

FRIENDSHIP SCHOOL PARENT HANDBOOK

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2026-2027



WELCOME

Dear Parents/Guardians:

Whether you're new or returning to us, I want to welcome you to a new school year at Friendship School. All of us-your teachers, principal, and support staff-are eager to begin a new year with your student.

This Parent Handbook includes information about our school policies and procedures that you can refer to during the school year. Please read it carefully and keep it on hand. If you have any questions, we will be happy to help you. Together we can make this a great school year full of new and innovative opportunities for our students to reach their full potential. It takes teachers, students, caregivers, and parents working as a team to make that happen.

Thank you for supporting our school and our students!

Sincerely,
Rachel Page
Principal
Friendship School

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook was created as a resource for parents to explain the policies and procedures for students attending Friendship School. Numbers referenced throughout the handbook correspond to specific San Diego County Board of Education policies. In some cases, the full policy is included; in others, only the most relevant sections are provided.

Parents play a vital role in their child's success by ensuring students attend school every day they are physically able, providing up-to-date contact information, submitting necessary specialized health care paperwork and medications, attending scheduled meetings with school staff, sending absence or tardy notes as required, and becoming familiar with the school's mission, improvement plans, and activities. While parents are encouraged to meet with school staff, conferences with teachers should be scheduled in advance to avoid interrupting instructional time.

Please take the time to review this handbook carefully. Understanding its contents will help make the school year smoother for everyone. If you have any questions, please contact Friendship School. Additional information is also available on the Friendship School website at: <http://www.sdcoe.net/friendship>

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Opened in September 1978, Friendship School provides specialized education for up to 50 students with Extensive Support Needs who also require individualized health support to access their education.

Serving students ages 3 to 21, each learner at Friendship School has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that highlights their strengths and needs, guiding the development of personalized instructional strategies. Ongoing data collection is essential to monitor progress toward IEP goals and objectives.

Meeting the diverse and complex needs of our students-while aligning with state standards-requires our staff to be highly creative and adaptive in delivering content at each student's learning level.

Friendship School is operated by the South County SELPA and consists of five classrooms, each led by a credentialed Education Specialist authorized to teach students with Extensive Support Needs. Each classroom is also supported by two trained paraprofessionals. All staff are trained in specialized healthcare procedures, and class sizes are capped at 10 students, maintaining a staff-to-student ratio of approximately 1:3.

Days: School operates 200 instructional days= 180 regular school days +20 Extended School Year (ESY) days. During your child's IEP meeting you can choose to not have your child attend the 20 ESY days.

Hours: School office open/close: 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
Teachers on campus: 8:15 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Arrival/departure of STUDENTS:
Regular School Days 9 a.m. to 3:07 p.m.
Minimum Day Schedule 9 a.m. to 1:11 p.m.

BASIC INFORMATION AND GUIDELINES

Emergency Forms

Emergency forms are a critical part of ensuring the safety and well-being of all students at Friendship School. These forms allow school staff to respond appropriately to your child's medical needs, including routine care, illness, or emergencies. They also provide vital contact information so we can quickly reach parents or designated emergency contacts when needed.

Emergency forms are completed upon a student's admission to Friendship School and must be updated at the beginning of each school year. Students may not begin attending school until all required medical orders have been reviewed and approved by the School Nurse.

Each emergency form must include a local phone number and at least one emergency contact. If any contact information-such as phone numbers or addresses-changes during the school year, please notify the school office immediately.

Drop-off/Pick-up Policy

To ensure the safety of our students and staff, all parents and guardians must check in at the **main office** when picking up their child. As part of our school safety plan, classroom doors remain locked during school hours.

If you need to pick up your child early, please notify the office and/or your child's teacher in advance so we can ensure your student is prepared for dismissal.

While we deeply value our partnership with families, we kindly ask that you wait in the front office during drop-off and pick-up times. This helps minimize classroom disruptions and allows staff to remain focused on student learning.

If you would like to visit your child's classroom, please refer to our **Visitor and Observation Policy** for guidelines and procedures.

Wheelchair Maintenance

Because your child relies on their wheelchair for safe transportation to and from school, it is essential that the wheelchair remains in proper working condition. District transportation services may decline to transport a student if the wheelchair does not meet safety standards established by the California Highway Patrol.

Please note that Friendship School staff are not permitted to make any repairs or adjustments to wheelchairs. If modifications or repairs are needed, families must coordinate directly with the wheelchair vendor. While

vendors are welcome to come to the school for service, Friendship School cannot contact them on your behalf. However, we will notify you promptly if any concerns arise regarding your child's wheelchair.

We strongly encourage regular maintenance and proactive care to ensure uninterrupted mobility and attendance for your child.

Clothing

All students are required to have at least two complete changes of clothing available at school each day. In the event that a student's clothing becomes soiled, the soiled items will be sent home with the student.

If both sets of spare clothing are used and the student needs to borrow clothing from Friendship School, we kindly ask that the borrowed items be washed and returned as soon as possible-ideally by the following school day.

Please note that Friendship School does not provide laundry services and cannot launder soiled clothing on-site.

Personal Hygiene

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing all necessary personal hygiene items for their child. This includes diapers, wipes, and other essential care items such as pads or bibs for daily use.

Friendship School staff will notify families through daily communication logs or notes if supplies are running low. To help ensure a smooth process, District Transportation has been supportive in allowing families to send these items with students on the bus.

We appreciate your support in maintaining your child's comfort and care throughout the school day.

School Communication

Teachers at Friendship School will communicate with parents daily using a dedicated notebook for each student. Please check this notebook each day when your child returns home. Because many of our students use alternative communication strategies, we strongly encourage parents, guardians, and caregivers to write in the notebook as well. Sharing information about your child's mood, needs, or changes at home helps us better support them throughout the day.

If a matter requires immediate attention, the school will contact you using the phone numbers you have provided. **Please note that bus drivers and aides are not permitted to relay messages to school staff.** If you need to get a message to your child's teacher, please call the school directly at 858-298-2213.

School site administration communicates with families through the Student Information System (Synergy), Blackboard, phone calls, and email. To support timely communication, it's important that you keep your contact information up to date with the school office.

To protect your child's instructional time, teachers are not available for routine phone calls during the school day. Routine calls should be directed to the front office. Teachers are available before and after school during designated times. If you have concerns regarding your child's education, please contact the classroom teacher first. If additional support is needed, reach out to the school principal.

Before School: 8:15 am-9:00 am

After School: 3:00-3:30 pm

Notification for Letters and Paperwork

Please allow at least **72 hours** for school staff to process and fulfill any requests for letters or paperwork from Friendship School.

Personal Items

To help us keep your child's belongings safe and organized, please label all personal items with your child's **first name and last initial**.

Support for Parents

Community Support Groups and Resources

The South County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA) offers a wide range of parent support groups and community resources. Additional local, state, and national resources are also available on the San Diego County Office of Education website at www.sdcoe.net.

Resource Parent

Parents of students with disabilities often find it helpful to speak with another parent who understands their experiences. The South County SELPA has designated **Special Education Parent Liaisons** who can help answer questions and offer support. To contact their office, call 619-470-5252

Resolution of Concerns

If you have concerns about your child's educational program, we encourage the following steps:

- Be a **positive advocate** for your child by first speaking directly with your child's teacher. Our staff is committed to working collaboratively with you to find a resolution.
- If additional discussion is needed, you may request an **IEP Team meeting** by contacting your child's teacher or the school principal. If you would like specific individuals to attend the meeting, please let us know so we can include them in the invitation. While schools have 30 days to hold an IEP meeting upon

request, we will make every effort to meet as soon as possible.

- Consider reaching out to the **SELPA's resource parent** for additional support and guidance.

IEP Meetings

Family participation is a vital part of the IEP process. We are committed to ensuring that all parents and guardians have meaningful opportunities to participate. IEP meetings can be held either **in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams**. Your child's teacher will contact you with tentative dates for the meeting. Please respond promptly with your availability and your preference for an in-person or virtual meeting. Technical support is available for families who need assistance accessing Microsoft Teams.

***Donations**

Friendship School is always in need of latex-free gloves, disinfectant wipes, liquid dish soap, "Arm and Hammer for Sensitive Skin" liquid laundry soap, Kleenex, and chucks. Donations of these items, and other medical and hygiene items, are always accepted and very much appreciated

SPECIALIZED HEALTH CARE INFORMATION

Medical and Health Requirements

Required Paperwork

All school-related medical paperwork must be completed and signed by **both the parent/guardian and the student's physician** before the student begins the new school year. If a physician prescribes a new procedure during the school year, the appropriate paperwork must also be completed **before** the procedure can begin at school.

Medication Policy

- Any medication administered at school must have a **current doctor's order**.
- All medications must be delivered to the school in their **original prescription containers**.
- The school **cannot provide any medication**, including over-the-counter medications like Tylenol or Motrin.
- Parents must supply the school with a **minimum one-week or one-month supply** of medication.
- A **72-hour emergency supply** must be kept at school at all times.
- Medications will **not** be sent back and forth daily between home and school.

Emergency Medication Supply

To ensure student safety in the event of a **natural disaster, emergency, or lockdown**, each student must have a **72-hour supply** of all required medications stored at school. This is a countywide recommendation and is essential for preparedness.

Medical Supplies and Equipment

Parents/guardians are responsible for **providing and maintaining** all necessary medical supplies and equipment,

including but not limited to:

- G-tube gauze and replacement kits
- Mic-Key extensions
- Formula and feeding supplies
- Suction machines and oxygen monitors
- Nebulizers and medications
- Diapers and wipes
- Any other individualized health care items required by the student

Please note:

- **Friendship School does not supply medical equipment or supplies.**
- Equipment must be in **working condition**. If a device (e.g., suction machine or oxygen monitor) is not functioning properly, your child **may not remain at school** until it is replaced or repaired.
- If your child uses a G-tube, an **extra extension and replacement kit** must be stored at school.
- If your child is on oxygen, an **extra O2 sensor** must also be available on site.

Emergency Contact Information

It is critical that the school has accurate and up-to-date **contact information** for parents and emergency contacts.

- In the event of a health emergency, the school nurse will attempt to contact parents and the listed emergency contacts.
- If no one can be reached, the student may be transported to the **nearest hospital for evaluation**. Hospital staff will then contact the parent or guardian.

Return to School After Hospitalization or Emergency Care

Students who have undergone surgery, been hospitalized, or visited the emergency room **must provide a written clearance from the attending physician** (not a nurse) before returning to school.

If any **medical procedures** conducted at school are affected or altered due to the hospitalization, **updated physician orders must be submitted** to the school **prior to the student's return**.

This ensures the safety and well-being of your child while at school and allows staff to provide appropriate care in accordance with medical guidance.

GUIDELINES FOR SENDING STUDENTS HOME

Guidelines for Sending a Student Home Due to Illness

To ensure the health and safety of all students and staff, the following criteria will be used as guidelines for determining when a student should be sent home due to illness:

1. **Fever**

- A temperature of **100°F (axillary)**, confirmed by two readings taken 30 minutes apart with no downward change.
- Students sent home due to fever must remain home for **at least 24 hours** after the last recorded fever **without the use of fever-reducing medications** (e.g., Tylenol, Motrin).
- If your child has a fever overnight or in the morning, **please do not medicate and send them to school**. They should remain home to prevent the spread of illness.

2. **Cough**

A student with a cough may be sent home if any of the following are present:

- Sneezing, runny nose, or congestion **and/or** a fever
- Use of PRN (as-needed) medications such as Tylenol, Motrin, or Albuterol
- Noticeable change in health status
- Presence of **green drainage** or sputum

3. Vomiting (Emesis)

- Student will be sent home if experiencing:
 - “Coffee-ground” like emesis
 - Projectile vomiting
 - Large amounts or frequent small amounts of vomiting
- **Emergency response** will be initiated if vomiting includes blood or occurs after a fall.

4. Diarrhea (Loose, Watery Stools)

- Student will be observed after the **first two** watery stools and sent home after the **third**.
- If additional symptoms are present, the student may be sent home after the **second** watery stool.
- Persistent daily diarrhea requires a written statement from a **health care provider (HCP)** confirming that no viral, bacterial, or parasitic condition exists.
- If loose stools are due to a diagnosed **medical condition or food intolerance**, a note from the HCP is required. Without documentation, standard guidelines will apply.
- Students sent home for diarrhea may return to school **24 hours after their last loose stool**, without the use of anti-diarrheal medications (e.g., Pepto-Bismol).

5. Seizures

- A student may be sent home if a seizure is of such **magnitude or frequency** that it interferes with their ability to participate in their school program. **The school nurse has the final authority to determine whether a student should be sent home due to any medical condition or symptom that may impact the student’s health or the well-being of others**
- Per Friendship School policy, **any student who receives Diastat or Valtoco while at school must go home following administration.**

6. Contagious Diseases or Skin Conditions

- Students with a **contagious illness that is not under treatment** or a **non-specific rash** (e.g., chickenpox, shingles, scabies, lice) will be sent home.
 - **Fever with a rash** will result in the student being sent home.
 - **Fever blisters or open mouth sores:** Students must remain home until all lesions are dry and no longer contagious.
 - If your child is sent home due to symptoms of a possible contagious condition, a **note from their healthcare provider** will be required for them to return to school

7. Other Medical Concerns

Additional health concerns—such as pneumonia, persistent coughing with thick yellow or green sputum, or other signs of physical distress—will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the school nurse and/or principal. **The school nurse has the final authority to determine whether a student should be sent home due to any medical condition or symptom that may impact the student's health or the well-being of others.** We ask that you keep your child home if they are not acting like themselves or are exhibiting any signs of illness, including flu-like symptoms. Your partnership is essential in helping us prevent the spread of germs and maintain a safe and healthy environment for all students and staff. As a reminder, students should remain home until they are symptom-free for at least 24 hours without the use of medications.

COVID-19 Guidelines/Infectious Illness Guidelines

At Friendship School, we are committed to maintaining a safe and healthy environment for our students and staff. Our COVID-19 guidelines are designed to promote hygiene, minimize the spread of illness, and ensure that all community members feel protected and supported.

Promoting Healthy Hygiene Practices

Staff will teach and reinforce proper hygiene practices, including regular handwashing, avoiding contact with the face, and covering coughs and sneezes. Students and staff are expected to wash their hands before and after eating, after coughing or sneezing, after outdoor activities, and before and after using the restroom. Handwashing should last at least 20 seconds using soap and water, followed by thorough drying with paper or single-use cloth towels. When handwashing is not feasible, fragrance-free hand sanitizer will be used and rubbed in until dry. Ethyl alcohol-based sanitizers are preferred, as isopropyl-based products may be more toxic and are more easily absorbed through the skin. Staff will model and monitor proper hand hygiene practices, especially for younger students.

Use of Face Coverings

All staff will have access to KN95 masks or face shields and may use them at their discretion. Students and staff will be reminded not to touch their face coverings and to continue washing their hands frequently. Families and staff will receive clear guidance on the correct use, removal, and cleaning of cloth face coverings. Friendship School will maintain adequate supplies to support hygiene practices, including soap, tissues, face coverings, and hand sanitizers with at least 60% ethyl alcohol for those who can safely use them.

Cleaning, Disinfection, and Ventilation

Frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, light switches, sink handles, bathroom surfaces, tables, and wheelchairs will be cleaned and disinfected daily and as frequently as practicable throughout the day by trained staff. The sharing of materials such as toys, games, and art supplies will be minimized; when sharing is necessary, items will be cleaned and disinfected between uses.

Cleaning products will be selected from the EPA-approved list “N” for use against COVID-19, with a preference for those that contain asthma-safer ingredients such as hydrogen peroxide, citric acid, or lactic acid. Products with ingredients like peroxyacetic acid, bleach (sodium hypochlorite), or quaternary ammonium compounds will be avoided to reduce asthma risk. All staff will receive proper training on the safe use of these products per manufacturer guidelines, Cal/OSHA regulations, and the Healthy Schools Act.

A cleaning and disinfecting schedule will be established to prevent overuse or underuse of cleaning products.

Disinfectants will be applied safely and stored away from students. Ventilation will be maximized by opening windows and doors to allow fresh air during and after cleaning. When air conditioning is used, settings will be adjusted to bring in fresh air, and air filters will be regularly checked and replaced to maintain optimal air quality.

Limiting the Sharing of Materials

Each student's personal belongings will be kept in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or designated areas. High-touch materials will be disinfected between uses.

Monitoring for Signs and Symptoms

Friendship School is committed to equity and inclusion and will not discriminate against any student or family who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. We actively encourage any student or staff member who is ill or who has had recent close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home. Throughout the school day, students and staff will be monitored for signs of illness. Anyone presenting with a fever of 100°F (axillary) or higher, a persistent cough, or other COVID-19 symptoms will be sent home.

CALIFORNIA ASSESSMENT INFORMATION

California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP).

The California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) is the state's academic testing program designed to monitor student progress annually. CAASPP includes computer-adaptive tests in English Language Arts/Literacy (ELA) and mathematics for students in grades 3 through 8 and grade 11, as well as a the science test for students in grades 5, 8, and 10. The California Alternate Assessment (CAA) serves as the alternate assessment for ELA and mathematics for eligible students.

The purpose of the CAASPP system has evolved from generating annual accountability reports to providing valuable information that supports teachers, administrators, students, and parents in improving teaching and learning throughout the school year, in accordance with Education Code 60602(a). CAASPP results, combined with other available data, help evaluate the effectiveness of curricula and programs and inform instructional planning.

As a parent or guardian, you have the right to excuse your child from any part of the CAASPP assessments. To excuse your child from the California Alternate Assessment (CAA), you must submit a written request to your child's teacher, as specified by Education Code 60615. We will honor your request accordingly.

Home and Hospital Instruction (HHI)

If your child is expected to be out of school for an extended period (more than two weeks) due to surgery or illness, **your home school district** may provide Home and Hospital Instruction (HHI) as a short-term educational service. Upon receiving a doctor's note explaining the need for the extended absence, an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting will be scheduled within five days to adjust services to meet your child's needs during home instruction.

The doctor's note must include:

- A clear diagnosis or medical condition
- Certification that the student cannot attend a less-restrictive environment (such as a regular classroom)
- The anticipated date when the student will return to school

Home-based instruction is intended as a temporary service while your child is recovering. Once your child is medically cleared to return, an IEP amendment meeting will be held to transition them back to school. If the student cannot return, another IEP meeting will take place to explore alternative placement options.

When recommending HHI, the IEP team requires a medical report from the attending physician, surgeon, or psychologist confirming the diagnosis and certifying that the severity of the condition prevents attendance in a less-restrictive setting, in accordance with 5 CCR §3051.4(d).

Please note that if parents do not provide relevant health or medical information needed to determine eligibility for HHI, the district may deny the request (Student v. Torrance USD, OAH No. 2008040111).

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION GUIDELINES

Parent Classroom Visits and Observations

Parents are always welcome to visit their child's classroom. To ensure a positive and focused learning environment, we ask that you avoid stopping by your child's room unannounced or engaging the teacher in conversation during instructional time, as this can be disruptive.

Please follow these guidelines for scheduling and conducting classroom observations:

- Observations must be scheduled in advance with both the classroom teacher and school administration. Please try to request at least one week ahead of time.

- Sign in and out at the main office upon arrival and departure.
- Wear the visitor ID tag provided by the office while on campus.
- To minimize disruption, you may be asked to sit in an area away from direct contact with students.
- Observations should be limited to 30 minutes per visit.
- Observations are recommended to occur no more than once per month.
- Parents may schedule separate meetings with the teacher for conferences outside of observation times.
- The teacher reserves the right to modify or adjust observation terms as needed.
- All observations will be accompanied by site administration

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Attendance Policy and Guidelines

The Friendship School staff sincerely thanks you for your ongoing support in keeping your child safe, healthy, and attending school regularly.

Attendance Requirements

- Regular, on-time attendance is required by law.
- Parents/guardians of children ages 6 to 18 are responsible for ensuring their child attends school full-time.
- Consistent attendance and punctuality are critical for student learning and success. We encourage scheduling medical and dental appointments outside school hours whenever possible.
- If attendance concerns arise, Friendship School will hold an IEP meeting-including a representative from your home district-to address the issue. Continued concerns may result in referral to your home district for truancy or SARB (School Attendance Review Board) proceedings.

Reporting Absences

- California law (Title 5 CCR § 306) requires parents or guardians to provide a written or verbal explanation for every student absence.
- Please notify the school office within three days of your child's absence by calling 858-298-2213 and

provide the reason for the absence. Parents may also text an absence and an absence reason to (619)-800-6488. Please note: **this is a TEXT ONLY line and does not receive calls.**

- Failure to report an absence may result in it being marked unexcused, which counts as truancy.
- Our Administrative Assistant will call parents daily to verify unreported absences. Please ensure your contact information is current in the school office.

Legally Excused Absences (California Education Code § 48205)

A student may be excused for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness or injury
2. Medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic appointments
3. Attendance at funeral services for an immediate family member
4. Exclusion due to failure to present immunization records
5. Exclusion due to contagious disease or lack of immunization
6. Sent home ill by the school health office, provided the student was present for roll call
7. Other reasons approved by the principal upon written parent/guardian request, including but not limited to:
 - a. Court appearances
 - b. Observance of religious holidays or ceremonies
 - c. Funeral services for non-immediate family members
 - d. Parent returning from active military deployment

Early Release and Late Arrival for Medical Services (California Education Code § 49602)

- Students must provide a doctor's note to be excused for late arrivals or early dismissals due to medical appointments.
- Late school bus arrivals will not be counted as tardy or unexcused.
- Any other late arrivals or early dismissals without a doctor's note will be marked unexcused.

Unexcused Absences and Truancy (California Education Code §§ 48260-48273)

Unexcused absences include:

- Absences, tardies, or early dismissals without a valid excuse.
- A student with three unexcused absences is considered truant.
- Parents will receive monthly mail notifications once their child accumulates three or more unexcused absences.
- Absences can impact your child's progress on IEP goals. Significant regression may result in an IEP team meeting to discuss your child's needs.

Chronic Truancy (California Education Code § 48263.6 and Penal Code § 270.1)

- A student absent without excuse for 10% or more of school days is considered a chronic truant, assuming proper district notifications have been made.
- Parents of chronic truants may face fines up to \$2,000 and/or jail time up to one year.

District staff and community agencies collaborate to resolve attendance issues before referring cases to court. All available resources will be exhausted prior to legal action.

TRANSPORTATION

District of Residence Transportation Service

- Please notify your district's Transportation Office if your child will be absent.
- Contact the district's Transportation Office when your child is ready to return to school after a prolonged absence.
- Ensure your student is ready at the designated pick-up time. Drivers will wait only 1 to 3 minutes; if the student is not at the bus stop, the bus will proceed without them.
- If the bus is late or does not arrive, please contact your district's Transportation Office directly.
- Please note that Friendship School does **not** provide transportation and cannot offer transportation information, as services are managed by your child's district of residence

Transportation Phone Numbers

Chula Vista Elementary School District 619-656-5600

Coronado Unified School District (619) 522-8900 x1043

National School District 619-336-7706

San Ysidro School District 619-428-4476

South Bay Union School District 619-628-3586

Sweetwater Union High School District 619-585-4454

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAM

This is an optional program, and parents are welcome to provide food from home if they prefer. All food served is modified according to each student's physician's orders, and all staff members hold valid food handler's certifications.

Food and beverages at Friendship School align with the nutrition recommendations of the U.S. Dietary Guidelines. The South Bay Union School District offers students a variety of appealing, nutritious options that meet their health needs.

Friendship School and the South Bay Union School District, which provides our meals, participate in the California School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, serving meals every school day. Breakfast and Lunch are currently available at no cost to families. Friendship School will need a copy of the most recent swallow study and a completed eating/feeding evaluation, signed by parent and physician, for students who will receive breakfast and lunch at school.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Friendship School Emergency Preparedness

Friendship School is committed to responding promptly and effectively to any emergency situations that may affect students and staff. In compliance with state law, we conduct monthly drills for fire, earthquake, and lockdown scenarios. Our emergency operations plan follows the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Incident Command System (ICS), ensuring a coordinated and efficient response to various emergencies.

Each year, we review and update our Emergency Management Plans to align with county-wide procedures, helping us manage situations such as lockdowns, relocations, and parent/child reunifications. Your child's IEP team will also include any specific safety and evacuation plans tailored to your student's individual needs.

We use an all-call messaging system to promptly notify parents and guardians about emergencies, including lockdowns, school closures, or other urgent events. It is crucial that we have your current phone number and email to keep you informed. During emergencies such as lockdowns or closures, please do not come to the school until official instructions are given. In most cases, staff will be fully engaged with students and unable to answer phones.

In rare cases, Friendship School may close the campus to protect students and relocate them to a safe site. In these situations, we coordinate closely with law enforcement to ensure an orderly release of students to their parents or guardians. Please wait for the "all-clear" from law enforcement before coming to the school, as your presence could disrupt emergency response efforts.

Given the unique needs of our students, every Individualized Education Program (IEP) team is required to discuss and document personalized emergency and evacuation procedures for each student. Classroom teachers are responsible for training their classroom teams on these individualized plans.

To ensure all students are safely evacuated during emergencies, Friendship School maintains a maximum staff-to-student ratio of 1:3 and utilizes a buddy system. Auxiliary staff are assigned to classrooms to support mobility, transfers, and secure evacuation. Each classroom designates three staff members to specific roles:

- **Staff Member A** remains in the classroom until all students and staff have been evacuated.
- **Staff Member B** stays at the evacuation site with the students who have been safely relocated.
- **Staff Member C** assists in transporting students, moving between the classroom and evacuation zone until everyone is accounted for.

All classrooms are equipped with individualized mobility and positioning devices for each student, and staff are

trained in their use.

A **school lockdown** is a protective action taken when there is a credible threat from an armed perpetrator either approaching the campus, on campus, or within the school building. The goal of a lockdown is to isolate students, staff, and visitors from the threat while law enforcement and emergency services respond. Lockdown procedures are practiced regularly to ensure that all staff know how to respond swiftly and appropriately in the event of an emergency.

Your child's safety is our highest priority, and we will keep you informed throughout any emergency via our all-call system.

COMMUNITY OUTINGS

Community-Based Instruction

Throughout the school year, community-based instruction (CBI) may be included in your student's schedule. This instruction enriches classroom learning by providing opportunities to engage with community resources. Typically, CBI takes place on Thursday mornings, with additional activities planned occasionally throughout the year. All outings are supervised and led by a teacher and/or the occupational therapist and speech therapist, who carefully plan each activity.

At the start of the school year, parents will receive a calendar outlining the scheduled CBI dates. Annual permission for your child's participation is required, usually completed at the beginning of the school year.

Parents and family members are warmly encouraged to join these outings to help increase the number of students who can participate.

Examples of community-based outings include trips to:

- Library
- Beach
- Park
- Estuary
- Grocery Outlet

During these experiences, students have the chance to engage with their community by purchasing items, playing structured team games, socializing with peers, and participating in activities such as scavenger hunts. Every student is supported in a one to one ratio, will carry their school ID, and staff will ensure the group stays together. An emergency backpack, including medical supports will also travel with the group.

SCHOOL WIDE EVENTS

Throughout the year, Friendship School hosts a variety of school-wide events, including Back to School Night, the Fall Festival, Spooky Kitchen, World Bazaar, Read Across America/Spirit Week, the Wheel-A-Thon, Prom, and Graduation.

A calendar of these events will be sent home at the start of each school year and will also be available on the Friendship School website: <https://www.sdcoe.net/schools/friendship>. These activities enrich our curriculum by engaging students with seasonal themes, promoting socialization and communication, and incorporating sensory experiences.

School-wide events are planned collaboratively by Related Service Providers, teachers, and administration to ensure meaningful participation for all. Parents are warmly encouraged to take part in these events. The school administration will notify parents via email and notes home ahead of each event. We kindly ask parents to RSVP if they plan to attend in person to help us with planning.

Social Skills Lab Program

On Thursday afternoons we participate in a rotating Social Skills lab activity. Teachers take turns hosting the activity in their classrooms and the OT and SLP will support and lead all of the Social Skills Labs except on the second Thursday of each month. Labs may be Bingo, crafts, games, Chat and Chill, or any other social communication skills the OT and SLP want to integrate into this setting. The Social Skills Lab program is part of our model of delivering embedded speech, language, and movement/sensory supports as outlined in every student's IEP.

School Clubs Program

One Thursday afternoon each month will be dedicated to our School Clubs Program. This annual program is driven by student interests and provides opportunities for cross-age and cross-grade interactions centered around shared interests. It also offers students access to experiences commonly available on comprehensive school campuses.

This initiative aligns with the SDCOE Strategic Plan by fostering belonging through transformative experiences. Based on their selected interests, students will be grouped into clubs of approximately 3–5 participants. Each classroom will host a club, and the teacher in that room will facilitate a 60-minute activity or lesson related to the club theme (e.g., Music Club, Animation Club). Part of the consultative model of SLP and OT supports are available to teachers to plan and facilitate these activities.

Classified staff will support student movement and access across classrooms, and site administration will provide a support schedule each month to ensure the program runs smoothly.

Buddy Program(s)

Friendship School welcomes opportunities to collaborate with agencies, schools, and community programs to enhance learning experiences for all students. These partnerships are developed in collaboration with organizations that share a commitment to creating transformative experiences that elevate all learners while fostering inclusion, belonging, and meaningful connections.

Friendship School currently participates in two buddy programs:

On alternate Thursdays, students from JCCS Global Academy partner with Friendship School students during community-based instructional activities. Buddies actively participate in the activities, support student access, encourage engagement, and help foster social connections. The JCCS buddy program is coordinated with Global Academy staff, and students are accompanied by one to two teachers during each event.

In addition, one Thursday each month during our School Clubs Program, buddies from the Youth Transition Campus (YTC) join Friendship School students on campus to participate in school clubs. YTC buddies engage alongside students, provide support, and help promote inclusive participation in club activities. YTC students are transported by YTC staff and are always accompanied by members of both the educational and probation teams.

Through these partnerships, Friendship School is able to provide authentic opportunities for students to build relationships, develop social skills, and experience a greater sense of community and belonging.

DESIGNATED INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

Students identified as requiring supplemental services receive support according to their agreed-upon IEP. These services may be provided as direct designated instruction or as consultation and can be delivered by Friendship School, your District of Residence, your SELPA, or a combination of these providers.

Physical and Occupational Therapy (PT/OT)

Consultation services for classroom teachers are provided by California Children's Services (CCS) for students eligible for CCS support. CCS also manages durable medical equipment, orthopedic concerns, and medically related therapy needs for eligible students.

School-based Occupational Therapy services follow the student's IEP and focus on maximizing each student's ability to learn and interact within the school environment. Occupational therapists collaborate closely with teachers and staff to incorporate sensory activities into the school day. These activities enhance body awareness, alertness, attention, tolerance for new textures, acceptance of hand-over-hand assistance, and help reduce self-stimulatory or self-injurious behaviors.

Speech/Language Services

Speech and language services are provided according to the IEP. Students are encouraged to actively participate in developing and using communication skills to their fullest potential.

Assistive Technology (AT)

Assistive technology services are provided as specified in the IEP to support functional skills and access needs. The AT specialist works alongside teachers and other providers to evaluate, select, and customize devices, as well as train staff and students in their effective use.

School Nurse Services

The school nurse monitors student health during school hours and coordinates communication between home and other healthcare agencies. The nurse oversees specialized healthcare procedures such as G-tube feedings, tracheostomy and oral suctioning, medication administration, and blood sugar monitoring. Training is provided for staff who assist with these procedures. The nurse also conducts health assessments, including vision and hearing screenings, especially during student re-evaluations.

Itinerant Support for the Visually Impaired (VI)

VI services are available for students with visual impairments that impact their educational performance, including both partial sight and blindness. These services are provided by the student's district of residence.

Audiological Services

Audiological support, including hearing level monitoring and auditory equipment management, is provided as required by the student's IEP through the South County SELPA audiologist.

INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM AT FRIENDSHIP

A core belief and practice at Friendship School is to presume competence. Presuming competence means believing that every student is capable of thinking, learning, understanding, and communicating regardless of how they currently show it. When we don't know what a student can do, we choose the least dangerous assumption, and provide opportunities and access to avoid limiting potential and growth. This belief system promotes dignity and respect, builds confidence and independence, leads to higher expectations and outcomes, and ensures students are given real opportunities to learn. In practice this may look like:

- Speaking to students in age-appropriate, respectful language
- Provide robust communication systems (AAC, visuals, choices)
- Offer grade-level content with appropriate supports
- Include students in conversations and decision-making
- Allow wait time and multiple ways to respond
- Focus on strengths and possibilities

It does NOT look like:

- Lowering expectations based on disability or behavior
- Speaking *about* students instead of *to* them
- Limiting communication to basic wants/needs

- Waiting for students to “prove readiness” before teaching

We believe every student can learn and deserves access to high quality instruction , materials, and supports to thrive at Friendship School.

To support a robust instructional program at Friendship our staff:

Engage in ongoing Professional Learning through PLC’s, staff meetings, and other opportunities connected to SDCOE and the South County SELPA, staff are encouraged to seek out relevant trainings

Use research based strategies to provide instruction that is aligned with CCSS

Intentionally plan for instruction using a scope and sequence, daily schedules, CCSS curriculum, and only rely on media that supports learning and can account for that connection to CCSS

Collaborate, co teach, co plan, and use planning and PD time to improve practice and ensure all staff can speak to instructional supports,strategies, and student learning goals

MEDI-CAL NOTICE

NOTIFICATION OF INTENT TO BILL CALIFORNIA MEDI-CAL FOR HEALTH RELATED SPECIAL EDUCATION AND RELATED SERVICES

Medi-Cal Local Education Agency (LEA) Billing Option

The San Diego County Office of Education – Friendship School may submit claims to California Medi-Cal for covered services provided to Medi-Cal-eligible children enrolled in special education programs. The Medi-Cal LEA program enables school districts and county offices of education (COEs) to receive federal funding to support health-related special education and related services.

Please be aware of the following:

- Information about your child and family is strictly confidential.
- Your rights are protected under federal laws including Title 34 Code of Federal Regulations §300.154, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974 (Title 20 U.S.C. §1232g), and Title 34 Code of Federal Regulations §99.
- Your consent to participate in the Medi-Cal LEA program is given during your child's annual IEP meeting and remains valid for one year unless you choose to withdraw it earlier. Consent can be renewed annually at the IEP meeting.

Your consent is voluntary and can be revoked at any time; however, revocation is not retroactive. Choosing not to consent will not affect your child's eligibility for or access to community-based services provided outside the school setting. If you refuse to consent to the school district and/or COE accessing Medi-Cal to fund health-related special education and related services, all such services will still be provided to your child at no cost to you.

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Office of Education

Deborah Montoya Ed.D

South County SELPA Director

IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

Friendship School Office 858-298-2213

District Special Education Departments

Coronado Unified School District (619) 522-8900 ex 1043
Chula Vista Elementary School District 619-425-9600 ask for Special Education
National School District 619-336-7500 ask for Special Education
San Ysidro School District 619-428-4476 ask for Special Education
South Bay Union School District 619-628-1600 ask for Special Education
Sweetwater Union High School District 619-796-7500

California Children Service (CCS)

Greg Rogers Medical Therapy Unit (MTU) 619-421-6083

San Diego Regional Center

4355 Ruffin Road, San Diego 92123 Suite 200 (Main Office) (858) 576-2996

San Diego Regional Center South Bay Phone: (619) 336-6600 Fax: (619) 477-6248
2720 Hoover Ave., Suite 100
National City 91950

Exceptional Family Resource Center 9245 Sky Park Court, Suite 130
San Diego, CA 92123 WEBSITE: www.efrconline.org

South County Special Education Local Plan Area (SELPA)

2727 Hoover Ave Ste. 202, National City, CA; Ph: 619-470-5252

Additional Resources:

IDEA: <http://idea.ed.gov/>
California Department of Education: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/>
Special Education: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/>
Council for Exceptional Children: <http://www.cec.sped.org/>

