

Silver Bow Montessori School

2011-12 Parent and Student Handbook

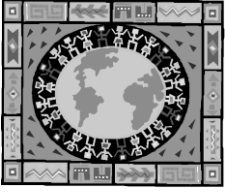
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Table of Contents

MISSION STATEMENT	4
NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY	5
ORGANIZATION	5
ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT	5
SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS	6
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS.....	6
Early Childhood Program.....	6
Kindergarten.....	7
Elementary Programs	7
Before and After School Care	7
Early Withdrawal	8
INFORMATION TOPICS (Alphabetized).....	8
Absences.....	8
AHERA Compliance.....	8
Arrivals and Dismissals.....	9
Backpacks.....	10
Birthdays	10
Calendar.....	10
Classroom Observations.....	10
Communication	11
Conferences	11
Curriculum Night(s)	11
Discipline.....	11
Emergency Notification	12
Field Trips	12
Fire Drills	12
First Days of School for Children Who Are New to School and/or Very Young.....	13
Health	13

Library Days.....	14
Lunch.....	14
Medicines	14
Pizza Friday.....	14
Service Hours and Parent Participation.....	14
Ski Program.....	15
Slippers.....	15
Snacks.....	15
Students' Clothing at School.....	15
Swim Program.....	16
Tardiness	16
Toys	16



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MISSION STATEMENT

Silver Bow Montessori School, Inc. (“SBM”) is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization dedicated to the development of the “whole” child. The school’s purpose is to nurture independent children capable of joyful learning by providing quality, authentic Montessori education that includes multi-age classrooms and self-directed, hands-on learning. SBM strives to enhance the social infrastructure and human capital of Butte and surrounding areas through its relationships with enrolled families, staff, stakeholders, and the community at large.

To achieve our mission, Silver Bow Montessori School offers a carefully prepared environment, featuring a large campus with open spaces indoors and out. With a comfortable home-like setting, the classrooms, playground, and garden offer abundant opportunities for learning, character building, and fun. Our environment provides security for emotional growth as well as intellectual learning. We share Dr. Maria Montessori’s conviction that the preservation of each child’s dignity is crucial. Treated with respect, our students develop respect for self, others, and the environment.

Embracing the Montessori philosophy, our teachers support and nurture the development of each student, based upon individual readiness, needs, interests, and learning style. The use of hands-on materials and individual lessons allows for a natural progression from concrete work to abstract reasoning as the child develops and matures. Each student chooses appropriate materials and activities with ample time to satisfy his/her drive for mastery through repetition. Without promoting external rewards, independent work habits are nourished, preserving the child’s internal motivation. This self-paced learning and the right to exercise liberty with responsibility provide opportunities for problem solving, priority setting, and decision-making. Through multi-age groupings, a natural mentoring process develops. More experienced students share their understanding, thereby reinforcing their own learning while building leadership skills.

Our Montessori faculty seeks to accomplish this through careful planning, patient observation, and thorough record keeping. Our staff shares a passion for the child’s love of learning, honoring each child and striving daily to meet individual needs while modeling positive values with integrity. Our staff strives to model a commitment to life-long learning.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Silver Bow Montessori School admits students of any race, color, national, and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national, or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs. Silver Bow Montessori School, Inc. does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, marital status, handicap, age, or national origin in the hiring or retention of employees; nor in determining their rank, or the compensation or fringe benefits paid to them.

ORGANIZATION

Silver Bow Montessori School, Inc. is a non-profit corporation dedicated to serving children ages 2½ through 12 through Montessori education. The school is tax-exempt under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

A parent or guardian can initiate the admission process by contacting the school for information. Interested parents are invited to observe the school and meet with the Director and teachers. If after meeting, the parents and school feel that the child may benefit from enrollment at the school, enrollment is established by the following procedures:

Step 1: Call the school to schedule a tour or attend an open house.

Step 2: Complete *Application for Admission* and submit non-refundable \$25 Application Fee.

Note on Early Childhood Program Readiness - The SBM Early Childhood Program provides a curriculum and environment designed for children ages 3 through 6. Children in this classroom must be able to handle toileting independently unless lack of toilet training is due to a medically diagnosed condition. Children ready for this classroom have adequate communication skills to convey their needs to adults, as well as the ability to concentrate for three to five minutes at an activity. Children 3 years of age may be enrolled for a half day schedule during their first year, but full day enrollment is expected for the second year or when your child is ready. In limited cases, children between 2½ and 3 years old may be admitted based upon demonstrated readiness.

Step 3: Applications for enrollment at SBM are accepted on a first-come, space-available basis, and a waiting list is maintained when necessary. While precedence on the waiting list is a primary factor in order of admissions, the school reserves the right to maintain age and gender balance in the classroom, as well as to consider student readiness, in all admissions decisions.

Step 4: If your child is selected for admission, you will receive a letter of acceptance along with documents needed to secure your enrollment. The following must be returned within two weeks of acceptance in order to secure your student's enrollment:

1. Signed acknowledgement of *SBM Parent/Student Handbook* – This handbook provides much useful information and outlines behavioral expectations required for continued enrollment in any SBM program.
2. Signed *Financial Terms and Conditions Agreement* – This agreement outlines policies regarding tuition, fees, service hours, withdrawal, and other matters.
3. The non-refundable \$100 enrollment fee.

The acceptance package will also include various authorization, emergency contact, and immunization forms required for participation in school programs. These additional forms must be submitted to the school by August 15.

Step 5: Parents/guardians of enrolled students should expect to receive calendars and further information about the upcoming school year in mid-July. Orientation meetings for parents are held the week before school begins. The beginning of the SBM school year typically corresponds to the beginning of school at Butte School District #1.

All children are initially enrolled on a six-week trial basis to determine compatibility with the program. Families wishing to enroll an elementary-aged child from another school will complete an elementary application for admission and sign a records release form that Silver Bow Montessori School will forward to the student's previous school.

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

The State of Montana provides a "Best Beginnings" day care scholarship program which can be used at SBM by qualifying families. Policies governing these programs may be obtained by inquiring from an SBM staff member.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

Early Childhood Program

The Early Childhood curriculum (for 2½ to 6 years old) offers students a non-graded, individualized learning experience based upon their developmental needs. Emphasis is given to activities which foster the student's creative thinking and support the growth of his or her social maturity and inner discipline. Carefully prepared classroom environments expose children to materials and experiences through which they develop socially, emotionally, and intellectually. Daily life skills are realistically fostered in the community of the Montessori classroom.

We offer half-day (8:30 to 11:30 a.m. or 12:15 to 3:15 p.m.) and full day schooling (8:30 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.) structured for the needs of the 2½ to 6 year old student. Activities to promote use of the senses, refine skills of discrimination and observation, strengthen memory, develop coordination, and promote concentration are presented with varying degrees of challenge. Students are introduced concretely to the intellectual concepts of language, mathematics,

geography, world cultures, and science. Socially, the classroom provides the young student who is ready to explore environments away from family and home a peer group with whom he or she can relate. It offers the older student opportunities to help younger students, an opportunity vital for social development.

The half-day, mixed day, and full day programs are each available for three- and four-year-old students. The full day program is required for Kindergarten age students.

Kindergarten

Children age 5 by September 10 (the locally prevailing definition of Kindergarten age) will typically be enrolled in the school's Kindergarten program. Montessori early childhood education is a three year program which includes the Kindergarten year. The Kindergarten year at Montessori provides the child with the valuable opportunity to be a leader of the Early Childhood classroom, as well as an opportunity to observe and participate in some activities with children aged 6 to 12. Kindergarten students travel to the library regularly with the elementary classroom and have other opportunities to participate on field trips with the elementary classroom.

Elementary Programs

Students aged 6 and older are ready for intellectual work on a more abstract level. Their previous Montessori academic experience forms the basis for this work. Imagination, moral conscience, and cultural awareness can be said to be the "sensitive periods" of this stage. As the student's skills in mathematics and language are being developed, the elementary curriculum (for ages 6 to 12) presents opportunities to explore cultural subjects – science, history, geography, and the arts and sciences. Besides this handbook, the elementary teacher can provide you with specific elementary curricular information that provides details not covered here.

Before and After School Care

Silver Bow Montessori School offers before and after school care for the convenience of families enrolled at the school. These services are billed as a flat rate for the month and can be included with the tuition payment. On a space available basis, enrolled families may utilize extended care on an occasional basis. But please notify us in advance if you will be utilizing this service to ensure that space and adequate staffing is available.

Students in before and after school care are supervised and provided with a variety of group or individual activities of active or quiet nature, indoors or out as the weather allows. Montessori teachers and support staff provide students with activities and watch over them during these times: 7:30-8:30 a.m., and 3:15-5:30 p.m.

Early Withdrawal

If it is necessary for a child to withdraw from the school, the school requires a 30 day written notice. It is most important to give the school this length of time in which to make arrangements for a replacement student. If no notice is given, parents are responsible for the following month's tuition. This policy is included in the Financial Policies and Procedures.

INFORMATION TOPICS (Alphabetized)

Absences

At both the early childhood and elementary levels, consistent attendance is required to maintain the continuity of the curriculum presented. If your child will be absent for any reason, we request that you call the school's office within one half hour of school starting time.

AHERA Compliance

Each year this school must comply with federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA) regulation regarding notification, disclosure, and management of asbestos in schools to all employees and parents.

This school maintains the management plans in the following location: SBM school office, 1800 Sunset Rd., Butte, MT 59701. Management plans are available during all school in-session hours during the academic year as well as during summer programs

AHERA requires all public and non-public elementary and secondary schools to ensure that all school employees and building occupants, or other legal guardians, are informed at least once each year about all asbestos inspections, response actions, and post-response action activities, including triennial reinspection and visual surveillance activities that are either planned or in progress. This notification must be made in writing and a copy maintained in the school's asbestos management plan. Notification methods may include the publication of an article in a school newsletter or through a separate written notice distributed to staff and sent home to a student's parent or legal guardian (e.g., this Parent/Student Manual).

Public and non-public schools must also provide a written notification to all parent, teacher, and employee organizations of the availability of the school's asbestos management plan for public inspection. A description of the steps to notify these organizations, as well as a dated copy of the notification, is to be maintained in the asbestos plan. The asbestos management plans are to be made available for inspection to representative of the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the State, the public, including parents, teachers, and other school personnel within five working days after receiving a request for its inspection.

For more information on the federal Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, please:

- Contact Don Kronenberger, the school's Designated Person; or,
- Go to http://www.epa.gov/asbestos/pubs/asbestos_in_schools.html

Arrivals and Dismissals

Getting each school day started on as positive a note as possible begins with how smoothly the transition goes from the moment you drop your child off at school. As Silver Bow Montessori School has grown, it has become important to formalize some guidelines to ensure safety and to support learning that begins even as the children enter the school grounds. Since development of independence and autonomy is an important part of the Montessori experience, saying your goodbyes in the car or at the gate is a critical starting point for this learning.

School starts at 8:30 a.m. for both the early childhood and elementary programs. Start of school for the afternoon program is 12:15 p.m. Due to the volume of arrivals, drop off windows are as follows:

Morning drop-off	8:15 to 8:30 a.m.
Afternoon session drop-off	12:05 to 12:15 p.m.

If you arrive after class begins, a staff member will meet your child in the coatroom and take them to the classroom. Elementary students who are late should enter the classroom quietly.

Please arrive (i.e., drive in) via the long tree-lined drive-way and depart via the parking lot outlet. This will make access and egress go more smoothly. The entrance to the school used at the beginning and end of each day is the back gate. Parents of older children may drop students off in the drive-way. Staff will be at the gate watching for them. You may walk with your child to the gate, and should do so if your child(ren) are younger. Please allow children to walk on their own, holding their hands as appropriate.

Dismissal times are 11:30 a.m. and 3:15 p.m. Please meet your child for pick-up at the back gate. The pick-up windows are as follows:

Morning session pick-up	11:20 to 11:30 a.m.
Afternoon session pick-up	3:15 to 3:30 p.m.

We ask your consideration in being prompt. At 3:30 p.m., children who haven't been picked up will be brought to extended care. In keeping with the policy of most schools, we will charge a fee for untimely departures in picking up your child. A \$5.00 fee will be assessed for up to 10 minutes late with a \$1.00 charge for each minute thereafter.

We are only able to release students to people listed on the emergency card that you have authorized as designated pick-up people. If you wish for a person not on the list to pick up your child, we require an oral permission via telephone from an authorized parent or guardian or a written and signed note (which is preferable). Please make sure that others who pick up and deliver your child recognize the importance of using seatbelts and child safety seats just as you do.

Please be sure to confirm visually or verbally with a staff member that you are picking up your child so we know that child has departed with an approved pick-up person. For children in extended care, a sign-out sheet is used for this purpose. Please ensure any of your pickup people are aware of this as well for the safety of our students.

Because of the volume of arrivals and departures, we are concerned about the safety of the parking lot. **Please attend to your children when you are using the parking lot.**

Punctual arrivals and departures are necessary for the school to run smoothly and effectively. Observing these scheduled pick-up and drop-off guidelines allows your child to begin and end the school day positively.

Backpacks

A favorite back to school item is the backpack. Please choose one that your child can comfortably wear and open (i.e. one that they can use, one that zippers or clips easily as buckles are typically still challenging for the EC students). Please ensure it is large enough not only for all the wonderful work that it will hold, but also to contain winter wear: snow-pants, hat, gloves, extra shoes, etc.

Birthdays

Children's birthdays may be celebrated on the actual birth date or the closest school day to it. Parents may bring simple treats that are easy for children to manage. Fruits, vegetables, and special treats from different parts of the world are especially enjoyable. Sugared beverages, sticky candy, chocolate, ice cream, and cake with icing are not welcomed. Birthday celebrations in the early childhood classroom involve a special ceremony marking the age of the child. In the EC classroom, parents are encouraged to attend the birthday circle and tell a little about their child. In the elementary classroom, birthdays are also recognized at circle (with singing), and any birthday treats are served in the lunchroom after lunch.

If having a party for your child, please do not send the invitations to school to pass out, as children not invited may have hurt feelings. We will provide a parent list for each family with names, addresses, and phone numbers.

Calendar

The school establishes an academic year calendar annually. Efforts are made to coordinate the calendar with that of Butte School District #1. The calendar will contain the dates of holidays, conferences, parent curriculum nights, and other dates of significance to the school.

Classroom Observations

You are welcome to visit school at any time it is in session. We strongly encourage parents to visit and see our program and your child in action. Scheduled observations of the classroom may

be arranged after the second week of October. This allows individual students and the classroom as a whole to settle in before the distraction of having observers in the environment. We ask that observations be scheduled to avoid overcrowding of the classroom that can result from too many observers at one time. Remember that you will be seeing a “snap-shot” of a day in the life of Silver Bow Montessori School. We have a handout for recommendations when observing that we will request all parents to follow.

Communication

Silver Bow Montessori School has an Administrative Coordinator in the school office from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. If you need to speak with school staff later in the day, you may call and leave a message on the answering machine. We check the machine at lunch and after 3:15 p.m. and will always return your calls. You may also leave a note in the basket in the coat room.

Conferences

Individual conferences will be scheduled during the fall and spring. At these times, scheduling sheets will be posted. Parents are asked to sign up for a convenient time to observe and later to have a conference. Please avoid questioning teachers at the door or car about your child’s progress. At these times, the teacher is to focus attention on the children or to complete preparation of the environment. Instead, ask the teacher to schedule a meeting time. Please do let us know about helpful information concerning your child’s health, attitudes, etc. which may affect behavior and readiness to learn.

Curriculum Night(s)

In early September, the teachers host an evening to share and introduce parents to the Montessori curriculum, materials and classroom environment. This is an opportunity to learn some of the unique distinctions of the Montessori philosophy and practice as well as get to know staff and other parents.

Discipline

Silver Bow Montessori School takes a “positive discipline” approach to a safe and peaceful school environment. Starting when a student first enters the school, he or she learns skills necessary for basic safety and positive and constructive interaction with classmates, teachers, and the school community.

The school’s goal is to foster development of the student’s inner discipline. With inner discipline comes knowledge of the proper way of acting under different circumstances. We encourage students to have a desire to learn, an awareness of responsibility, and a respectful attitude towards members of the classroom and school environment. Teachers provide lessons in (and do their utmost to model) acceptable classroom and school behavior by which students learn

to solve difficulties between each other, using clear guidelines based on:

- respect for self;
- respect for others; and,
- respect for the environment.

Silver Bow Montessori School deems it essential that a safe and positive learning environment be established for students and staff. Students have a right to learn in an atmosphere where their safety, dignity, and well-being can be assured. If a student's actions threaten these conditions within the school community, staff members will give their best efforts to working positively and proactively with that student, his/her parents or guardians, and additional qualified professionals as necessary, to aid that student and safeguard the learning environment of the school. These efforts notwithstanding, Silver Bow Montessori School reserves the right to take any actions necessary to protect the safety and well-being of the school community, including temporary and/or permanent separation of a student from the school.

Disciplinary issues involving students will be addressed by school staff members only. No parent may initiate or interpose in any disciplinary action involving another parent's child on school grounds. This policy applies to both verbal and physical contact of a disciplinary nature with students at the school. This policy applies anytime at school or on a school trip, whether the parent is dropping off, picking up, chaperoning, observing, or volunteering in the classroom. Parents are welcome at any time to schedule a meeting with school staff to discuss concerns about school discipline issues.

Emergency Notification

One of the required documents for enrollment is the Emergency Notification form. Please ensure that it is updated as changes occur (i.e. for new phone numbers, e-mail addresses, approved pick-up parties, etc.) We want to be sure to have the correct information so we will be able to contact you as quickly as possible if the need arises.

Field Trips

An important part of the Montessori curriculum is experiencing and exploring the world around us. Field trips are an exciting component for students to develop new understanding. These are announced through weekly letters and newsletters with as much notice as possible. Details are explained and chaperones are frequently needed and appreciated. If parents have ideas about places to visit or things to do, please share them with the teachers.

Fire Drills

The school performs several fire drill exercises throughout the year to ensure children are prepared for an emergency. Children are taught what to do in these circumstances whether it is at school, home, or other place. It is part of the safety curriculum for the early childhood students and usually involves one of their favorite field trips to the fire station.

First Days of School for Children Who Are New to School and/or Very Young

Fortunately, children with experience at the school are generally very pleased to be returning. To help prepare your younger or “new-to-school” child to begin school, we suggest you be as positive as you can. Please try to convey these ideas to your child in your own words in preparation for his/her coming to school:

- 1) “Now that you are 3 years old, you are old enough to start school and learn to do many new things.”
- 2) “I love you and am happy you can go to school and learn with other children your age.”
- 3) “There will be many fascinating and fun things to do at school. You will be able to choose from many blocks, puzzles, books, and many other things you want to do.”
- 4) “You will meet wonderful, new friends at school.”

Should your child be hesitant to leave you, you may stay in the room with him/her for five minutes if you feel it is necessary. Almost always, a child will become happy within five minutes after a parent has left when he/she becomes occupied with the interesting activities of the school. If your child continues crying more than 15 minutes after you have left, please rest assured that we will call to advise you.

Health

Our school is cleaned daily with disinfectants to prevent infections from spreading. We emphasize hand washing often to students and staff. A medical history form and medical release form must be completed for every student at school. Please update this form as necessary.

Each student will be observed for signs of illness throughout the day. Students who are ill, tired, or upset will be given a chance to rest in a quiet area. When a child becomes too ill the parents will be notified to come and pick up their child immediately. Parents are required to remove their child within one hour after calling. It is the parents’ responsibility to notify us in the event their child is found to have a communicable disease. We then can let others know if their children have been in contact with the contagion. Minimally they should be kept at home for 24 hours following any of the conditions outlines below:

1. Fever of 100 degrees or higher and who also have one or more of the following:
 - *diarrhea
 - *earache
 - *signs of irritability or confusion
 - *sore throat
 - *rash
2. Vomiting on 2 or more occasions within the past 24 hours.
3. Diarrhea or 2 or more watery stools within a 24 hour period
4. Draining rash

5. Eye discharge or pink eye
6. Fatigue that prevents participation in regular activities.
7. Open or oozing sores.
8. Lice or Scabies

Library Days

The elementary classroom travels on a bi-weekly basis to the public library. This is an opportunity to not only get reading material but also to learn how to access and use the library's resources. Kindergarten students are invited to join them. Library cards can be applied for and once received are stored by the teachers.

Lunch

Students that stay all day need to bring their own lunch. These should include nutritious items, please no sodas or candy. Items should be packed in containers that children can open easily by themselves or with minimal assistance. We especially appreciate if students use environmentally friendly reusable containers. If you include ready to eat meals such as "Lunchables," ones that need minimal assembly and cooking are most appreciated. If you send pizza Lunchables or Easy Mac, please prepare it first so it can be reheated at school.

Elementary students learn as part of their curriculum to plan for the following things in lunches: 1) whole grain breads; 2) fresh fruit; 3) fresh vegetable; 4) a source of protein (e.g. meat, cheese, soy, etc.); 5) environmentally responsible packaging (e.g. reduce, reuse, recycle); and 6) a beverage without added sugar. Please note that water and low-fat milk are provided by the school at lunch, so packing a beverage is not necessary.

Medicines

Please ensure that a medication form is completed if a child needs to take medication during school hours. This is a state licensure requirement. A form also needs to be completed if a child takes cough drops or other optional OTC meds. Especially for early childhood students, please ensure these meds are given to the teacher to be dispensed as instructed and as necessary.

Pizza Friday

A popular, elective option for lunch on Fridays is pizza. We order a variety of pizza from Silver Bow Pizza and serve it with salad and a fruit for lunch. The cost is \$3.00. This can be paid on a weekly basis or can be included in your monthly invoice.

Service Hours and Parent Participation

Education of young children is a partnership between parents and the school. Parents play an integral role at the school. When parents contribute their time, talents, or materials, it serves to promote a sense of community and upgrades the quality of our students' experience. To

maximize the school's limited resources, there is an annual commitment of 20 hours of service to school per family, or a fee of \$10 per hour in place of this service.

There are a variety of opportunities to fulfill this requirement. Examples include: attending meetings and participating in the PTO (Parent Teacher Organization), its committees and activities, particularly fundraising events; chaperoning field trips; playground coverage for teacher's meetings; assisting teachers with materials preparation; assistance in the classroom reading with students; sharing/presenting to the class on a curriculum topic, etc. Other ideas and opportunities will be announced in weekly letters, newsletters and on the website.

Ski Program

Another way to enjoy Montana's unique recreational venues is through SBM's ski program. The program typically consists of 4 ski days from January through March at the Discovery Ski Area. Discounted ski equipment and lesson packages are offered. It is exciting to see our youngest EC students learn quickly and enjoy Montana's winter wonderland. Elementary students learn or improve their skills with Discovery's variety of trails and difficulty levels.

Slippers

For children in the EC classroom, a pair of comfortable, easy to put on slippers is necessary. Over-sized, noise making, or character-head slippers are not practical when children are walking with work trays. Such decorations can be also be distracting and make it difficult for children to easily sit cross-legged at circle times. Appropriate slippers can usually be found at Wal-Mart, Bob Ward's, or many web vendors. Please label these with the child's name. For children in the elementary classroom, sneakers are an option to change into in the classroom from snow boots.

Snacks

The school serves one nutritious snack in the morning and one in the afternoon. Those students staying for the extended care program will receive an additional snack. The school does not provide breakfast. We ask each family to plan for bringing snack provisions for the whole school one or two weeks per year. Sign-ups for this service to the school are provided at the annual parent orientation meeting. Recommended shopping lists, including quantities, are also available at the orientation meeting and the school office.

Students' Clothing at School

Children at Silver Bow Montessori School go outside in all forms of weather all during the year, so please make certain your child has appropriate clothing. In coldest weather, this includes hat, gloves, snow boots, and winter coat. Snow pants are advisable for most. When snow is on the ground, your child must have snow boots in order to go out for recess. We also ask that your child bring a pair of slippers (early childhood) or sneakers (elementary) to keep at school to wear indoors. Please label all items with names, including coats, hats, slippers/sneakers, and gloves.

It is also recommended that students keep a change of clothing at school. These should be provided in a reclosable bag labeled with the student's name.

Due to space constraints, students should not leave coats, hats, and gloves overnight at school. Your cooperation in this regard will help reduce clutter and redundancy within the school's limited space.

Swim Program

SBM offers an eight week swim program in partnership with a local swim instructor, Mavis Bentley. Teachers and parent volunteers also help to instruct with this life critical skill. It is strongly encouraged for all students to participate, but it not required for EC students. Lessons are required for elementary students.

Tardiness

At both the early childhood and elementary levels, tardiness is disruptive to the classroom and handicapping to the student who is late. Tardiness affects the whole classroom's experience. If your child is tardy three times in an academic year, you will receive a note from the school asking your cooperation. If there are two additional instances of tardiness, we will ask for a meeting with the parents to address the situation.

Toys

To avoid disappointments and/or loss, please do not allow your child to bring toys, money, games, candy/gum, trading cards, etc. to school. These items distract students (even if they are in a backpack). If these items accidentally arrive at school, we will hold them for your child until the end of the day. Children are always welcome to bring an appropriate book, something from nature, a unique keepsake from a trip, or culturally significant item to share with their class.