



# Somerset Academy Charter School

*Miramar Campus*



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## FAQs

### **QUESTION: What is a Charter School?**

**ANSWER:** A Charter School is a public school of choice that is state-funded but privately operated. Charter Schools have the freedom to set their own policies related to such things as discipline policies, philosophy, teaching methods, curriculum, human resources management and staff development.

### **QUESTION: What is the role of the Governing Board?**

**ANSWER:** Our Governing Board's role is to monitor the school's academic progress and provide input and leadership into the school improvement process. They also manage our budget to help ensure that the school has adequate resources and address facility issues. The Governing Board analyzes school performance data and hires and monitors our school leaders.

### **QUESTION: What is the role of the management company?**

**ANSWER:** Academica is our service management company that provides guidance with services such as: support with facility design and human resource coordination. They also offer financial assistance including bookkeeping and budgeting, as well as support for insurance, safety and maintenance which are provided to the Governing Board for its oversight and approval.

### **QUESTION: What does it mean to be a Title I school?**

**ANSWER:** During the 2008/2009 school year, Somerset Academy Miramar became eligible for Title I funding. Title I is a program that provides federal funding for supplementary staff, instruction, and support services for students who need additional assistance in core subject areas.

### **QUESTION: Who is eligible to attend Somerset?**

**ANSWER:** Any PreK3, Pre-K4 – (must be fully potty trained and 3 years old by June 1<sup>st</sup> of upcoming school year) and K through 8<sup>th</sup> grade children of school age selected by random lottery enrollment.

### **QUESTION: Can you give me some general background information on your school?**

**ANSWER:** Somerset Academy has campuses in both Dade and Broward counties serving students in grades PreK3 – 12<sup>th</sup> grade. Opened in 1997, our Miramar campus was the first of the Somerset Academies as well as one of the first Florida Charter Schools. Somerset Miramar's new building opened in August for the 2007/2008 school year and

currently house approximately 1050 students. Our neighborhood school, just across the street, holds an additional 76 students. While we have two elementary schools and a middle school all together in the Vizcaya community, we operate as one student body. We believe that every child can and will learn at his or her own pace, and we believe in using exploratory, hands-on learning and individualized instruction to ensure that each child experiences academic success!

**QUESTION: When can I register?**

**ANSWER:** Registration for the 2009-2010 school year has begun. Registration dates and times are posted on our website, [www.somersetmiramar.com](http://www.somersetmiramar.com).

All new students registering will be placed on a wait list and a lottery selection process will be used to enroll students as openings become available. *Please note that all documentation specified on the registration form must be submitted in order to be considered for lottery registration.*

**QUESTION: What grades does the school register?**

**ANSWER:** For 2009-2010, we will be registering students in PreK3/4 – 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

**QUESTION: Do you have a lottery? If so, how does it work?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, we are required to use a lottery process for enrollment and/or any time that a grade level has more applicants than there is space available. A lottery is a random selection of students. Here's how it works:

1. When you register and submit a completed registration packet, you will be given a lottery number.
2. We then put all of the lottery number slips into a container and randomly select them. We select them until the number of seats available in the grade level is full.
3. We continue to select the remainder of the lottery slips and place them on a wait list in the order they were randomly selected.
4. We then post all selected numbers on our website. You can log onto the website to see if your lottery number was pulled. *If selected, you will be required to contact us within three (3) school days of the lottery posting to confirm and reserve your child's seat.* If you do not have access to the Internet, you can always call the school to find out the lottery results for your child.
5. If your child was placed on a wait list, we will call you when there is an opening in your grade level and your child was next on the wait list. Please be aware that the wait list is created through the lottery process.

**QUESTION: When will I know if my child has been accepted?**

**ANSWER:** We post the lottery results on our website, [www.somersetmiramar.com](http://www.somersetmiramar.com). We will be posting our random selection of lottery numbers on April 3, 2009 by 5:00 p.m. *As long as you confirm acceptance within three (3) business days, your child will be accepted.* Please note that all documentation specified on the registration form must be submitted prior to the lottery in order to be considered for lottery registration.

**QUESTION: How do I confirm my child's acceptance?**

**ANSWER:** You may confirm your child's registration using any of the following

methods:

- Email us at [registration@somersetmiramar.com](mailto:registration@somersetmiramar.com). Be sure to tell us you are accepting and list your child's name and grade.
- Fax us at 305-829-4477. Be sure to tell us you are accepting and list your child's name and grade.
- Call us at 305-829-2406. Be sure to tell us you are accepting and list your child's name and grade.

**IMPORTANT: If we do not hear you within three (3) business days, we will assume you are NOT accepting your child's seat, and we will remove your registration application from our files.**

**QUESTION: What do I need in order to register?**

**ANSWER:** In order to register, you will need to have completed and submitted the following documents to the school:

- A completed registration packet
- A copy of your child's birth certificate
- Two forms proving that you reside at the listed address (such as a driver's license and utility bill). Up to date health and immunization forms (the originals – one is blue and the other is yellow)
- Previous reports cards and academic transcripts including standardized test reports
- A copy of your child's current health insurance coverage (for the required student accident insurance documentation).
- A copy of your child's final report card no later than June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

*If your child is coming from a Broward County public school, we will request these records for you, and you will need only to fill out the completed registration form. Please remember that we must have ALL required documents in order for your registration application to be considered complete.*

**QUESTION: Are there any contracts or other special requirements to be a part of your school?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, we do require all parents and students to sign the following:

- The Somerset Code of Conduct
- The Broward County Code of Conduct (distributed on the first day of school)
- A Parent Volunteer Application and Contract (A minimum of 30 and a maximum of 40 volunteer hours are required per family. Please see contract for more details.)
- An agreement to follow the guidelines listed in our school Handbook. (To read a copy of our current Handbook, please go to our website and click on the link for our Parent/Student Handbook.)

Most of these documents are included in our Registration Packet.

**QUESTION: What is the difference between a charter school and a public school?**

**ANSWER:** Charter schools are public schools. However, we are both publicly and privately managed and funded. We follow the same calendar as the public school system. We abide by most of Broward County's policies, but we also have our own individual policies and procedures in place.

**QUESTION: What is the difference between different charter schools?**

**ANSWER:** All charter schools are public schools; however, some are municipally run and funded while others are privately run and funded. Each also has its own philosophy and vision. For example, some charter schools focus on technology or performing arts while others do longitudinal studies on different ethnic groups of students and how they respond to certain educational programs. Others are run almost exactly like a public school.

**QUESTION: How is *your* charter school different?**

**ANSWER:** Our school has a strong academic focus and believes that each child should learn at his or her own pace, so we try to individualize our program to meet each child's level and learning needs. Our educational philosophy is based on some of the principles listed below:

- Somerset Academy believes that a school should be a place where students love to learn, teachers love to teach, and parents are a key part of the educational process.
- We believe that students work "up" to standards that are set for them and so we set high expectations for all of our students.
- We believe in a "teaching by doing" approach to instruction and incorporate "hands on" activities in all of our instruction.
- We believe that all students can and will learn.
- We believe that each learner is unique; therefore we structure our academic program to meet the needs of each individual learner. We also allow learners to work at their own pace and engage in activities that meet different learning styles and levels simultaneously.
- We implement a program that will not only focus on a well-rounded educational program, but one that also has a stronger emphasis in math, science, and technology.
- We also involve our students in a number of community projects that teach them to connect learning to the "real world" both locally and globally.

**QUESTION: Do you provide transportation?**

**ANSWER:** No, we do not. Students may walk, ride their bikes, or parents can drop them off in our carpool lane. When you register, we can also provide you with the names of some licensed private bus companies that can transport your child to and from school; however, we are in no way affiliated with these companies and cannot recommend one particular company to you.

**QUESTION: Are you affiliated with Somerset Academy in Pembroke Pines/Davie and will my child get preference if transferring from there?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, we are all a part of Somerset Academy, Inc. Students do get preference if your child or a sibling attends any of our campuses. Somerset makes every attempt to allow students to transfer between campuses providing (1) space is available and (2) the transfer is initiated during the re-registration period. However, we cannot guarantee that this transfer will be granted. Be sure to note that you are transferring from one of our other campuses on page one of the re-registration form.

**QUESTION: How old does my child have to be to register?**

**ANSWER:** In order to register for Pre-K4, your child has to be 4-years-old by Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>. For Kindergarten, your child has to be 5-years-old by September 1<sup>st</sup> of the current school year. If your child is coming from another country or a private school and is in a grade above their age-level grade, you will have to show proof of promotion to the next grade level on a final Report Card signed by the principal or headmaster of the school. Final authorization of this grade placement is determined by Somerset Miramar's Principal.

**QUESTION: My child has an IEP and requires special services. Can he/she attend your school?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, as a public charter school, we provide ESE services as stated on a child's IEP. We ask that you bring a copy of your child's current IEP prior to registration and meet with our ESE specialist and/or administrative team to discuss our ESE program, and your child's IEP in order to be sure that our school is the best possible placement for your child.

**QUESTION: Do you have a gifted program?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, while we do not have self-contained gifted classes, we follow goals and objectives specified on their IEP. Students labeled "Gifted" receive instruction with a gifted-focused curriculum. We also offer accelerated classes for both our gifted and our high achieving students in middle school. For more information about this, please contact a school administrator.

**QUESTION: Does your school get graded? What is your grade?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, all charter schools get graded the same as all public schools do. Our elementary and middle school both earned an A and We have met our AYP (Annual Yearly Progress) goals each year for our Neighborhood School; however, our Neighborhood School has never received a grade since it has never had the minimum number of students in a grade level or the correct grade configuration to issue a grade.

**QUESTION: Do you offer special area classes?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, we will offer a variety of special area classes such as Spanish, Physical Education, Health, Art, Music, Library/Research, and Computers. Other programs such as Band, Chorus, Intensive Reading and Math, Study Skills, and other Core Enrichment classes will be considered and/or developed for implementation as our school progresses in its development. The concept of our charter program will focus on advancements in science, math and technology. Student participation in a hands-on

science program that focuses on key environmental issues will help promote peace, harmony and balance in our world. The consumer math curriculum we put in place will provide our students with the economic base required to succeed in the real world. In addition, all of our classrooms are equipped with computers and we also provide our students with a computer course that teaches computer and web design basics in a lab setting.

**QUESTION: What extracurricular programs will you offer?**

**ANSWER:** We offer extracurricular fee-based programs. Generally, programs such as martial arts, choir, art, cheerleading, dance, and IMAC are offered after school and run through private companies on our campus. These are determined on a year to year basis. During the 2008/2009 our students were able to participate in soccer, basketball, football, and, volleyball.

**QUESTION: What are your school's drop off and pick up times?**

**ANSWER:**

**Primary Elementary (Pre-K through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)**

Hours: 8:45 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

Drop off: Between 8:30 and 8:45 a.m.

Pick up: Between 2:45 and 3:00 p.m.

**Upper Elementary/Middle School (4<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>)**

Hours: 8:30 a.m. – 3:15 p.m.

Drop off: Between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m.

Pick up: Between 3:15 and 3:30 p.m.

**QUESTION: Do you provide before and after school care? If so, what are the hours?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, we offer a fee-based program for before and after school care. This program enrolls students on a first-come, first-serve basis. Our morning care program, D.E.E.P. (Developmental Early Enrichment Program) begins at 7:00 a.m. and extends through 8:10 a.m. for middle school and 8:40 a.m. for elementary school. Our aftercare program, O.C.E.A.N. (Offering Curriculum Enrichment for Aftercare Needs) begins at dismissal time and ends at 5:55 p.m. These programs provide homework assistance, recreation, and enrichment activities for students.

**QUESTION: How much does it cost to register to attend your school?**

**ANSWER:** As a Broward County Public Charter School, we are tuition FREE for anyone residing in Dade or Broward County. PreK3 and PreK4 is a private program, however and tuition and fees for that program are listed below. In addition, our before and after care program is also fee-based; however, we do accept Family Central payments for our before and aftercare programs. In order to get your child off to a good start, please note that you will be required to purchase school uniforms, a student planner, a School-to-Home folder, and classroom school supplies for your child listed on the "School Supply Lists."

**QUESTION: What are the costs of your Morning Care and After Care program?**

**ANSWER:** A non-refundable registration fee for morning and aftercare of \$30.00 is required. D.E.E.P., our morning care program, cost \$85.00 per month. O.C.E.A.N., our after care program, costs \$145 per month. Discounts are given to families that have more than one child registered in the program.

**QUESTION: If I have one primary elementary child and one upper elementary or middle school child enrolled at your school, can I get a discount on childcare between dismissal times?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, we offer Sibling Care and within this program we supervise Pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade elementary students until their older siblings are able to come and pick them up at dismissal time. We also offer this childcare program in the morning, allowing students with a 30 minute school start time difference to be supervised so that parents can make one convenient trip to school. (There is a one time fee of \$100 for Sibling Care for families with children in **both middle and elementary school.**)

**QUESTION: What are the costs of your Pre-K program?**

**ANSWER:** There is a \$75.00 registration fee and a monthly fee of \$425.00. Discounts are given for additional siblings. Pre-K students follow the primary elementary school hours; however, aftercare is available until 5:55 p.m.

**QUESTION: Do you participate in the VPK program?**

**ANSWER:** No, we do not participate in the VPK program.

**QUESTION: Can you explain the school's curriculum?**

**ANSWER:** The primary goal of any school is to educate the children. In order to do that, the school must have a strong, structured, and spiraling curriculum that meets the needs of students at different academic levels and with different learning styles. Somerset Academy's Miramar Campus has this very type of program and includes both traditional and alternative approaches for instructing our students. Our current traditional curriculum program follows the Florida Sunshine State Standards. Kindergarten classes incorporate the Superkids Reading Program by Pleasant Rowland The elementary grades incorporate Scott Foresman's Reading Street for reading and language arts and Harcourt for science and mathematics; grades 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> also utilize Carnegie Cognitive Tutor for mathematics. Middle school grades incorporate Prentice Hall for math and science, McDougal Littell and Holt, Winehart, and Winston for language arts and reading, and History Alive! Social Science program for social science classes. Our GEM math program uses Prentice Hall and our 6<sup>th</sup> grade reading classes also utilize Scott Foresman's Reading Street; all middle school math classes also utilize Carnegie Cognitive Tutor. In addition to the traditional curriculum, we supplement our program by incorporating a variety of methods: the Voyager Reading Program for remediation, the SRA and Wilson programs for math and reading remediation, Project M.I.N.D. (Math Is Not Difficult) math enrichment programs, the S.T.E.P.S. program - a hands-on, interdisciplinary, thematic learning program, and the CORE character program that focuses on healthy behavioral and emotional child development; and FOSS science kits to allow for hands-on science activities. Created to teach principles of responsibility and citizenship, our

M.A.T.R.I.C. (Molding Achievers Toward Responsible Involvement in Community) educates and expose our students to real-world tasks, cooperative and project-based learning, and problem-solving strategies as well as teach leadership skills. Our school also offers a state of the art technology curriculum by providing many computer based programs such as STAR, Accelerated Reader, Carnegie Cognitive Tutor, Jamestown Reading Navigator, FCAT Explorer, Successmaker, and many others. All of these curricular programs are aligned to meet the goals of No Child Left Behind, to meet the requirements of Broward County Pupil Progression Plan (Policy 6000.1), and to meet the grade level proficiency expectations of Florida's Sunshine State Standards. By incorporating multiple learning systems at Somerset, we believe that we can create the best possible program for each individual learner while also making learning an exciting and enjoyable experience!

**QUESTION: I'd like more information about your Pre-K program. Can you explain your curriculum?**

**ANSWER:** Our Pre-K program is based on the Constructivist Learning Theory. We have a center-based, hands-on, thematic curriculum that allows each child to move forward at his or her own pace. Our program allows students to explore social concepts and academic skills. In fact, we make sure these students are prepared for Kindergarten by providing academic reading and math activities with a strong phonics base; this opens the door for our students that are ready to read. Additionally, we offer individualized instruction in both math and reading. As a result of our literacy focus, many of our Pre-K4 young learners are beginning readers at the end of the school year. To summarize, our Pre-K program focuses on cooperative learning and social skills, introduces our Pre-K students to the world of education and provides them with the tools to become successful independent learners. It's this special Somerset program that leads to consistent success and Kindergarten readiness!

**QUESTION: Is your school accredited by SACS (Southern Association of Colleges and Universities)?**

**ANSWER:** Yes, our Neighborhood, Elementary, and Middle Schools have successfully earned SACS Accredited.

**QUESTION: Where can I get more information on your school?**

**ANSWER:** Continue to check our website, [www.somersetmiramar.com](http://www.somersetmiramar.com) where you will find a document entitled "Key Information Bulletin" that provides updated information about our school. Our Handbook is a great source for information, as well and is also available online. You can always email us any questions that you might have to [registration@somersetmiramar.com](mailto:registration@somersetmiramar.com). Our office personnel can be reached between the hours of 8:15 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. We are always happy to do our best to answering any questions you may have.

**QUESTION: Am I able to take a tour of the school?**

**ANSWER:** Yes! Tours are being given every Friday at 10:00 A.M. Please call the office to be placed on our tour schedule list.