism

Consequences

Step 1: Minor Offences

Staff members handle the incident directly and consequences are established.

Step 2: Major Offences

Students write an Action Plan to resolve the problem. The teacher will make anecdotal notes on the back of the action plan and parents will receive a copy of the student's Action Plan. Student, teacher and parent signatures are required on the Action Plan. A copy of the Action Plan is kept in the student's file. In extreme circumstances, parents are notified immediately and the student may face an in-school suspension.

Step 3: Out-of-School Suspension

Repeat offences or any single offence deemed serious enough will result in suspension from school. Any student who chooses to behave in such a manner can be suspended by the Principal for up to five days. Parents will be notified and police contacted (if required).

A re-admission meeting or expulsion hearing with the board of directors may be necessary when this step is taken. Parent(s) must meet with the Principal, the Executive Director, and, depending on the severity, the Board of Directors. A Behaviour Contract is drawn up between the parents and the student and approved by the school board for readmission. Placement in another school or program may be recommended.

Appeals

Parents are encouraged to bring concerns, questions, and suggestions directly to the school in accordance with the procedure outlined under Steps of Communication. While we may not always have solutions, we will promise our best efforts to be understanding, honest, and accommodating. Open and honest communication is the best way to keep the relationship positive.

Communication Plan

The most efficient steps to communicate at SWIS are:

First Contact: Teacher

Second Contact: Vice-Principal

Third Contact: Principal

Fourth Contact: Chief Operating Officer

Fifth Contact: Board of Directors

Student/Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

Parents and Students of Summit West Independent School are asked to acquaint themselves with, and follow, the school's policies and procedures. The Parent/Student Handbook outlines the mission of the school, and the school's policies and procedures. We ask that you review the Parent/Student Handbook carefully.

By signing below, you confirm you have read and fully understand the Summit West Independent School Parent & Student Handbook, and understand that violating any policies of SWIS may result in disciplinary action by Summit West, up to and including dismissal. By signing below, you also acknowledge that you agree and will abide by the school's policies and procedures in letter and spirit.

Student Signature



Date

2023/06/08

Parent Signature

Date

Thank you.

Tracey Forrester
Chief Operating Officer
Summit West Independent School

Brad Masterson
Principal
Summit West Independent School