



SCHOLARMADE[®]
Achievement Place of Arkansas

PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

2026-2027

Scholarmade[®]



SCHOLARMADE ACHIEVEMENT PLACE OF ARKANSAS PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

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This Handbook is effective July 1, 2026. 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. We are pleased to have you join our team and become part of a mission-driven organization dedicated to expanding educational opportunities and improving outcomes for children and families throughout our community.

Throughout this handbook, "Scholarmade" refers collectively to Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas and its affiliated entities, unless otherwise specified.

The policies, procedures, and workplace expectations outlined in this handbook have been developed to support a safe, productive, and professional work environment. Many of these guidelines have been informed by employee feedback and recommendations from our School-Based Management Team. All employees are expected to review and comply with the provisions contained herein. Scholarmade reserves the right to modify, revise, interpret, suspend, or discontinue any policy, procedure, benefit, or practice described in this handbook at any time. Employees will be notified of material changes as they occur.

Scholarmade is committed to maintaining a workplace free from discrimination, harassment, and retaliation and to fostering a culture where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect.

This handbook is provided electronically. After reviewing its contents, you are required to complete and sign the Employee Handbook Acknowledgment Form through Adobe Sign and submit it to Human Resources no later than your first day of employment. Completion of this acknowledgment is a condition of employment and is required as part of the onboarding or rehire process. Failure to submit the required acknowledgment may delay payroll processing and access to certain employment-related systems and benefits.

We are excited to welcome you to the Scholarmade family and look forward to the contributions you will make as we work together to fulfill our mission of preparing scholars for success in school, career, and life.

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.



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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.

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.



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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).



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CODE OF CONDUCT

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 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.

Professionalism, Ethics, and Workplace Conduct

All Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas (SAPA) employees are ambassadors of the school's mission, values, and reputation. Every employee, regardless of position, is expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on the organization and contributes to a productive, respectful, and professional workplace. The School Director and leadership team are responsible for guiding faculty and staff in advancing the school's mission and maintaining a culture of excellence, accountability, and mutual respect.

At Scholarmade, professionalism extends beyond instructional responsibilities. Employees serve as educators, mentors, problem-solvers, role models, and representatives of the organization. We expect all team members to demonstrate enthusiasm, expertise, sound judgment, integrity, professionalism, and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Our mission is to prepare students for success through a personalized learning program that cultivates academic achievement, intellectual curiosity, character development, and a commitment to community. We believe every child possesses tremendous potential and that motivation, perseverance, and excellence can be developed through intentional support and high expectations.

Respectful Workplace Relationships

Employees are expected to maintain professional and respectful relationships with colleagues, students, families, board members, vendors, and community partners. Workplace interactions should support collaboration, trust, and organizational effectiveness.

The following behaviors are inconsistent with Scholarmade's expectations and may result in corrective action:

- Gossiping, rumor-spreading, or engaging in conversations that undermine and cause harm to colleagues or the organization.
- Participating in cliques, exclusionary groups, or activities that create division among staff members.
- Discussing confidential personnel, student, family, or organizational matters with unauthorized individuals.
- Using social media, text messages, group chats, or other communication platforms to criticize, ridicule, or disparage colleagues, supervisors, students, families, or the school.



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- Allowing personal disagreements, friendships, or social relationships to interfere with professional responsibilities.

Employees are expected to address concerns through established supervisory, human resources, and organizational channels rather than through informal discussions, social media posts, or public complaints.

Professional Boundaries

Healthy professional boundaries are essential to maintaining trust, fairness, and effective leadership. Employees are expected to exercise sound judgment regarding relationships with colleagues, students, and families. Supervisors, administrators, directors, and other leaders must maintain appropriate professional boundaries with employees they supervise. Leadership positions require objectivity, consistency, and impartial decision-making. Leaders should avoid conduct that could compromise their credibility, create perceptions of favoritism, diminish professional authority, or interfere with their ability to effectively supervise and evaluate staff.

Employees are expected to recognize that conduct occurring outside of work hours may affect workplace relationships, organizational culture, and professional effectiveness. Participation in social activities, gatherings, or relationships that create workplace conflict, favoritism, hostility, or disruptions to school operations may be addressed as a workplace matter when such conduct impacts the school environment.

Professional Communication

Employees shall communicate with students, families, colleagues, and community members in a professional, courteous, and respectful manner at all times.

Professional communication includes:

- Responding to families and colleagues in a timely and respectful manner.
- Using appropriate language and tone in all verbal, written, electronic, and social media communications.
- Seeking clarification before making assumptions.
- Resolving disagreements through respectful dialogue and established problem-solving processes.
- Demonstrating discretion and confidentiality when handling sensitive matters.

Employees should assume that all written communications, including emails, text messages, social media content, and electronic correspondence, may become public records or subject to review.

Professional Responsibilities

Professionalism includes consistently fulfilling workplace responsibilities and organizational expectations. Employees are expected to:

- Report to work on time and prepared to perform assigned duties.
- Follow established attendance, sign-in, sign-out, and timekeeping procedures.
- Meet deadlines and complete assigned tasks accurately and professionally.



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- Follow school policies, administrative directives, and operational procedures.
- Maintain a professional appearance consistent with organizational expectations.
- Demonstrate accountability for their actions and decisions.
- Support organizational initiatives even when individual opinions differ.

Emotional Intelligence and Conflict Resolution

Scholarmade values emotional intelligence, self-awareness, and constructive problem-solving. Employees are expected to manage disagreements professionally and maintain emotional discipline in challenging situations.

When concerns arise, employees should:

- Address issues directly and respectfully with the appropriate individual when possible.
- Utilize supervisory and human resources processes for conflict resolution.
- Focus on solutions rather than blame.
- Refrain from engaging in workplace drama, retaliation, or unprofessional behavior.

Patience, empathy, professionalism, and sound judgment should guide all interactions.

Ethics, Integrity, and Stewardship

We treat students, colleagues, and families with fairness, dignity, and respect while protecting the civil rights of all individuals. Discrimination, harassment, retaliation, bullying, intimidation, or unequal treatment based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, socioeconomic status, political affiliation, or any other protected characteristic will not be tolerated.

Academic integrity, ethical conduct, and public trust are fundamental to our work. Employees shall avoid conflicts of interest and shall not permit personal relationships, affiliations, or outside interests to influence professional decisions.

As stewards of public resources, employees are expected to manage school property, finances, and assets responsibly, ethically, and transparently while advancing the mission and goals of Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas.

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.



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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.



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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 Chief of Staff(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



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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 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.



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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 School Director or Managing Director, or directly to the Chief of Staff 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 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 School Director and CEO. Under no circumstances should staff engage a potentially violent person directly. The School Director, 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.



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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 School Director 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.



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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
- 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 Chief of Staff 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.



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- 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, Chief of Staff, School Director, 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.

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



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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 School Director or Chief of Staff 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.

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: 7 AM to 1:30 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.



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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

Work Hours, Attendance, and Leave

Regular attendance and punctuality are essential to the effective operation of Scholarmade Achievement Place of Arkansas and to ensuring a safe, orderly, and productive learning environment for scholars.

Workday Expectations

Teachers and instructional staff are required to report to work by **7:30 a.m.** and remain on duty until **4:15 p.m.** If student start and end times are revised, teachers shall report to work at least thirty (30) minutes prior to the start of the student day and remain on duty at least thirty (30) minutes after dismissal or until all assigned students have been safely dismissed and picked up, whichever occurs later.

Administrators and office staff are required to report to work **one (1) hour prior to the start of the student day** and remain on duty **one (1) hour after the end of the student day**, unless otherwise directed by the School Director. The standard workday for administrators is generally **7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.** Administrators are also expected to perform a minimum of one late-duty assignment each week and remain on campus until at least **5:00 p.m.**, or as assigned.

All employees are expected to be present and actively engaged during their assigned work hours. Employees may not leave campus during the workday without prior approval from their supervisor.

Service to School and Community Expectations

Employment at Scholarmade includes responsibilities that extend beyond the regular workday. Strong partnerships with families and the community are critical to student success and are an important component of every employee's professional responsibilities.

Employees may be required to attend and participate in activities outside of normal contract hours, including but not limited to:

- Parent-teacher conferences;



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- Family engagement events;
- Open houses;
- Curriculum nights;
- Town halls and parent meetings;
- Student performances, showcases, and exhibitions;
- Graduation, promotion, and awards ceremonies;
- Recruitment and enrollment events;
- Athletic, extracurricular, and school-sponsored activities;
- Professional development activities;
- Community outreach events; and
- Other school-related functions as assigned.

Teachers, administrators, and other staff members are expected to participate in a reasonable number of evening and weekend activities that support the mission, operations, and community engagement goals of Scholarmade. Attendance at required events is considered part of an employee's professional responsibilities and may be a factor in performance evaluations.

Professional Responsibility Expectations

Professional responsibilities at Scholarmade are measured not only by attendance during contracted work hours, but also by the successful completion of assigned duties, fulfillment of professional obligations, participation in required school activities, and meaningful contributions to the school's mission, operations, and community engagement efforts.

Employees should understand that educator and leadership responsibilities extend beyond the instructional day. Attendance and participation in required meetings, family engagement activities, student events, recruitment initiatives, professional development, committees, and other school-sponsored functions may be expected as part of an employee's professional duties.

The School Director or designee may assign duties and responsibilities that occur before school, after school, during evenings, or on weekends when such activities support student achievement, school operations, family engagement, enrollment, safety, compliance, or organizational goals.

Failure to fulfill assigned responsibilities, attend required activities, or participate in mandatory school functions may be considered in performance evaluations and employment decisions, including contract renewal recommendations.

Faculty Meetings and Professional Development

Teachers and academic staff are required to attend faculty meetings, professional development sessions, training activities, and other required school functions as scheduled. Employees should anticipate at least two extended-day meetings or professional development sessions per month, which may extend beyond the regular workday. Attendance at these events is a condition of employment and is mandatory unless otherwise excused by administration.



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Leave Requests and Absences

Employees must submit requests for leave through the school's designated time and attendance management system. Submission of a leave request does not constitute approval. Leave is not authorized until approved by the employee's supervisor or designated administrator.

Unless an absence is covered by an approved leave request or protected under applicable law or school policy, employees are expected to report to work as scheduled and remain for their entire workday.

Employees who will be absent or late must notify both their supervisor and the designated office contact as soon as possible, preferably before the absence occurs and no later than one (1) hour before the start of the workday. Notification must be provided for each day of absence unless alternative arrangements have been approved.

Employees who are absent for three (3) consecutive workdays during the school year are required to provide documentation from a licensed healthcare provider before returning to work.

Attendance Standards

Excessive absenteeism, tardiness, early departures, failure to follow attendance procedures, or abuse of leave privileges negatively impacts school operations and student achievement and may result in corrective action.

Employees who:

- Fail to report to work as scheduled;
- Fail to provide required notice of an absence;
- Arrive late or leave early without authorization;
- Exhaust available leave balances and continue to incur absences; or
- Demonstrate a pattern of excessive absenteeism or tardiness

may be subject to corrective action, up to and including nonrenewal of employment or termination.

Employees may not take unpaid leave, unpaid days off, or exceed their available accrued leave balances without prior written approval from the School Director or their supervisor.

For purposes of this policy, excessive absenteeism includes, but is not limited to, absences that exceed an employee's accrued leave balance, repeated unscheduled absences, chronic tardiness, frequent early departures, or attendance patterns that interfere with the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of the position.

Medical Documentation

Employees who have a medical condition that may result in frequent or extended absences should notify Human Resources and may be required to provide supporting medical documentation. Scholarmade reserves the right to require medical verification for any absence when permitted by law.

Employees requesting accommodations or leave related to an ongoing medical condition must comply with all applicable documentation requirements and may be required to submit updated medical information periodically to support continued accommodations or leave requests.



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Restricted Leave Periods (Blackout Dates)

To maintain continuity of instruction, ensure adequate staffing, support school operations, and comply with state assessment and accountability requirements, personal leave, vacation leave, and discretionary PTO requests will generally not be approved during designated Restricted Leave Periods ("Blackout Dates").

Except in cases involving documented illness, emergencies, protected leave, or other circumstances approved by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) or designee, employees may not use PTO on the workday immediately preceding or following a federal holiday, state holiday, school holiday, scheduled school break, or other designated blackout period.

For example:

- If a holiday falls on a Monday, PTO will generally not be approved on the preceding Friday or the following Tuesday.
- If a holiday falls on a Sunday and is observed on a Monday, PTO will generally not be approved on the preceding Friday or the following Tuesday.
- If a scheduled school break begins on a Monday, PTO will generally not be approved on the preceding Friday.
- If a scheduled school break ends on a Friday, PTO will generally not be approved on the following Monday.

Requests for leave during blackout periods will be reviewed only for extraordinary circumstances and must be supported by appropriate documentation when requested.



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2026–2027 RESTRICTED LEAVE PERIODS	
Labor Day Observed Monday, September 7, 2026 - Friday, September 4, 2026 - Tuesday, September 8, 2026	Presidents Day Observed Monday, February 15, 2027 - Friday, February 12, 2027 - Tuesday, February 16, 2027
Columbus Day / Indigenous Peoples' Day Observed Monday, October 12, 2026 - Friday, October 9, 2026 - Tuesday, October 13, 2026	Spring Break - Day before break: Friday, March 19, 2027 - Day after break: Monday, March 29, 2027
Veterans Day Observed Wednesday, November 11, 2026 - Tuesday, November 10, 2026 - Thursday, November 12, 2026	Easter Weekend - Friday, March 26, 2027 - Monday, March 29, 2027
Thanksgiving Break - Day before break: Friday, November 20, 2026 - Day after break: Monday, November 30, 2026	Mother's Day - Friday preceding Mother's Day - Monday following Mother's Day
Winter Break - Day before break: Tuesday, December 22, 2026 - Day after break: Monday, January 4, 2027	Father's Day - Friday preceding Father's Day - Monday following Father's Day
Martin Luther King Jr. Day Observed Monday, January 18, 2027 - Friday, January 15, 2027 - Tuesday, January 19, 2027	Memorial Day Observed Monday, May 31, 2027 - Friday, May 28, 2027 - Tuesday, June 1, 2027



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State Assessment Window (ATLAS and Other State-Mandated Assessments)

No discretionary leave will be approved during the annual state testing window except for documented emergencies, court orders, military obligations, or approved protected leave. Testing dates are established annually by the Arkansas Department of Education. Employees will be notified of testing blackout dates each school year upon publication of the official testing calendar.

Administrative Personnel Expectations

Administrative employees, including administrators assigned to school sites, are expected to maintain regular business operations during student holidays, breaks, intersessions, and vacation periods unless otherwise approved by the CEO. School closure for students does not automatically constitute a workday closure for administrative personnel.

Administrative staff may be required to report to work during school breaks to support enrollment, recruitment, budgeting, compliance, personnel matters, facilities management, planning activities, audits, grant administration, professional development, and other operational functions.

The CEO reserves the right to deny any leave request when operational needs, staffing levels, student supervision requirements, testing obligations, compliance activities, or school events necessitate the employee's presence.

Remote Work

Scholarmade is committed to maintaining the security of student records, personnel information, and confidential organizational data. Remote work arrangements are not a standard employment benefit and will be approved only under state of emergencies or extreme inclement weather conditions.

Employees may not access student records, confidential personnel files, or protected organizational information from remote locations unless specifically authorized to do so and only through approved systems and security protocols.

Inclement Weather and Emergency Closures

Scholarmade may close, delay, dismiss early, or transition to an alternative instructional or work schedule due to inclement weather, hazardous road conditions, utility outages, public health concerns, or other emergency circumstances.

Employees on less than a 240-day contract, including teachers and other school-based staff, may be required to make up workdays or hours missed due to school closures or cancellations resulting from inclement weather or emergency conditions. Make-up days may be added to the school calendar, designated professional development days, teacher workdays, intersession periods, or other dates determined by the School Director and CEO.

Employees on 240-day contracts are expected to work remotely or report to work when directed and may be assigned alternative duties during periods when students are not in attendance, provided conditions permit safe operations.



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Scholarmade reserves the right to modify the academic calendar, employee work schedules, and reporting requirements as necessary to satisfy state instructional time requirements, contractual obligations, operational needs, and student learning expectations.

Employees will be notified of school closures, delays, remote work expectations, and make-up day requirements through official Scholarmade communication channels.

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 Chief of Staff. 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. 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



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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 individual's 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 and Electronic Communications Policy

ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas recognizes that social media and digital communication platforms are a significant part of modern life and can be valuable tools for communication, collaboration, and community engagement. At the same time, employees have a professional responsibility to protect the privacy, safety, and reputation of our scholars, families, staff, and organization.

All employees are expected to exercise sound judgment when using social media, whether during or outside of work hours. Conduct occurring online may affect workplace relationships, school operations, student safety, public trust, and the reputation of ScholarMade. Employees are expected



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to maintain the same standards of professionalism, confidentiality, respect, and integrity online that are expected in the workplace.

Definition and Scope

For purposes of this policy, social media includes but is not limited to Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, X (Twitter), LinkedIn, Snapchat, YouTube, blogs, podcasts, websites, online forums, messaging applications, group chats, text messaging platforms, and any other electronic communication platform.

This policy applies to:

- Official ScholarMade social media accounts;
- Personal social media accounts;
- Personal websites, blogs, podcasts, and online forums;
- Electronic communications that reference, depict, discuss, or otherwise relate to ScholarMade, its students, families, employees, programs, facilities, activities, or operations.

Professional Conduct and Personal Responsibility

Employees are personally responsible for all content they create, post, share, comment on, endorse, or distribute through social media and electronic communications.

Employees should understand that content posted online may be copied, shared, archived, screenshot, forwarded, or permanently retained regardless of privacy settings.

Employees shall not engage in online conduct that:

- Disrupts school operations;
- Interferes with employee working relationships;
- Undermines the authority or effectiveness of school leadership;
- Harms the reputation of ScholarMade;
- Violates student or employee privacy rights;
- Creates a hostile, intimidating, or unprofessional environment; or
- Violates any school policy, state law, federal law, FERPA requirements, or confidentiality obligations.

Student Images, Videos, and School Content

To protect student privacy and maintain consistent school communications, employees may not create, publish, post, livestream, transmit, or distribute photographs, videos, recordings, or other images of students, student activities, classrooms, school events, school facilities, or school operations on personal social media accounts or personal websites.

This prohibition applies regardless of whether:

- A student's name is used;
- ScholarMade is identified by name or by pictures;



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- The employee is currently employed by ScholarMade; or
- The content was created during work hours or outside of work hours.

Any photograph, video, recording, or image taken on ScholarMade property, during a school-sponsored activity, or in connection with an employee's job responsibilities is considered school-related content and may not be posted to a personal account.

Employees may share, repost, or link to content that has been officially published through authorized ScholarMade social media channels, provided the content is shared in its original form and is not altered, edited, supplemented, or presented as an original personal post.

Employees may not create independent or original social media posts featuring ScholarMade students, facilities, classrooms, events, activities, or operations.

Former employees remain prohibited from posting, sharing, distributing, or using student photographs, videos, recordings, or school-related content obtained during their employment with ScholarMade.

Identification of ScholarMade

Employees may not attempt to circumvent this policy by omitting the school's name while posting content that reasonably identifies ScholarMade.

Content may be considered ScholarMade-related even when the school's name is not explicitly stated if the content includes, references, depicts, or otherwise identifies:

- Students;
- Staff members;
- Parents or families;
- School facilities or classrooms;
- School events or activities;
- School uniforms;
- Logos, signage, materials, or branded items;
- Internal school matters;
- Employment-related matters; or
- Circumstances that would reasonably allow others to identify ScholarMade as the subject of the post.

The determination of whether content is ScholarMade-related shall be made by the administration based on the totality of the circumstances.

Workplace Conduct and Online Commentary

Employees shall not use social media or electronic communications to:

- Gossip about colleagues, students, families, board members, or administrators;
- Spread rumors or unverified information;



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- Publicly air workplace disputes, grievances, or personnel matters;
- Encourage hostility toward employees, families, or the school;
- Make false, misleading, defamatory, threatening, harassing, discriminatory, or retaliatory statements; or
- Undermine the effective operation of the school.

Employees are expected to address concerns through established supervisory, administrative, and Human Resources channels rather than through social media platforms, group chats, public forums, or online commentary.

Communication with Students and Families

Employees may not establish or maintain personal social media relationships with currently enrolled students.

Electronic communication with students shall occur only through school-approved communication platforms and for legitimate educational purposes.

Employees should exercise caution when interacting with parents and guardians through personal social media accounts. Professional boundaries must be maintained at all times.

Recording and Privacy

Employees may not record, photograph, videotape, livestream, or otherwise capture students, staff members, parents, visitors, meetings, conversations, disciplinary matters, confidential records, or private school activities without authorization.

The unauthorized recording of employees, students, parents, meetings, or confidential conversations may result in disciplinary action.

Violations

Violations of this policy may result in corrective action, up to and including termination of employment, nonrenewal of contract, revocation of access to school systems, legal action, or referral to appropriate authorities.

Employees who become aware of potential violations of this policy should report the matter to their supervisor, the School Director, or Human Resources.

ScholarMade reserves the right to review publicly available social media content and investigate conduct that may affect school operations, student safety, employee effectiveness, confidentiality, or the reputation of the organization.

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



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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.

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



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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.

Parking Lot Liability

Vehicles parked on school property are the responsibility of their owners. The school assumes no liability for loss or damage except as required by law or when liability is established through the negligent acts of the school or its employees.

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
- Light, non-allergenic scents only when necessary



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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 Personal Technology

ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas is committed to maintaining a focused learning environment, maximizing instructional time, and modeling appropriate technology use for scholars. Employees are expected to exercise professional judgment regarding the use of personal telephones, cell phones, and other electronic devices during the workday.

Personal telephone calls should be limited and conducted during non-instructional times whenever possible. Employees may not make personal calls or engage in personal communications while they are responsible for supervising students, except in the case of an emergency.

Consistent with Arkansas law and ScholarMade's student cell phone expectations, employees are expected to model appropriate technology use at all times. While employees are permitted to have personal cell phones and electronic devices on campus, such devices may not be used for personal purposes in the presence of students or during times when employees are responsible for instruction, supervision, monitoring, transportation, dismissal, or other student-related duties.

Prohibited uses of personal devices during instructional or supervisory responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Making or receiving personal telephone calls;
- Sending or receiving text messages;
- Accessing personal email accounts;
- Browsing the internet for non-school-related purposes;
- Accessing or posting to social media platforms;
- Watching videos or streaming content unrelated to instruction;
- Playing games; or
- Engaging in any activity that distracts from student supervision or instructional responsibilities.

Employees should not access personal social media accounts during the workday except during approved duty-free breaks or lunch periods and only when such use does not interfere with assigned responsibilities.



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Personal electronic devices may not be used during staff meetings, professional development sessions, conferences, parent meetings, Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, board meetings, or meetings with vendors, consultants, donors, community partners, or other third parties unless the device is being used for an approved school-related purpose.

Employees may not use personal devices to photograph, videotape, audio record, livestream, or otherwise capture images or recordings of students, staff members, parents, classrooms, school activities, or school operations without prior authorization and compliance with all applicable school policies.

Employees shall not communicate with students through personal telephone numbers, personal email accounts, social media platforms, messaging applications, or text messages. All communication with students must occur through approved school communication systems and must serve a legitimate educational purpose.

Whenever possible, communications involving individual students should include a parent, guardian, administrator, or approved school communication platform to maintain transparency and appropriate professional boundaries.

Violation of this policy may result in corrective action, up to and including termination of employment. Repeated use of personal devices during instructional time, student supervision, meetings, or other assigned duties may be considered neglect of professional responsibilities and may affect performance evaluations, contract renewal recommendations, or employment status.

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.



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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.

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

Planning and preparation time is a critical component of an effective instructional program and is intended to support high-quality teaching and student achievement. Time designated as planning time is reserved for professional responsibilities directly related to instruction, student learning, and school operations.

Planning time may be used for, but is not limited to:

- Lesson planning and instructional preparation;
- Reviewing and analyzing student data;
- Grading assignments and assessments;
- Entering grades and maintaining academic records;
- Preparing instructional materials and resources;
- Organizing instructional files and documentation;
- Collaborating with colleagues and participating in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs);
- Communicating and conferencing with parents and guardians;
- Reviewing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), intervention plans, and student support documentation;
- Participating in professional development activities; and
- Completing other instructional and professional responsibilities as assigned.

Planning time is not intended to serve as an additional lunch period, personal break period, or time for conducting personal business. Employees should not routinely use planning periods to leave campus, run errands, attend personal appointments, or engage in non-school-related activities.

Employees who wish to leave campus during their planning period must obtain prior approval from their supervisor and must comply with all sign-out procedures established by the school.



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Except in emergency situations, scheduled meetings, student supervision assignments, or other administrative needs, planning time shall be preserved for instructional and professional purposes. Every certified employee shall receive no less than two hundred (200) minutes of individual planning time each week, consistent with applicable law and school scheduling requirements.

If a certified employee does not receive the required two hundred (200) minutes of planning time during a workweek due to school-directed assignments, administrative duties, meetings, student supervision, coverage of classes, testing requirements, or other operational needs of the school, ScholarMade shall compensate the employee for the documented planning time lost at the employee's regular hourly rate of pay. Compensation shall be based on the actual number of planning minutes missed and verified by the employee's supervisor.

Employees are expected to promptly report any loss of planning time and submit any required documentation in accordance with school procedures. Compensation will not be provided for planning time voluntarily waived by the employee or lost due to the employee's own actions, requests, tardiness, absences, or failure to adhere to assigned schedules.

Employees are expected to use planning time productively and professionally to support instructional excellence, student achievement, family engagement, and the overall mission of ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas.

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

Employees should understand that the workplace does not provide the same expectation of privacy that exists in a personal residence or private setting. Offices, classrooms, desks, filing cabinets, lockers, telephones, computers, tablets, mobile devices, network accounts, email accounts, internet access, cloud storage, student information systems, security systems, and other equipment, technology, and resources provided by ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas ("ScholarMade") are furnished for business purposes and remain the property of ScholarMade.

Accordingly, employees should not expect privacy in the use of any ScholarMade property, equipment, technology systems, communications systems, or workspaces. ScholarMade reserves the right, to the extent permitted by law, to inspect, access, monitor, review, retrieve, audit, copy, disclose, or remove information contained in or stored on school property or school-owned systems at any time, with or without prior notice.



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This includes, but is not limited to:

- Offices, classrooms, desks, filing cabinets, and lockers;
- School-issued computers, tablets, mobile devices, and telephones;
- Email accounts and electronic communications;
- Internet and network usage;
- Voicemail systems;
- Cloud-based storage systems and applications;
- Student information systems and databases;
- Security cameras and surveillance systems;
- Electronic files, documents, photographs, videos, recordings, and data stored on school-owned equipment or networks.

To support operational, safety, security, compliance, and quality assurance objectives, ScholarMade may monitor telephone usage, electronic communications, internet activity, system access, data transmissions, and other use of school-owned resources.

Employees should refrain from using school equipment, email systems, messaging platforms, or telephones for personal matters that they wish to keep private. Personal information stored on or transmitted through ScholarMade systems may be accessed or reviewed in the course of routine operations, investigations, audits, public records requests, litigation, or other legitimate business purposes.

Employees are prohibited from bringing or storing unauthorized, illegal, dangerous, or inappropriate items on school property. Prohibited items include, but are not limited to:

- Illegal drugs or controlled substances;
- Drug paraphernalia;
- Alcohol or alcoholic beverages;
- Firearms, ammunition, or weapons prohibited by law or school policy;
- Explosives or hazardous materials;
- Stolen property;
- Contraband; and
- Any item that poses a threat to the safety, security, or operation of the school.

ScholarMade reserves the right, to the extent permitted by law, to conduct searches of school property and school-issued equipment. When there is a legitimate business, safety, security, compliance, or investigative reason, employees may be required to submit personal items brought onto school premises for inspection, including but not limited to bags, purses, backpacks, briefcases, lunch containers, packages, vehicles parked on school property, and other personal containers.

Employees may also be required to permit inspection of desks, lockers, filing cabinets, offices, electronic files, voicemail, email accounts, cloud storage, and other school-owned property or systems.



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Refusal to cooperate with a lawful search, inspection, audit, or investigation authorized by ScholarMade may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Nothing in this policy is intended to interfere with employee rights protected under applicable federal or state law.

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 three years following separation, unless otherwise agreed in writing. Employees may inspect and copy their folders by submitting a written request to the School Director 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.

Contractual Obligations, Competing Employment, Non-Compete, and Non-Solicitation

ScholarMade Achievement Place of Arkansas invests substantial resources in the development of its employees, educational programs, curriculum, intellectual property, enrollment strategies, operational systems, community relationships, and organizational reputation. To protect these legitimate business interests, employees are expected to avoid activities that compete with, conflict with, or otherwise undermine the mission, operations, or interests of ScholarMade. Employees may not engage in outside



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employment, consulting, business activities, or professional affiliations that interfere with their duties, create a conflict of interest, compromise confidential information, or compete with ScholarMade's educational programs or operations. Employees may not perform work for another employer during hours for which they are compensated by ScholarMade.

All employees must disclose outside employment or professional affiliations that may present an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Employees remain bound by all confidentiality, non-disclosure, intellectual property, non-compete, non-solicitation, and other restrictive covenant agreements executed as a condition of employment.

Compliance with Contractual Obligations

Employees are reminded that signing an employment contract with ScholarMade creates a legally binding obligation. Employees are expected to fulfill their contractual commitments and provide appropriate notice before accepting employment elsewhere.

An employee may not unilaterally terminate an employment contract and accept employment with another school district or educational entity during the term of the contract without an appropriate release or other legal authorization. Submitting a resignation does not, by itself, release an employee from contractual obligations.

In accordance with Arkansas Code Annotated § 6-17-304, an employee who is currently under contract with another public school district may not enter into an employment agreement with ScholarMade without first being released from that contract.

If an employee breaks an employment contract [resigns] after signing a contract with ScholarMade and accepts employment with another school district or educational entity without the required release or legal authorization, liability, ScholarMade will petition the state department to provide legal relief under this statute.

Non-Compete and Non-Solicitation Agreement

As a condition of employment, employees acknowledge and agree that they may be required to execute a Non-Compete and Non-Solicitation Agreement designed to protect ScholarMade's workforce, student enrollment, intellectual property, confidential information, educational programs, strategic initiatives, and community relationships. From the date of termination of employment and continuing for a period of twelve (12) calendar months thereafter, the employee agrees:

- Not to solicit or attempt to solicit any current or prospective ScholarMade students or families to transfer enrollment, services, or participation to another school, educational institution, program, or entity;
- Not to seek employment with, provide services to, consult for, or otherwise become affiliated with any public school located within a ten (10) mile radius of any ScholarMade campus who serves the same grade level without prior written consent from the Superintendent or Chief Executive Officer;



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- Not to recruit, hire, solicit for employment, encourage, induce, or attempt to recruit or hire any current ScholarMade employee without prior written authorization from the Superintendent; and
- Not to use or disclose ScholarMade's confidential information, intellectual property, curriculum materials, enrollment data, strategic plans, donor information, operational systems, or other proprietary information for the benefit of another educational institution or competing organization.

ScholarMade maintains that these restrictions are necessary to protect its legitimate business interests, including student enrollment, workforce stability, educational investments, intellectual property, confidential information, community relationships, and organizational goodwill.

This provision is intended to be interpreted and enforced consistent with applicable Arkansas law governing restrictive covenants, including Arkansas Code Annotated § 4-75-101, as amended, and any successor statutes. If any provision is determined to be unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall remain in full force and effect to the maximum extent permitted by law.

Employees acknowledge that these obligations are material conditions of employment and that any signed employment agreement, offer letter, restrictive covenant agreement, or related employment document may impose additional restrictions beyond those described in this handbook.

Violation of these provisions may result in disciplinary action, legal action, injunctive relief, recovery of damages, and any other remedies available under applicable law.

Compensation, Termination, and Breach of Contract

ScholarMade shall compensate employees for lawful and properly performed services in accordance with the school's established payroll schedule. If an employee resigns, is terminated for cause, is separated through a reduction in force, has their employment otherwise ended by ScholarMade, or fails to complete the contractual term, salary and benefits will cease as of the employee's final day of employment, subject to applicable law.

Final pay will be reconciled based on the employee's contracted rate of compensation, the number of contract days actually worked, and compensation already paid through the final day of employment. Any remaining wages due or adjustments to compensation will be calculated and processed in accordance with applicable law and ScholarMade payroll procedures.

Visitors in the Workplace

To allow employees to perform their duties without unnecessary distractions, ScholarMade employees should generally refrain from having personal visitors in the workplace. In emergency situations, an employee may need to bring their child to work on a non-student day. The employee must receive prior approval from the School Director and assumes full responsibility for the supervision, safety, and conduct of the child while on campus. Children are not permitted to accompany employees to work on student attendance days.



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All visitors must check in through the Raptor Visitor Management System, obtain and visibly wear a visitor badge, and remain in the designated foyer area until escorted by a ScholarMade employee. Unescorted visitors are not permitted in the school. Employees who are hosting or escorting a visitor are responsible for making certain that the visitor follows all ScholarMade policies, safety and security procedures, and applicable laws while on school property.

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 Director 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.

Stipend

A stipend is additional compensation provided to an employee for assuming specific duties, responsibilities, assignments, or leadership roles that are beyond the scope of the employee's regular job description and standard work expectations.

Stipends are awarded for work that requires extra time, effort, accountability, or specialized responsibilities and may include duties performed outside of the employee's normal workday, contract hours, or assigned position. Receipt of a stipend is contingent upon the successful performance and completion of the assigned duties and compliance with all expectations associated with the role.

A stipend is not considered part of an employee's base salary, does not create an ongoing entitlement to additional compensation, and may be modified or discontinued based on organizational needs, funding availability, or the employee's fulfillment of the assigned responsibilities.

Scholarmade Stipend Requirements

Employees receiving a stipend must:

- Perform the specific duties outlined for the stipend position, assignment, or role.
- Complete all required responsibilities, deliverables, and reporting requirements associated with the assignment.
- Perform work that extends beyond their regular position responsibilities and contractual obligations.
- Complete any required activities outside of the regular school day, when applicable.



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- Maintain satisfactory performance in both their regular position and stipend assignment.
- Submit documentation evidencing the completion of stipend-related duties, activities, meetings, events, projects, or other assigned responsibilities.
- Ensure that all submitted documentation is accurate, timely, and sufficient to demonstrate completion of the assigned work.
- Obtain verification and approval from the designated supervisor, administrator, or program director responsible for overseeing the stipend assignment.

Payment of a stipend is contingent upon the submission and verification of required documentation. Scholarmade reserves the right to reduce, withhold, delay, or revoke stipend payments when documentation is incomplete, duties are not performed as assigned, or verification cannot be obtained. Failure to fulfill stipend responsibilities may result in the reduction, withholding, or removal of the stipend.

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



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- Independence Day
- Day after Independence Day
- Day prior to Thanksgiving Day
- Thanksgiving
- 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, School Director, 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.



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Paid Time Off (PTO) Policy

PTO Eligibility and Accrual

Full-time 12-month administrative employees accrue 8 hours per month, 96 hours of PTO per year. Full-time academic staff accrue 8 hours of PTO per month from August through May, for a total of 80 hours annually. Part-time, temporary, and contract employees are not eligible for PTO. PTO is accrued over time and must be earned before it may be used. Employees may accumulate a maximum of 192 hours of PTO.

Requesting PTO

Employees must submit PTO requests through the approved platform at least 48 hours in advance and receive approval from their manager before taking time off. PTO requests must be submitted for one day at a time. Requests covering multiple days in a single submission will not be approved.

PTO may be requested in four-hour increments, with eight hours constituting a full day. Employees should select the "Request Time Off" link in ADP and complete all required information, including the description and comments, date, PTO pay code, start time, number of hours requested, and a review date at least 48 hours later.

Confirmation will be provided when the request is approval or denial notification after the request has been reviewed. Any discrepancies related to PTO must be reported and resolved within 30 days.

Restricted PTO and Blackout Days: ScholarMade restricts the use of PTO during identified Blackout Days. Employees may not schedule PTO on the business day immediately before or after any federal, state, or school holiday, including holidays or observances that fall on weekends, such as Mother's Day, Easter, and Father's Day, without prior written approval.

Insufficient PTO and Leave Without Pay

If a PTO request is denied and the employee does not report to work, or if an employee is absent after exhausting available PTO, the absence will be treated as Leave Without Pay (LWOP). The employee will forfeit the applicable daily or hourly rate of pay for the absence. Absences that exceed an employee's earned and available PTO balance will result in a deduction from the employee's salary. Repeated LWOP occurrences or excessive use of unearned PTO may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Transfer of Unused PTO

When employment with ScholarMade ends, unused PTO up to 80 hours may be received from a Arkansas public school district or charter school after receiving the information from that district or charter school.

Employee Benefits

Eligible employees may participate in benefit programs offered subject to the eligibility requirements and terms and conditions of each benefit program.



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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.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) Leave

Employees are eligible for FMLA leave if they have worked for ScholarMade for at least 12 months, have completed at least 1,250 hours of service during the previous 12 months, and ScholarMade employs at least 50 employees at its worksite.

Employee Responsibilities Under the FMLA

Employees must provide at least 30 days' advance notice when the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable. When advance notice is not possible, employees must notify ScholarMade as soon as practicable and follow normal absence reporting procedures.

Employees must provide enough information for ScholarMade to determine whether the absence qualifies for FMLA leave, including the reason for the leave and its expected timing and duration. Medical or other appropriate certification and periodic recertification may be required.

ScholarMade will notify the employee of FMLA eligibility within five business days, absent extenuating circumstances. When applicable, available paid leave will run concurrently with FMLA leave and be deducted from the employee's accrued leave balance. After paid leave is exhausted, the remaining FMLA leave will be unpaid and job-protected, subject to applicable FMLA limits.

Eligible employees may receive up to 12 workweeks of FMLA leave during the applicable 12-month period for:

- Pregnancy, prenatal care, or childbirth;
- The birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child;
- Care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition; or
- The employee's own serious health condition that prevents them from performing their job duties.
- FMLA leave may also be available for qualifying military family circumstances as provided by federal law.
- References: 29 C.F.R. Part 825; U.S. Department of Labor FMLA Fact Sheets #28 and #28E.

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



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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.

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



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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 School Director 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.

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 Chief of Staff 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.



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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 Chief of Staff 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 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.



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



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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	

Please sign this receipt page of this Handbook and return it to Human Resources