

Fort Sanders Educational Development Center 2024-2025 Parent Handbook



Our phone number is: 865-594-5035

Our Fax number is: 865-594-5038

Our school Address:

501 S. 21st Street
Knoxville, TN 37916

Fort Sanders Families,

Welcome to our school family! I am honored to serve as the administrator at Fort Sanders and look forward to a great school year! Strong communication with the families we serve is critical for a successful school experience. All of us here encourage you to be involved in our school and your child's education as much as possible.

This handbook will help explain school rules and regulations, expectations and general information for both students and the adults who care for them. Please take time to review it carefully and keep a copy for your records.

Thank you for sharing your children with us. It is a privilege we don't take lightly. Please don't hesitate to contact us with any concerns, questions, or comments. We look forward to getting to know each of you and seeing our students grow during their time here at "The Fort."

Sincerely,

Jessica Schaefer Ruiz



Jessica Schaefer Ruiz, Principal
jessica.schaefer Ruiz@knoxschools.org
865-594-5035

PLAY, LEARN, GROW

Fort Sanders Mission Statement

Together, Fort Sanders Educational Development Center, parents and community will provide a nurturing learning environment for all children with individualized opportunities for social, emotional, physical and academic growth.

We believe:

- In helping all students become confident, independent learners.
- In developmentally appropriate strategies to prepare students for future success.
- In fostering a nurturing, high quality learning environment.
- Students learn best through play and interaction.
- In preparing students for the learning journey of life.
- In modeling the love of learning through our own actions.
- School should be a happy, safe place that encourages all learners to grow.

School Security

Our first priority is to maintain a safe and secure learning environment for all students at Fort Sanders. The following guidelines are in place to keep all the students safe and to protect instructional time from interruptions and distractions.

- All Knox County Schools are controlled access facilities. All exterior doors remain locked during the school day. Visitors should use the buzzer system at the main door or cafeteria door. When you push the buzzer a staff member will speak to you on the intercom. Please have your picture ID ready to show the office staff.
- All visitors will be greeted and helped at the door by one of the office staff. Visitors will not be permitted in the building unless there is a pre-approved reason such as a parent conference, IEP meeting, etc.
- If you need to bring something for your child (backpack, lunch, etc.) we will not interrupt instructional time. We will make sure the item is delivered at an appropriate time. Double-check each morning to ensure your child has what he/she needs for the day.
- A school safety plan is in place and all staff members are aware of what to do in the rare case of an emergency (fire, weather, intruder, etc.) The details of these plans are not shared with the community at large to ensure our highest level of security.
- A Knox County Schools Security Officer is on site to assist staff and students in our day-to-day operations.

School Hours

No parents or students will be permitted in the building before 7:10 a.m. Staff members are not available to supervise students until 7:10 a.m. Teachers will greet parents during arrival at their classroom doors. Dismissal will take place at the common assigned doors.

For all Voluntary PreK (VPK), Co-Taught Pre-K, Blended Pre-K and Transition classrooms the school day begins at 7:45 a.m. and ends at 1:15 p.m. Children may start arriving for class at 7:10 a.m. All Pre-K students must be signed in and out every day. No child (except bus riders) will be admitted before 7:10 a.m. All doors will be locked at 7:45 a.m. Students arriving after 7:45 are considered tardy and will need to report to the front door (entrance on S. 21st Street) to be checked in. Parents will need to bring their child into the office and sign them in. If you need to pick up your student before 1:15 p.m. you must sign them out through the main office. No child will be released prior to being signed out in the office. A photo ID is required for all students checking out early, or being picked up by someone other than a legal parent/guardian. We may ask for a photo ID for verification from anyone picking up a student.

To ensure safety and a smooth dismissal each day, NO students will be checked out early after 12:45 p.m. If you have an appointment or conflict where you need to pick up your children early, please do so by 12:45 p.m. Our instructional time is critical and we want to limit interruptions as much as possible.

In the K-12th Grade Developmental Classroom, students begin their school day at 7:45 a.m. and end at 2:45 p.m. Students arriving after 7:45 a.m. will need to check in through the main door (entrance on S. 21st Street) before going to their classroom. If you need to pick your student up before 2:45 p.m. you must sign him/her out through the main office. No child will be released prior to being signed out. The half day schedule for the K-12th grade students is also 7:45 a.m. to 11:15 a.m.

In the Language Group and Blended Language Group students will come during one of these times:

Monday/Wednesday 7:45 to 10:15 a.m.

Monday/Wednesday 10:45 to 1:15 a.m.

HALF DAYS There are two days during the school year when students will attend for a ½ day. *For the 2024-2025 school year those days are: December 20 and May 22. On these days the children arrive at 7:45 and dismiss at 10:15.*

EARLY RELEASE DAYS The Board of Education approved a proposal to create six early-release days for students in the 2024-2025 school year. This proposal is aimed at improving student learning outcomes. Like any professional, teachers need time to prepare, share ideas and work collaboratively to support students. As we continue addressing academic challenges in the wake of the pandemic, we believe this initiative will ensure that our outstanding educators are equipped to meet the needs of students. Teachers will work a normal schedule on those days. All Fort Sanders students will be dismissed at 11:15 a.m. Buses will also run at this time.

Early release days will be held on the following dates in the 2024-2025 school year:

- August 14, 2024
- September 18, 2024
- November 20, 2024
- January 22, 2025
- February 12, 2025
- March 26, 2025

Visitors

If you would like to visit your child's classroom you must have permission from the classroom teacher and principal at least 24 hours in advance. Visitors must check-in and get a visitor badge from the main office. Volunteer opportunities are very limited and must be scheduled with the teacher in advance.

Classroom observations are limited to 30 minutes and must have principal approval 24 hours in advance. Principals have the right to refuse classroom observations. If you are volunteering, the time frame will be decided between you and the classroom teacher prior to the scheduled time. Knox County Policy prohibits the use of audio or video recording and still photos while visiting a classroom.

Per Knox County School Board Policy, all volunteers must register online before volunteering at school. Registration information can be obtained through contacting the main office.

Attendance Policy

We adhere to the Knox County Schools attendance policies. State law requires children to be present for a minimum of three hours and 15 minutes to be counted present for the day (two hours and one minute for Pre-K and Kindergarten students). This rule applies to both full and 1/2 days.

Knox County will excuse absences for sickness, death in the immediate family, recognized religious holidays and true family emergencies. Knox County does not excuse absences for reasons other than those listed. Excuses for student absences must be in writing and turned in within five days of the students return to school. All excuse notes should include the student's printed name and be dated and signed. Up to ten absences per year may be excused with a parent/guardian note. After ten, a doctor's excuse will be required for any additional absences to be excused. A phone call to the office will not be accepted as an excuse and it is not necessary to inform staff. Once a child reaches 5 absences, you may receive a call from the school principal or social worker to discuss your child's attendance and offer support in developing more consistent attendance habits.

Arriving at school on time and regular attendance are critical components of a successful school career. Please make every effort for your child to faithfully attend school and be on time. Remember, parents are legally responsible for keeping children in school. Students arriving after 7:45 a.m. must be checked in through the main entrance.

Emergency Procedures

Emergency Contacts: It is critical we have the most current emergency contact information, including current cell phone numbers, at all times. Please inform the office and classroom teacher immediately if phone numbers or contact information changes. If your child is ill or injured, we must be able to contact you immediately. If there is a child custody agreement or parenting plan in place, it is your responsibility to provide legal documentation for our files.

School Closing: During bad weather, if the possibility of a school closing is apparent, you may come to school to sign your child out with no attendance penalty. You do not need to call the school office beforehand. It is important to keep the phone lines open for emergency information from school and county supervisors. Please listen to local radio or TV stations for information and updates on school closings, or check the Knox County Schools website for this information. Although buses will attempt to keep their regular routes, please be aware any bus route can be shortened or canceled due to flooding, ice or snow.

School Clinic and Medication

Fort Sanders School has a full time nurse who will be present while students are at school. The school also has access to a clinic equipped to accommodate the health and safety of our students.

Medication: As a general policy, medicines are not administered to children at school. However, in some circumstances, long-term medication required during school hours will be dispensed by the school nurse or trained staff if necessary. The following procedures must be followed for prescription medication:

- The physician must fill out and the parent must sign a medical form for each medication. A new form must be completed when there is a change in time or dosage. A new form must be filled out every school year. Forms are available in the school clinic.
- Medication must be brought to school in the original prescription bottle by the parent/guardian and submitted to the school nurse. Students must NEVER bring in medication. The school nurse and parent will verify the quantity. Medication will be kept in a locked area.
- The school nurse will notify the parent when medication is almost gone.
- All medication must be picked up by the parent/guardian at the end of the school year.

Illness: For the safety and well-being of our staff and students, a child with a contagious medical issue cannot remain at school. This includes common conditions like pinkeye, nausea, a rash or fever. Students who throw up, have diarrhea or fever at school may not return until they are symptom free (without medication) for 24 hours. A fever of 100.4 or a low grade fever coupled with other symptoms of illness warrant exclusion from school. THE SCHOOL NURSE AND ADMINISTRATOR WILL MAKE ALL FINAL DECISIONS REGARDING STUDENTS BEING EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL FOR ILLNESS. Because many of our students are medically fragile, we are very cautious in this regard. We appreciate your understanding and respect for other students' health.

School staff cannot apply sunscreen, diaper cream, or any other over the counter product.

School Breakfast and Lunch Program

MEAL PRICES

Fort Sanders has been awarded CEP status for the 24-25 school year. That means that all means will be provided to students free of charge. However, KCS meal pricing structure for the 24-25 school year, breakfast and lunch meals is listed below. If your child brings their food to school but would like to purchase a milk off the cafe line, they will need to have money in their lunch account. We look forward to serving you in the cafeteria!

STUDENTS

Breakfast, Reduced	\$0.30
Breakfast, Paid	\$2.00
Lunch, Reduced	\$0.40
Lunch, Paid ES	\$2.75
Lunch, Paid MS/HS	\$3.00

ONLINE MEAL PREPAYMENTS

Knox County Schools Nutrition Department accepts online payments through www.linqconnect.com

If you have questions about the system, please call the School Nutrition office at 865-594-3640.

FREE & REDUCED APPLICATIONS

To apply for a free/reduced lunch price, go to www.linqconnect.com.

- A letter with more information will be sent to you. If you have not received a letter, please contact your student's school office for one.
- If your student attends a school participating in the Community Eligibility Program, you will NOT have to fill out a traditional Free & Reduced application as you have in prior years. If you have a student attending a non-participating school, you will need to complete a Free & Reduced application.

Dress Code

Please provide a change of clothes for your child, as well as extra diapers, pull-ups, underwear, and/or wipes as needed. Accidents happen from time to time and we have a limited supply of extra clothes. Tennis shoes are strongly encouraged each day. Flip-flops and sandals create a safety concern and are strongly discouraged.

To help create the best learning environment for students, the following standards for dress must be observed in all Knox County Schools:

- Pants must not sag below the waist and must be at a safe length.
- Head apparel, except for religious or medical reasons, must not be worn inside the school building.
- Footwear is required and must be safe and appropriate for indoor and outdoor physical activity.
- Clothing or accessories may not display offensive, vulgar language or images, and must not advertise products that students may not legally purchase.

The principal reserves the right to determine whether the student's attire and appearance are within the acceptable limits. In matters of opinion, the judgment of the principal/designee shall prevail. The principal may allow exceptions for school wide programs or special events.

Party Policy and Nutritional Guidelines

We love to celebrate birthdays here at school. However, you must follow these few guidelines.

- You must have permission from your child's classroom teacher at least 24 hours in advance.
- Please obtain permission from the classroom teacher regarding appropriate snacks for the students. Healthy treats or non-edible treats are acceptable.
- You must check with the teacher regarding allergies.
- Due to severe allergies, NO LATEX BALLOONS are allowed in the building. No exceptions.

Parent Teacher Conferences and Family Events

We strongly encourage meaningful communication between parents and teachers to benefit your student. Conferences will occur after student dismissal to protect instructional time. Parent conferences can occur virtually or in person. Knox County Schools will use the Microsoft Teams platform for virtual meetings. We encourage you to schedule a conference to discuss your child's progress at any time during the year. Fort Sanders teachers will be available to have a parent conference with you at a minimum of twice per school year, once in the Fall Semester and once in the Spring semester. Administration will schedule two specific weeks in which teachers will be available. However, if there is an issue or concern that needs immediate attention please do not wait until the scheduled conference to address this with your child's teacher. In this instance, please contact your child's teacher or administration as soon as possible.

In the past, we have been fortunate enough to host a Family Engagement learning session, as well as, two Parents' Night Out sessions for our Fort families. We also host a Holly Jolly Holiday Party for families. We hope to do those again and encourage you and your family to join us for any and all events in which you are able.

Social Services

If your child is in need of materials necessary to attend school, personal hygiene items, or other needs, please notify the office. We have resources available to get you the appropriate help you may need.

If You Have a Problem

Most problems can be handled at the classroom level and the first person to notify when you or your child experience a problem is the classroom teacher. If the problem cannot be resolved at that level, then the principal should be informed. You may call our school office at 594-5035 or email Mrs. Ruiz (jessica.schaefferruiz@knoxschools.org). Our first priority is always the safety, well-being and development of all our students.

Bullying and Harassment

Knox County Schools prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, bullying and cyber-bullying.^{1, 2} A safe and courteous environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve. Harassment, intimidation or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate students in a safe and orderly environment; and since students learn by example, administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers should be positive role models in demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. All Knox County Schools teachers and administrative personnel are responsible for ensuring this policy is faithfully implemented in all areas under their purview or direct supervision.

Safe School Choice Notice

Under the Tennessee State Board of Education's Unsafe School Choice Policy, any public school student who is the victim of a violent crime as defined under Tennessee Code Annotated 40-38-11(g) or the attempt to commit any of these offenses as defined under Tennessee Code Annotated 39-12-101, shall be provided an opportunity to transfer to another grade-level appropriate school within the district. Additional information regarding this option may be obtained from Brian Hartsell at 594-1502.