



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

2021 - 2022

Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths. Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior (Psalm 25:4 and 5)

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I. INTRODUCTION

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Synergy School of Tomorrow holds to the following Statement of Faith:

- We believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God.
- We believe that there is one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His virgin birth, in His sinless life, in His miracles, in His vicarious and atoning death through His shed blood, in His bodily resurrection, in His ascension to the right hand of the Father, and in His personal return in power and glory.
- We believe in salvation through faith in Christ alone, not of works.
- We believe that for the salvation of lost and sinful people, regeneration by the Holy Spirit is essential.
- We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit by who's indwelling the Christian is enabled to live a godly life.
- We believe in the resurrection of both the saved and the lost; they that are saved unto the resurrection of life and they that are lost unto the resurrection of damnation.
- We believe in the spiritual unity of believers in our Lord Jesus Christ.

VISION STATEMENT

Synergy School of Tomorrow's vision is to produce students who are fully devoted followers of God, who are fully prepared to enter the workforce and/or college as productive and successful members of society. Synergy is committed to provide various opportunities for student achievement through certifications, dual enrollment, apprenticeship training and clinical/hands-on simulations. Synergy recognizes that every student learns differently; therefore, we offer two distinctive educational pathways, which includes vocational training and/or college preparatory.

- SSOT is committed to educational excellence and spiritual truth
- SSOT provides an educational programs and courses of instructions that are conducted consistently within the teaching of the inerrant Word of God
- Meeting these standards of excellence is dependent upon the shared efforts of SSOT personnel, families, and the church

MISSION STATEMENT

"The mission of Synergy School of Tomorrow is to provide an excellent education for all students, in a safe faith-based environment."

Our mandate is to develop a learning environment that targets the heart and soul of every student by tapping into their God endowed gifts and talents through pathway options, as well as, exposing them to a unique style of blended classes, and to inspire them to demonstrate their faith-based values.

PURPOSE AND PHILOSOPHY

Education is an essential part of a child's life today, and SSOT is committed to fostering a child's love for learning through character driven, academically challenging, stimulating activities which assist in that development process.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

Under the laws of the State of Florida, SSOT is an integral ministry of Tradition Worship Center. The council of Tradition Worship Center appoints and holds accountable a Governing Board for SSOT. Appointees to the Governing Board must be members of the church, in good standing, and who subscribe wholly to the doctrinal standards of faith and practice of Tradition Worship Center. The Governing Board establishes and administers standards of performance and quality for all school programs personnel. SSOT, founded in 2000, is an independent Christian school incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in the state for Florida.

MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

SSOT is an educational institution, which is supported by Tradition Worship Center. The Word of God is central in the education process. The goals of SSOT reflect those of Tradition Worship Center and are within the scope of the vision for Tradition Worship Center. SSOT reserves the right to make changes to this handbook throughout the year to better match the needs of the organization.

NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

SSOT employs individuals of any race, color, national and ethnic origin withal of the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to the organization. We do not discriminate based on race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of our employment policies, educational policies, admission policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic and school-administered programs.

NONDISCRIMINATION DECLARATION

SSOT is firmly committed to the principle of equal opportunity. It is our policy to prohibit discrimination against anyone because of their race, sex, national origin, religion, color, marital status, age, or disability. All aspects of the employment relationship, including recruiting, hiring, training, working conditions, compensation, promotion, discipline, and separation of the work relationship are subject to this policy.

ACCREDITATION

SSOT is accredited through The Florida Coalition of Christian Private Schools Association, Inc. SSOT is compliant with all Step-Up for Students, AAA Scholarships, and McKay Scholarship regulations.

SSOT EXPECTATIONS

SSOT needs your help in making each working day enjoyable and rewarding in pursuit of student achievement. Your first responsibility is to know your own duties and how to do them promptly, correct and pleasantly.

Secondly, you are expected to cooperate with management and your fellow employees and to maintain a good team attitude.

Third, always remember that we serve our students and their parents. Only by forging partnerships with our parents can we expect to maximize the potential of our students and ourselves.

How you interact with fellow employees and those whom SSOT serves, and how you accept direction can affect the success of your school. In turn, the performance of one school can impact the entire service offered by SSOT; consequently, whatever your position, you have an important assignment to perform every task to the very best of your ability. You are encouraged to grasp the professional development opportunities offered. This handbook offers insight on how you can perform positively and to the best of your ability to meet and exceed SSOT's expectations.

We strongly believe you should have the right to make your own choices in matters that concern and control your life. We also believe in direct access to management. We are dedicated to making SSOT an organization where you can approach your CEO, School Leaders or Human Resources representative to discuss any problem or question. We expect you to contribute your suggestions to improve the quality of SSOT.

Remember, you help create the pleasant and safe working conditions that SSOT intends for you. Your positive participation will result in better performance for the school overall and personal satisfaction for you.

SSOT CHAIN OF COMMAND

The following concerns should be directed to the Administration:

- Academic
- Discipline
- Pre-school (VPK) –Mrs. Alfonsi
- Before and Aftercare (K-5) Main Office, Afterschool activities (6-12) Main Office

The following concerns should be directed to the School Administrator:

- Operations
- Curriculum
- Schedules

The following concerns should be directed to Human Resources:

- Company Compliance and Policy issues
- Payroll and employment questions
- Vacation/Sick/Personal time off questions

Departmental questions and/or concerns should be directed to the department lead/supervisor.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Synergy School of Tomorrow (SSOT) believes in creating a harmonious working relationship between all employees. In pursuit of this goal, SSOT has created the following employee relations objectives:

- Provide an exciting, challenging, and rewarding workplace and experience with a primary focus on children.
- Select employees based on skill, training, attitude, and character without regard to race, sex, national origin, religion, color, marital status, age, or disability. Compensate and promote all employees fairly.
- Provide employee benefits and comfortable and progressive working conditions.
- Provide paid time off and holidays to all eligible employees.
- Take prompt and fair action of any complaint which may arise in the everyday conduct of our business.
- Respect individual rights and treat all employees with courtesy and consideration.
- Maintain mutual respect in our working relationship.
- Keep all employees informed of the progress of SSOT, as well as the overall goals and objectives of the organization.

EMPLOYMENT

HIRING PROCESS

SSOT's goal is to hire professionals who are committed to the students in their care. We have considered the cost of having a commitment to the ministry of Christian Education and have found that if we are willing to give ourselves to the task with great enthusiasm, then the "Joy of the Lord is our strength".

We trust God to remember that each laborer is worthy of his hire and that the people of God will provide monies and benefits that will help us to sustain our own lives and that of our family. We believe that hiring the correct people is essential to the expansion of God's Word as well as our school. The following process is established for hiring at SSOT:

- SSOT governing body will determine the need for additional staff, then at that time an advertisement will be placed in the career section of the company website and job board sites
- A potential applicant must submit an online application

- Human Resources department will review applications
- A phone interview will be conducted by Human Resources
- Upon review of the phone interview results, an in-person interview will be scheduled
- Interviews scheduled may include HR, Administrator, Department Head
- Either intent to hire the potential employee will be given (contingent upon results of background check) or applicant will receive a Decline of Offer
- If selected, the applicant must first fill out a hiring packet, and complete all new employee training

SSOT relies on the accuracy of the information provided in applications and personal interviews, as well as the accuracy of other data presented throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in any of this information or data may result in exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired, discipline up to and including termination of employment.

“AT WILL” EMPLOYMENT

All employees of SSOT, regardless of their classification or position, are employed on an **at-will** basis. This means that each employee is terminable at the will of the employee or the organization at any time, with or without cause and with or without notice.

Furthermore, nothing contained in the policies, procedures, handbooks, manuals, job descriptions, application for employment, or any other document of the organization shall in any way create an express or implied contract of employment or an employment relationship on other than an at-will basis. No one is authorized to alter the at-will employment relationship except the Chief Executive Officer. Any alteration of the at-will employment relationship must be in writing and signed by the Chief Executive Officer and employee.

EMPLOYMENT CLASSIFICATIONS

At the time employees are hired, they will be classified according to their position as a 12-month, 10-month, or part-time employee. Employees who are unsure how their position is classified or what their scheduled start and end dates are for the school year should ask their supervisors. Employees are classified as:

- **Full-Time Employee:** An employee who is scheduled to work an average of 30 or more hours per week on a continuous basis.
- **Part-Time Hourly Employee:** An employee who is scheduled to work an average of less than 30 hours per week.
- **Temporary Employees:** From time to time, SSOT may hire employees for specific periods of time or for the completion of a specific project.
An employee hired under these conditions will be considered a temporary employee. The job assignment, work schedule and duration of the position will be determined on an individual basis.

Normally, a temporary position will not exceed six months in duration, unless specifically extended by a written agreement. Summer employees, interns and seasonal employees are considered temporary employees. A temporary employee does not become a regular employee by virtue of being employed longer than the agreed upon specified period.

CRIMINAL HISTORY/BACKGROUND CHECK

As a condition of employment, all employees are required to have a criminal history review. The criminal history review shall include a fingerprint check and simultaneous FBI check. Individuals who refuse to a criminal history review or whose criminal history review reveals that they have been convicted of certain crimes or have violated the law will not be offered employment and/or may be subject to termination. Individuals whose criminal history reveals that they have been convicted of or have pleaded nolo contendere to a crime listed in Florida Statute 90.410 and/or any other crime reasonably related to the job requirements will not be offered employment for a position of supervisory or disciplinary authority over school children unless approved in writing by a district judge and the district attorney. No person employed or otherwise associated with SSOT, including members of the Board of Directors, who has been convicted of or has pleaded nolo contendere to a crime related to misappropriation of funds or theft shall be engaged in direct processing of school funds.

The periodic review of criminal history may be initiated by SSOT at the expense of SSOT, but it shall not be excessive or used in a manner that violates policies of discrimination or harassment. If staff members commit an offense listed in while employed by SSOT, they must disclose the offense to the Human Resources department within 48 hours of the occurrence.

Employees are required to provide certifications, trainings, diplomas, or degree received or in-service hours. These requirements must be completed prior to beginning employment, and the information must be submitted to Human Resources.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

SSOT is an equal employment opportunity employer. Employment decisions are based on merit and business needs and without regard to race, sex, national origin, religion, color, marital status, age or disability or any other factor protected by law. This policy applies to all areas of employment including recruitment, hiring, training and development, promotion, transfer, termination, layoff, compensation, benefits, social and recreational programs, and all other conditions and privileges of employment in accordance with applicable federal, state, and local laws.

Management is primarily responsible for seeing that SSOT's equal employment opportunity policies are implemented, but all members of the staff share in the responsibility for assuring that by their personal actions the policies are effective and apply uniformly to everyone.

Employees who have complaints or concerns about any type of discrimination against themselves or others, are required to immediately report this conduct in writing to the School Leader or Director of Human Resources using the Employee Grievance Form found in Human Resources Office.

Employees can also directly report any complaints to the Director of Human Resources. Every effort will be made to keep such reports as confidential as possible although it is understood that an investigation will normally require the involvement of third parties.

SSOT will not permit any retaliatory conduct against an employee who comes forward with a genuine complaint or concern about discrimination, harassment, or violation of law or who assists in the investigation process, nor will any such employee be discharged, disciplined, or in any way adversely affected in his/her terms or conditions of employment. Any employees engaged in discriminatory or harassing practices will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

DISABILITY ACCOMMODATION

Synergy School of Tomorrow (SSOT) complies with the law regarding reasonable accommodation for employees with disabilities. "It is the policy of organization to comply with all the relevant and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). SSOT will not discriminate against any qualified employee or job applicant with respect to any terms, privileges, or conditions of employment because of a person's physical or mental disability. SSOT will also make reasonable accommodations wherever necessary for all employees or applicants with disabilities, provided that the individual is otherwise qualified to safely perform the essential duties and assignments connected with the job and provided that any accommodations made do not impose an undue hardship on SSOT."

It is the responsibility of employees to notify their supervisor if they need an accommodation. Upon doing so, your supervisor may ask for your input on the type of reasonable accommodation you believe may be necessary or the functional limitations caused by your disability. Also, when appropriate, we may need your permission to obtain additional information from your physician or other medical or rehabilitation professionals. SSOT will work with you to determine whether a reasonable accommodation exists. Employees should notify the School Leader or Human Resources in writing when a reasonable accommodation is requested under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the nature of the accommodation so that this information can be included in the employee's personnel file.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYEMENT

Employees may hold jobs outside SSOT if they meet the performance standards of their employment with SSOT. Additionally, outside work must **not** be performed during SSOT's work hours and must not interfere with work being performed on behalf of the organization.

All employees will be subject to SSOT's scheduling demands, regardless of any existing outside work requirements.

If SSOT determines that an employee's outside work interferes with his or her performance or the ability to meet the requirements of SSOT, the employee may be asked to terminate the outside employment, if he or she wishes to remain with our organization.

Outside employment that constitutes a conflict of interest is prohibited. Employees may not take an outside job, either for pay or as a donation of her or his personal time, if the job competes in any way with the employee's services to SSOT, determined at the sole discretion of SSOT. Employees may not use the school facilities or resources to provide an additional source of income. Employees are encouraged to discuss the matter with their supervisor before accepting the outside employment.

IMMIGRATION LAW COMPLIANCE

All offers of employment are contingent on verification of your right to work in the United States. Prior to your first day of employment with SSOT, employees will be asked to provide original documents verifying your right to work and as required by federal law, to sign Federal Form I-9, Employment Eligibility Verification Form. If at any time you cannot verify your right to work in the United States, SSOT may be obligated to terminate your employment.

INTRODUCTORY /PROBATIONARY PERIOD

An introductory/probationary period of 90 days of the work relationship exists for new employees. This period is viewed as a time of adjustment as the employee gets to know us and we get to know him/her. The administration will make frequent observations during the introductory/probationary period during which there will be ongoing feedback. *(Teachers will be assigned a mentor to help them adjust to the SSOT culture. Upon conclusion, based upon feedback, additional training will be provided.)* A 90-day evaluation will commence at the end of the introductory/probationary period.

EMPLOYEE PERSONNEL FILES

Human Resources (HR) department handles personnel administration functions. It is very important that you communicate any changes to your personal information to HR to keep your personnel file up to date regarding pay, deductions, and other matters.

Confidential personnel records will be maintained on each employee. These records may include:

- A completed application
- Current First Aid and CPR Certificate (if applicable)
- Signed statement that the employee understands the statutory requirements for professional reporting of child abuse and neglect
- Notarized Affidavit of Good Moral Character
- Copies of training information and credentials
- Acknowledgment Forms
- Non-Disclosure Agreement Form
- Fingerprinting and FBI background check (kept in a separate file)
- W-4 and I-9 (kept in a separate file)

It is the employee responsibility to provide complete and accurate information about their education, training, and to be aware of keeping all required documents up to date (e.g., CDA, CEU, degrees, CPR and First Aid).

Each employee must notify their supervisor and Human Resources in writing, of any changes in address, phone number or person to be notified in case of emergency, to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is in the employee's personnel records. Personnel files will **always** be kept locked.

MEDICAL RECORDS

Employee medical records, if any, will be kept in a separate confidential file.

SSOT maintains this information in the strictest confidence and may not use or disclose medical information about an employee without the employee first having signed an authorization form permitting such use or disclosure, pursuant to a court-ordered subpoena or as required by law.

PERFORMANCE REVIEW PROCESS

The SSOT Performance Review process provides all employees with ongoing and meaningful feedback on their performance. To do this, the administrative teams work to document each employee's areas of strength, growth and ongoing progress using a specific Performance Review template. The goal of the Performance Review process to ensure that SSOT employees in every position are contributing to the daily success of students and our operations.

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

By accepting employment with SSOT, you have a responsibility to SSOT and to your fellow employees to adhere to certain rules of behavior and a code of conduct.

The purpose of these rules is not to restrict your rights, but rather to be certain that you understand what conduct is expected and necessary. When each person is aware that she/he can fully depend upon fellow workers to follow the rules of conduct, our organization will be a better place to work for everyone.

Employees who demonstrate other inappropriate behavior will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. The severity of the disciplinary action taken will be based upon circumstances of the infraction and may include termination.

APPEARANCE AND CONDUCT

Employee appearance and conduct are an important part of his/her effectiveness with parents, students, and co-workers alike. Dress should be neat and modest. The wise and judicious employee will not let his or her appearance become a source of discussion or controversy. We encourage employees to dress in a professional manner that will glorify God. Professionalism in our dress creates a better identification of the employee and respect from the parents, students, and co-workers.

- Employees should use "business casual" guidelines for apparel
- Appropriate attire includes SSOT Polos or t-shirts tucked in, or other business casual including business styled jeans (solid and dark colored denim with no holes or graphics)
- Men's pants must have belt and shirt must be tucked in

- No joggers or athletic pants
 - *Athletic staff may wear approved athletic wear*
- Ladies may wear Capri's, pants, dresses, or skirts (modest length, no mini dresses or skirts permitted)
- Shorts (modest length) are permitted for the following departments:
 - Athletic/PE
 - Transportation
 - Cleaning/Maintenance
 - Volunteers
 - *Other departments may wear modest length shorts on special days and only upon approval by Administration*
- Clothing should not be extremely tight fitting, or revealing
- Shoes should be sensible yet attractive. Teachers should wear a heel height that is practical
- Modest necklines, hem lengths, hair styles and make up are a reflection upon our school
- SSOT requires any body art or body piercing (excluding one small-gauged set of earrings in ear lobes) be covered when teacher is present on the SSOT campus or representing SSOT or working with students or attending SSOT or Tradition Worship Center events. Facial and tongue piercings are prohibited, and existing facial/tongue piercings must be empty of all jewelry or other.
- Hair is to not be a distraction to self or students
- School sponsored apparel acceptable on school spirit days or events.

WORK SCHEDULE

All SSOT school staff must report to work according to their specific school schedule and slated arrival time. All administrative, office and support staff reporting times must be approved by their supervisor.

If an employee forgets to clock in or out, he/she will need to contact Human Resources via email to correct their time.

If it is necessary to schedule leave early or time off, employees must inform their direct supervisors for a Personal Time Off (PTO) Request form turned in to direct supervisor at least 1 week in advance.

Requests will be approved/denied based upon the best interest of the students and schedules and availability of staff.

Time off will not be approved during PTO blackout periods (see schedule of blackout dates). Time off will be deducted from the employee payroll time accrued. (see payroll accruals for more detail).

ATTENDANCE

The presence or absence of each employee is of critical importance to the successful operation of the company.

Therefore, SSOT expects all its employees to be on time, ready to begin work at the beginning of their day, and to work the full allotted time they are assigned each day.

SSOT reserves the right to assign employees to jobs other than their usual assignment when necessary, provided the employee can perform the essential functions of the alternate assignment.

Employees are not allowed to perform work while on scheduled non-paid lunch break, unless specifically assigned by the supervisor.

In the event an employee performs any work during the scheduled non-paid lunch break or before or after his/her scheduled work hours, such time must be reported to their supervisor and added on their individual timecard. It is the responsibility of the employee to clock back in, or report the time worked to their supervisor if unable to clock-in given an emergency.

Attendance at SSOT sponsored functions is not compensated unless the supervisor has required you to attend and work at the function. Employees violating these rules may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including, termination.

Time and Attendance

- Work time will be calculated using Paychex Time App. Employees are required to clock in and out every day using a virtual timecard every day to be paid for time worked.
- No employee may record hours worked for a colleague or other employee.
- Altering, falsifying, or tampering with time records may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination for both employees.
- In the event of an error recording employee time, please report the matter to your direct supervisor or Human Resources immediately.
- The work schedule for SSOT will be arranged in such a way that overtime is not required or permitted except in the following situations:
- Where any established post of duty must be covered, and a scheduled employee is not available to cover the post. Administration must approve beforehand.
- Where danger to a student's life, health or well-being would occur if an employee were not available to cover the post. Administration must approve beforehand.
- If on some occasions overtime is needed, it must be pre-approved by Administration or employee will not be compensated for that time.

Employees will be paid bi-weekly on Fridays. Promotions and salary increases are subject to budgetary consideration and satisfactory job performance. All salary information is confidential. Discussion of salaries between employees is discouraged and may lead to disciplinary action, written notice to personnel file up to, and including termination of employment.

ABSENCES OR TARDINESS

From time to time, it may be necessary for employees to be absent from work. SSOT is aware that emergencies, illnesses, or pressing personal business that cannot be scheduled outside an employee's work hours may arise. Personal time off (PTO) has been provided for this purpose.

Employees who are unable to report to work, or who will arrive late, should contact their supervisor, and inform him/her of their situation with a phone call or email as soon as they are aware of their impending absence or tardiness.

Employees who know in advance that they will need to be absent should inform their supervisor and request the needed time off. Time off requests must be *approved* by a supervisor prior to being taken by an employee.

Employees who are unable to call in themselves because of an illness, emergency or for some other reason, should be sure to have someone call their supervisor for them. Also, employees are required to send an email of the absence to Employeecallout@synergyk12.com for documentation purposes.

Employees who are absent because of an illness for three (3) or more consecutive days may be asked by their direct supervisor to submit written documentation from their doctor stating that they may return to work and resume normal work duties.

Absences due to accident, injury or major illness are **required** to provide medical clearance from doctor to direct supervisor and Human Resources stating they may return to work and resume normal work duties.

EXCESSIVE ABSENCES

A consistent pattern of questionable absences can be considered excessive and may be cause for concern and employees subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. In addition, excessive lateness or leaving early without informing administration will be considered a "lateness pattern" and may carry the same weight as an absence. Other factors, like the degree and reason for the lateness, will be taken into consideration. Three (3) consecutive days of no call/no show is considered a voluntary resignation.

Supervisors may make a note of any employee's absence or lateness, and his or her reasons, and have it placed in the employee's personnel file.

Employees should be aware that excessive absences, lateness or leaving early may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Furthermore, employees are prohibited from leaving early or for an extended period during the school day without informing school administration/supervisor and are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination for taking such actions.

WORKING FROM HOME

Employees are not permitted to work from home for pay without prior documented permission from supervisor and business owner. Any attempt to do so may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

COMPENSATION GUIDELINES

Our compensation program is to attract potential employees, meet the needs of all current employees and encourage productive employees to stay with our organization. Our compensation program is built to balance both employee and the needs of the organization.

It is our desire to pay all regular employees' wages and salaries that are competitive with other employers in the marketplace in a way that will be motivational, fair, and equitable. Compensation may vary with individual performance and the organization's performance.

We apply the same principles of fairness to all employees, regardless of their age, sex, race, color, gender, national origin, disability, veteran status, marital status, familial status, or any other factor protected by law.

SALARY AND HOURLY PAY

Staff expects to receive a fair wage for the work completed and/or assignments. We are committed to fairly compensating the staff. Salary and hourly rates of pay are determined by a combination of previous experience and education completed.

Since quality education cannot happen without adequate coverage, employees are expected to be present, ready for their assigned job, at their assigned place for the total number of hours in their established workday and work week unless absence from their duty is authorized.

BASIS FOR DETERMINING PAY

Several factors may influence your rate of pay. Some of the items we consider are the nature and scope of your job, what other employers pay their employees for comparable jobs (external equity), what we pay employees in comparable positions (internal equity), and individual as well as job performance. It is the goal of the organization to have a current job description on hand that broadly defines your job responsibilities.

PAY PERIOD

Employees will be paid bi-weekly on Fridays. We will pay all employees over a 10 month or 12month period or until the end of the assignment if temporary.

Employees who are terminated or who voluntarily separate from employment with the company will only be paid for the time earned.

The separated employee final check will be a **live** check and will be mailed to the employee. No direct deposit will be issued on the final check.

MANDATORY DEDUCTIONS FROM PAYCHECK

We are required by law to make certain deductions from your paycheck each time one is prepared. These may include federal, state, and local income taxes and contributions to Social Security or one of the various State Retirement Systems.

These deductions will be itemized on your check stub. The amount of the deductions will depend on your earnings and the information you furnish on your W-4 form regarding the number of exemptions you claim. If an employee wishes to modify the number of exemptions claimed, they can update this by obtaining a form from Human Resources. If employees wish to claim Exempt on their W-4, they must submit a signed copy of the W-4 document to the HR department.

Employees will not be able to claim “Exempt” without submitting a hard copy of their W-4 to the HR department for verification. **Note:** Only employees may modify their W-4 form. Verbal or written instructions are not enough to modify withholding allowances. Employees are advised to check their pay stubs to ensure that it reflects the proper number of withholdings.

The W-2 form employees receive annually reflects how much earnings were deducted for purposes. Any other mandatory deductions to be made from employee paychecks, such as court ordered garnishments, will be explained whenever the organization is ordered to make such deductions. **Note:** Please see the section “Wage Garnishments” for further information.

COMPENSATION CHANGES

Changes to the amount of an employee’s wage or salary will become effective on the first regular pay period following the change.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

Direct payroll deposit is the automatic deposit of employee pay into the financial institution account of choice.

Employees may choose to enroll in Direct Deposit as part of their onboarding. If an employee’s existing Direct Deposit account information changes (a bank account is closed or a new account is opened), they should update their Direct Deposit account information with Human Resources immediately.

PAYCARD

Employees may choose to enroll in the Skylight Pay Card funding option as a part of their onboarding. If an employee’s existing Pay Card is lost or stolen, he/she must contact skylightpaycard.com or 877-814-7679.

You will also need to contact the Human Resource department to remove and/or update your compensation method from your employee payroll account.

Please Note: Any employee that receives a live paycheck and has not picked up the check within 48 hours following pay day, it will be placed in the mail to the address on file in the Human Resources department.

ERROR IN PAY

Every effort is made to avoid errors in your paycheck. Employees who believe an error has been made should tell the HR Department immediately. They will take steps to research the problem and endeavor to make any necessary corrections by the next regular pay day.

If an employee receives an overpayment in his or her paycheck, it is his or her responsibility to report that overpayment. If the overpayment is subsequently discovered by the school or Central office, the employee will be required to pay funds back to the organization.

WAGE GARNISHMENTS

When an employee's wages are garnished by court order, we are legally bound to withhold the amount indicated in the garnishment order from the employee's paycheck. However, we will honor the Federal Consumer Credit Protection Act, which places restrictions on the total amount that may be garnished from an employee's paycheck.

A \$3.00 service fee may be charged per check written to cover the administration of the above, if permitted by the judgment of garnishment or by law.

COMPENSATION REVIEWS

We will review employee compensation annually. Factors such as job performance, unexcused absences, and tardiness, continued training and education, leadership abilities, positive attitude, and willingness to accept additional responsibilities, may be considered in determining the compensation. However, good performance does not guarantee increased compensation or continued employment.

PAID AND UNPAID TIME OFF

As described below, the organization affords eligible employees with Paid Time Off (PTO). In some circumstances, leave is unpaid. The organization compensates employees entitled to PTO using their base hourly rate, excluding overtime compensation, if any.

ALL Requests for time off must be in writing and given to the direct supervisor at least 1 week in advance and are not within the blackout periods. Time off is to be used for Sick/Vacation/Personal Days (This applies to All Employees).

PTO will be deducted to the nearest minute. PTO does not roll over to next school year. If at least 1 weeks' notice is not given, the request may be denied.

PTO ACCRUAL BANK

PTO Accrual Bank is time off an employee has **earned** but not yet used. Employees might earn general personal time off hours that they can delegate toward sick, or personal time when needed. Employees will be eligible for PTO on the first of the month following the first day of work. Employees accumulate PTO as follows:

- **Accumulate** Up to 4.0 hours of PTO per work month (September through May).

Please Note: Employees returning from leave will not begin accumulating PTO until the first of the month following 30 days back from leave.

All Employee time off will be applied (deducted) from their PTO Accrual Bank. Company policy does not allow to take the time off un-paid if you have available PTO Accrued. If all your PTO has been used time off will be without pay.

(PTO Accrual Bank is not applicable to temporary, seasonal, or volunteer employees)

Please Note: If you choose to leave for any reason or if you are suspended, terminated, or laid off for any reason, any remaining time is then forfeited and will not be paid.

SCHOOL HOLIDAYS

Our schools and offices will be closed for the following holidays during the 2021-2022 academic school year.

September 5, 2021	Labor Day
November 11, 2021	Veterans Day
November 22-26, 2021	Thanksgiving Holiday
December 20-31, 2021	Winter Break
January 17, 2022	Dr. MLK Day
February 21, 2022	President's Day
March 14-18, 2022	Spring Break
April 15, 2022	Good Friday
April 17, 2022	Easter Holiday Observance
May 30, 2022	Memorial Day
July 4, 2022	Independence Day

BLACKOUT DATES

PTO may not be taken the last week of the school year, or on scheduled in-service and/or training days, or immediately before or after holidays without supervisor's permission. See your supervisor for specific department blackout dates.

If PTO is requested on these dates (foreseen or unforeseen circumstances) illness or disability documentation from your physician will be required upon returning. Please refer to the PTO Policy for Professional Development Days.

2021-2022 Blackout Dates (inclusive of staff PD dates): July 20 -August 31, 2021; September 4, 2021; September 6, 2021; October 14, 2021; November 10, 2021; November 12, 2021; November 19, 2021; November 29, 2021; December 17, 2021; January 3, 2022; January 14, 2022; January 18, 2022; February 18, 2022; February 22, 2022; March 10, 2022; March 21, 2022; April 14, 2022; April 19, 2022; May 16-20, 2022; July 1, 2022; July 5, 2022.

BEREAVEMENT

All regular, full-time employees will receive up to three consecutive working days of leave with pay (not charged to PTO) upon the death of an immediate family member.

Bereavement pay is calculated based on the base pay rate at the time of absence and will not include any special forms of compensation, such as incentives, commissions, bonuses, and overtime.

Members of the immediate family include: the employee's spouse, child, parent, grandparent, grandchild, or sibling(s) and mother/father-in-law. To be eligible for paid bereavement leave, the employee must attend the funeral of the deceased relative.

Employees should request bereavement leave from their supervisors as soon as possible. The organization will require verification of the need for the leave.

Verification must be submitted to your supervisor and the HR department. Bereavement pay will only be made to employees for actual time spent away from work. For example, if the death occurs at a time when work is not scheduled, payment will not be made.

If a holiday or part of your vacation occurs on any of the days of absence, you may not receive holiday pay in addition to bereavement pay. Employees do not accrue bereavement leave and will not be paid for unused bereavement leave.

NON-FAMILY MEMBER FUNERAL LEAVE

All regular, full-time employees may take up to one (1) day off with pay to attend the funeral of a close, non-family member. This time off will be considered by the employee's supervisor on a case-by-case basis. The pay for time off will be prorated for an hourly employee if the funeral occurs on scheduled workdays. The supervisor should confirm that the time is recorded accurately on the timecards.

The organization will require verification of the need for the leave. Bereavement pay will only be made to employees for actual time spent away from work. For example, if the death occurs at a time when work is not scheduled, payment will not be made.

If a holiday or part of your vacation occurs on any of the days of absence, you may not receive holiday pay in addition to bereavement pay. Employees do not accrue bereavement leave and will not be paid for unused bereavement leave.

ADDITIONAL TIME OFF REQUEST FOR BEREAVEMENT

We understand the deep impact that death can have on an individual or a family, therefore; additional non-paid time off may be granted.

The employee may plan with his or her supervisor for an additional four (4) unpaid days off in the instance of the death of an immediate family member. Additional unpaid time off may be granted depending on the circumstances such as distance of travel.

JURY DUTY

SSOT encourages and expects all employees to fulfill their civic responsibility by serving jury duty when required.

Employees summoned for jury duty will be granted a leave of absence for the period required for such jury duty. The leave of absence will be granted without loss of PTO or any other benefit. If an employee is present at court and has not been picked to serve trial, he or she must turn in hours served from the clerk of court to their supervisor daily. If an employee has been picked to serve trial, all time after the first day, he or she will be paid the difference between his or her regular salary or wage and the amount he or she receives as a juror.

Any employee summoned for jury duty must provide his or her supervisor with an authentic summons, subpoena, or notice for such duty and upon returning to work must present proof of jury duty service, including the dates of the employee's service. Employees are expected to return to work if they are excused for jury duty during their regular working hours. Failure to report to work if excused from jury duty could possibly result in a loss of PTO and/or disciplinary action up to and including termination.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

The organization will not discriminate against employees because of the approved use of family care or medical leave or a proper request for such leave. Requests for family care and medical leave will be considered without regard to age, sex, race, religion, national origin, disability, veteran status, political belief, marital status, familial status, or any other factor protected by law.

FMLA Employee Eligibility:

To be eligible for FMLA leave, you must have:

- Has been employed by the organization for a consecutive 12 months, and;
- Has been employed for at least 1,250 hours of service during the consecutive 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave;

- Is employed at a worksite where 50 or more employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles of that worksite.

Qualifying Reasons for FMLA:

FMLA leave may be taken for any of the following reasons:

- For birth of a son or daughter, and to care for the newborn child;
- For placement with the employee of a son or daughter for adoption or foster care;
- To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition;
- Because of a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of the employee's job;
- Because of any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) in support of a contingency operation; and
- To care for a covered service-member with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the service-member.
- Equal application: The right to take leave under FMLA applies equally to male and female employees. A father, as well as a mother, can take family leave for the birth, placement for adoption, or foster care of a child.

Duration of Leave: Eligible employees may receive up to 12 work weeks of unpaid leave during a “rolling” 12-month period, measured backward from the date of any FMLA leave. FMLA leave for the birth or placement of a child for adoption or foster care must be completed within 12 months of the birth or placement.

Use of Accumulated Paid Leave:

Any unused paid leave that is available at the time of the request for FMLA leave will be applied concurrently and at the beginning of the FMLA leave. You will not accumulate any of your additional PTO while on leave. Except for any paid leave that is applied, an employee is not entitled to any compensation during FMLA leave.

Intermittent Leave:

Employees may request intermittent leave or reduced schedule leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition or if you have a serious health condition that warrants such a request pursuant to the FMLA Act Section.

Notice and Medical Certification:

When seeking FMLA leave, employees must provide:

- At least thirty (30) days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave, if the need is foreseeable, or notice as soon as practicable in the case of an unforeseeable leave;

- Medical certification supporting the need for leave due to a serious health condition affecting you or an immediate family member must be returned before your leave begins, or if not possible, within 15 days of our request to provide the certification. If you fail to do so, we may delay the commencement of your leave or withdraw any designation of FMLA leave, in which case your leave of absence would be unauthorized, subjecting you to discipline up to and including termination. Second to third opinions and periodic recertification may also be required;
- Periodic reports as deemed appropriate during the leave regarding your status and intent to return to work; and
- Medical certification of fitness for duty before returning to work if the leave was due to your serious health condition. Failure to comply with the requirements may result in delay or denial of leave.

Reinstatement:

Subject to certain exceptions permitted by law, the organization will restore employees to their original and equivalent positions upon return from FMLA leave. If, due to medical circumstances, you are no longer able to perform your original job, we will attempt to transfer you to alternate suitable work, if available.

For purposes of this policy:

- A child is defined as a natural, adopted, or foster child, a stepchild, or a legal ward;
- A parent is defined as the employee's or his/her spouse's natural, adoptive, or foster parent, stepparent, or legal guardian;
- A serious health condition is defined as a disabling physical or mental illness, injury, impairment, or condition involving a) inpatient care in a hospital, nursing home, or hospice; or b) outpatient care requiring continuing treatment or supervision from a health care professional.

Military Reserves or National Guard Leave

Employees who serve in U. S. military organizations or state militia groups may take the necessary time off without pay to fulfill this obligation and will retain all their legal rights for continued employment under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) and other applicable laws. These employees may apply accrued PTO to the leave if they wish; however, they are not obligated to do so.

You are expected to notify your supervisor, School Leader and be able to provide a copy of your military order, as soon as you are aware of the dates you will be on duty so that arrangements can be made for replacement during this absence.

The Military Family Leave Provisions under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitle eligible employees of covered employers to take FMLA leave for any “qualifying exigency” arising from the foreign deployment of the employee’s spouse, son, daughter, or parent with the Armed Forces, or to care for a service member with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the service member’s spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin.

QUALIFYING EXIGENCY LEAVE

A covered employer must grant an eligible employee up to 12 work weeks of unpaid, job protected leave during any 12-month period for qualifying exigencies that arise when the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is on covered active duty or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty.

Covered active duty means:

- For members of the Regular Armed Forces, duty during deployment of the member with the Armed Forces to a foreign country.
- For members of the Reserve, components of the Armed Forces (members of the National Guard and Reserves), duty during deployment of the member with the Armed Forces to a foreign country under a call or order to active duty in support of a contingency operation.

Military Caregiver Leave

A covered employer must grant an eligible employee up to a total of 26 work weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave during a "single 12month period" to care for a covered service-member with a serious injury or illness. The employee must be the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the covered service-member.

A covered service-member is either:

- A current member of the Armed Forces (including a member of the National Guard or Reserves) who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is in outpatient status, or is on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness; or
- A veteran of the Armed Forces (including the National Guard or Reserves) discharged within the five-year period before the family member first takes military caregiver leave to care for the veteran and who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a qualifying serious injury or illness. A veteran who was dishonorably discharged does not meet the FMLA definition of a covered service member.

ACCEPTING OTHER EMPLOYMENT OR GOING INTO BUSINESS WHILE ON LEAVE

Employees who accept any employment or go into business while on a leave of absence from the organization will be considered to have violated the terms of their employment with the organization as of the day on which they began their leave of absence and may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

SSOT is committed a comprehensive benefits program for all eligible employees. In addition to receiving an equitable salary and having an equal opportunity for professional development and advancement, an employee may be eligible to enjoy other benefits that will enhance employee job satisfaction.

We believe a good benefits program is a solid investment in SSOT's employees.

SSOT will periodically review the benefits program and will make modifications as appropriate to the organization's condition. SSOT reserves the right to modify, add or delete the benefits it offers, providing reasonable notice of such changes to our employees.

Eligibility for Benefits

Full time employees are eligible to receive benefits in accordance with the provisions of this Employee Handbook. Temporary and part-time hourly employees are not eligible for benefits. All employee benefits plans will become effective on the first of the month following the first day of work. Employee paid benefits premiums are payroll deducted on a pre-tax basis.

MEDICAL BENEFITS

Health insurance coverage is offered to full time employees through United Health Care and is subject to the terms and conditions in the plan documents.

It is the responsibility of all employees to complete the online benefit enrollment process within 60 days of being hired. **Changes can only be made to an existing benefits policy during open enrollment or with the occurrence of a qualifying event.** Benefits open enrollment will be held in November of the calendar year. New benefits coverage, or any changes made to an existing policy during the open enrollment period, will then become effective on January 1 of the following year.

Eligible employees who choose not to obtain medical insurance through United Health Care, must waive participation in the benefit programs through the online enrollment.

DENTAL BENEFITS

Dental benefits are offered to full time employees through a voluntary dental plan and are subject to the terms and conditions in the plan documents.

VISON PLAN

Vision benefits are offered to full time employees through a voluntary vision plan and are subject to the terms and condition in the plan documents.

SHORT TERM AND LONG-TERM DISABILITY INSURANCE

SSOT provides short- and long-term disability insurance, subject to the terms and conditions in the plan documents, to all fulltime employees at no cost to the employee.

SUPPLEMENTAL INSURANCE

Employees can enroll in supplemental insurance programs, subject to the terms and conditions in the plan documents, at their own expense. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deductions. New employees must accept or reject this benefit during their first month of employment. All employees must accept or reject this benefit on an annual basis and during the specified period.

LIFE INSURANCE AND AD&D

Employees can enroll in Life and AD&D insurance programs subject to the terms and conditions in the plan documents, at their own expense. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deductions. New employees must accept or reject this benefit during their first month of employment. All employees must accept or reject this benefit on an annual basis and during the specified period.

RETIREMENT PLAN

Employees can enroll in 403B retirement program subject to the terms and conditions in the plan documents, at their own expense. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deductions.

New employees must accept or reject this benefit during their first month of employment. All employees must accept or reject this benefit on an annual basis and during the specified period.

Unemployment Compensation

Depending upon the circumstances, employees may be eligible for Unemployment Compensation upon termination of employment with SSOT. Eligibility for Unemployment Compensation is determined by the Division of Unemployment Insurance of the State Department of Labor.

Social Security

The United States Government operates a system of mandated insurance known as Social Security. As a wage earner, employees may be required by law to contribute a set amount of their weekly wages to the trust fund from which benefits are paid.

SSOT may be required to deduct this amount from each paycheck an employee receives and to match the employee's contribution dollar for dollar, thereby paying one-half of the cost of the employee's social security.

Employees enrolled in the State Retirement System (TRSL, LSERs) are not eligible to contribute to Social Security while they are contributing to the State Retirement System.

An employee's Social Security number is used to record their earnings. Employees are encouraged to protect their Social Security record by ensuring that the name and Social Security number on their pay stub and W-2 Form are correct.

Employees may also want to make sure their earnings statement is accurate each year by requesting a Personal Earnings and Benefit Estimate Statement from the U.S. Social Security Administration by calling 1-800-772-1213 or by accessing them on-line at www.ssa.gov.

II. POLICIES & PROCEDURES

STANDARDS FOR ACADEMY LIFE

Every community or group of individuals has rules, regulations, and standards that define and govern. These guidelines serve to define SSOT, minimize distracting behaviors, and provide a structure within which the individual can feel secure and accepted.

It also presents the desired image to the public. Individuals, when joining a group, need flexibility and a willing spirit to adhere to the customs of that community. The notion of balancing our individualism with the community's standards within which we live, is both Biblical and social, and one which will follow us all our days. Thus, as you become a part of the SSOT community, you will find some standards to govern your behavior. The immediate task is a willing compliance. The life-long task is to recognize that when you leave SSOT and join other groups they, too, will have standards for you.

PROFESSIONAL ETHICS

- Know and respect the value and dignity of every person
- Freedom to learn, to teach, and guarantee of equal opportunity for all students
- Understand the importance of your own professional growth and continue to pursue your own professional growth.
- Seek to use the best professional judgment and integrity
- Knowing the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, students, parents, and the community
- Strive to achieve and sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct. *(Adapted from The Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida)*

HIGH WORK ETHIC GUIDELINES

- Excellent education is marked by attentive, responsible employees
- Being a committed SSOT employee requires devotion to the clients/customer (students)
- Being a quality environment for students, means having the SSOT adequately staffed throughout the hours of operation

FRAUD POLICY

The fraud policy was established to facilitate the development of controls which will aid in the detection and prevention of fraud against SSOT. It is the intent of SSOT to promote consistent organizational behavior by providing guidelines and assigning responsibility for the development of controls and conduct of investigations.

This policy applies to any fraud, or suspected fraud, involving employees as well as consultants, vendors, contractors, outside agencies doing business with employees of such agencies, and/or any other parties with a business relationship with SSOT.

Any investigative activity required will be conducted without regard to the suspected wrongdoer's length of service, position/title, or relationship to the organization.

Management is responsible for the detection and prevention of fraud, misappropriations, and other inappropriate conduct. Fraud is defined as the intentional, false representation or concealment of a material fact for the purpose of inducing another to act upon it to his or her injury.

Each member of the management team will be familiar with the types of improprieties that might occur within his or her area of responsibility and be alert for any indication of irregularity. Any fraud that is detected or suspected must be reported immediately to the CEO.

The terms embezzlement, misappropriation, and other fiscal wrongdoings refer to, but are not limited to:

- Any dishonest or fraudulent act
- Forgery or alteration of any document or account belonging to the organization
- Forgery or alteration of a check, bank draft, or any other financial document
- Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, or other assets
- Impropriety in the handling or reporting of money or financial transactions
- Accepting or seeking anything of material value from contractors, vendors or persons providing services/materials to the organization.
- Destruction, removal, or inappropriate use of records (student, personnel, financial and, etc.), furniture, fixtures, and equipment.

If there is any question as to whether an action constitutes fraud, contact the Human Resources department (772) 202-0779, for guidance.

The CEO has the primary responsibility for the investigation of all suspected fraudulent acts as defined in the policy. If the investigation substantiates those fraudulent activities have occurred, the CEO will issue reports to appropriate designated personnel.

Decisions to prosecute or refer the examination results to the appropriate law enforcement and/or regulatory agencies for independent investigation will be made in conjunction with legal counsel and senior management, as will final decisions on disposition of the case.

The CEO treats all information received confidentially. Any employee who suspects dishonest or fraudulent activity will notify the CEO immediately and should not attempt to personally conduct investigations or interviews/interrogations related to any suspected fraudulent act. Investigation results will not be disclosed or discussed with anyone other than those who have a legitimate need to know. This is important to avoid damaging the reputations of persons suspected but subsequently found innocent of wrongful conduct and to protect SSOT from potential liability.

Any employee identified in fraudulent activity will face legal action, up to and including immediate termination.

CODE OF ETHICS POLICY

The purpose of SSOT Code of Ethics and conflict of interest policy is to protect SSOT's interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an SSOT employee, officer or trustee or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction.

- No employee of SSOT may receive any thing of economic value for assisting a person in a transaction with SSOT.
- No employee of SSOT is to receive any thing of economic value, other than the compensation and benefits from SSOT to which they are entitled for the performance of their duties and responsibilities of their office or position.
- No employee of SSOT is to receive a “finder’s fee” - *i.e.*, they cannot receive any thing of economic value from a person to whom they have directed SSOT’s business.
- No employee of SSOT can participate in any transaction involving SSOT in which they have a personal substantial economic interest about which they should be reasonably expected to know.
- No employee of SSOT can bid on or enter any contract, subcontract or other transaction that is in the supervision or jurisdiction of SSOT, nor can any legal entity in which they have a controlling interest.
- No employee of SSOT of SSOT can solicit or accept anything of economic value as a gift or gratuity from any person if they know or reasonably should know that such person: (1) has or is seeking to obtain contractual or other business or financial relationships with SSOT, or (2) is seeking, for compensation, to influence the passage or defeat of legislation by SSOT.
- No employee of SSOT of SSOT can solicit or accept anything of economic value as a gift or gratuity from any person is they know or reasonably should know that the person: (1) conducts operations that are contracted or purchased by SSOT; or (2) has substantial economic interests that may be substantially affected by the performance of nonperformance of their SSOT duties.
- No employee or member of SSOT of SSOT can abuse their position within the SSOT – *i.e.*, they cannot use the authority of their office or position to compel or coerce anyone to give them anything of value.

Standards of Ethical Conduct

Synergy School of Tomorrow/Florida State Christian Academy

(Adapted from the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida and Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida)

1. Our school values the worth and dignity of every person, the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, acquisition of knowledge, and the nurture of democratic citizenship. Essential to the achievement of these standards are the freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal opportunity for all.
2. Our primary concern is the student and the development of the student's potential. Employees will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity.
3. Concern for the student requires that our instructional personnel:
 - a. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning and/or to the student's mental and/or physical health and/or safety.

- b. Shall not unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning.
 - c. Shall not unreasonably deny a student access to diverse points of view.
 - d. Shall not intentionally suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.
 - e. Shall not intentionally expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
 - f. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights.
 - g. Shall not harass or discriminate against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition, sexual orientation, or social and family background and shall make reasonable effort to assure that each student is protected from harassment or discrimination.
 - h. Shall not exploit a relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage.
 - i. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
 - j. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
 - k. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
4. Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of colleagues, of students, of parents, and of the community, employees of our school must display the highest degree of ethical conduct. This commitment requires that our employees:
- a. Shall maintain honesty in all professional dealings.
 - b. Shall not on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition if otherwise qualified, or social and family background deny to a colleague professional benefits or advantages or participation in any professional organization.
 - c. Shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political or civil rights and responsibilities.
 - d. Shall not engage in harassment or discriminatory conduct which unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance of professional or work responsibilities or with the orderly processes of education or which creates a hostile, intimidating, abusive, offensive, or oppressive environment; and, further, shall make reasonable effort to assure that each individual is protected from such harassment or discrimination.
 - e. Shall not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague.

Training Requirement

All instructional personnel and administrators are required as a condition of employment to complete training on these standards of ethical conduct.

Reporting Misconduct by Instructional Personnel and Administrators

All employees, **educational support employees**, and administrators have an obligation to report misconduct by instructional personnel and school administrators, which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student. Examples of misconduct include obscene language, drug and alcohol use, disparaging comments, prejudice or bigotry, sexual innuendo, cheating or testing violations, physical aggression, and accepting or offering favors. Reports of misconduct of employees should be made to **Simone Tillman, Human Resources Director, (772) 801-5522 or (772) 202-0779**. Reports of misconduct committed by administrators should be made to **Simone Tillman, Human Resources Director, (772) 801-5522 or (772) 202-0779**. Legally sufficient allegations of misconduct by Florida certified educators will be reported to the Office of Professional Practices Services.

Policies and procedures for reporting misconduct by instructional personnel or school administrators which affects the health, safety, or welfare of a student are posted in our employee workroom and on our Web site at www.synergyschooloftomorrow.com or www.fscademy.com

Reporting Child Abuse, Abandonment or Neglect

All employees and agents have an affirmative duty to report all actual or suspected cases of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect. Call 1-800-96-ABUSE or report online at: <http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report/>.

Signs of Physical Abuse The child may have unexplained bruises, welts, cuts, or other injuries; broken bones; or burns. A child experiencing physical abuse may seem withdrawn or depressed, seem afraid to go home or may run away, shy away from physical contact, be aggressive, or wear inappropriate clothing to hide injuries.

Signs of Sexual Abuse The child may have torn, stained or bloody underwear, trouble walking or sitting, pain or itching in genital area, or a sexually transmitted disease. A child experiencing sexual abuse may have unusual knowledge of sex or act seductively, fear a particular person, seem withdrawn or depressed, gain or lose weight suddenly, shy away from physical contact, or run away from home.

Signs of Neglect The child may have unattended medical needs, little or no supervision at home, poor hygiene, or appear underweight. A child experiencing neglect may be frequently tired or hungry, steal food, or appear overly needy for adult attention.

Patterns of Abuse: Serious abuse usually involves a combination of factors. While a single sign may not be significant, a pattern of physical or behavioral signs is a serious indicator and should be reported.

Liability Protections

Any person, official, or institution participating in good faith in any act authorized or required by law, or reporting in good faith any instance of child abuse, abandonment, or neglect to the department or any law enforcement agency, shall be immune from any civil or criminal liability which might otherwise result by reason of such action. (F.S. 39.203)

An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or of the former or current employee is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under F.S. Chapter 760. (F.S. 768.095)

SAFETY

SSOT is committed to providing the resources and manpower necessary to develop, implement, and administer safety procedures for the protection of its employees.

All employees are expected to meet their responsibilities to make the safety procedures effective and productive. Periodic reviews of our safety procedures will be conducted by management to maintain its effectiveness.

Reporting Safety Issues

All accidents, injuries, potential safety hazards, safety suggestions and health and safety related issues must be reported immediately to your supervisor, School Leader and Human Resources. If an employee is injured and require emergency response, management will contact the response agency, if needed. If an injury does not require medical attention, an Employer Report of Injury/Illness Form must still be completed in case medical treatment is later needed, and to ensure that any existing safety hazards are corrected. The employee's Claim for Worker's Compensation Benefits Form must be completed in all cases in which an injury requiring medical attention has occurred.

Safety Rules:

- Report all work related injuries to your supervisor immediately.
- Immediately report accidents, near accidents, and property damage to your supervisor regardless of severity.
- Horseplay and fighting will not be tolerated in the workplace.
- Use required personal protective equipment (PPE) and/or safety procedures to protect yourself from potential hazards that cannot be eliminated. Maintain your PPE in good condition.
- Possession of unauthorized firearms, alcoholic beverages, illegal drugs, or unauthorized medically prescribed drugs will not be tolerated in the workplace. Inform your immediate supervisor if you are required to take medication during work hours.
Written medical evidence stating that the medication will not adversely affect your decision making or physical ability may be required, particularly if you drive a vehicle on organization business.
- Operate equipment only if you are trained and authorized.
- If you do not understand your job assignment, ask your supervisor for help.
- Inspect your workstation/area for potential hazards and ensure that the equipment is in safe operating condition before using it.
- Immediately report any unsafe condition or act to your supervisor.
- Take any temporary corrective action you can to render the area safe until permanent corrections can be made.
- If your work creates a potential hazard, correct the hazard immediately or use safety tape/signs to isolate the area before leaving it unattended.
- If there is any doubt concerning the safety of the work method to be used, consult your supervisor before beginning the work.
- Follow recommended work procedures outlined for the job including safe work methods.
- Maintain an orderly environment. Store all equipment in a designated place.

- Report any smoke, fire, or unusual odors to your supervisor, School Leader or Human Resources.
- Use proper lifting techniques. For objects exceeding 50 pounds in weight, specific methods for safe lifting should be determined by your immediate supervisor.
- Never attempt to catch a falling object.
- Comply with all state and local traffic laws, signs, signals, markers, and persons designated to direct traffic. Fasten seat belts before driving any motor vehicle.
- Know and follow departmental rules regarding first aid, emergency procedures, evacuation routes, and fire department notification.
- Assist and cooperate with all safety investigations and inspections and assist in implementing safety procedures as requested.

Employees who do not comply with these safety rules may be subject to disciplinary action and may be considered undesirable for continued employment with SSOT.

REPORT INJURIES

Immediately report all injuries, no matter how slight, to your supervisor, School Leader or Human Resources.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

All employees are covered by Worker's Compensation. Any injury must be reported immediately to an Administrator, and a written report completed. If a workplace injury does occur, a drug test will immediately follow as per the workers compensation guidelines.

Questions

If employees are ever in doubt regarding the safe way to perform a task, please do not proceed until the supervisor has been consulted.

Employees will not be asked to perform any task that may be dangerous to their health, safety, or security. If you feel a task may be dangerous, inform your supervisor, School Leader, or Human Resources immediately.

SSOT strongly encourages employee participation and your input on health and safety matters. Employees may report potential hazards and make suggestions about safety without fear of retaliation. SSOT appreciates, encourages, and expects this type of involvement! The success of the safety program relies on the participation of all employees.

Although it is SSOT's responsibility to provide for the safety, health, and security of its workers during working hours, it is the responsibility of each employee to abide by the rules, regulations and guidelines set forth. Remember, failure to adhere to these rules will be considered serious infractions of safety rules and will result in disciplinary actions.

Note: Employees who return to work after being absent due to a work-related injury must report to Human Resources with a doctor's clearance before returning to work. Human Resources will then provide a Return-to-Work Clearance for the employee.

WEAPONS

To ensure that SSOT maintains a workplace safe and free of violence for all employees, SSOT prohibits the possession or use of perilous weapons on SSOT property. A license to carry the weapon on organization property does not supersede this policy.

Any employee in violation of this policy will be subject to prompt disciplinary action, up to and including termination. All employees are subject to this provision, including contract and temporary employees, visitors, and customers on organization property. The only exception to this policy will be police officers, security counselors or other persons who have been given written consent by SSOT to carry a weapon on the property.

"SSOT property" is defined as all SSOT managed buildings and surrounding areas such as sidewalks, walkways, driveways, and parking lots under SSOT's management authority.

"Dangerous weapons" include, but are not limited to, firearms, explosives, knives, and other weapons that might be considered dangerous or that could cause harm. Employees are responsible for making sure that any item possessed by the employee is not prohibited by this policy.

SSOT reserves the right at any time and at its discretion to search all packages, containers, briefcases, purses, lockers, desks, enclosures, and persons entering its property, for the purpose of determining whether any weapon has been brought onto its property or premises in violation of this policy.

Employees who fail or refuse to promptly permit a search under this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including a termination.

FIRE PREVENTION

Know the location of the fire extinguisher(s) in your area and make sure they are always kept clear. Notify the School Operations Manager if an extinguisher is used or if the seal is broken. Keep in mind that extinguishers that are rated ABC can be used for paper, wood, or electrical fires. Make sure all flammable liquids, such as alcohol, are stored in approved and appropriately labeled safety cans and are not exposed to any ignition source. There will be regular fire drills held at each school site. If you are aware of a fire, you should:

- Pull the nearest fire alarm.
- Immediately contact the fire department.
- If the fire is small and contained, locate the nearest fire extinguisher. This should only be attempted by employees who are knowledgeable in the correct use of fire extinguishers.

- If the fire is out of control, leave the area immediately. No attempt should be made to fight the fire.
- When the fire department arrives, direct the crew to the fire. Do not re-enter the building until directed to do so by the fire department.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

If you are advised to evacuate the building, you should:

- Stop all work immediately and proceed calmly with all students to nearest exit.
- Exit quickly, but do not run. Do not stop for personal belongings.
- Proceed, in an orderly fashion, to a parking lot near the building. Be present and accounted for during roll call.
- Security or School Leader Contact outside emergency response agencies, if needed.
- Do not re-enter the building until instructed to do so.

INCLEMENT WEATHER/EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING

At times, emergencies such as severe weather, fires, or power failures can disturb school operations. The decision to close the office or schools is the decision of the CEO.

When the decision to close is made, employees will receive notification from their direct supervisor or School Leader.

Please listen to local news, the radio, and check social media when there is inclement weather. In general, SSOT will follow the decisions of the St. Lucie County School District.

Days that the schools are closed due to inclement weather may create a need to extend the school year or shorten holiday breaks.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Neatness and good housekeeping are signs of efficiency. You are always expected to keep your classroom or work area neat and orderly – it is a required safety precaution. If there is a liquid spill, clean it up immediately.

Do not leave materials or other objects on the floor that may cause others to trip or fall. Keep aisles, exits, electrical panels, fire extinguishers, and doorways always clear.

Easily accessible trash receptacles are located throughout the building. Please put all litter in the appropriate receptacles and containers. Always be aware of good health and safety standards, including fire and loss prevention. Please report anything that needs repairing or replacing to your supervisor and Operations immediately.

SECURITY

Maintaining the security of SSOT schools and offices is every employee's responsibility. Develop habits that ensure security as a matter of course. For example:

- Know the location of all alarms and fire extinguishers and familiarize yourself with the proper procedure for using them, should the need arise.

- When you leave SSOT's premises make sure that all entrances are properly locked and secured.

PARKING

You are encouraged to use the parking areas designated for our employees. Remember to lock your car every day and park within the specified areas.

Courtesy and common sense in parking will help eliminate accidents, personal injuries, and damage to your vehicle and to the vehicles of other employees.

If you should damage another car while parking or leaving, immediately report the incident, along with the license numbers of both vehicles and any other pertinent information you may have to your School Operations Manager or Security.

SSOT cannot be and is not responsible for any loss, theft, or damage to your vehicle or any of its contents.

PROPERTY

Personal Property

SSOT is not responsible for the loss, theft, or damage of an employee's personal property. Therefore, we strongly urge employees to take the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of such property.

Company Property

Company property is defined as any piece of technology, equipment, furnishing, vehicle, building, or supply owned, leased, or otherwise in the custodial care of the Company or any person acting as a company representative. It is the responsibility of each employee to ensure proper use and maintenance of Company property. Should any employee know about any misuse, they must notify their supervisor immediately.

Employees may not use company property for personal reasons unless specific permission has been granted by a member of management. Employees will be held responsible for any loss or damage incurred while the property is in their possession for personal use. If the property is in disrepair when the employee takes possession, they should note those issues with a member of management, so they are not held responsible for them upon return.

Employees are expected to take reasonable care of company property being used for company business. Normal wear and tear is to be expected, but any employee found to neglect or misuse company property may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination. Failure to return company property may result in legal action.

Employees may be issued SSOT property for use during their employment. Such items include but are not limited to computer equipment, keys, communication devices. Employees are required to sign a Property File Form and logs when items are issued.

It is the employee responsibility to ensure company items issued are secure. At no time should company equipment be left in an unsecure area, cabinets or drawers that other employees, volunteers or public may have access. This practice is in direct violation of company policy as it may leave the company vulnerable. Furthermore, employees will be financially responsible for any lost or damaged company property issued. The value of any property issued will be deducted from the employee's paycheck. Employees will be required to sign an acknowledgment form for this purpose.

Personal Use of SSOT Property and Proprietary Information

Employees are not allowed to borrow SSOT equipment for their own personal use. In no instance may equipment be taken from the school premises without prior management approval. Furthermore, employees may not remove company proprietary information including, but not limited, student transcripts, personnel files, bank records, sensitive student information, cumulative folders, trackers and, etc. without permission. Employees identified in this type of behavior will be subject to an internal and/or external investigation, disciplinary action up to, and including termination and legal action proceedings.

As an SSOT employee, you accept full responsibility for accountability, proper utilization and losses of equipment assigned to you or under your control as well as confidential and/or company proprietary information you may be privy to.

Employees are responsible for returning the equipment in good condition and may be required to pay for any damages that occur because of improper use/loss while using the equipment. Proprietary company information removed from the premises must be returned immediately and its entirety.

SMOKE-FREE ENVIRONMENT

In consideration of the reports of the Surgeon General of the United States and in keeping with SSOT's intent to provide a safe and healthy work environment, no person shall smoke, chew, or otherwise consume any tobacco or tobacco product while on SSOT grounds or any school bus transporting children attending any SSOT school. Any person who violates this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The Smoke-Free Workplace policy applies to:

- All areas of buildings and grounds occupied by the organization's employees
- All SSOT-sponsored off-site conferences and meetings
- All vehicles owned or leased by SSOT
- All visitors to school sites
- All contractors and consultants and/or their employees working on school sites.
- All temporary employees
- All student interns

We believe that the spirit of thoughtfulness and cooperation, which are characteristics of SSOT, are adequate to resolve any disputes which might arise under this policy. Where disputes cannot be so resolved, the rights of the nonsmoker shall be given precedence, as required.

Employees who violate this smoking policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate discharge.

EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

It is SSOT's expectation that all employees will conduct themselves accordingly and to accepted standards of conduct and performance. When employees do not meet these standards, it is the supervisor's responsibility to act in a timely manner and initiate a program of disciplinary steps to address the problem.

Although employment with SSOT is based on mutual consent and both the employee and SSOT has the right to terminate employment at will, with or without cause or advance notice, SSOT may use progressive discipline to address performance and behavior issues. This policy is intended to ensure that all employees are treated as consistently and fair throughout the organization.

The disciplinary program has four major purposes:

1) to ensure that the employee knows what the problem is; 2) to communicate what the supervisor's expectations are for the employee to correct the problem; 3) to provide appropriate penalties for improper work conduct; and 4) to provide a record of corrective action taken by supervisors in such problem situations.

Progressive Discipline

Progressive discipline is a formal process which includes several steps or levels of discipline, each of which provides the employee with the opportunity to correct the problem or inadequacy.

These steps are outlined on the Employee Incident Report, which may be used in disciplining employees for infractions. Depending on the circumstances and severity of the infraction, disciplinary action may involve the steps outlined below. The seriousness of the situation will determine the action taken in any given circumstance, and an employee's overall work and attendance records may be considered. SSOT will take the action believed to be most appropriate in each situation and can bypass any of the steps outlined below.

Unless the severity of the infraction warrants otherwise, prior to moving to formal discipline the supervisor should do the following:

1. Do a thorough fact-finding that includes collection of all information and applicable records.
2. Hold a discussion in private with the employee. During the discussion the supervisor should state the problem clearly and allow the employee to respond.
3. Follow up with the employee after the meeting and after all information has been gathered, to report the findings.

If the supervisor intends to move to formal discipline, the employee should be told at the conclusion of the follow-up meeting or as soon after as possible. It should be made clear to the employee which level or step of the discipline process is being applied.

4. Provide a follow up letter as soon after the meeting as possible. The letter should include the date and time of the follow-up meeting, a brief statement of the problem, the supervisor's expectations, and the conclusion reached in the meeting.
5. The stage of discipline must be clearly noted, and a statement made that lack of improvement will result in further discipline.

Disciplinary Action Progressive Steps

There are four (4) steps in the progressive discipline process; however, in cases of misconduct or repeated infractions, the process may be shortened and the supervisor, in consultation with the Human Resources department, may move directly to a later step in the process, including termination.

All disciplinary action should be taken within a reasonable time frame and be documented on an Employee Incident Report. It is recommended that no more than two (2) days elapse between the time the supervisor learns or has knowledge of the offense, and the action is taken.

Verbal Warning

Verbal warnings are for minor first offenses. It is important that supervisors not re-use the verbal warning for the same type of offense. No more than two verbal warnings should be given. A supervisor should have a full discussion with the employee before giving the warning to ensure that the employee can respond or to give additional information. If the supervisor believes that a verbal warning is appropriate, it should be made clear to the employee that the verbal warning is the first step in the progressive discipline process.

The verbal warning should be documented for the supervisor's record, and it is recommended that a note summarizing the warning be given to the employee. The record and note should record the date, time, and reason for the warning. The verbal warning remains in effect for 12 months.

Written Warning

After an employee has received a verbal warning or if the severity of the infraction warrants, a subsequent offense may be addressed by a written warning as appropriate. Supervisors should review the draft of the written warning with the Human Resources department.

The supervisor and employee first meet to discuss the problem. In the discussion, the supervisor must review the incident or performance problem which requires the warning, and the supervisor and employee should exchange ideas and information regarding solution(s) to the problem. The written warning should be given to the employee directly following the discussion, with copies to the Human Resources department for the employee's official personnel file. Written warnings are retained in the employee's formal record for 12 months. The written warning should:

- Documented on the Employee Incident Report;
- Thoroughly and specifically describe the situation which prompted the warning; including day, date, time, location, and what the supervisor saw or heard;
- Indicate why the behavior or performance is unacceptable;
- Include a summary of the decisions that were reached during the discussion regarding how the employee would correct the problem;
- State that if the behavior continues or other problems occur, additional corrective measures may be taken, which may result in termination of employment;
- If the written warning is given without a prior discussion regarding the incident between the supervisor and employee, the supervisor should discuss the matter with the employee when giving the employee the warning.

Final Written Warning: After an employee has received a first written warning or if the severity of the infraction warrants, a subsequent offense may be addressed by a Final Written Warning. The steps listed for a Written Warning should be repeated (share content of warning with HR department and meet with employee to discuss repeated offense). The final written warning should be given to the employee directly following the discussion, with copies to the Human Resources department for the employee's official personnel file. Final written warnings are retained in the employee's formal record for 12 months.

Termination: Termination of employment is the culmination of the progressive discipline process or the penalty for very serious offenses. If deemed necessary, the Human Resources department will conduct a pre-termination hearing. The purpose of the hearing is to review with the employee's supervisor and the employee, the documentation and any new circumstances leading to the supervisor's request to terminate.

SEPARATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Employees who voluntarily end their employment with SSOT during the school year should give SSOT's Human Resources department and their direct supervisor at least two (2) weeks written notice in advance of their termination date.

While numerous circumstances may require working with an employee to correct a standard, there are several reasons that would require immediate separation of the work relationship:

- Any form of physical abuse of a student, or employee
- Withholding food or drink from a child as a form of punishment
- Endangering the life of a student or employee
- Failure to report professional misconduct or suspicion of child abuse
- Sleeping during work hours
- Dishonesty or removal of another employee's property without permission
- Misrepresentation of fact in seeking employment
- Failure to comply with school and classroom policy

- Failure to fulfill the terms of teacher expectations in this handbook and the teacher's contract
- Gross insubordination, including refusal to perform a duty connected with the job requested by the administration
- Violation of confidential information
- Abusive language to a supervisor or to any other employee or to a parent

EXIT INTERVIEW

When an employee leaves SSOT, Human Resources requests that they participate in an exit interview or complete an exit survey, so that we can learn each employee's reasons for leaving, and/or any other impressions that the employee may have about SSOT. In the exit interview survey, employees can provide insight into areas for improvement that SSOT can make.

RETURN OF SSOT PROPERTY

Employees may be issued SSOT property for use during their employment. Such items include but are not limited to computer equipment, keys, communication devices. Employees are required to sign a Property File Form and logs when items are issued. Items must be returned to SSOT at the time of employee's separation of employment. Employees will be responsible for any lost or damaged items.

The value of any property issued and not returned will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck. Employees will be required to sign an acknowledgment form for this purpose.

EMPLOYMENT INQUIRIES

Employees of SSOT should not under any circumstances respond to any requests for information regarding another employee unless it is part of their assigned job responsibilities. Employees who receive requests for information regarding other employees should forward those requests to their supervisor who should then forward them to the Human Resources department.

COMMUNICATION

Employee Communication with Coworkers

Successful working relationships and conditions depend upon successful communication.

Not only do employees need to stay aware of changes in procedures, policies and general information, employees also need to communicate suggestions or problems as they affect their work. Employees should make sure they are aware of and utilize all SSOT methods of communication, including this Employee Handbook, bulletin boards, and discussions with the memoranda, staff meetings, newsletters, training sessions, and organization e-mail.

SSOT encourages all employees to discuss any issue they may have with a co-worker directly with that person. If a resolution cannot be reached, the employee should arrange a meeting with their supervisor to discuss any concern, problem, or issue that arises during their employment.

If requested, any information discussed in such a meeting will be considered confidential to the extent reasonably practicable. Retaliation against any employee for meeting with their supervisor to voice their concerns will not be tolerated. Please remember it is counterproductive to a harmonious workplace for employees to create or repeat rumors. It is more constructive for an employee to consult their supervisor.

Communication Between Staff, Students and Parents

Communication between students and parents with SSOT staff must be appropriate and in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws.

All communication, whether in writing, orally, or electronically, is expected to be professional, deemed reasonable and acceptable by any outside person, and limited to information that is school-related. Improper or inappropriate communication between SSOT employees and students and parents may include, but is not limited to, communication that may be viewed as derogatory, threatening, harassing, sexual, lewd, discriminatory, or suggestive in nature, regardless of who initiates the communication.

Any electronic communication between SSOT staff members and students (whether via SSOT provided or personal hardware or account) are considered SSOT work products and subject to public records. This includes sharing of information and/or communication via writing, images, signals, sounds, recordings, data, or intelligence of any kind that is transmitted or shared, including in physical or electronic form. As such, if SSOT employees use a personal cell phone or personal email address to communicate with students or parents, the employee implicitly agrees to provide SSOT access to the cell phone or emails if and/or when SSOT requests to do so.

Inappropriate Communications

SSOT is aware that the reputations and careers of students and educators have been damaged due to inappropriate communications between parties. Therefore, the intent of the policy above is to ensure all employees and students aware of the expectations and procedures of our organization regarding communication with students and families.

Communications of Politics, Religions, Movements and Other Sensitive Topics of Debate SSOT promotes a healthy work environment. Therefore, employees are asked to refrain from discussion of politics, debates regarding religion, movements and other such topics that may cause debates.

Violations

Any violation of this policy will be immediately investigated by the employee's supervisor.

The investigation will include dates, the name of the person reporting the allegation, and the specific allegation made. Employees identified in inappropriate communication may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

COMPUTER SOFTWARE (Unauthorized Copying)

SSOT does not condone the illegal duplication of software. The copyright law is clear. The copyright holder is given certain exclusive rights, including the right to make and distribute copies.

Title 17 of the U.S. Code states that "it is illegal to make or distribute copies of copyrighted material without authorization" (Section 106). The only exception is the users' right to make a backup copy for archival purposes (Section 117).

The law protects the exclusive rights of the copyright holder and does not give users the right to copy software unless the manufacturer does not provide a backup copy.

Unauthorized duplication of software is a federal crime. Penalties include fines up to and including \$250,000 and jail terms of up to five years.

Even the users of unlawful copies suffer from their own illegal actions. They receive no documentation, no customer support, and no information about product updates.

- SSOT licenses the use of computer software from select companies. SSOT does not own this software or its related documentation and, unless authorized by the software manufacturer, does not have the right to reproduce it.
- Regarding use on local area networks or on multiple machines, SSOT employees shall use the software only in accordance with the software publisher's license agreement.
- SSOT employees learning of any misuse of software or related documentation within the organization must notify the IT personnel immediately.
- According to the U.S. Copyright Law, illegal reproduction of software can be subject to civil damages and criminal penalties, including fines and imprisonment.
- SSOT employees who make, acquire, or use unauthorized copies of computer software shall be disciplined as appropriate under the circumstances. Such discipline may include termination.

COMPUTERS AND EMAIL ACCEPTABLE USE

SSOT makes every effort to provide the best available technology to those performing services for SSOT. In this regard, SSOT has installed, at substantial expense, equipment such as computers and email.

This policy is to advise those who use our business equipment about access to and disclosure of computer stored information and email messages created, sent, or received by SSOT's employees with the use of SSOT's equipment.

This policy also sets forth policies on the proper use of the computer and email systems provided by SSOT. SSOT property, including computers and email, should only be used for conducting organization business. Incidental and occasional personal use of organization computers and our voice mail and email systems is permitted, but information and messages stored in these systems will be treated no differently from other business-related information and messages described below.

EMAIL

Email is the standard form of communication within SSOT. It is the employee's responsibility to manage his/her own mailbox. Email is for business use, and personal use should be limited and occur during non-business hours. A warning will be generated when the mailbox capacity reaches 90% full and will continue until the maximum limit is reached. Email accounts of terminated employees will be disabled immediately and deleted from the system one month from the date of termination.

The use of the email system may not be used to solicit for commercial ventures, religious or political causes, outside organizations, or other non-job-related solicitations. Furthermore, email is not to be used to create any offensive or disruptive messages. Among those which are considered offensive, are any messages which contain sexual implications, racial slurs, gender specific comments, or any other comments that offensively address someone's age, race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, national origin, or disability. In addition, the email shall not be used to send (upload) or receive (download) copyrighted materials, trade secrets, proprietary financial information, or similar materials without prior authorization.

Although SSOT provides certain codes to restrict access to computers and email to protect these systems against external parties or entities obtaining unauthorized access, employees should understand that these systems are intended for business use, and all computer information and email messages are to be considered SSOT records.

SSOT also needs to be able to respond to proper requests resulting from legal proceedings that call for electronically stored evidence. Therefore, SSOT must, and does, maintain the right and the ability to enter any of these systems and to inspect and review any, and all data recorded in those systems. Since SSOT reserves the right to obtain access to all email messages left on these systems, employees should not assume that such messages are private and confidential or that SSOT or its designated representatives will not have a need to access and review this information.

Individuals using SSOT's business equipment should also have no expectation that any information stored on their computer, whether the information is contained on a computer hard drive, Dropbox or in any other manner, will be private.

Accordingly, no employee should have an expectation of privacy as it relates to any computer or electronic equipment or software.

SSOT has the right to monitor email messages. SSOT will inspect the contents of computers or email during an investigation triggered by indications of unacceptable behavior or as necessary to locate needed information that is not more readily available by some other less intrusive means.

The contents of computers and email, properly obtained for some legitimate business purpose, may be disclosed by SSOT, if necessary, within or outside of SSOT.

Given SSOT's right to retrieve and read any email messages, such messages should be treated as confidential by other employees and accessed only by the intended recipient.

SSOT's Chief Executive Officer or Chief Financial Officer will review any request for access to the contents of an individual's computer or email prior to access being made without the individual's consent. Any employee who violates the Computer and Email policy may be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

INTERNET USE AND SOFTWARE DOWNLOADING

This policy defines the proper employee use of the SSOT Internet Access and the procedures for handling software download opportunities. When using the internet do the following:

- Respect the privacy of others and do not intentionally obtain copies, modify files, passwords or data that belong to others. Do not represent yourself as someone else by using another's account. Do not forward personal material without prior consent. Do not use language that is abusive, profane, or offensive.
- Respect the legal protection provided by copyright licenses to programs, books, articles, and data.
- Do not follow the links when offered unless you are aware of the origin of the message. Do not download software upgrades or suspect attachments without contacting the IT department beforehand. Software upgrades often are not adequately tested and can introduce incompatible code making the existing system unstable. Attachments may contain viruses or malicious code that can compromise the security of the in-house system.
- Adhere to existing Federal and State laws regarding electronic communication. This includes regulations re: accessing information without authorization, giving passwords out to others, or causing a system to malfunction. These laws carry both civil and criminal penalties.
- Do not access material that is fraudulent, harassing, sexually explicit, or offensive (including offensive material concerning sex, race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, gender, veteran status, or other characteristic protected by law).

Employees who are in doubt as to the protocol and risks involved in using the Internet or in downloading software upgrades offered on the Internet should contact their supervisor or IT personnel.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Employees have no right to privacy with respect to any information sent, received, created, accessed, obtained, viewed, stored, or otherwise found at any time on any SSOT computer. Any violations of the policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

SSOT recognizes that employees use social media (Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn, etc.). However, employee use of social media can create a problem in the workplace if it:

- Interferes with the employee's work;
- Used to harass or discriminate against co-workers or students/families;
- Creates a hostile work environment;
- Divulges confidential information about our organization or families; or
- Harms the goodwill and reputation of our organization.

If you choose to identify yourself as an SSOT employee in your personal social networking accounts, you must state explicitly and prominently that any views expressed are your own and not those of SSOT or any person or entity affiliated with SSOT. Further, if use of any social media creates any of the circumstances described above, SSOT may take disciplinary action up to and including the immediate termination of employment.

We ask that teachers and staff members refrain from “friending” or “following” current students on their personal social media accounts, to protect the organization. *The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)* is a federal privacy law that gives parents and families certain protections regarding their children's education records (report cards, transcripts, disciplinary records, contact and family information, and class schedules).

This law also requires that teachers refrain from naming students, sharing their grades, posting physical representations (photos or videos), or making insulting or derogatory comments about current students, any SSOT school, or any SSOT schools’ faculty/staff/board member on their personal social media accounts.

Instructors should understand that even a story that they believe is humorous or funny may still come across as demeaning. Remarks that teachers or staff members make about teaching, colleagues or classroom activities online should never allude to a student(s). Failure to adhere to this policy may be grounds for discipline up to and including termination.

Any SSOT employee who allows access to his or her social networking page(s) by any student or parent, or who utilizes any social networking media to communicate with any student or parent, **MUST** make sure that no confidential or inappropriate data is contained anywhere within or accessible by that social networking page.

Please Note: Social media pages are the responsibility of the employee to establish the appropriate privacy settings and guards, and to monitor the posts which may be visible to any students or parents. All the information stated above regarding social media has been outlined and will be monitored closely by our Human Resources department to protect the brand, name, and integrity of SSOT.

NO SOLICITATION/DISTRIBUTION

Visitors have a limited right of access to SSOT’s facilities and should only be on SSOT property for purposes directly related to their children’s education.

Visitors who are not visiting for the purpose of directly dealing with their child should report to the School Operations Manager and will only be allowed visitation for purposes of proper sales or maintenance and repair. Exceptions to this policy can be obtained only through administrative approval.

Employees may not engage in solicitation or in the distribution of literature during scheduled work hours or in work areas without the permission of the School Leader.

Working schedule means the period scheduled for the performance of job duties, not including break times, or other periods when employees are properly not engaged in performing work related duties. Employees on their break times, or other non-working times may not solicit or distribute literature to other employees during the working time of such employees.

Bulletin boards on employer property are to be used for official purposes only to notify employees about information approved in advance by management.

Only those management employees designated by SSOT, may post material on, or remove material from, official bulletin boards.

AUTOMOBILE

When operating your personally owned vehicle for business:

- An employee's Personal Auto Liability insurance is the primary insurance. SSOT's liability insurance coverage is more than an employee's personal insurance. In all cases, the primary insurance is the employee's insurance policy and SSOT will be used in reserve and take effect only after personal insurance is used up.
- Employees should carry at least state minimum per occurrence liability coverage. Evidence of insurance coverage is to be provided to each year, by a copy of the employee's policy Declaration page or a Certificate of Insurance.
- SSOT is not responsible for any physical damage to an employee's vehicle. Employees must carry their own collision and comprehensive coverage.

In the event of an accident all employees are urged to:

- Take necessary steps to protect the lives of self and others.
- Comply with police instructions.
- Not assume or admit fault. Others will determine liability and negligence after thorough investigation.
- Report the accident to as soon as possible.

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

SSOT prohibits workplace violence. Consistent with this policy, acts or threats of physical violence, including intimidation, harassment, and/or coercion, which involve or affect SSOT, or which occur on SSOT property will not be tolerated.

Acts or threats of violence include conduct, which is sufficiently severe, offensive, or intimidating to alter the employment conditions at SSOT, or to create a hostile, abusive, or intimidating work environment for one or several employees. Examples of workplace violence include, but are not limited to, the following:

- All threats or acts of violence occurring on SSOT's premises, regardless of the relationship between SSOT and the parties involved.
- All threats or acts of violence occurring off SSOT's premises involving someone who is acting in the capacity of a representative of SSOT.

Examples of conduct, which may be considered threats or acts of violence, include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hitting or shoving an individual.
- Threatening an individual or his/her family, friends, associates, or property with harm.
- Intentional destruction or threatening to destroy SSOT's property.
- Making harassing or threatening phone calls.
- Harassing surveillance or stalking (following or watching someone).
- Unauthorized possession or inappropriate use of firearms or weapons.

SSOT prohibition against threats and acts of violence applies to all persons involved in SSOT's operation, including but not limited to personnel, contract, and temporary workers and anyone else on SSOT property. Violations of this policy by any individual on SSOT property will lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination and/or legal action as appropriate. All employees are encouraged to report incidents of threats or acts of physical violence of which they are aware to their supervisors

DISCRIMINATION/HARRASSMENT POLICY

It is the policy of SSOT to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment based on race, sex, national origin, religion, color, marital status, age or disability, national origin, veteran status, citizenship, or any other characteristic protected by law. SSOT prohibits any such discrimination or harassment.

It is our mission to provide a professional work and learning environment free of harassment that maintains equality, dignity, and respect for all.

It shall be a violation of this policy for any student, teacher, administrator, or other employee of SSOT to harass a student, teacher, administrator, or other employee through conduct or communication.

This policy applies to all applicants and employees, whether related to conduct engaged in by fellow employees or someone not directly connected to SSOT (e.g., an outside vendor, consultant, or customer).

Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings and **NO HARASSMENT POLICY.**

All SSOT staff and students have a responsibility to keep the school environment free of harassment. Students must report incidents to the Administration. When the Administration becomes aware that harassment might exist, it is obligated by law to act. SSOT will promptly investigate all reports.

Any student found to have harassed a fellow student will face disciplinary action. SSOT will take no adverse action against any person for making a good faith report of alleged harassment.

BULLYING/HARASSEMENT

SSOT is committed to maintaining an environment that is free from all forms of bullying/harassment. In keeping with this commitment, the Administration will not tolerate, condone, or permit bullying/harassment of or by employees or students. Anyone concerned that they are being bullied or harassed must report this concern to the Administration immediately.

- Bullying- Bullying behavior can be:
- Verbal (name calling, teasing, abuse, putdowns, sarcasm, insults, threats)
- Physical (hitting, punching, kicking, scratching, tripping, splitting)
- Social (ignoring, excluding, ostracizing, alienating, making inappropriate gestures)
- Psychological (spreading rumors, dirty looks, hiding or damaging possessions, malicious SMS, and email messaging, in inappropriate use of camera phones)
- It is important to note that conflict or fights between equals and single incidents are not defined as bullying. Bullying behavior is not:
 - Students not getting along well
 - A situation of mutual conflict
 - Single episodes of nastiness or random acts of aggression or intimidation

What Is Harassment?

Harassment can take many forms. As used in this Employee Handbook, the term “harassment” includes:

Sexual, verbal abuse, inappropriate contact, leering, demand for sexual favors, rape, unwelcome verbal, physical, or sexual conduct, which has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment, is considered sexual harassment.

Harassment tactics usually involve the inappropriate use of power. Anyone concerned that they are being sexually harassed must report this concern to the Administration immediately.

- Offensive remarks, comments, jokes, or slurs pertaining to an individual’s race, religion, sex, gender, pregnancy, color, age, national origin or ancestry, disability, citizenship, veteran status, or any other protected status defined by law.
- Leering, offensive sexual remarks, sexual advances, flirtations, or requests for sexual favors regardless of the gender of the individuals involved.

- Offensive physical conduct, including touching, regardless of the gender of the individuals involved, including threats of harm, violence, or assault.
- Offensive pictures, drawings or photographs or other communications, including e-mail and social media.
- Threatening reprisals of an employees' refusal to respond to requests for sexual favors or for reporting a violation to this policy.
- Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, regardless of gender, when:
- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis of employment decisions affecting such individual.
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with the individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Responsibility

All SSOT employees have a responsibility for keeping our work environment free of harassment.

Reporting

SSOT encourages reporting of all perceived incidents of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, regardless of the offender's identity or position. Individuals who believe that they have been the victim of such conduct should report their concerns to Human Resources in writing, by phone (772) 801-5522, Ext 1006 or via email grievances@SSOTk12.com.

In addition, SSOT encourages individuals who believe they are being subjected to such conduct promptly to advise the offender that his or her behavior is unwelcome, if the individual believes it is safe to do so, and request that it be discontinued. Often this action alone will resolve the problem.

However, SSOT cannot resolve a harassment problem that it does not know about. Therefore, employees are responsible for bringing any such problems to SSOT's attention so it can take whatever steps are necessary to correct the problems.

Investigation/Complaint Procedure

All complaints of harassment will be promptly investigated. If the investigation substantiates the accusations, the appropriate corrective action will be taken. This may include, but not be limited to reprimand, suspension, or dismissal, depending on the nature and severity of the offense. Appropriate action will also be taken in the event the accusations are intentionally false or malicious in intent. The Informal and Formal Procedures are outlined below.

Informal Procedure

If for any reason an individual does not wish to address the offender directly, or if such action does not successfully end the offensive conduct, the individual should notify his/her supervisor or Director of Human Resources. Human Resources may, if the individual so requests, talk to the alleged offender on the individual's behalf.

In addition, there may be instances in which an individual seeks only to discuss matters with one of the SSOT designated representatives, and such discussion is encouraged. An individual reporting harassment, discrimination or retaliation should be aware, that SSOT may decide it is necessary to take action to address such conduct beyond an informal discussion. This decision will be discussed with the individual.

The best course of action in any case will depend on many factors and, therefore, the informal procedure will remain flexible. Moreover, the informal procedure is not a required first step for the reporting individual.

Formal Procedure

As noted above, individuals who believe they have been the victims of conduct prohibited by this policy statement or believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with the School Leader or Director of Human Resources.

SSOT encourages the prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that rapid and constructive action can be taken before relationships become irreparably strained. Therefore, while no fixed reporting period has been established, early reporting and intervention have proven to be the most effective method of resolving actual or perceived incidents of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation. Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be investigated promptly.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the investigatory process to the extent consistent with adequate investigation and appropriate corrective action. Misconduct constituting harassment, discrimination or retaliation will be dealt with appropriately.

Responsive actions may include but are not limited to training; referral to counseling; and/or disciplinary action such as warning, reprimand, withholding of a promotion or pay increase, reassignment, temporary suspension without pay, or termination, as SSOT deems appropriate under the circumstances.

If a party to a complaint does not agree with its resolution, that party may appeal to SSOT's CEO. False and malicious complaints of harassment, discrimination or retaliation as opposed to complaints, which, even if erroneous, are made in good faith, may be the subject of appropriate disciplinary action.

Retaliation

Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately to a School Leader or Human Resources and will be promptly investigated and addressed.

An employer who discloses information about a former or current employee to a prospective employer of the former or current employee upon request of the prospective employer or of the former or current employee is immune from civil liability for such disclosure or its consequences unless it is shown by clear and convincing evidence that the information disclosed by the former or current employer was knowingly false or violated any civil right of the former or current employee protected under F.S. Chapter 760. (F.S. 768.095) business-related social events.

This policy should not, and may not, be used as a basis for excluding or separating individuals of a gender, or any other protected characteristic, from participating in business or work-related social activities or discussions. In other words, no one should make the mistake of engaging in discrimination or exclusion to avoid allegations of harassment. The law and the policies of SSOT prohibit disparate treatment based on sex or any other protected characteristic, regarding terms, conditions, privileges, and perquisites of employment.

The prohibitions against harassment, discrimination and retaliation are intended to complement and further those policies, not to form the basis of an exception to them.

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT POLICY

Policy Statement

Synergy School of Tomorrow (SSOT) is committed to providing a safe environment for all its employees free from discrimination on any ground and from harassment at work including sexual harassment. SSOT will operate a zero-tolerance policy for any form of sexual harassment in the workplace, treat all incidents seriously and promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment. Any person found to have sexually harassed another will face disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from employment. All complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and treated with respect and in confidence. No one will be victimized for making such a complaint.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated.

It includes situations where a person is asked to engage in sexual activity as a condition of that person's employment, as well as situations which create an environment which is hostile, intimidating or humiliating for the recipient.

Sexual harassment can involve one or more incidents and actions constituting harassment may be physical, verbal, and non-verbal. Examples of conduct or behavior which constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

Physical conduct

- Unwelcome physical contact including patting, pinching, stroking, kissing, hugging, fondling, or inappropriate touching
- Physical violence, including sexual assault
- Physical contact, e.g., touching, pinching
- The use of job-related threats or rewards to solicit sexual favors

Verbal conduct

- Comments on a worker's appearance, age, private life, etc.
- Sexual comments, stories, and jokes
- Sexual advances
- Repeated and unwanted social invitations for dates or physical intimacy
- Insults based on the sex of the worker
- Condescending or paternalistic remarks
- Sending sexually explicit messages (by phone or by email)

Non-verbal conduct

- Display of sexually explicit or suggestive material
- Sexually suggestive gestures
- Whistling
- Leering

Anyone can be a victim of sexual harassment, regardless of their sex and of the sex of the harasser. SSOT recognizes that sexual harassment may also occur between people of the same sex. What matters is that the sexual conduct is unwanted and unwelcome by the person against whom the conduct is directed.

SSOT recognizes that sexual harassment is a manifestation of power relationships and often occurs within unequal relationships in the workplace, for example between manager or supervisor and employee.

Anyone, including employees and students of SSOT, casual workers, contractors or visitors who sexually harasses another will be reprimanded in accordance with this internal policy.

All sexual harassment is prohibited whether it takes place within SSOT premises or outside, including at social events, business trips, training sessions or conferences sponsored by SSOT.

Complaint procedure

Anyone who is subject to sexual harassment should, if possible, inform the alleged harasser that the conduct is unwanted and unwelcome.

SSOT recognizes that sexual harassment may occur in unequal relationships (i.e., between a supervisor and his/her employee) and that it may not be possible for the victim to inform the alleged harasser.

If a victim cannot directly approach an alleged harasser, he/she can approach one of the designated staff members responsible for receiving complaints of sexual harassment. This person should be another supervisor or the Human Resources department.

When a designated person receives a complaint of sexual harassment, he/she will:

- Immediately record the dates, times, and facts of the incident(s).
- Ascertain the views of the victim as to what outcome he/she wants.
- Ensure that the victim understands the company's procedures for dealing with the complaint.
- Discuss and agree the next steps: either informal or formal complaint, on the understanding that choosing to resolve the matter informally does not preclude the victim from pursuing a formal complaint if he/she is not satisfied with the outcome.
- Keep a confidential record of all discussions.
- Respect the choice of the victim.
- Ensure that the victim knows that they can lodge the complaint outside of the company through the relevant country/legal framework .

Throughout the complaint procedure, a victim is entitled to be helped by a counsellor within the company. SSOT will select counselors and provide them with special training to enable them to assist victims of sexual harassment. SSOT recognizes that because sexual harassment often occurs in unequal relationships within the workplace, victims often feel that they cannot come forward. SSOT understands the need to support victims in making complaints.

Informal Complaint Procedure

If the victim wishes to deal with the matter informally, the designated person will:

- Give an opportunity to the alleged harasser to respond to the complaint.
- Ensure that the alleged harasser understands the complaints mechanism.
- Facilitate discussion between both parties to achieve an informal resolution which is acceptable to the complainant or refer the matter to a designated mediator within the company to resolve the matter.
- Ensure that a confidential record is kept of what happens .
- Follow up after the outcome of the complaints mechanism to ensure that the behavior has stopped.
- Ensure that the above is done speedily and within 3 days of the complaint being made.

Formal Compliant Procedure

If the victim wants to make a formal complaint or if the informal complaint procedure has not led to a satisfactory outcome for the victim, the formal complaint procedure should be used to resolve the matter.

The designated person who initially received the complaint will refer the matter to the Human Resources Director to instigate a formal investigation.

The Human Resources Director may deal with the matter him/herself, refer the matter to an internal or external investigator or refer it to a committee of 3- 5 members of the Executive Management in accordance with this policy.

The person carrying out the investigation will:

- Interview the victim and the alleged harasser separately.
- Interview other relevant third parties separately.
- Determine whether the incident(s) of sexual harassment took place.
- Produce a report detailing the investigations, findings, and any recommendations.
- If determined that the harassment took place, decide what the appropriate remedy for the victim is, in consultation with the victim (i.e.- an apology, a change to working arrangements, a promotion if the victim was demoted because of the harassment, training for the harasser, discipline, suspension, dismissal).
- Follow up to ensure that the recommendations are implemented, that the behavior has stopped, and that the victim is satisfied with the outcome.
- If it cannot determine that the harassment took place, he/she may still make recommendations to ensure proper functioning of the workplace.
- Keep a record of all actions taken.
- Ensure that all records concerning the matter are kept confidential.
- Ensure that the process is done as quickly as possible and in any event within 3 days of the complaint being made.

Outside Complaint Procedure

A person who has been subject to sexual harassment can also make a complaint outside of the company. They can do so in writing to *ATTN: HR Grievance Department, 2810 S. US Highway 1, Fort Pierce, FL 34982*, by calling the Human Resources department line at (772) 801-5522, Ext 1006 or via email grievances@SSOTk12.com.

Disciplinary Action and Sanctions

Anyone who has been found to have sexually harassed another person under the terms of this policy is liable to any of the following sanctions:

- Verbal or written warning
- Adverse performance evaluation
- Reduction in wages
- Transfer to another department/position
- Demotion

- Suspension of duties without pay
- Dismissal of employment

The nature of the sanctions will depend on the gravity and extent of the harassment. Suitable deterrent sanctions will be applied to ensure that incidents of sexual harassment are not treated as trivial. Certain serious cases, including physical violence, will result in the immediate dismissal of the harasser.

Policy Implementation

SSOT will ensure that this policy is widely disseminated to all relevant persons. All new employees must be trained on the content of this policy as part of their induction into the company.

Every year, SSOT will require all employees to attend a refresher training course on the content of this policy.

It is the responsibility of every manager of each department to ensure that all his/her employees are aware of the policy.

Monitoring and Evaluation

SSOT recognizes the importance of monitoring this sexual harassment policy and will ensure that it anonymously collects statistics and data as to how it is used and whether it is effective.

Supervisors, managers and those responsible for dealing with sexual harassment cases will report on compliance with this policy, including the number of incidents, how they were dealt with, and any recommendations made. This will be done on a yearly basis. As a result of this report, the company will evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and make any changes needed.

GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE POLICY

We provide a fair, equitable, and productive work environment for all employees. This policy seeks to support the achievement of this goal by providing a transparent and consistent process for resolving grievances. It is in the best interest of the organization and employees that such conflicts are resolved quickly and amicably. The Grievance Procedure Policy does not apply to complaints of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. Please follow the complaint procedure set forth in the Discrimination/Harassment Policy set forth above.

If there is a situation that you need to discuss in private, please bring this to the attention of Human Resources or Principal. It is never acceptable to discuss situations with other teachers, parents, or anyone else.

Grievance Procedure

Any employee having a grievance relating to his/her status or conditions of employment with SSOT should refer to the steps listed below:

Step 1: Informal resolution

The employee attempts to resolve the complaint informally by discussing the relevant issues with the other person involved.

Should the employee not feel comfortable discussing the matter, he/she should immediately proceed to Step 2. Should the person who is the subject of the grievance be the employee's immediate manager, the employee should immediately proceed to Step 3.

Step 2: Immediate supervisor

The employee notifies his/her supervisor in writing as to the substance of the grievance and states the outcome sought.

Discussions should be held between the employee, supervisor, and any other relevant party. This level may be informal, but either party may request written statements and agreements. The parties should strive to complete Step 2 within one workweek (taking into consideration the last day of school and holidays) from the time the written complaint is received. If the matter is not resolved, proceed to Step 3.

Step 3: HR Assistance

If the employee still feels that no satisfactory conclusion has been offered, the employee may make a written request for an appointment with Human Resources within seven (7) business days from the immediate supervisor's decision in Step 2. The written request should include the relevant details of the employee's grievance and include all pertinent information for Human Resources to fully evaluate the employee's claim. The request should explicitly state that a grievance is being filed.

In the event Human Resources determines a meeting is warranted given all the statements and information provided, the employee and others concerned may be asked to attend the meeting to discuss the employee's complaint to make a fair and final determination. The parties should strive to complete Step 3 within 10 business days (taking into consideration the last day of school and holidays) from the time the investigation is opened until a decision is rendered, provided all relevant information and resources are available to resolve the matter. In the event of a delay in the availability of relevant information or resources, Human Resources will work expeditiously to render a decision. All final decisions will be sent to the complainant in writing.

No Retaliation

Open discussion is encouraged so that employee grievances may be resolved to the satisfaction of all concerned. Employees who submit a complaint under this procedure will not be harassed, nor will any reprisals or retaliation occur because of him/her raising the grievance. An employee who is found to have submitted a grievance in bad faith or that he/she knows to be false will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The time limits above are subject to modification on a case-by-case basis due to operational requirements, travel, in-depth investigations, etc. The Director of Human Resources will have final authority to resolve any disputes regarding the implementation of this grievance procedure, including determination of the appropriate decision makers.

WHISTLERBLOWER POLICY

SSOT requires employees to observe high standards of business and personal ethics in the conduct of their duties and responsibilities.

As employees and representatives of SSOT, we must practice honesty and integrity in fulfilling our responsibilities and comply with all applicable laws and regulations.

Reporting Responsibility

This Whistleblower Policy is intended to encourage and enable employees and others to raise serious concerns internally so that SSOT can address and correct inappropriate conduct and actions. It is the responsibility of all employees, and volunteers to report concerns about violations or suspected violations of law, ethical standards, or regulations that govern SSOT operations.

No Retaliation

It is contrary to the values of SSOT for anyone to retaliate against any director, officer, employee, or volunteer who in good faith reports an ethics violation or a suspected violation of law. An employee who retaliates against someone who has reported a violation in good faith is subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.

Reporting Procedure

SSOT has an open-door policy and suggests that employees share their questions, concerns, suggestions, or complaints with their supervisors. I

f an employee is not comfortable speaking with his/her supervisor or is not satisfied with his/her supervisor's response, he/she is encouraged to speak with Human Resources.

Employees with concerns or complaints about violations of law, ethical standards, or regulations governing SSOT operations should submit their concerns or complaints in writing directly to the Human Resources department.

The Human Resources department is responsible for ensuring that all complaints about unethical or illegal conduct are investigated and resolved. The Human Resources department will advise the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of all complaints and their resolution. The CEO will immediately notify the Advisory board of any concerns or complaints regarding corporate accounting practices, internal controls, or auditing and work with the committee until the matter is resolved.

Acting in Good Faith

Anyone filing a written complaint concerning a violation or suspected violation must be acting in good faith and have reasonable grounds for believing the information disclosed indicates a violation.

Any allegations that prove not to be substantiated and which prove to have been made maliciously or knowingly false will be viewed as a serious offense subject to discipline up to and including termination of employment.

Confidentiality

Violations or suspected violations may be submitted on a confidential basis by the complainant. Reports of violations or suspected violations will be kept confidential to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct an adequate investigation.

Handling of Reported Violations

Human Resources will notify the person who submitted a complaint and acknowledge receipt of the reported violation or suspected violation. All reports will be promptly investigated, and appropriate corrective action will be taken if warranted by the investigation.

Non-Grievance Issues

The following issues are *not* eligible for processing through the SSOT's Employee Grievance Procedure:

- Performance responsibilities, expectations, and evaluations or temporary work assignments;
- Budget and organizational structure, including the number or assignments of positions in an organization;
- The selection of an individual to fill a position, unless it is alleged that the selection is in violation of written policy;
- Any decision, including, but not limited to, termination, demotion, reassignment, furlough, and layoff made because of lack of work or other actions resulting from a reduction in the work force or job abolition. If the subject of your grievance is related to any of the areas listed above, your grievance cannot be processed through the Employee Grievance Procedure.

WORKPLACE SUBSTANCE ABUSE POLICY

SSOT believes in and is committed to providing a safe workplace. We will achieve this by establishing policies promoting high standards of health and safety. In keeping with this objective, it is the intent of the organization to maintain a drug/alcohol-free workplace and workforce.

Drug testing of employees is a management safety tool. Employers must furnish for employees a place of employment free from recognized and unrecognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious harm to the employees. Employees are answerable for complying with all safety and health standards issued under local, state, and federal jurisdictions that apply to their actions on the job.

All employees are expected to report to work in a physical and emotional condition that allows them to perform their assigned tasks in a competent and safe manner.

Therefore, the use, abuse, presence in the body or reporting to work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other impairing substances by an employee is strictly prohibited.

These scenarios limit the ability of the user to exercise good judgment, to react properly in unexpected situations or to perform tasks safely and efficiently.

They endanger not only the employee, but also students, coworkers, the public and property. SSOT has implemented this policy to eliminate these problems and to achieve the policy's other purposes.

Everyone shares responsibility for maintaining a safe work environment. Employees with drug/alcohol problems are encouraged to seek early assistance from an approved counseling/rehabilitation program. It is the responsibility of SSOT's administrators to alert the Human Resources department and talk to employees when changes in one's performance or behavior suggest substance abuse. Coworkers should encourage anyone with a drug problem to seek help.

The goal of this policy is to provide a safe, productive, and healthful working environment for employees of SSOT while maintaining our respect for individual privacy rights and confidentiality.

Purpose of the SSOT Substance Abuse Policy: SSOT recognizes the problem of drug/alcohol abuse in our society. In addition, we view substance abuse as a serious threat (to the abusing employee, our staff, students, and the public). Although employees and applicants may be required by a physician to use prescription drugs, abuse of prescribed medications will be handled the same as the abuse of an illegal substance. Therefore, a workplace drug testing policy has been implemented to ensure that SSOT will have a drug/alcohol free environment.

Objectives of this policy include:

- To assist in maintaining a safe and healthful working environment for employees of SSOT;
- To maintain a drug/alcohol-free workplace and workforce;
- To provide counseling and/or rehabilitation for employees when appropriate;
- To prevent accidental injuries or deaths and to protect property;
- To prevent the occurrence of incidents whose consequences may drastically affect the safety and future of facility operations;
- To minimize absenteeism and tardiness, to improve productivity and to ensure quality workmanship;
- To protect the reputation of SSOT and its community of schools;
- To comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations and contractual obligations;
- To maintain our respect for individual privacy right and confidentiality through fair and reasonable procedures and protocols.

Statement of Policy: At any time employees are representing SSOT or are at any school function or event in any capacity, including field trips both in and out of town, the following activities are strictly prohibited:

The illegal use of any drug, narcotic or controlled substance; the possession, transit, transfer or purchase of illegal or unauthorized drugs; the use, abuse, presence in the body or reporting to work under the influence of drugs/alcohol or other intoxicants; the sale of illegal or unauthorized drugs or substances or drug-related paraphernalia. Any employee in violation of this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination. Depending on the circumstances, other action, including notification of appropriate law enforcement agencies, may be taken against any employee who violates this policy.

Definition of Policy Terms: For the purposes of this policy, organization premises encompasses organization affiliates and subsidiaries including all properties, offices, parking lots, facilities, lands, platforms, buildings, structures, fixtures, installations, boats, aircraft, automobiles, trucks and all other vehicles and equipment, whether owned, leased or used. For this policy, employees are on SSOT business whenever on duty and/or under SSOT's direction, whether at school worksites, SSOT sponsored activities or during transit to and from those activities. SSOT employees can never forget that they serve as role models for students.

For the purpose and application of this policy, employees include all full-time, part-time or contract employees and employment applicants and candidates as well. This policy equally applies to all employees. Compliance with this policy will be required as a condition of employment for all employees. There shall be NO exceptions.

Drug Classification: The prohibitions addressed by this policy pertain to, but are not limited by, the following overview of drugs/alcohol. The presence of these or any other illegal or unauthorized drugs in the employee while working in any detectable amount (unless stipulated), is prohibited.

- **Illegal Drugs, Unauthorized Controlled Substances, Look-a-Likes, Inhalants of Abuse, Designer and Synthetic Drugs:** These include, but are not limited to, central nervous system stimulants such as cocaine and amphetamines; hallucinogens; PCP or Phencyclidine; narcotic analgesics as found in opium (like morphine and codeine) or opium derivatives (heroin); inhalants from volatile solvents like glue, paint or gasoline or from aerosols like hair sprays, deodorants or insecticides or from anesthetic gases like ether, chloroform or amyl nitrate; cannabis such as found in marijuana, hashish or hash oil.
- **Unauthorized Use of Intoxicating Beverages:** An employee whose alcohol blood level is over 0.04 percent (40 MG/DL blood) during working time is in violation of this policy.
- **Prescription Drugs (Legally Controlled Substances) and Off-the Shelf Medicines:** The use of off-the-shelf drugs/medicine or those prescribed by a licensed physician for a given employee is permitted, provided work performance is not affected, under the following conditions: Employees must only possess a reasonable amount of medication; employees must inform their supervisor of possible adverse side effects prior to using such substances on the job; employees must not consume prescribed drugs more often than prescribed by their doctor; employees must not allow any other person to consume their prescribed drugs; all medicine must be in its original container with the employees name,

the doctor's name and prescription number on the label; each prescription must not be older than one (1) year of the date issued.

However, SSOT always reserves the right to have a licensed physician determine if prescription drug use increases the risk of injury to the employee or others while working.

If such a finding is made, SSOT may limit or suspend the employee's work activity during the period job safety may be adversely affected by the consumption of such medication.

Policy Enforcement Activities Regarding Workplace Searches: To achieve the objectives of this policy, SSOT always reserves the right while employees are entering, departing or on the premises or when circumstances warrant or when reasonable suspicion or cause exists to have properly authorized supervisors or Resource Officers to conduct unannounced reasonable searches and inspections. These searches may extend throughout the organization's premises as described above, as well as to employees' and persons' effects.

Personal property subject to inspection includes, but is not limited to, lockers, baggage briefcases, boxes, bags, parcels, lunchboxes, food/beverage containers, desk, file and other storage cabinets, tools, and clothing.

The purpose of the said search is to determine if employees or others are in possession, use, transportation, or concealment of any prohibited items and/or substances of this policy. Searches may be initiated without prior notice and conducted at times and location as deemed appropriate by SSOT. At NO TIME will employees or others be touched, nor will any clothing be removed during these searches and inspections.

Circumstances for Urine, Blood or Other Workplace Drug Testing: SSOT reserves the right in certain circumstances to require employees, as a condition of employment and/or continued employment, to submit to urine, blood, or other drug tests to determine the presence of illegal or unauthorized substances prohibited by the policy. Each employee so tested will be required to provide written consent prior to testing. All urine and blood sampling will be performed with concern for each employee's personal privacy, dignity, and confidentiality. The final test results will be disclosed on a need-to-know basis to administer the policy or as may be legally required. These unannounced tests may be exercised under the following conditions:

- **Pre-Employment Testing:** Specified job applicants may or may not be required to undergo screening for the presence of illegal substances as a condition of employment at SSOT. Applicants will be required to voluntarily submit to a urinalysis test at a laboratory chosen by the organization and by signing consent agreement will release the organization from liability. Any applicant with positive test results will be denied employment at that time but may initiate another inquiry with the organization after six (6) months. The organization will not discriminate against applicants for employment because of past abuse of drugs/alcohol. Neither will the organization tolerate the current abuse of drugs/alcohol. All employees who carry firearms shall be required to undergo drug testing as a condition of pre-employment.

- **Just Cause/Post-Incident Testing:** When there is reasonable cause to suspect that a working employee's behavior, performance, error in judgment, accident or incident or unsafe actions are related to substance abuse or when there is an accident or near accident involving personnel in which injury, to persons or damage to property has occurred or potentially could have occurred the employee must submit to a requested drug screening.
- **Post-Accident or Workman's Compensation Testing:** If an employee suffers an occupational on-the-job injury requiring treatment from a doctor, causes injury to a coworker requiring treatment from a doctor or is injured due to the employee's failure to wear required personal protective equipment, drug/alcohol testing may be required.
- **Random Testing:** All employees are subject to routine drug/alcohol testing to prevent and detect substance abuse.
- **Post-Treatment/Counseling/Rehabilitation or Return-to-Work Testing:** Submission to a drug-screening test will be a condition of reinstatement of employment upon completion of a drug/alcohol treatment or counseling program or any other return-to work established procedure.

SSOT reserves the right to, at any time, inspect or search any person, place, or thing on organization premises to enforce this policy. Any preliminary investigation of a policy violation may require placing an employee on suspension pending review of the surrounding circumstances, facts, and final determinations of test results.

- **Failure to Comply:** Failure to comply with the provisions of this policy, including not submitting to require medical or physical examinations or tests when requested to do so, constitutes a policy violation, and will be considered grounds for disciplinary action up to and including termination. Discharge or suspension without pay from employment may occur even for a first offense, except as otherwise provided in this policy.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE VIOLATIONS

Illegal Drug Use: Any employee found in violation of this policy due to the use, abuse, presence in the body or reporting to work under the influence of illegal drugs or the bringing of illegal drugs onto SSOT's premises; the use, possession, transit, transfer, storage, concealment, promotion, sale or attempt to sell any form of illegal drugs or substances while on organization premises or on organization business, at any time during the hours between the beginning and ending of the employee's work day, whether on duty or not; or the possession or sale or attempt to sell drug-related paraphernalia will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Possession or sale of illegal drugs or substances will be causes for immediate termination.

- **Alcohol Abuse:** Any employee who is under the influence of alcoholic beverages at any time while on organization premises, on organization business or at any time during the hours between the beginning and ending of the employee's workday, whether on duty or not, shall be in violation of this policy and is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

- An employee shall be determined to be under the influence of alcohol if his/her normal faculties are apparently impaired due to consumption of alcohol or if the employee has a blood alcohol level of 0.04 percent (40 MG/DL blood) or higher.
- **Other Violations:** Other violations subjecting an employee to immediate discharge include substituting or tampering with a urine or blood sample, refusal, or failure to report to an approved counseling or rehabilitation program requested management after a confirmed completion and not being properly released to return to work or a positive confirmed test for any substance prohibited by this policy after completion of a counseling or rehabilitation program and return to work.