

# F.A.Q.

## Somerset Academy Central Miramar

### UNDERSTANDING THE BASICS

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

**A:** A Charter School is a public school of choice that is state-funded but privately operated. Charter Schools have the autonomy and choice to set many of their own policies related to such things as curriculum delivery, parent involvement, discipline, and special programs; however charter schools, as public educational institutions, must maintain accountability academically, and in all areas of legal and safety compliance.

#### **Q: What is the difference between the many different charter schools that exist?**

**A:** Each charter school is different. They are run by independent boards and each charter school corporation has its own philosophy, vision, and focus that determine the type of experience you will have if your child attends that particular charter school. For example, some charter schools focus on dual-language programs or performing arts magnet-like focuses while others maintain single-gender classrooms.

#### **Q: How do I know if Somerset Academy Central Miramar is the right school for my child?**

**A:** Somerset has a strong academic focus and believes that each child should learn at his or her own pace; therefore, we try to individualize our program to meet each child's level and learning needs regardless of age. 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 an educational program that will not only focus on developing well-rounded students, but will also have a strong emphasis in college preparatory curriculum.
- 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.
- We believe learning should be fun.
- We encourage you to schedule some time to speak to our staff and get to know the Somerset team. We are always happy to answer any specific questions you may have.

#### **Q: Do I have to pay to attend a charter school?**

**A:** No. Since charter schools are publicly funded, K-12 students attend tuition FREE.

**Q: What grades does Somerset Central Miramar have?**

**A:** Somerset Academy Central Miramar will be a Pre-K3 through 12th grade campus. The school consists of three charter schools operating on one campus at Somerset Academy Central Miramar. Somerset Neighborhood School will operate the K-5<sup>th</sup> grade program; Somerset Academy Preparatory Middle School will operate the 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> grade program; and Somerset Academy Charter High School Miramar will operate the 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade program. (Please note: Pre-K 3 and Pre-K 4 are tuition-based programs.)

**Q: Can you give me some general background information about Somerset Academy?**

**A:** Somerset was one of the first charter schools to open in south Florida in 1997. It was opened by parents and community members who wanted a school that maintained a strong neighborhood-school feel by (1) maintaining an open-door policy and high level of parent involvement, (2) by personalizing the academic program for each student, and (3) by delivering the curriculum in creative, hands-on and innovative ways. Today, Somerset Academy has numerous PK – 12<sup>th</sup> grade campuses in south, central and northern Florida. In addition, Somerset Academy Charter Schools were the first charter school system to be accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS/CASI). Visit [www.somersetacademyschools.com](http://www.somersetacademyschools.com) for more information about our schools.

**Q: Are Somerset Academy teachers certified?**

**A:** Yes. Our teachers and administrators are certified and highly qualified in their subject areas and meet the Florida state requirements for certification the same as any traditional public school educator.

**Q: Does Somerset Academy require uniforms?**

**A:** Yes. Both staff and students are required to wear uniforms. Uniforms at Somerset Central Miramar will consist of polo shirts (colors vary between elementary and secondary students) with black or khaki bottoms. Elementary students may wear skorts, shorts, pants, skirts. Secondary students may wear pants. No shorts are allowed. Specific Physical Education uniforms, Spirit Shirts for Fridays and field trips, Worrier Attire for Tuesdays and special occasions, and cold-weather clothing will also be required. School uniforms must be purchased from Somerset's official uniform vendor, All Uniform Wear. Additional uniform specifications may be found on our website at [www.somersetcentral.org](http://www.somersetcentral.org).

**Q: Do you provide transportation?**

**A:** Most of our parents participate in our carpool system to get their child to school. Students may also walk or ride their bikes to school. Buses are available and provided for select students, as well; please discuss this with the registrar if you have specific questions.

**Q: Is Somerset Academy accredited?**

**A:** Yes. All Somerset Academy schools are accredited as a district by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Council on Accreditation and School Improvement (SACS/CASI).

**Q: Do you offer food services?**

**A:** Yes. Breakfast and lunch will be available for all students for a fee (to be determined). Free and reduced meal applications are also available for families experiencing financial hardship.

**Q: Does your school get graded?**

**A:** Yes. All charter schools are graded the same as a traditional public schools. Somerset Neighborhood is a grade of an “A” Somerset Preparatory Middle School is a school grade of a “B” and Somerset Academy Miramar High is a school grade of an “A” for the 2011-2012 School year.

Somerset Academy has an excellent record of academic performance and, as a district, is one of the top performing school districts in the state. You can see our results by visiting [www.somersetacademyschools.com](http://www.somersetacademyschools.com) and clicking the link “results.”

**Q: What are the school hours?**

**A:** Hours will vary based on student enrollment. We have staggered drop off and pick up times to ensure an efficient flow of traffic during carpool and to allow for extended school days when necessary. Elementary school is required to attend school for at least 6 hours, middle school for 6.5 hours, and high school for 7 hours. Hours are typically similar to but may vary slightly from those of the surrounding traditional public schools.

**Q: Do you provide a before and after school care program?**

**A:** Yes, we will offer a fee-based program for before and after school care. The morning care program begins at 7:00 a.m. The after school care program begins at dismissal and ends at 6:00 p.m. These programs provide homework assistance, recreation, and enrichment activities.

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

**A:** A non-refundable registration fee of \$30.00 is required. Our morning care program costs \$90.00 per month. Our aftercare program, costs \$150 per month per child. (While these are the currently posted rates, they are subject to change annually.) Discounts are given to families that have more than one child registered in the program.

**Q: What happens if my children get dismissed at different times?**

**A:** Somerset offers Sibling Care within our aftercare program. We supervise younger siblings from their earlier dismissal time until their older siblings are able to come and pick them up at their later dismissal time. We also offer Sibling Care in the morning so that parents can make one convenient trip to school. There is a monthly fee of \$25.00 or a one-time fee of \$225.00 for Sibling Care for families with children in **both secondary and elementary school**. (While these are the currently posted rates, they are subject to change annually.) Discounts are given to families that have more than one child registered.

**Q: Do you follow the same calendar as Broward County public schools?**

**A:** Yes

**Q: How can parents get involved at Somerset?**

**A:** Somerset Academy has a strong belief in the power of parent involvement. It is the formula “parents + teachers + students = partners in excellence” that is a fundamental building block of the success of our school program. Parents can get involved in many ways such as by joining our School Advisory Council, by being a part of the school PTA, by volunteering as a room mom or dad, or by joining our Parent Action Committee. Parents can also help day to day by helping with anything from

carpool and lunch duty to field trips and special events. Parents can volunteer schoolwide and in individual classrooms. They can help with fundraising, book fairs, holiday activities, and more. The opportunities are endless. Each time you volunteer, you will also earn credit toward completing your volunteer hour obligation as part of our re-enrollment requirement.

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

**A:** Continue to check our website, [www.somersetcentral.org](http://www.somersetcentral.org), for updates. You can also go to [www.somersetacademyschools.com](http://www.somersetacademyschools.com) for an overview of the Somerset philosophy and program. Until a Principal has been selected, you may email any questions that you might have to the following individuals:

- General questions about Somerset Academy CONTACT: Ms. Athena Guillen, [aguillen@somersetcentral.org](mailto:aguillen@somersetcentral.org)
- Pre-K , elementary questions: CONTACT: Ms. Geyler Herrera, [gherrera@somersetcentral.org](mailto:gherrera@somersetcentral.org)
- Middle school, high school questions: CONTACT: Ms. Donyale McGhee, [dmcghee@somersetcentral.org](mailto:dmcghee@somersetcentral.org)

**OUR ACADEMIC PROGRAM**

**Q: What is your school's curriculum?**

**A:** 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 has this type of program and includes both traditional and alternative approaches for instructing our students of all levels. Our curriculum is the Sunshine State Standards and all of the courses and curriculum materials used are in alignment with those standards. All of these curricular programs are aligned to meet the goals of the requirements of the 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.

**Q: What curriculum is the school considering for the secondary school?**

**A:** Students will have the opportunity to continue to study in Advanced Placement and Dual Enrollment courses. In addition, the following curriculum programs are under consideration for the coming school years are: Cambridge International Education, International Baccalaureate and College Board Programs.

**Q: Do you incorporate technology into your academic program?**

**A:** Somerset also offers a state-of-the-art technology to enhance each child's learning experience. The school is equipped with such things as stationary and mobile computer labs, Promethean Boards, Document Imaging Cameras, and numerous classroom computers. In addition, many computer-based software programs are used; some of these include Accelerated Reader, Achieve 3000, Carnegie Cognitive Tutor, IXL, and Successmaker.

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

**A:** Yes. Each school meets the needs of gifted students in different ways depending on the population of gifted students and a student's Educational Plan (EP).

**Q: My child has an IEP. Do you offer ESE services?**

**A:** Yes. Each school meets the needs of ESE students in different ways depending on the student's IEP. Please schedule a meeting with our ESE Specialist to better understand our ESE program.

**Q: My child speaks English as a second language. Do you offer academic support for this?**

**A:** Yes. All Somerset schools have various classes and assistance programs to meet the needs of students who are Limited English Proficient to help them succeed in language development and in our academic program. Please schedule a meeting with our ESOL coordinator for additional information.

**Q: Will Somerset Central Miramar offer advanced placement programs and dual enrollment courses?**

**A:** Yes. AP courses will be driven by student and parent interest as well as faculty certification. Dual enrollment courses will also continue, and Somerset will work with local post-secondary institutions to maintain these course offerings.

**Q: Do you offer special area classes and electives?**

**A:** Yes, we will offer a variety of special area classes such as Physical Education, Art, Music, Library/Research, Foreign Language, and Computers. Other electives such as Health, Band, Chorus, Intensive Reading and Math, Study Skills, Peer Counseling, Drama, Television Production, and other elective classes will be considered. Electives are determined based on the requirements outlined in SB Policy 6000.1 Pupil Progression Plan and student interest.

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

**A:** We offer a variety of extracurricular programs. These programs range from sports to tutoring to clubs. Generally, programs such as martial arts, choir, art, religion, foreign language, cheerleading, dance, and IMACS are offered after school and run through private companies on our campus. These are determined on a year to year basis and are driven by student and parent interest.

**Q: Will you offer competitive sports? If so, which ones?**

**A:** Somerset Central Miramar will offer competitive sports for secondary students (grades 6-12). Sports offered will vary based on student interest. Each Somerset campus offers a variety of sports such as cheerleading, basketball, flag football, baseball, and soccer. Each campus competes against different schools, both public, private, and charter. Our school will continue to offer all FHSAA approved athletic programs. These sports are offered on a student interest basis.  
by Somerset Academy Central Miramar.

**Q: Do Somerset Academy students have to take FCAT tests?**

**A:** Yes. As a public school, we are accountable to the state and must administer the FCAT test to our students. We prepare our students daily through teaching the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards, and not "teaching to the test." As a Broward County public charter school, we are also required to abide by the Pupil Progression Plan (SB Policy 6000.1) as it pertains to student promotion

requirements. However, there is a variety of assessment methods used to determine student promotion – not just the FCAT.

**Q: Does my child have to pass the FCAT prior to graduation?**

**A:** All students attending Somerset will have to meet all State of Florida graduation requirements. That includes passing the FCAT and course specific requirements.

**Q: How will I know if my student is meeting the requirements to graduate?**

**A:** Each student in the secondary school will have all of their prior courses evaluated by a qualified secondary counselor to determine if they meet graduation requirements. Students in need of additional coursework will have the opportunity to make up those courses during the school day, through virtual school or a summer program.

**PRE-KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM**

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

**A:** No. Our Pre-K program is privately operated. Hours are typically the same as primary elementary student hours, and aftercare is available for an additional fee.

**Q: What can I expect if I enroll in your Pre-K program?**

**A:** 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-K students are beginning readers by the end of the school year.

We also teach cooperative learning and social skills to introduce our Pre-K students to the world of education and provide them with the skills to become successful independent learners. These techniques lead to student success and Kindergarten readiness.

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

**A:** There is a \$75.00 registration fee and a monthly fee of \$425.00. Discounts are given for additional siblings. . (While these are the currently posted rates, they are subject to change annually.)