



SCHOLARMADE[®]
Achievement Place of Arkansas

PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

2025-2026
Scholarmade[®]



SCHOLARMADE ACHIEVEMENT PLACE OF ARKANSAS PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

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This Handbook is effective July 1, 2025. This Handbook supersedes all prior handbooks and policies covered herein. This handbook will be provided in an alternative format such as Braille, large print, or audio upon request. At any time, I may obtain another copy of this handbook by requesting an electronic or paper copy from my office manager. No part of this handbook may be distributed, printed, reproduced, or sold without the express written consent of Scholarmade Achievement Place.



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Dear Team Member,

Welcome to Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas. As a not-for-profit organization, we are dedicated to expanding educational opportunities for children and families throughout our community. In this handbook, “Scholarmade” refers collectively to all affiliated entities unless otherwise noted.

The policies, procedures, and workplace expectations you’ll find here were shaped by staff surveys and insights from our School-Based Management Team. Please review them carefully. These guidelines may be updated at any time, and you will receive prompt notification of any official changes.

We value the expertise and commitment you bring to our school. Together, we will cultivate a collaborative, inclusive environment that honors the rich diversity of our staff, scholars, and families. Scholarmade proudly maintains a nondiscriminatory workplace and a “Safe Place” for every member of our community.

This handbook is provided in digital form. After reviewing its contents, please sign the acknowledgment page electronically via Adobe and submit it to Human Resources by your first day of employment. Completion of this acknowledgment is required as part of your new-hire or rehire paperwork; your pay may be withheld until it is received.

We are thrilled to have you join our team and look forward to the difference we will make together.

Achieve More!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Phillis N. Anderson".

DR. PHILLIS N. ANDERSON

Chief Executive Officer and Founder pnicholsanderson@Scholarmade.org



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OVERVIEW OF SCHOLARMADE

Who We Are

ScholarMade Achievement Place is a national nonprofit that opened its first public charter school in Little Rock's historic Mitchell Building in August 2018. Our mission is to transform the lives of students and families, many of whom come from low-income, minority backgrounds—by accelerating academic achievement and growth through an innovative program.

Why We Exist

We are committed to closing the opportunity and achievement gaps that perpetuate income inequality and limit life prospects for communities of color. By equipping scholars with the skills and support they need, we aim to break the cycle of poverty and create lasting change.

How We Do It

- Integrated Technology-Enabled Learning: Scholars engage with personalized, anytime-anywhere instruction supported by an extended school year and longer instructional days.
- Professional Teacher Development: Ongoing training ensures educators deliver rigorous, culturally responsive instruction.
- Emotional Intelligence: Social and emotional learning is woven into every aspect of our program to foster resilience and self-regulation.
- Family and Community Partnerships: Academic Parent-Teacher Teams invite families into the learning process, while collaborations with local associations and wellness organizations provide place-based experiences that reinforce classroom learning.

Together—a community of families, teachers, leaders, and staff, ScholarMade prepares scholars for high school, college, and beyond, opening doors to opportunities they deserve.

Our Mission

Our mission is to prepare scholars through emotional intelligence and personalized learning to be self-confident, intellectually inquisitive, emotionally intelligent, and academically competent beings. Our Scholars will become leaders and problem-solvers who will improve conditions wherever they choose to work and live.

Our Creed

ScholarMade believes that all our children can demonstrate excellence in academia and human decency. As the world is built upon both logic and principle, both discipline and creativity, so too can every child be made of academic ambition and empathetic fiber.

ScholarMade believes that scholastic excellence can be the foundation upon which every child builds extraordinary monuments in humanities, economics, technology, and the arts.

ScholarMade serves so that all children will be empowered to set and pursue their goals with steadfast resilience and instilled with the desire to lead their communities through service.

ScholarMade believes that all children are made for more.

Our Brand

“Our Brand” signifies hope for a better tomorrow for communities and children who have been traditionally left behind and set aside. We desire to instill a love for learning and community in every child and family that we are fortunate to serve.

Our Name

SCHOLARMADE: Every child has the potential to be a Scholar and our Signature Learning Experience will make each child into a Scholar. One who is guided by other scholars, normally known as a teacher, one who loves learning and who actively pursues new knowledge that will be used to benefit self and community.



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Our Affirmation

WE LOOK TO THE H.I.L.L.S. TO REMEMBER OUR RESPONSIBILITIES.
HONOR IN EVERY INTERACTION,
INTELLIGENCE IN EVERY DECISION,
LEARNING FROM EVERY CHALLENGE
LEADERSHIP IN EVERY SITUATION,
SERVICE TO EVERY PERSON.

Our Mascot and Colors

Our mascot is the **Monarch** because our children are kings and queens made for more. The Lioness is ambitious, driven, fierce, resilient, and compassionate. She takes care of her community, her friends, and her family. Our schools' colors are **Navy** and **Maroon** representing compassion, confidence, courage, wisdom, intelligence, truth, creativity, prosperity, power, renewal, growth, harmony, love, and ambition.

Our Core Competencies

Our programs, systems and procedures reflect POWER core values:

PURSUIT: the emotional urge to explore and understand ideas and the active urge to learn more about a topic.

OPTIMISM: a student's beliefs that they have the emotional capacity to navigate the social world in an effective manner, accomplishing his or her goals as needed.

WIN: a student's belief that he or she possesses intellect, reasoning, assertiveness, and motivation to be successful in life.

EMPATHY: including a feeling for others, sympathetic reactions to their feelings, and imaginative involvement in how the other person might be feeling.

RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS: observable acts of the students that lead to emotional and social effectiveness of interactions with others.

Our Core Beliefs

We share the following fundamental beliefs about our work:

All children deserve access to excellent public schools.

All children can achieve at high levels.

Parents are our partners and play a significant role in the education of their child.

We are good stewards of the resources we have and place children first in all decisions.

Our History

Dr. Phillis N. Anderson founded Scholarmade Achievement Place in July 2015 and serves as its CEO and Chief Executive Officer. Over the course of her career, she taught and administered in the Little Rock School District, District of Columbia Public Schools, and Prince George's County (MD) Public Schools. As Senior Vice President at Lighthouse Academies, Inc., Dr. Anderson pioneered the network's entry into Arkansas—opening its first state schools, including one on a military installation—and went on to launch and manage campuses in Oklahoma, Detroit, Milwaukee, New York, and Washington, DC.

On September 14, 2017, the Arkansas State Board of Education granted Scholarmade its charter as a three-school, single-site public charter. Scholarmade welcomed its inaugural class of 280 scholars on August 13, 2018—a date now celebrated each year as Founder's Day. In January 2023, the State Board renewed our charter for a seven-year term. Today, Scholarmade serves K–8 learners through Ivy Hill Preparatory Academy, which comprises the Lower Academy (K–4) and Upper Academy (5–8).

CODE OF CONDUCT

All SAPA employees champion our schools' mission and policies. The Head of School guides the faculty to embody and advance these goals, while Assistant Heads oversee their academies. Beyond teaching, faculty serve as problem solvers and ambassadors for Scholarmade. We expect every team member to bring enthusiasm, deep expertise in their subject areas, and the highest standards of integrity and character.



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We shall support the mission of the school, which is to prepare students for college through a personalized learning program. We strive to create within our students a love of learning, intellectual curiosity, and a sense of duty to the community, enabling them to make thoughtful and morally informed decisions throughout their lives. We believe in the potential of each child and the concept that internal motivation can be developed and nurtured, while students also appreciate individual differences.

We treat students, colleagues and families with fairness and respect, upholding everyone's civil rights. Discrimination of any kind—race, culture, religion, gender identity, age, socioeconomic status, disability or political belief—is unacceptable. Collaboration matters. We embrace shared responsibility, working together to achieve our goals. Our communications—written and spoken—reflect courtesy, confidentiality and respect for privacy.

We maintain emotional discipline, responding calmly and thoughtfully in every situation. Patience, empathy and sound judgment guide our interactions, protecting the dignity of everyone in our community. Academic integrity is nonnegotiable. We avoid conflicts of interest and ensure personal affiliations never influence our decisions or performance. As stewards of public funds, we manage resources responsibly and transparently.

DESE Rules Governing the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators

All Staff with a valid Arkansas teaching license (or not) are required to abide by the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators. Scholarmade is required by law to report any violations of the Code of Ethics. Using profanity towards or in the presence of students and parents, touching a student, threatening a student, not supervising a student, and failure to plan lessons and provide effective instruction are all violations of the Code of Ethics. Violations are required to be reported for investigation to DESE

The ADE Rules Governing the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators further define these standards and provide a process for investigating alleged violations.

What is expected of Arkansas Educators?

Standard 1: An educator maintains a professional relationship with each student, both in and outside the classroom.

Standard 2: An educator maintains competence regarding his or her professional practice inclusive of skills, knowledge, dispositions, and responsibilities relating to his or her organizational position.

Standard 3: An educator honestly fulfills reporting obligations associated with professional practices.

Standard 4: An educator entrusted with public funds and property, including school sponsored activity funds, honors that trust honest, responsible stewardship.

Standard 5: An educator maintains integrity regarding the acceptance of any gratuity, gift, compensation, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions and shall refrain from using the educator's position for personal gain.

Standard 6: An educator keeps in confidence secure standardized test materials and results and maintains integrity regarding test administration procedures.

Standard 7: An educator maintains the confidentiality of information about students and colleagues obtained in the course of the educator's professional services that is protected under state law or regulations, federal law or regulations, or the written policies of the educator's school district, unless disclosure serves a professional purpose as allowed or required by law or regulations.

Standard 8: An educator refrains from using, possessing and/or being under the influence of alcohol or unauthorized drugs/substances and/or possessing items prohibited by law, or possessing or using tobacco or tobacco.

Professionalism

At Scholarmade, professionalism underpins every interaction and shapes our reputation. Staff and teachers manage their time effectively, communicate clearly, deliver assignments punctually and present themselves with appropriate attire. When challenges arise, we draw on emotional intelligence, staying calm, listening actively and seeking



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solutions. As representatives of our school's brand, staff members safeguard its integrity in every public setting. We focus on constructive problem-solving and uphold relationships and culture at all times.

STANDARD EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Equal Employment Opportunity

Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas is committed to fostering a workplace free from unlawful discrimination. We provide equal employment opportunities to all employees and applicants without regard to race, color, religion, creed, sex (including pregnancy), gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, genetic information, marital status, ancestry, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local law. This policy applies to all terms and conditions of employment, including recruitment, hiring, promotion, compensation, benefits, training, and termination. Scholarmade complies fully with Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Equal Pay Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Arkansas Civil Rights Act, and all other applicable statutes.

Employees who believe they have experienced or witnessed discrimination, or retaliation should report the matter immediately to the Executive Director (humanresources@Scholarmade.org). All concerns will be treated confidentially to the greatest extent possible, investigated promptly, and resolved without fear of retaliation. Anyone found to have engaged in discrimination or retaliation will be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination.

Reasonable Accommodation

Scholarmade will provide reasonable accommodation to qualified individuals with disabilities to enable them to perform the essential functions of their positions or to enjoy equal access to benefits and privileges of employment, unless doing so would impose an undue hardship on the organization. Applicants or employees who require accommodation should notify Human Resources or their manager as early as possible—ideally when applying or immediately upon recognizing the needs so that their request can be addressed promptly. Requests will be evaluated on an individualized basis and in accordance with applicable law.

Background Checks

Scholarmade requires all prospective employees, contractors, and volunteers—paid or unpaid—to complete a background check before beginning any services. Anyone likely to work directly with children is disqualified for life if convicted of violent or sexual offenses (such as murder, rape or child molestation) and for ten years following any conviction for battery, contributing to a minor's delinquency, weapons or controlled-substance offenses, or obscenity involving minors. Individuals who will handle school or student finances—or access confidential information—are disqualified for ten years after any felony involving dishonesty (including fraud, theft, burglary or embezzlement) or after two or more misdemeanors for similar crimes. In every case Scholarmade weighs the seriousness of the offense, the time since conviction or sentence completion, and the responsibilities of the position. Arrests without convictions do not automatically bar service but will prompt further review if directly relevant. If a background check prompts a potential refusal or termination, the candidate receives a pre-adverse-action notice with a copy of the report, five business days to respond, and then, if concerns remain, a post-adverse-action notice. All state requirements governing background checks for school employees are incorporated by reference.

Arkansas Teacher Qualifications

To earn and maintain a teaching license in Arkansas, candidates must hold at minimum a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution and complete a state-approved educator preparation program. They must demonstrate subject-matter competency—typically by passing the appropriate Praxis® assessments or meeting alternate certification criteria—and satisfy all fingerprinting and background-check requirements. Prospective teachers also submit official transcripts and complete any required content-specific coursework or pedagogy seminars. For candidates new to the profession, Arkansas mandates a mentored residency year under the guidance of an experienced, state-certified mentor. Throughout this period, beginning educators engage in structured



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observations, formative evaluations and targeted professional development aligned to Arkansas Teaching Standards.

Teacher Licensure Plan & Regulation

Arkansas's Educator Licensure and Preparation Rules (ADE Rule 10) establish a tiered licensure framework: Resident Licenses for those in preparation programs; Probationary Licenses for first-year teachers in an induction year; Standard Licenses awarded upon successful completion of induction requirements; and Advanced Licenses for accomplished educators who demonstrate leadership, impact on student learning and ongoing professional growth. Renewal cycles span three to five years, depending on experience and license type, and require completion of approved continuing-education units or National Board certification. Local districts submit Teacher Licensure Plans outlining how mentors are selected, how formative feedback is delivered and how induction activities align with state standards. District plans must also include protocols for evaluating mentor effectiveness and documenting candidate progress, ensuring that every new teacher receives consistent support until attaining a Standard License.

Manuals and Guides

Scholarmade has several manuals and guides that outline the instructional responsibilities and key concepts of the model for teachers and is considered an addendum to the Personnel Policies. Teachers are required to teach the grade level standards as indicated by the **Division of Elementary and Secondary Education** and outlined through instructional checklists and curriculum maps designed by Scholarmade. Teachers are required to use the instructional resources selected by Scholarmade to teach those standards. Failure to do so will be noted in the evaluation of the teacher and is considered a violation of the Educators Code of Ethics.

Safe Place Environment

Scholarmade is dedicated to a workplace where every individual—employee, volunteer, contractor or visitor—can contribute free from harassment, intimidation or discrimination. Harassment on the basis of race, color, sex or gender (including pregnancy), religion, age, marital status, sexual orientation or identity, national origin, disability, veteran status, genetic information, ancestry or any other legally protected characteristic contradicts our core values and will not be tolerated.

Harassment may take many forms: spoken slurs or derogatory remarks; unwelcome sexual advances, requests or comments; visual displays such as offensive images, cartoons or emails; and physical acts ranging from unwanted touching to assault or obstruction. Such conduct, whether by supervisors, coworkers, parents, vendors or others, that creates a hostile, intimidating or offensive environment or interferes with one's work performance violates this policy and state and federal law.

Anyone who experiences or witnesses inappropriate behavior should report it promptly—employees to the Head of School or Managing Director, or directly to the Executive Director if the complaint involves those leaders. All reports will be handled discreetly and investigated thoroughly, balancing confidentiality with the need for a complete inquiry.

If an investigation confirms a violation, Scholarmade will impose sanctions commensurate with the offense and the individual's record, up to and including termination. Retaliation against anyone who files a complaint or participates in an investigation is strictly forbidden; any such retaliation must be reported immediately and will itself be subject to disciplinary action. Scholarmade remains fully committed to complying with all applicable anti-harassment and nondiscrimination laws and to fostering a culture of respect and dignity for every member of our community.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE, STUDENT SAFETY AND MANDATORY REPORTING

Teachers at Scholarmade owe a continuous duty of care, supervising students at all times—during classroom instruction, extracurricular activities and any school-sponsored event. This requires anticipating foreseeable risks, establishing clear routines and using proactive management techniques so lessons remain safe and productive. Supervisors must remain within sight and hearing distance, and if they must leave, they arrange for a qualified adult replacement—not another student or volunteer. Equipment must be routinely inspected, used only as intended



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and accompanied by student instruction in proper operation. Exercising professional judgment means balancing risk mitigation with fostering independence and maximizing learning opportunities.

Violence, threats or abuse—whether against students or staff—are intolerable. Anyone who becomes aware of a threat or violent act must call 911 if necessary and immediately notify the Head of School and CEO. Under no circumstances should staff engage a potentially violent person directly. The Head of School, upon receiving any report of physical injury, inappropriate touch or sexual misconduct, also notifies local law enforcement at once. All allegations will be investigated thoroughly and kept as confidential as legally possible; substantiated violence or threats lead to disciplinary action up to immediate dismissal. Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited. Physical restraint is permitted only when reasonable and necessary to protect safety. Any staff member, volunteer or contractor who harms a child—or fails to report known or suspected neglect, abuse or molestation—will face immediate discharge and referral to the appropriate authorities in accordance with state law.

GUIDELINES FOR APPROPRIATE INTERACTIONS WITH STUDENTS & CHILD ABUSE STAFF REPORTING

Staff must balance professionalism and genuine care in every interaction with students. Recording or sharing images of scholars is prohibited unless a parent has granted explicit, activity-specific permission. Personal social media posts featuring students are not allowed. Any concern for a student's welfare—whether observed directly or reported by others—must be communicated immediately to the Head of School or Chief Executive Officer.

Under Arkansas law, all school employees and volunteers are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse—physical, sexual or emotional—and must complete annual Mandated Reporter training, filing reports with Child Protective Services or local law enforcement as required. To protect against false allegations, staff should limit physical contact to side-by-side hugs, handshakes, high-fives or pats on the shoulder and always remain in view of others. Unwanted or intimate touch, isolated one-on-one meetings behind closed doors, off-campus interactions, or transporting students without written parental consent are strictly forbidden.

Student-to-student misconduct—hazing, bullying or verbal ridicule—must be interrupted at its first sign. Supervisors and administrators regularly monitor classrooms, restrooms and other high-risk areas (unused rooms, stairwells, hallways) to ensure visibility and compliance with state-mandated supervision ratios. Restroom doors remain ajar when privacy allows, and staff are encouraged to make unannounced checks. All extracurricular activities and field trips require prior administrative approval, appropriate adult-to-student ratios, and clear transport protocols (no unauthorized stops, no overnight trips without exception). These measures work together to safeguard our community and uphold ScholarMade commitment to student safety.

Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) Compliance

In accordance with federal law, ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas may employ only individuals legally authorized to work in the United States. All new hires and rehires must present valid documentation of work eligibility as required by the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA). ScholarMade will verify each employee's eligibility through completion of the Form I-9 process.

Submitting false, altered, or fraudulent documents will result in immediate termination and may lead to referral for civil or criminal prosecution. ScholarMade adheres to both federal and state non-discrimination laws in administering its IRCA obligations; employees will not be treated differently based on national origin or citizenship status during the verification process.

Questions regarding acceptable documentation or IRCA procedures should be directed to the Human Resources Department.



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IMPLEMENTING IEPs & 504 PLANS: TEACHER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Purpose

This policy defines how teachers and support staff implement Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and 504 Plans, ensuring every student receives the accommodations, modifications, and services they require.

2. Key Responsibilities

- **Review & Understand:** At the start of the school year—or upon a student’s enrollment—teachers must review each IEP or 504 Plan in detail, noting goals, accommodations, modifications, and related services.
- **Classroom Implementation:** Apply all specified accommodations and modifications during instruction, assignments, and assessments.
- **Collaboration:** Work closely with special-education staff, related-service providers, and parents/guardians to coordinate support.
- **Progress Monitoring:** Document and track each student’s progress toward IEP/504 goals. Share updates with families at regular intervals, per district guidelines.
- **Record Keeping:** Maintain accurate records of accommodations provided, lessons modified, and evidence of student progress.
- **Annual Review Participation:** Contribute to the IEP/504 annual review—either in person or via written report—by reporting on student outcomes, instructional strategies, and recommended adjustments.

3. Procedures

1. **Initial Document Review:** Obtain and study the student’s current IEP or 504 Plan, ensuring clarity on all requirements.
2. **Implementation Plan:** Integrate accommodations (e.g., preferential seating, extended time) and modifications (e.g., simplified tasks, alternate assessments) into lesson plans.
3. **Ongoing Documentation:** Log each accommodation or modification used, noting its effectiveness and any barriers encountered.
4. **Progress Reporting:** Submit progress reports according to school timelines; schedule parent conferences as needed.
5. **Annual Evaluation:** Attend the annual IEP/504 meeting to help set new goals and revise supports.

4. Training & Professional Growth

- **Initial Training:** Scholarmade will offer mandatory workshops on interpreting and applying IEPs and 504 Plans.
- **Continued Development:** Teachers must participate in ongoing professional development on special-education law, best practices, and assistive technologies.

5. Compliance & Accountability

- **Regulatory Adherence:** All staff must comply with federal, state, and local regulations governing special-education services.
- **Consequences for Noncompliance:** Failure to implement required supports may lead to corrective action, up to and including termination.

By following these guidelines, teachers ensure that students with disabilities receive equitable access to learning and support their academic and social-emotional growth.

CORRECTIVE ACTION

Scholarmade holds every employee accountable to our policies and ethical standards. Any violation—regardless of whether it is a first offense—may result in discipline calibrated to the seriousness of the misconduct, up to and including immediate termination. Offenses that breach our Code of Ethics will be reported to the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education. For less severe infractions, we follow a due-process progression:

- Verbal warning



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- Memorandum of Understanding outlining required corrective steps
- Written reprimand
- Suspension, with or without pay
- Termination

In cases of serious misconduct—such as harm to others, theft or other grave breaches, Scholarmade reserves the right to suspend an employee immediately while an investigation is under way. Staff have the right to appeal decisions to the Executive Director or when applicable to the Chief Executive Officer.

GENERAL POLICIES

REPORTING CHANGES AND MISTAKES

All employees must promptly notify their supervisor in writing of any changes to their name, address, phone number, marital status, work permit or visa status, tax withholding allowances, emergency contacts, insurance beneficiaries or dependent coverage. Keeping this information current ensures accurate pay, tax documents and benefit records; any delay caused by outdated data is the employee's responsibility. Insurance changes follow SCHOLARMADE's carrier policies and may not take effect immediately. Upon receiving each paycheck or pay statement, employees have seven days to review it and report errors—whether in personal details, withholdings or paid-time-off balances—to humanresources@Scholarmade.org. Prompt notification protects your benefits and maintains compliance with HR requirements.

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES & FLSA COMPLIANCE

All Scholarmade employees are classified along three dimensions—Employment Status, Role, and FLSA Status—and are subject to federal and state wage-and-hour laws.

1. Employment Status

- Full-Time: Regularly scheduled to work 40 or more hours per week. Eligible for the full suite of benefits.
- Part-Time: Regularly scheduled to work fewer than 40 hours per week. Benefits eligibility only as explicitly stated in this handbook.
- Temporary: Hired for a defined term (e.g., specific project or less than 12 months for corporate positions; less than 10 months for school-year positions). Not eligible for fringe benefits except those required by law.
- Salaried: Paid a predetermined annual salary, disbursed biweekly. May be classified as exempt (see Section 3) if they meet both the salary-basis test and the duties tests under FLSA.
- Contractual: Engaged under a written agreement for specified deliverables or timeframes. Compensation, benefits eligibility and renewal terms are governed by individual contract and applicable law.

2. Role

- Administrative: Non-instructional positions (e.g., CEO, Executive Director, Head of School, Managing Director, program and operations coordinators, SPED LEA Supervisor, office managers, custodians, maintenance staff).
- Academic: Direct-instruction roles (e.g., teachers, academic facilitator, guidance counselors, social workers). Academic employees do not work during scheduled vacations or holiday breaks except for required meetings and training.

3. FLSA Status

Exempt Employees

To qualify as exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act, an employee must:

1. Be paid on a salary basis—a guaranteed minimum of \$684 per week (federal threshold; higher state thresholds apply).
2. Perform primary duties that meet one of the exempt categories (executive, administrative, professional) as defined by DOL regulations.



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Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime pay and must receive their full weekly salary for any week in which they perform work, regardless of hours worked.

Non-Exempt Employees

Non-exempt employees are entitled to:

- Overtime Pay: $1\frac{1}{2} \times$ regular rate for all hours worked over 40 in a single workweek.
- Recordkeeping: Accurately record all hours worked—on-site or off-site—and submit weekly time records for supervisory approval. Intentional inaccuracies may result in disciplinary action.
- Meal and Rest Breaks: scheduled breaks and lunch breaks.

4. Pay Schedules by Classification

Annual salary paid semi-monthly (24 pays) over 12 months. Time records maintained for audit purposes only.

Note: Definitions and benefits eligibility under these categories may be adjusted to comply with the Affordable Care Act and any applicable Arkansas wage-and-hour laws.

End of School Year

This section applies to full-time employees leaving school at the end of the school year. Those who are not leaving will experience no interruption in compensation or benefits. Any Academic Employee, such as a teacher or teaching assistant, who leaves at the end of the school year, will no longer be eligible for benefits, except by law, such as COBRA. For those employees who voluntarily terminate at the end of the school year, the employer will continue to provide health and dental insurance through June 30th and COBRA will become available beginning July 1st.

Pay Periods and Pay Checks

Scholarmade employees are paid over a 12-month period on the 15th and last day of the month. In the event the payroll date falls on a holiday, the pay date shall be the last business day prior to that holiday. It is your responsibility to ensure that your time is reported accurately by the Monday of that payroll week. Employees shall be notified if the pay schedule is to change.

Scholarmade provides a direct deposit service for employees. Employees are strongly encouraged to enroll for direct deposits to minimize disruptions caused by slow mail, lost checks, inclement weather, etc. Please contact your school operations manager if you would like to arrange for a direct deposit of your paycheck.

If a lost check is re-issued, the bank fee (\$25.00) and any other processing fee will be deducted from the employee's pay as allowed by applicable law. This is another reason that we encourage all employees to utilize direct deposit. Academic staff who elect the buyout at the end of the school year or staff who are terminated will have direct deposit cancelled and instead receive a live payroll check that they can pick up from their school operations manager at the school.

Garnishments

Scholarmade is required by law to honor any legal order for garnishment. We will make initial notification of any demand for garnishment with specification of the total amount and the amount of each planned deduction. We will make every effort to notify you in advance if such notice is available to us, and as applicable by law.

Office and Work Hours

Work Schedules and Overtime

Scholarmade employees serve in diverse roles and settings. District-based staff must follow their individual work schedules, while campus-based staff adhere to the school's published hours. Full-time employees are expected to devote their professional efforts exclusively to Scholarmade responsibilities.

Non-exempt employees are eligible for overtime pay at the applicable premium rate and must obtain prior written approval from the Head of School or Managing Director before working any hours beyond 40 in a workweek. Unauthorized overtime will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Questions regarding overtime eligibility or compensation should be directed to Human Resources.



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Exempt employees follow these standard hours, subject to reasonable flexibility as program needs dictate:

- Academic Exempt Staff: 7:30 AM to 4:15 PM [or 30 minutes before school and 30 minutes after the end of school]
- Administrative Exempt Staff: 7:00 AM to 4:30 PM
- Meals Staff: 6:30 AM to 2:30 PM
- Custodial Staff: 6:30 AM to 7:00 PM (varies by assignment)

All staff participate in one weekly professional development session, extending their scheduled day by up to 90 minutes on the designated day. Consistent adherence to these requirements ensures adequate coverage, supports student safety, and upholds our commitment to excellence.

Solicitation and Distribution

To preserve instructional time and maintain a professional environment, Scholarmade prohibits unauthorized solicitation and the distribution of materials during work hours or in work areas.

- Employee Solicitation: Employees must not solicit coworkers for any purpose, business, charitable, or organizational—while either party is on duty. Approved breaks and meal periods are excluded.
- Literature Distribution: No printed or electronic materials may be distributed, posted, or displayed in work areas—or via the internal email system—except for official Scholarmade communications (e.g., job postings, administrative memoranda).
- Non-Employee Activity: Non-employees may not solicit staff or distribute materials on Scholarmade property at any time.
- Designated Exceptions: Activities organized or sanctioned by Scholarmade (such as school-sponsored charitable events) are permitted. Any additional exceptions require prior approval from the Chief Executive Officer (pnicholsanderson@Scholarmade.org).

Strict compliance with this policy ensures that staff and students remain focused on teaching and learning, and that our campuses and offices remain orderly and free of unauthorized materials.

Attendance

Teachers and academic staff are required to report to work at 7:30 and the workday ends at 4:15PM. Employees must make requests for leave through the designated time management platform. Requesting the leave does not grant the leave, the request must be approved by your manager. Unless your absence is permitted or excused under SCHOLARMADE's paid time off policies, you are responsible for being at work on time and not leaving early. If you are going to be absent or late, it is your responsibility to report your absence to the Office as soon as possible during each day of your absence, preferably in advance of lateness and no later than one hour before the start of the workday. If you are absent for more than three consecutive days, you may be required to provide written documentation from your physician.

An employee who is absent for reasons other than those permitted or excused by the SCHOLARMADE's policies, or who fails to provide notice as required, will be subject to appropriate corrective action, up to and including discharge. In addition, an employee who is late or leaves early will face corrective action, up to and including discharge. An employee may not take an unpaid day off and may not take a day off from work beyond accrued sick or PTO time, without the prior approval of the Head of School or Supervisor. Excessive absences can be grounds for nonrenewal or termination. Excessive is defined by taking more leave than the employee has earned. Staff members who have a medical reason that may cause excessive absences must submit medical documentation of such and should be prepared to submit medical documentation with each absence if related to an ongoing condition.

PTO is not granted, during the school year, for the day before or after a federal, state, or school holiday or during state testing to ensure normal operations of the school. (For example, PTO will not be granted on Friday or Tuesday of a holiday occurring on a Monday; or a Friday and Monday for a holiday occurring on a Sunday). This



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includes Mother's Day, Father's Day, and Easter. The CEO can approve leave for these days for emergencies or illnesses.

BLACK OUT DAYS:

Labor Day (Monday, September 1, 2025):

- Friday, August 29, 2025
- Tuesday, September 2, 2025

Columbus Day (Monday, October 13, 2025):

- Friday, October 10, 2025
- Tuesday, October 14, 2025

Veterans Day (Monday, November 10, 2025):

- Friday, November 7, 2025
- Tuesday, November 11, 2024

Thanksgiving Break (November 24–28, 2025):

- Day before break: Friday, November 21, 2025
- Day after break: Monday, December 1, 2025

Winter (Holiday) Break (December 17–January 2, 2026):

- Day before break: Tuesday, December 16, 2025
- Day after break: Monday, January 5, 2026

Memorial Day (Monday, May 25, 2026):

- Friday, May 22, 2026
- Tuesday, May 26, 2026

Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Monday, January 19, 2026):

- Friday, January 16, 2026
- Tuesday, January 20, 2026

Presidents Day (Monday, February 16, 2026):

- Friday, February 13, 2026
- Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Spring Break (March 23–27, 2026):

- Day before break: Friday, March 20, 2026
- Day after break: Monday, March 30, 2026

Easter Sunday (April 5, 2026):

- Day before: Friday, April 3, 2026
- Day after: Monday, April 6, 2026

STATE Summative Testing Dates: April 14-30

Mother's Day (Sunday, May 19, 2026):

- Friday, May 8, 2026
- Monday, May 11, 2026

Administration employees, including those working at a school site, are expected, and required to work normal business hours during academic holidays and vacations.

Occasionally, it may be necessary for a staff member to work remotely and access student files from a remote location. This must be approved by the CEO and the Remote Work Policy is in effect. Remote Work will only be granted in extreme circumstances.

General Complaint Procedure

Any employee may voice a complaint or concern to their supervisor. If the employee is not satisfied with the response, he/she may bring the concern or complaint to the Executive Director. If not satisfied with the response, the employee may bring a concern or complaint to the Chief Executive Officer.

Nepotism and Amorous Relationship Policy

This policy establishes the standards and procedures governing workplace relationships at Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas, including those involving family members, romantic partners, or other close personal connections. Its purpose is to preserve the integrity, fairness, and professionalism of our educational environment while minimizing conflicts of interest, favoritism, or the appearance of impropriety.

All employees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that ensures personal relationships do not influence employment decisions or undermine Scholarmade's mission. Staff must act professionally and reasonably, placing the welfare and education of our students above personal considerations. Any situation that could be perceived as favoritism or bias—whether arising from familial ties or romantic involvement—must be avoided, and potential conflicts of interest should be disclosed promptly.

Under this policy, no employee may directly supervise, evaluate, or otherwise influence hiring, promotion, disciplinary measures, or compensation decisions involving members of their own family. Family is broadly defined to include parents, siblings, spouses, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and in-laws.



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Likewise, employees are prohibited from engaging in romantic or sexual relationships with anyone over whom they have supervisory authority or whose employment conditions they affect. Even consensual relationships in a supervisory–subordinate context are disallowed, as they introduce unavoidable conflicts of interest and risk eroding the professional atmosphere essential to our work.

To ensure transparency, any employee who finds that a personal relationship may intersect with workplace responsibilities must inform Human Resources or the school principal within ten business days of the relationship's commencement or upon hire. Human Resources will assess the situation, recommend duty reassignments if necessary, and enforce recusal from related decision-making processes. Supervisors who are party to such a relationship must step aside from any evaluative or contractual role, with an alternative decision-maker appointed as needed.

All employees will participate in annual ethics training that reviews these standards. Human Resources will periodically review disclosed relationships to confirm ongoing compliance. Failure to disclose a relevant relationship, to recuse oneself appropriately, or otherwise to adhere to these guidelines will result in corrective action up to and including termination. Retaliation against any individual who makes a good-faith disclosure or reports a violation of this policy is strictly prohibited and shall itself warrant disciplinary measures.

Business Conduct

In the event that you become aware of another employee's behavior or actions that you believe, are inappropriate, illegal, problematic, or in any way inhibit or affect your job performance or the SCHOLARMADE work environment, you should discuss such behavior or actions with your Supervisor or Chief Executive Officer. All reasonable concerns will be promptly, thoroughly, and confidentially investigated by SCHOLARMADE and, where necessary, appropriate corrective action will be taken.

Off-Duty Conduct and Representation

Scholarmade respects employees' privacy and their right to personal time free from workplace intrusion. At the same time, all staff serve as ambassadors of Scholarmade, and off-duty behavior can affect our reputation and community trust. Any off-duty misconduct, whether criminal activity, unprofessional behavior, or actions undermining Scholarmade values—may lead to disciplinary measures, up to and including termination, if management determines it harms our image, negatively impacts the individuals ability to perform their job, or conflicts with our mission. In particular, the use of profanity toward students or parents, or any derogatory conduct in their presence, will not be tolerated and may result in immediate dismissal. Employees are expected to exercise sound judgment at all times to maintain the high standards of conduct our community deserves.

School Based Management Team

The School Based Management Team that consists of school leaders, teacher leaders, parent representative, and staff representative plays an important role in decision making. The team develops and manages the school's improvement plans and strategic action plans. In accordance with the Arkansas Learns regulations, the School Based Management Team serves as the personnel policies committee and approves calendar events, reviews curriculum, and provides input on the development of policies and procedures that are outlined in this handbook.

Social Media Guidelines

Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas recognizes that digital platforms play a vital role in 21st-century learning and communication. These guidelines are intended to help staff, students, and families engage safely and professionally in blogs, wikis, social networks, podcasts, and other online forums. Participation in social media remains a personal choice, protected by free-speech principles; however, any content that disrupts school operations or reflects poorly on our community may be subject to discipline. All online activity related to Scholarmade, whether posted on official channels or personal accounts—falls under our Acceptable Use Policy and applicable laws.



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Definition and Scope

Social media encompasses user-created, collaborative online environments such as blogs (e.g., WordPress), wikis (e.g., Google Sites), social networks (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn), photo and video sharing sites (e.g., YouTube, Flickr), and messaging platforms (e.g., GroupMe, text messaging). Employees must never conduct school business—particularly student communication via personal text or messaging apps, as such exchanges cannot be guaranteed private and may violate professional boundaries.

Professional Conduct and Personal Responsibility

Staff should maintain the same standards of honesty, respect, and courtesy online as they do in person. Information shared—even if marked “private”—can be stored indefinitely, copied, and redistributed without consent. By identifying yourself as a Scholarmade employee, you connect your online presence to our institution; therefore, all posts should align with our values and reflect positively on our school community. Use security settings judiciously, but remain aware that privacy controls do not guarantee absolute confidentiality.

Interactions with Students and Families

Personal social-networking “friendships” with students are prohibited and are strongly discouraged with parents or guardians, unless there is a compelling, documented reason and prior approval. Electronic communication to a single student is permitted only when it concerns school-related matters and copying relevant parties (e.g., other students, parents, administrators). In all cases, messages should be professional, appropriate, and transparent.

Content Restrictions and Enforcement

Employees may not post Scholarmade-related content or students on personal accounts; official announcements and school news belong on our designated channels. Any posting that disparages Scholarmade, its students, families, or staff—or that displays unprofessional or derogatory language—may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Recording or videotaping students or private conversations without express notification and consent is prohibited. Violations of these guidelines should be reported to Human Resources or your supervisor.

By adhering to these standards, we foster a culture of trust, accountability, and mutual respect in both physical and digital learning environments.

Chromebooks, Instructional Resources, Care of Space

Teachers and Staff members are responsible for ensuring the care and appropriate use of instructional resources, items, and technology including Chromebooks and headsets that are assigned to your class for use. These items must be counted daily and locked in the Chromebook cart or cabinets. Chromebooks should be assigned to a student and a record of that assignment must be kept. Students should not carry Chromebooks outside of the classroom. Teachers are required to report immediately any missing Chromebooks or headsets and any that have been damaged. Negligence can result in the teacher being held financially liable for any school equipment including Chromebooks. Teachers are required to notify parents and record the incident in the appropriate manner as indicated in the Family Handbook and Achievement, Instruction and Culture Guide.

Drugs, Alcohol, and Prescription Medications

Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas maintains a strictly drug-free, alcohol-free, and smoke-free workplace. Employees must not use, possess, distribute, manufacture, or sell illegal drugs or alcohol on school grounds, at any Scholarmade facility, or while representing Scholarmade off-site. Being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances during working hours or while on Scholarmade premises is prohibited. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Any employee convicted of an alcohol- or drug-related offense must notify their supervisor within five (5) days of the conviction. Similarly, employees must report any arrest or criminal charge related to drugs or alcohol—whether on school property or elsewhere—to their supervisor within five (5) days of the arrest or filing of charges. Failure to report in a timely manner will be treated as a breach of policy and may lead to disciplinary measures.



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Prescription and over-the-counter medications are permitted when used precisely as directed by a licensed health professional. However, any employee taking medication that could impair their ability to perform job duties safely or effectively must inform their supervisor immediately and must not report to work while under the influence of such medication, as it could pose a danger to themselves and others. Scholarmade will engage in an individualized assessment to determine whether reasonable accommodations can be made to support continued job performance without compromising safety or operational integrity.

Scholarmade encourages employees who may be experiencing substance-use challenges to seek assistance. Confidential information and referrals to appropriate treatment or support programs are available through Human Resources. All inquiries and records related to treatment will be handled with the greatest possible confidentiality, consistent with applicable law.

Smoking

Scholarmade is committed to maintaining healthy learning and working environments. Smoking of any kind—including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vaping devices, and smokeless tobacco—is prohibited in all indoor and outdoor areas of Scholarmade offices, school sites, and vehicles. Employees must refrain from smoking while on Scholarmade property or during any school-related activity.

Food and Beverages

Employees are responsible for keeping their workspaces and shared areas clean and presentable. Personal food and drink should be consumed only in designated break rooms; employees may not use kitchen facilities intended for student meal preparation. Microwaves, space heaters, and other personal appliances are not permitted in classrooms or instructional spaces. After meetings or communal activities, staff must restore common areas to their original condition to ensure a tidy, professional atmosphere for students, families, and visitors.

Professional Development Requirement

All educators at Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas must complete their annual professional development between June 1 and May 30. Approved activities—whether held during the instructional day or outside contractual days—count toward this requirement. Should an educator miss any portion of scheduled development (for example, due to illness), they must make up the equivalent hours through additional offerings approved by the evaluator responsible for their summative evaluation. Makeup activities must closely mirror the content and delivery method of the original sessions and meet all DESE standards for professional development.

Reimbursement of Program Fees

Scholarmade may cover fees for district-approved development programs—such as Arkansas Teacher Corps, Laying the Foundation, or the ArPEP initiative—at the onset of participation. If an educator separates from Scholarmade for any reason before fulfilling their contractual commitment or does not return for the following academic year after completing the training, the full cost of those fees becomes the responsibility of the educator and will be reimbursed to the school.

Workplace Attire

Professional Attire Guidelines for Staff

Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas maintains a business-casual environment to reinforce our mission and uphold a professional image with students, families, and community partners. Staff may request reasonable adjustments to these guidelines; attire should reflect good judgment, personal hygiene, and respect for colleagues.

Acceptable Attire

- Trousers or slacks, capris, dresses, or skirts of appropriate length
- Collared shirts, including polo and button-down styles; sweaters and turtlenecks
- Ties and sport coats (optional, but encouraged for a more formal appearance)
- Professional footwear, including closed-toe shoes or clean athletic shoes when paired with business-casual attire
- Neat, well-groomed hair and minimal accessories



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- Light, non-allergenic scents only when necessary

Unacceptable Attire

- Denim (except on authorized dress-down days) or t-shirts
- Clothing with rips, tears, or excessive wear
- Sweatpants, joggers, leggings, or other activewear
- Shorts of any style
- Hats or head coverings worn indoors (unless required for religious or medical reasons)
- Flip-flops, slides, or other open-toe footwear

Staff who require modifications for instructional or cultural reasons may submit proposals to their supervisor for review. Compliance with these guidelines supports our collective goal of fostering credibility, trust, and respect throughout the Scholarmade community.

Scholarmade reserves the right to notify any employee if certain attire is not deemed appropriate for the workplace.

Telephone Use, Cell Phones and Other Personal Technology

Personal telephone calls should be kept to a minimum and personal toll calls should not be made at the expense of Scholarmade or of any school. Employees should not make personal calls at a time when they have any responsibility for supervising any child(ren), except in the event of an emergency.

Staff may not use cell phones, PDA devices, camera phones or other technology devices for personal matters when teaching or otherwise supervising children. Staff should not access Social Media for personal use during the workday. These devices may not be used during any staff meeting or meeting with any third party (parent, vendor, consultant, funder, etc.). Prohibited uses during these times include making or receiving calls, sending, or receiving text messages, taking pictures, or checking email. Staff members may not send any text messages to any student. All communication outside of class between a staff member and any student, including text messages, emails, photographs, and phone calls, must go through the student's parent.

Employer-Issued Device Monitoring

Scholarmade provides computers, tablets, smartphones and related software to support its educational mission. To safeguard our network, data and users, the school may monitor activity on any device it issues. Monitoring can include network-traffic and application logs, file-access records, location data (where enabled) and system events. Automated alerts may flag unusual behavior—large data transfers or off-hours access—for further review.

While limited personal use is allowed under our Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Policy, users should have no expectation of privacy. Monitoring records are retained according to our records-management schedule and accessed only by authorized IT, legal and senior administrators for legitimate business or security purposes.

Any breach of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to termination, and will be handled under the school's Incident Response Plan. Questions or concerns should be directed to the IT department; supervisors will reinforce awareness and report potential misuse.

Staff may not use their own laptops on any **SCHOLARMADE** site without the prior written consent of the Chief Executive Officer.

Staff are never to video tape students unless for an instructional activity or performance and should not use personal devices for those recordings. Students should never be posted on any personal Social Media sites.

Parking

Scholarmade is not responsible for loss, theft, or damage to your vehicle or to any personal belongings left in your vehicle. Please park your vehicle at each site as indicated by signs or by personnel working at that site. Gates around the campus are normally locked during the day for our safety but may be opened at various times for deliveries. Please keep your vehicle locked at all times.



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Personal Property

Scholarmade does not assume responsibility for any personal property brought by employees to its premises. Employees are to use their own discretion when choosing to bring personal property into the office and do so at their own risk. Additionally, employees may not bring or display in the office any property that may be viewed as inappropriate or offensive to others.

Planning and Preparation Time

The purpose of time set aside in the day referred to as Planning Time is to be used to prepare lessons, participate in PLCs and other professional development activities, conference with parents, complete instructional duties such as grading, grade entry, organizing files and documents. It is not to be used as a lunch period and to consistently leave the campus to run errands. Leaving the campus during a Planning Period requires authorization from your supervisor. Planning time for all academic employees is a most important adjunct to an effective instructional program. The parties, therefore, agree that time allocated for this purpose will be used, except in emergencies, for instructional planning. Every certified employee will have at least two hundred (200) minutes for individual planning each week.

Office Security

It is each employee's responsibility to make sure the office is secure at the end of each business day. The last employee to leave the office at night is responsible for making certain that all filing cabinets, doors, and windows are locked, and the alarm is set. No more than \$50.00 in cash may be kept in a school office overnight. Please review school procedures for more details.

Privacy in the Workplace Policy

The working environment does not provide the same degree of privacy experienced at home. Offices, desks, telephones, lockers, and computers are furnished for business purposes, and remain the property of Scholarmade. Any content therein may require that it be opened to authorized management representatives. For that reason, an employee's use of an office, desk, telephone, locker, voicemail, email, or computer will not be considered private. In addition, to promote quality assurance, telephone calls made by all employees may be periodically monitored by Scholarmade. Furthermore, electronic data transmissions, as well as computer data of any type, are subject to monitoring, and desks and offices may be opened as management deems appropriate. To avoid embarrassment or other difficulties, employees should not discuss private matters over business phones, voice mail or electronic mail, nor should employees bring personal property and materials (especially flammable articles, drugs, personal alcohol-containing products, firearms, weapons of any type, explosives, or any other illegal or inappropriate item) onto Scholarmade's premises.

If requested by administration of Scholarmade are required to submit to a search of any pocket, package, purse, gym bag, briefcase, toolbox, lunch box, or other container brought onto Scholarmade's premises, and to submit to a search of a desk, file, locker, other stationary containers, data files, voicemail, or email provided by Scholarmade. Failure to cooperate in a requested search is cause for termination.

Confidential Information, Records, and Intellectual Property

All Scholarmade employees are entrusted with sensitive information and are expected to safeguard it at all times. Confidential data includes, but is not limited to, personnel files, compensation details, student records, and proprietary business information. New staff must sign a non-disclosure agreement and remain bound by any additional confidentiality provisions in their employment contracts. Questions regarding these obligations should be directed to the Chief Executive Officer.

Access to student records is governed by state and federal law, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Such records may only be viewed or used to fulfill job responsibilities and must not leave school premises without the CEO's authorization. Under no circumstances may student images, work samples, or personal information be used for personal purposes, on- or off-site.

Each employee's personnel folder contains performance evaluations, commendations, disciplinary records, and other documents relevant to promotions, transfers, or compensation decisions. These records are retained for



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three years following separation, unless otherwise agreed in writing. Employees may inspect and copy their folders by submitting a written request to the Head of School or Managing Director. They may also request removal of specific documents or add written comments; such requests will be considered in accordance with applicable law.

All materials created in the course of employment—reports, presentations, curricula, software, and related deliverables—are the exclusive property of ScholarMade, unless they incorporate preexisting, employee-owned content. Employees agree to take any steps necessary to formalize the school's ownership interests.

To support our mission and showcase our personalized learning program, ScholarMade may feature staff photographs and brief bios in promotional materials, on social media, and on our website. Images may continue to appear after employment ends if they remain central to our branding. No confidential contact information will ever be published. Employees who have concerns about the use of their image should contact Human Resources.

Competing Employment

Because ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas operates in a specialized educational sector, employees are prohibited from engaging in any employment or association that competes with or conflicts against our institutional interests. Staff may not perform duties for another school district or organization that mirror their responsibilities at ScholarMade, nor may they undertake any secondary employment during hours for which they are compensated by ScholarMade. All employees remain bound by the non-disclosure agreement and must notify Human Resources of any outside employment or affiliation that could present even the appearance of a conflict. Furthermore, staff who voluntarily separate from ScholarMade may not seek employment with any charter school located within ten miles of our campus for a period of twelve months following their departure. This restriction helps protect ScholarMade's investments in personnel and preserves the integrity of our academic programs.

ScholarMade employees are bound by contract and according to **A.C.A. § 6-17-304. Employment of teacher obligated to another school district; liability of hiring district**

- (a) A school district that employs a teacher or administrator whom it knows, or reasonably should know, is under a valid contract with another district is liable to the contracting district in an amount equal to the salary specified in the breached contract, exclusive of fringe benefits.
- (b) Either district may petition the Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to satisfy that liability by redirecting from the hiring district's state-aid allocation an amount equal to the liability.
- (c) Upon receipt of a proper petition, the Division shall calculate the amount owed and effectuate the transfer from the hiring district's funds to the entitled district.
- (d) If a substantial dispute exists regarding the existence or terms of the contract, the State Board of Education may decline to impose the penalty.

Non-Solicitation

During the period of your employment and for a period of one year after the termination of your employment with ScholarMade, you shall not, directly or indirectly, (i) solicit for employment or employ any person who was employed by ScholarMade during your employment with ScholarMade; or (ii) call on, solicit, or take away for yourself or for any other person or entity any person, student or entity who or which was a customer of ScholarMade during your employment with ScholarMade. All employees are also subject to any restrictions listed under their employment letter.

Visitors in the Workplace

In order to allow employees to perform their work free from unnecessary distractions, ScholarMade employees should generally refrain from having personal visitors at the workplace. In emergency situations, it may be necessary for a child to accompany a parent to work. In those situations, the employee must obtain approval from the Head of School in advance and assume all responsibility for their child.



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All visitors must sign in through Raptor and obtain a visitor's badge and wait in the foyer area until they can be escorted by an employee. No unescorted visitors are permitted in the school. While a visitor is under your care, it is your responsibility to ensure that they comply with all Scholarmade policies and applicable laws.

Contractors and Third-Party Vendors

Scholarmade may authorize the use of contractors and consultants for various services, including but not limited to physical therapy; speech professional development; maintenance and transportation. The school is responsible for ensuring that independent contractors comply with Scholarmade policies, this Handbook, and applicable laws. Employees are required to report to the school Head of School immediately any violation of a Scholarmade policy.

Expense Reimbursement

Scholarmade will reimburse employees for reasonable business expenses, including travel, if approved in advance by your immediate Supervisor. Employees requiring assistance with travel in advance must contact their supervisor. Employees must refer to the Travel and Reimbursement Policy for specifics about travel and reimbursement procedures. No expenses will be reimbursed, which violates the Travel and Reimbursement Policy. Expenses which are submitted more than thirty (30) days after the expense was incurred will not be reimbursed to the employees unless there are exigent circumstances.

MEALS, TICKETS, FOOD, AND GIFTS FROM THIRD PARTIES

ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas recognizes that interactions with vendors, community partners, and families sometimes involve modest expressions of appreciation. To preserve our integrity and avoid any real or perceived conflicts of interest, employees may accept meals, event tickets, or other gifts valued at less than \$30, subject to the following conditions. First, business-related meals must be reasonable in cost and context; alcohol, if served, should be consumed sparingly and only at evening events. Second, no procurement or operational decision may be influenced—directly or indirectly—by the offeror's gift. Third, all staff must act with the highest standards of honesty and transparency.

Any gift exceeding \$30 in value must be reported immediately by email to the Chief Executive Officer, including the nature of the gift, its source, the date received, and its estimated value. The CEO will determine whether acceptance is permissible; unapproved items must be returned promptly to the sender. This policy ensures that ScholarMade's relationships with external parties remain professional and that our community's trust remains well placed.

ABSENCES: TIME OFF AND HOLIDAYS

Paid Holidays

The following are paid holidays for full-time administrative 12-month employees. The following are the only paid holidays for full-time administrative employees, as defined above. Academic employees, both exempt and non-exempt, are not paid for holidays but only for days required to work during the school year. Academic teachers, exempt academic employees, who elect to have their salary paid evenly over the course of a year, however, are paid during holiday and summer break periods.

- Labor Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Memorial Day
- Juneteenth
- Day before Independence Day
- Independence Day
- Day after Independence Day
- Day prior to Thanksgiving Day
- Thanksgiving



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- Day after Thanksgiving
- Christmas Eve Day
- Christmas Day
- Day after Christmas Day
- New Year's Eve
- New Year's Day
- Day after New Year's

Holiday Schedule and Building Closure

ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas observes the following paid holidays for all administrative employees—including the CEO, Head of School, and other staff designated as administrative in their employment agreements. Should one of these holidays fall on a weekend, ScholarMade will announce an alternate day off. In addition, all school facilities will close for a seven-day winter recess between December 24 and January 1; the exact dates each year will be set by the CEO. During this closure, campus-based administrative personnel are not required to work and will not incur charged leave.

Employees must work their scheduled assignments on the business day immediately preceding and following any holiday to qualify for holiday pay, unless they have obtained prior written approval from their supervisor. If an absence is due to illness and supported by a doctor's note, holiday pay may be granted at the Chief Executive Officer's discretion. ScholarMade will also make reasonable efforts to accommodate employees' observance of religious holidays not officially designated, provided sufficient notice is given and operational needs can be met.

Time and Attendance

All teaching staff at ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas are expected to arrive on campus and be ready for their duties at least thirty minutes prior to the official start of the school day and to remain available for thirty minutes after dismissal. This extended presence ensures that classrooms are fully supervised, collaboration among colleagues is facilitated, and any last-minute student needs can be addressed. Under no circumstances should a teacher leave a student unattended; if a student remains after the dismissal period without a guardian present, the teacher must personally escort the student to the administrator on duty and remain with the student until responsibility is formally transferred.

To promote accountability and streamline our attendance tracking, all staff are required to record their exact arrival and departure times each day using the Raptor™ system. Employees must sign in immediately upon arrival and sign out just before they leave campus. Supervisors will regularly review these records; repeated tardiness, early departures, or deviations from the student hand-off procedure may result in progressive disciplinary action. Consistent adherence to these expectations not only safeguards our scholars but also upholds the professional standards essential to our school's mission.

Paid Time Off (PTO) Policy

Full-time administrative employees accrue PTO at a rate of 96 hours per year. Full-time academic staff earn eight hours of PTO each month from August through May (80 hours annually). Part-time, temporary, and contract employees are not eligible for PTO.

To request leave, employees must enter their PTO request in ADP at least 48 hours in advance and receive approval from their manager or the Managing Director before taking time off. Requests may be submitted in four-hour increments (a full day equals eight hours) by selecting the "Request Time Off" link, completing the description and comments, choosing the date(s), PTO pay code, start time, and number of hours, and then specifying a review date at least 48 hours later. ADP will send confirmation of submission and, once reviewed, an approval or denial notification. Any discrepancies must be resolved within 30 days.

Employees may not schedule PTO on the business day immediately before or after any federal, state, or school holiday—including those that fall on weekends (e.g., Mother's Day, Easter, Father's Day)—without prior written approval. If a request is denied or an employee fails to report to work after exhausting available PTO, the absence



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will be treated as leave without pay (LWOP) and the employee will forfeit the daily rate of pay for those hours. Repeated LWOP occurrences may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

When employment with ScholarMade ends, unused PTO may be transferred to a new Arkansas school district or charter school upon request by the receiving district.

COVID-19 Related Absences

ScholarMade follows current CDC and federal guidelines regarding COVID-19. Employees who test positive or must care for an ill family member may request Emergency Family and Medical Leave Expansion Act (EFMLA) leave and apply PTO toward that leave; medical documentation is required. Vaccinated (protected) employees are not subject to quarantine after exposure per CDC guidance. Unvaccinated (unprotected) employees should adhere to mask-wearing, social distancing, and may be required to complete an exposure survey or regular testing. All employees must obtain medical clearance before returning to campus. To the extent any provision conflicts with state or federal law, the law controls.

By adhering to these procedures, ScholarMade ensures equitable access to leave, maintains consistent staffing, and protects the health and safety of our community.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Leave

Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least 12 months, have 1,250 hours of service in the previous 12 months*, and if at least 50 employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles.

Employee Responsibilities under the FMLA

Employees must provide at least 30 days' advance notice of foreseeable FMLA leave. When 30 days' notice is not practicable, such as for a medical emergency—they must notify ScholarMade as soon as possible and follow the district's normal call-in procedures. Employees must supply sufficient information to allow the district to determine whether the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and to establish its anticipated timing and duration. Such information may include an indication that the employee or covered family member cannot perform essential functions or daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health-care provider, or circumstances warranting military family leave. Employees must also inform the district if the requested leave relates to a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified. In most cases, employees will be required to furnish an initial certification and, if requested, periodic recertifications supporting the need for leave.

Upon receiving notice, ScholarMade will determine FMLA eligibility and notify the employee—either orally or in writing—within two business days of its decision. If leave is approved and the employee has accrued paid leave, FMLA-qualifying absences will be designated as paid leave and charged against accrued balances. Once paid leave is exhausted, the leave will continue on an unpaid, job-protected basis, up to 12 weeks per 12-month period for any of the following reasons:

- Incapacity related to pregnancy, prenatal care, or childbirth.
- Care for a newborn or newly placed adopted or foster child.
- Care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition.
- The employee's own serious health condition that renders them unable to perform their job duties.

References: 29 C.F.R. § 825.302 DOL Fact Sheet #28E (employee notice obligations) [dol.gov](https://www.dol.gov).

PROFESSIONAL LEAVE

Professional leave is a privilege granted to support employees' scholarship, instructional effectiveness, and leadership development. Requests for professional leave must be submitted to your supervisor and the CEO and will be evaluated on the proposal's alignment with ScholarMade's teaching, leadership, or research priorities and on the applicant's plan to integrate new knowledge into our programs. Staff participating in degree, licensure, or other approved development activities must provide detailed agendas, written reports of completed training, and evidence of applied learning. If an employee resigns or is terminated within two years of receiving school-paid professional development funds, ScholarMade reserves the right to recover those costs.



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EMERGENCY PAID TIME OFF

In the event of illness or emergency, employees must notify their supervisor or the main office by 6:00 AM on the day of absence and arrange for any required substitute coverage. Early departures due to illness must also be communicated to a supervisor before leaving; under no circumstances should students be left unsupervised. Non-urgent medical appointments should be scheduled outside of instructional hours, and foreseeable PTO needs—such as elective surgery—should be reported as far in advance as possible. Absences exceeding three consecutive workdays require medical documentation; if the documentation is deemed insufficient, ScholarMade may require a fitness-for-duty examination at the school's expense. Employees with chronic health conditions must submit documentation for each related absence. PTO may be used to care for an employee's sick or injured child or household family member under the same terms that apply to personal illness. For extended disabilities, employees should consult their benefits materials regarding short- or long-term disability leave; accrued PTO may be required before disability benefits begin.

REDUCTION IN FORCE

This policy establishes a transparent, objective framework for reducing staff when necessary to address shifting academic priorities, enrollment levels, or budgetary constraints. It applies to all district employees—administrators, teachers, and support personnel—and ensures that decisions balance student needs with fiscal responsibility. Reductions will first safeguard positions that directly affect student learning, particularly in critical subjects, special education, and other specialized programs, and will prioritize employees with strong performance evaluations, relevant certifications, and seniority when qualifications are comparable. Essential operational roles that support safety, health, and daily functions are similarly protected. When a reduction is required, district leadership will assess financial and enrollment data, develop a targeted plan, and communicate clearly with affected staff about timelines, criteria, and available resources. Notices of separation will outline severance, benefits continuation, and job-placement assistance, and employees may appeal decisions in writing to Human Resources within ten business days. The policy, reviewed annually, ensures that workforce adjustments are handled fairly, consistently, and in compliance with all applicable laws and contracts.

REIMBURSEMENT AND CHARGES FOR LOST OR UNRETURNED PROPERTY OF SM

Upon termination, the employee will be required to assume his or her normal duties at ScholarMade's regular worksite. Employees who are directed to return to work must immediately return all SM property to their manager if required. In the event that an employee fails to return such equipment in good working order, Scholarmade reserves the right to deduct costs for replacement and/or repair from the employee's paycheck in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws. If the employee fails to return to work when directed and otherwise terminates his or her employment, the employee understands that such costs for unreturned property may be withheld from his or her final paycheck. To the extent that the employee's final paycheck is not sufficient to cover the costs of such unreturned property, the employee understands that Scholarmade may institute collection proceedings against the employee in a manner compliant with all applicable law.

Time Used Beyond Accrued Leave & FMLA Benefits

If an employee separates from ScholarMade having used more PTO than accrued, any resulting negative balance will be deducted from the final (or penultimate) paycheck in accordance with applicable law. For example, an employee who has accrued 24 hours of PTO but uses 32 hours before departure will have eight hours' pay withheld. ScholarMade may also recover any other unpaid benefit costs—such as health-plan premiums—by billing the employee or offsetting final wages.

Medical Certification Requirements

Employees requesting leave for a serious health condition—whether their own or that of a spouse, parent, or child—must submit a healthcare-provider's certification to the Head of School or CEO along with their leave request. ScholarMade may provisionally grant the leave pending receipt of the certification and, at its discretion and expense, may require a second opinion. If circumstances change or an extension is needed, periodic recertification may be requested.



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Continuation of Benefits During Leave

While on approved FMLA or other paid leave, employees retain all accrued benefits. PTO and sick leave do not accrue during unpaid leave. ScholarMade will maintain group health and dental coverage on the same terms as if the employee were actively at work: premiums for paid leave are deducted from payroll as usual, and those on unpaid leave must remit their share according to a schedule set by the CFO. If an employee fails to return at the end of leave for reasons other than continuing serious health issues or unforeseeable circumstances, they must reimburse ScholarMade for premiums paid during their unpaid absence. Any unreimbursed balance may be deducted from final wages.

Reporting & Return-to-Work

Employees on leave must provide the Managing Director or Executive Director with a status update and return-to-work intent every 30 calendar days. ScholarMade's obligation to maintain coverage and job protection under the FMLA ends when an employee formally notifies the school of an intent not to return. Prior to resuming duties, employees must submit a fitness-for-duty certification from their healthcare provider.

Restoration to Position

Upon returning from FMLA leave, eligible employees will be reinstated to their original position or to an equivalent role with comparable pay, benefits, and working conditions. To avoid undue disruption for students, an employee may be assigned to a different but substantially similar position for the remainder of the school year if necessary. Benefits and salary will continue at the same level as prior to leave. However, if a workforce reduction occurs during the leave period, reinstatement may not be possible.

Non-FMLA Medical Leaves of Absence

Employees who do not qualify for FMLA may request an unpaid medical leave of absence—up to six weeks—by submitting a written application, including medical documentation, to the Payroll and Benefits Manager. The Executive Director will oversee the application process, and only the CEO may grant such leave. Approval is determined on a case-by-case basis, considering the medical necessity, length of service (minimum six consecutive months of employment, including summer for instructional staff), disciplinary history, and operational needs of the district.

Notification Requirements

Employees must submit written notice at least thirty (30) days before the anticipated start of any foreseeable leave. If thirty days' notice is impracticable, employees should notify ScholarMade as soon as possible and follow normal call-in procedures. ScholarMade may require recertification of a medical condition if an employee requests an extension of their leave, if the original circumstances change significantly, or if new information calls the original certification into question. Failure to return from leave—or to request an extension—by the agreed date will result in automatic termination.

Reinstatement

An employee planning to return from leave must provide their supervisor with at least three (3) working days' written notice and a healthcare-provider's release certifying fitness to resume all essential job duties, with or without accommodations. ScholarMade will restore the employee to their original position or to an equivalent role with comparable pay, benefits, and working conditions within five business days of receiving that notice and certification. If reinstatement to the exact position is impossible—due to legitimate business needs, workforce reductions that occurred during the leave, or because the employee is among the top ten percent of earners—ScholarMade will offer a substantially similar position. In all cases, salary and benefits will remain at the level in effect prior to the leave.

Integration with Other Benefits

Leave under this policy is unpaid except to the extent covered by accrued PTO or sick leave. While on unpaid leave, PTO accruals are suspended and resume upon return to active employment; time on leave does not count toward the next accrual increment. ScholarMade will continue group health insurance coverage for the duration of



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leave, provided the employee pays their share of premiums on the schedule established by the CFO. If an employee fails to return within six months of the leave's end, ScholarMade may recover any premiums paid on the employee's behalf during unpaid leave.

Bereavement Leave

When an employee experiences the death of an immediate family member—defined as a spouse, child (including resident stepchildren), parent, stepparent, grandparent, brother, or sister—the employee is entitled to up to two paid workdays to attend the funeral or plan. In exceptional circumstances, the CEO may authorize additional leave, with or without pay. Employees may also take one paid day to attend the funeral of a close relative—such as an aunt, uncle, cousin, niece, or nephew—upon providing proof of the relative's death and relationship.

Jury Duty

Employees summoned for jury duty will receive paid leave for up to three days. To qualify, they must provide the jury summons to the Head of School or Managing Director as soon as possible and supply documentation from the court confirming their service. During periods when jury service is not required, employees are expected to report to work. ScholarMade will pay the difference between the employee's regular salary and any jury fees received for up to three days of service.

Witness Leave

Employees who are legally summoned as witnesses will be granted the necessary time off. They should notify their supervisor immediately upon receipt of the summons. Witness leave may be taken as paid time off or, at the employee's election, as unpaid leave. Any scheduled work absences for witness service must be arranged in advance with management.

Military Leave of Absence

ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas complies with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) by granting unpaid leave to employees called to active duty or training in any branch of the U.S. uniformed services. Employees should provide advance notice of military service whenever feasible; notice may be waived only if military necessity makes it impossible or unreasonable.

During military leave, employees may continue their health insurance coverage under the same plan terms and remain responsible for the applicable premium payments. Vacation and holiday accruals are suspended for the duration of unpaid leave. Employees whose service lasts 30 days or less must report back to work on the first regularly scheduled workday following the end of their service, allowing for reasonable travel time. Those whose military duty extends beyond 30 days must submit a reemployment application in accordance with USERRA and any relevant state statutes.

Upon return, the aggregate period of service has not exceeded five years—employees will be reinstated to the position they would have held had they remained continuously employed, or to a comparable role if the original position is unavailable. For purposes of seniority, leave time under USERRA is treated as continuous employment, preserving benefit accruals and service-based entitlements.

OTHER EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas offers a comprehensive benefits package exclusively to its full-time, active employees. Employees who do not return for the subsequent school year cease to be "active" once the current school year concludes. The descriptions below summarize each benefit; the official plan documents govern all terms and conditions.

Medical, Dental & Vision Insurance

- Full-time employees may enroll themselves, eligible dependents, and domestic partners (where permitted by the plan) on the group medical, dental, and vision plans effective on the dates specified in the plan documents. Scholarmade contributes a portion of each premium; employees pay the remainder. Plan details,



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including contribution rates and eligibility periods, are available from the School Operations Manager or Human Resources.

Affordable Care Act Compliance

- All group health plans comply with the Affordable Care Act's requirements for minimum essential coverage, affordability, and preventive services.

Retirement

- Employees are enrolled in the Arkansas Teacher Retirement System (or other state retirement plan as applicable) and may make pre-tax contributions under IRS Section 125. Enrollment procedures and contribution requirements are coordinated by the Managing Director.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs)

- Employees may participate in health-care and dependent-care FSAs to set aside pre-tax dollars for eligible expenses, reducing taxable income.

Life Insurance

- Basic group life insurance is provided at no cost to full-time employees. Supplemental coverage—up to \$10,000 increments—for employees, spouses, or children may be purchased at group rates.

Workers' Compensation

- All work-related injuries and illnesses are covered under state workers' compensation law. Employees must report incidents immediately to their supervisor and complete any required paperwork. Scholarmade will not retaliate against employees for filing legitimate claims. Benefit determinations and appeals are administered by the carrier. Employees may use accrued leave during any waiting period for benefit payment.

COBRA Continuation

- Under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA), employees and covered dependents may elect to continue group health coverage at their own expense following qualifying events such as termination (other than for gross misconduct), reduction in hours, divorce, or loss of dependent status. Notice of the event must be provided to Human Resources within 30 days to preserve continuation rights; documentation may be required.

Scholarmade reserves the right to modify, add, or terminate any benefit at its discretion or as required by the benefit provider, consistent with plan terms and applicable law. In case of any discrepancy between this summary and the official plan documents, the plan documents shall prevail.



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Employee Acknowledgment of Policies and Handbook

I acknowledge that I have received and reviewed the following Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas policies and the Personnel Handbook for the 2025–2026 school year, all of which are available on the staff Google Drive and the official website:

- Acceptable Use Policy (Technology, Internet, Google Drive)
- Technology & Equipment Policy
- Document Retention Policy
- Travel Policy

I understand that violation of any of these policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. I further acknowledge that:

1. Contractual Obligations
2. My employment with Scholarmade is provided in a written contract signed by the Chief Executive Officer. No other representative of Scholarmade may alter this status. I am bound by the terms and conditions set forth in my individual contract, including any non-compete provisions and reimbursement obligations for sign-on bonuses, retention bonuses, or professional development fees paid on my behalf.
3. Handbook Supersession & Amendments
4. This Handbook supersedes all prior policies, written or oral. Scholarmade reserves the right to modify any policy or procedure at any time; updates will be communicated through official notices. Only the Chief Executive Officer may approve changes to this Handbook.
5. Notice of Resignation
6. I agree to provide a minimum of two weeks' written notice if I resign. I understand that resignation does not release me from the contractual obligations outlined in my employment agreement. Should I accept a position with another district or charter school while under contract, I will notify that employer of my existing contract with Scholarmade.
7. Questions and Interpretation
8. I will direct any questions about policy content or interpretation to the Chief Executive Officer at pnicholsanderson@scholarmade.org. In the event of a conflict in interpretation, the CEO's decision is final.

By signing below, I confirm that I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the policies and expectations outlined in the Personnel Handbook and related policy documents.

Employee Name			
Employee Signature		Date	

2025-2026

PLEASE SIGN THIS RECEIPT PAGE OF THIS HANDBOOK AND RETURN IT TO HUMAN RESOURCES