

STAFF HANDBOOK



www.strideacademy.org



320-230-5340
3241 OAKHAM LANE
ST. CLOUD, MN 56301



STAFF HANDBOOK 2025-2026

Web Site: www.strideacademy.org

Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

STRIDE Academy is a charter school authorized by the Minnesota Department of Education. As a charter school, we are a public, non-profit entity and receive funding through the Minnesota Department of Education. We must comply with all state and federal mandates that govern public schools in the State of Minnesota. We must also comply with requirements established by our authorizer, Pillsbury United Communities. Students are not assessed tuition fees to attend STRIDE Academy.

Eric Skanson, Executive Director

eskanson@strideacademy.org

Elementary School: (320)230-5340

Middle School: (320)452-8601

STRIDE Academy School Board of Education Members:

Sara Fromm - Board Chair

Aaron Lundblad - Community Representative

Tina Barak - Parent Representative

Abdi Ismail - Parent Representative

Kelly Springer - Parent Representative

Carie Essig - Teacher Representative

Andy Lyman - Teacher Representative

Ashlee Gibson - Teacher Representative

Eric Skanson - Ex-Officio

Board meetings are held on the dates listed below at 6:00 pm, in room 109 at STRIDE Academy Middle School. Meetings are open to the public. Board minutes are available on the STRIDE Academy website or upon request. See board meeting postings on the STRIDE Academy website or within each school building.

School Board Meeting Dates for the 2025-2026 School Year:

July 2025: July 17

August 2025: August 21

September 2025: September 18

October 2025: October 23

November 2025: November 20

December 2025: December 18

January 2026: January 15

February 2026: February 19

March 2026: March 19

April 2026: April 16

May 2026: May 21

June 2026: June 18

[Staff Directory \(Link\)](#)

At Will Employment

Employees of STRIDE Academy are employed “at will”. This means that you have the option of resigning from your employment at any time, for any reason or no reason, with or without prior notice. This also means STRIDE Academy has the same option to terminate your employment at any time, for any reason or no reason, with or without prior notice. Nothing in the Employee Handbook or any other STRIDE document should be understood as creating a guarantee of continued employment, a right to termination only for specific reasons or pursuant to specific procedures, or of any other guarantee of continued benefits.

Progressive Discipline

STRIDE Academy’s Administration reserves the right to discharge any employee for either inability to perform their job duties or for misconduct as outlined in the school’s disciplinary policy.

The steps in the Progressive Discipline process include:

1. Written warning/reprimand
2. Suspension with pay
3. Suspension without pay
4. Withholding of salary advancement
5. Dismissal/discharge

Please note that these steps may be applied as necessary, based on the severity and circumstances of each case.

Non-Discrimination

The Board of Education of STRIDE Academy has adopted the following policy regarding discrimination. *“No person shall, on the grounds of race, creed, sex, marital status, national origin, age, color, religion, ancestry, status with regard to public assistance, sexual or affection orientation, familial status or disability be subjected to discrimination in any program operated by STRIDE Academy or in recruitment, consideration, selection, employment or rate of compensation by the Academy.”* Staff should report concerns or policy violations to the Executive Director as soon as possible. *Policy #402*

Resignation

An employee wishing to resign shall provide at least two-week written notice to the Administration. Whenever possible, it is preferred that the employee give Administration as long a notice of resignation as possible. The date of the notice shall be the date when the Administration receives the written notice of resignation. In certain circumstances the employee may be required to leave at the time of notice. Under these circumstances he/she may be paid for the two-week notification period. Failure to comply with the resignation timetable may result in forfeiture of certain benefits that the employee may have accrued. Employees are not eligible for paid time off during the resignation period.

Code of Conduct

The image and reputation of STRIDE Academy is reflected in its staff, administration, and Board. The STRIDE Academy Board has high expectations for its employees in conveying a positive professional attitude, and maintaining honorable behavior. All staff are expected to present themselves as professional educators; which include wearing professional attire. The communicative behavior of staff must be respectful and professional at all times. Staff to staff communication must also be of professional nature.

STRIDE Academy staff is expected to be involved in their professional community to enhance their professional development and maintain an informed network of professional support.
POLICY #425

Grievance procedures

Under normal working conditions, employees who have a job-related problem, question or complaint should first discuss it with the appropriate person or school employee. At this level, employees usually reach the simplest, quickest, and most satisfactory solution. If this does not solve the problem, or if mediation is required, the employee may talk with an administrator or the office of Human Resources who will work to resolve the situation. The Executive Director will keep the School Board informed of any final written warnings or possible legal issues and concerns.

Grievance Process for an employee with a job-related problem or complaint:

- Discuss problem or complaint with appropriate staff member
- If the matter cannot be resolved, discuss the problem with an administrator or the office of Human Resources, who may use mediation, and who can be an arbiter in making a decision.
- If the resolution reached during mediation is not satisfactory, the staff member with the complaint should go to the Executive Director, who will be the final arbiter in the grievance process. If the Executive Director is the subject of the grievance, the individual may take the complaint to the School Board.

Open Door Policy

STRIDE Academy will attempt to treat all internal grievances as confidential, recognizing, however, that in the course of resolving internal complaints, some dissemination of information to others may be necessary or appropriate.

Mediation Process

If warranted, school administration will bring both parties to engage in the mediation process, conducted on the basis of the following points:

- Identifying both parties' needs and interests;
- Generating alternatives and solutions;
- Choosing a solution that provides maximum joint benefit; and
- Enforcing non-retaliation.

In cases where mediation fails, or a resolution cannot be reached by the Executive Director, the matter may be elevated to the attention of STRIDE Academy's Governing Board. In serious cases, state or federal agencies may become involved as well.

Confidentiality

Since school staff have access to private and confidential information about students and families, it is imperative that the student's right to confidentiality guide actions related to disclosure of student information. The sharing of any information about students or families can first be governed by the requesting individual's "right to know" the information. This includes sharing information between staff members. Student issues (SPED, discipline, grades, test scores, parent concerns, financial status, etc.) will not be discussed unless in a closed classroom or office. If in doubt about an individual's right to obtain information, ask the building administrator. *POLICY #406*

Licensing Requirements for Teachers POLICY #424

STRIDE Academy's licensed employees are required to hold a valid teaching certificate, permit, or other document equivalent that makes them eligible to perform those services in the state of Minnesota. Copies of licensing documents, undergraduate and graduate level transcripts, and any other documents relevant to the credentials of being a licensed professional should be submitted to the Executive Director and the office of Human Resources. It is the responsibility of the licensed employee to maintain a valid license, and submit the proper CEU documentation for renewals.

Teachers must have graduated from a credentialing program. Substitute teachers need to provide proof of appropriate licensure prior to providing substitute services.

WORK ENVIRONMENT

Photo Identification

STRIDE Academy will provide each employee with a photo identification card. All staff are expected to visibly wear their identification in the building or at a school-related function. Remember that all visitors are expected to have a visible visitor badge, and if you do not see one, you are expected to ask for it.

Mandatory Reporting

All school personnel are mandated to report any child abuse. All reports of suspected child abuse and neglect are to be made directly and immediately to the local police department, county sheriff or county Child Protection Office. This verbal report is followed by a Mandatory Written Report (see building administrator). All employees are required to review and sign an acknowledgement form for mandated reporting each year. Please work collaboratively with the Principal and Social Worker to address your concerns about student welfare and the appropriate course of action to take. *POLICY #414*

Harassment

STRIDE Academy has a commitment to confront behaviors that are considered to be harassment. Prompt reporting and investigation by administration is mandated by the STRIDE Academy Board of Education. All staff will sign the attached Harassment Policy Acknowledgement Form on a yearly basis and return to the office of Human Resources. *POLICY #413*

The following definitions of harassment apply:

Harassment is participating in, or conspiring for others to engage in badgering acts that injure, degrade, disgrace or threaten other individuals (examples include religious persecution or cruelty directed toward an individual with a disability).

Sexual Harassment is defined as, but not limited to:

1. Words or actions relating to sex that are derogatory, offensive, exploitative and/or degrading
2. A display or circulation of materials and/or pictures, which are sexually explicit or demeaning (including web-based or electronically transmitted information).

Racial Harassment and racial bias consists of physical or verbal conduct related to an individual's race when conduct:

1. Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment;
2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance; or
3. Otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment or academic opportunities

Religious Harassment consists of physical or verbal conduct which is related to an individual's religion when the conduct:

1. Has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working or academic environment;
2. Has the purpose or effect of substantially or unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance; or
3. Otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment or academic opportunities.

Bullying

The Board of STRIDE Academy actively promotes a safe and welcoming school, conducive to teaching and learning that is free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behavior for all, including staff. The staff is expected to create a climate in which all types of bullying are unacceptable.

Bullying is defined as any written or verbal expression, physical act or gesture, or a pattern of those behaviors, that is intended to cause distress upon one or more students in the school

environment, including the school building, grounds, vehicles, email, internet, bus stops and all school-sponsored activities and events. *POLICY #514*

Celebrations

All school wide celebrations and dress-up days must be pre-approved by administration.

Children of Employees on Worksite

Administration must approve children attending work with a staff member. Children of staff members are not allowed in areas that are for staff members only (staff lounges, copy room). Children of staff members must remain with parents and supervised until 7:45 a.m. All staff members' children must stay with their homeroom teacher until picked up at the end of the day.

Duty Day

The duty day for certified staff is eight (8) hours, 7:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m., as per the annual Work Agreement. The duty days for hourly staff will be within the hours of 8:00 a.m. to 3:30p.m. There may be occasions when a staff member will need to arrive late or leave early. You must get prior approval from the administration. The official student day is from 8:15am to 3:05pm. If staff must leave the school building during the duty day, she/he must obtain Administrator approval.

Paraprofessionals

Paraprofessionals are STRIDE Academy school staff members serving in a supportive role to the teaching staff and administration. Paras provide instructional or behavioral support to students. They may be assigned to work one-to-one with a student, or work with small groups of students to pre-teach concepts or vocabulary, reinforce instructional concepts, or enhance or extend instructional time. They may provide behavioral cues, reinforcement, or proximity control to individual students. Paras are not expected to provide primary instruction to an individual student, small group of students or class. All paraprofessionals' interventions must be planned, guided and supervised by the teacher in charge. (See [Paraprofessional Handbook](#))

Dress Code - Appearance and Clothing

As an employee of STRIDE Academy, you are required to dress professionally. All employees of STRIDE are required to maintain dress, grooming and hygiene practices that are consistent with a professional workplace environment. It is unacceptable for employees to be unclean, disheveled or offensive.

If the Administration determines an employee's dress is inappropriate the employee may be asked to change. Repeated violations may result in further progressive discipline.

Cell Phones - Staff

Staff are prohibited from using cell phones for personal use during student contact time unless approved by administration. In our learning environment, it is important that staff stay focused on their Professional duties. Personal use of electronic devices, including (but not limited to) air pods/earbuds, are NOT allowed between 7:30 AM—3:30 PM. Repeat offenses could result in progressive discipline. Staff are allowed to use cell phones during working hours for business purposes, such as checking emails or messaging with another employee regarding work related matters. At no time should staff use cell phones to take pictures or videos of students.

Photos and social media

At no time should staff take pictures or videos of students. Official photographs taken by approved staff or contracted photographers are the only acceptable media. At no time should a staff member post photos or videos of students on their personal social media. Any photos or videos that staff wish to have used on the STRIDE Academy social media should be sent to the appropriate staff for posting. Not abiding to this expectation will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Personal Property on School Site

Personal property brought to the school site should be clearly identified so items can be distinguished from school property. Valuables must be stored in secure locations, preferably in locked drawers or closets. All staff have the option to obtain a free lock to secure their personal items.

Energy Management

We request that all staff make an effort to conserve energy, especially during peak energy consumption times of the year. Please follow all administrative requests regarding thermostat settings, open windows and doors, and turning off lights.

Security Procedures

Security and safety procedures have been established for the protection of students, staff, and all who enter our facility. Enter and exit the building using designated access doors only. To enter the building on non-school days (weekends and holidays) Any and all keys, security access cards, and Picture ID's will remain the property of STRIDE Academy. Upon separation from employment at STRIDE Academy, all of the previously mentioned items shall be turned in to the Office of Human Resources no later than the last day of work.

For the safety and security of all students and staff, exterior doors must remain closed and locked at all times. Staff are strictly prohibited from propping doors open for any reason, including convenience or temporary access. Propping doors compromises building security and creates a serious safety risk. All staff are expected to enter and exit through designated access points using their assigned key cards or entry credentials. Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action.

For security and safety purposes, all staff are required to sign in and out at the main office when leaving campus during the workday, or returning after an off-site obligation. This procedure ensures accurate accountability in the event of an emergency and helps maintain a secure school environment. Staff must also notify their supervisor when leaving campus during scheduled work hours. Consistent adherence to this process is essential and expected of all employees.

Video Surveillance

Maintaining the health, welfare, and safety of the students, staff, and visitors while on the school property and the protection of school property are important factors of the school. The school board recognizes the value of video/electronic surveillance systems in monitoring daily activity on school property. The school building and grounds are equipped with video surveillance. Videos will be viewed by school personnel on a random basis and/or when problems have been brought to the attention of the school. A video will be released only in conformance with the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act Minn. Stat. Ch.13 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. 1232g and the rules and regulations promulgated thereunder. All requests to review video footage must be submitted in writing to administration. *POLICY #712*

HEALTH & SAFETY**Accidents**

All accidents must be reported to the office of Human Resources as soon as possible after the incident. The person witnessing the accident or receiving the first report of the accident must fill out an *Incident Report*. Staff must use their best judgment in managing an emergency situation. It is critical to avoid decisions that could result in further injury to the individual(s). Always plan student activities with safety as a primary consideration, be alert to potential dangers, and try to prevent accidents.

Blood Exposure Procedure

If you are exposed to blood, it is necessary to follow adequate procedures to avoid contamination. Consider the following guidelines:

Did the contact with the blood include any of the following?

- Blood in the eyes, nose or mouth
- Blood contact with broken skin (less than 24 hours old), including cuts or open skin rashes, or breaking of skin in a bite
- Penetration of skin by a blood-contaminated sharp object (needle, lancet, glass, teeth, etc.)

If any of the above occurred:

- Report the incident to the Office of Human Resources
- Follow instructions in Blood Exposure Training
- Consider obtaining medical care

Emergency Information

An emergency message from ParentSquare will be used if emergency information must be disseminated quickly to all staff. Staff will receive a text message/email/phone call with any emergency information. Please let the office know if your contact information changes.

Emergency Procedures - Please see Crisis Plan

- Severe Weather Plan
 - The procedures to follow in case of severe weather are posted in each room of the building.
 - Please familiarize yourself and your students with these procedures which are located in the Crisis Plan.
 - Severe weather shelter signs are posted in the building.
- Lockdown Drills
 - All lockdown procedures are located in the Emergency Procedures Manual.
 - STRIDE Academy will conduct five lockdown drills per year.
 - The lockdown procedures should be kept confidential from the public.
- Fire Drills
 - Minnesota schools are required to conduct five fire drills each year. At least one of these drills must be an obstructed exit fire drill.
 - Fire drills will be conducted on a regular basis as per the State Fire Marshall regulations. ◦ In each room, an emergency escape plan is posted. Please familiarize yourself and your students with this plan. Refer to this map so you know how to evacuate your area of the building. You may want to practice evacuation with your students prior to an actual fire drill.
 - Please turn off lights and close all doors as you pass through them.

Health Services

The Health Service Office is responsible for school health services. If a student comes to school with medication, send that student to the Health Service Office to consult with personnel about administration of the medication. Our guidelines for administration of medication follow those established by the Minnesota Department of Education. *POLICY #516*

- Administering medication from unmarked bottles or envelopes violates the medical code of ethics.
- Students shall be administered medication in school only in exceptional circumstances, wherein the student's health may be jeopardized without it.
- Prescription medication may be given at school. Medications must be contained in the original container current labeled by the pharmacist or doctor. The pharmacist will provide parents with two prescription bottles, upon request. Medication authorization forms are available from the office.
- Over-the-counter medication, including Tylenol, aspirin and cough syrup, may be given when accompanied by a note from the parent/guardian and physician. Over-the-counter medication must be in the original container with printed instructions on the bottle or box.
- Students are NOT allowed in the Health Services area without approval from authorized staff personnel. All students reporting to the Health Service Office must be accompanied with a signed Health Service Pass.

Tobacco/Marijuana Use

The Board of Education prohibits the use of tobacco/marijuana products (ex. – cigarettes, e-cigs, vapes and other forms of tobacco/marijuana) on STRIDE Academy property, including school building and grounds. *POLICY #419*

Weapons POLICY #501

Employees of STRIDE Academy are prohibited from carrying or possessing firearms or other weapons while acting in the course and scope of employment with STRIDE. Except for law enforcement officials, STRIDE strictly prohibits any person, whether licensed to carry a weapon or not, from carrying or possessing firearms or other weapons on the school premises.

ATTENDANCE & LEAVE

Attendance Incentive - Staff

Absences by any staff member shift the workload to other staff and can be disruptive to the Mission of STRIDE Academy Charter School. At the same time, it is recognized that at times, such absences are unavoidable. In an effort to minimize the impact of absences, STRIDE Academy Charter School shall provide all regularly assigned employees, excluding administration, an incentive for minimizing the number of absences. For purposes of this policy, an absence shall be any hours the employee is not at work during his/her scheduled work time.

Paid Time Of (PTO)/Personal Leave POLICY #409

All staff must report all unexpected absences to Kate Hill prior to 6:00 a.m. Should an absence need to be reported after 6:00 am, staff must contact Kate Hill as soon as possible. Absences should be communicated via text (320.200.4169) and your direct supervisor via call/text/email. This will ensure we have proper coverage for absent staff. You must also report your unexpected absence in Skyward. Failure to communicate an absence may result in disciplinary action.

Planned absences must be entered into Skyward and preapproved by HR. It is also important that the absence be discussed with your direct supervisor. Particularly, if the absence will be 2 or more consecutive days.

PTO will be frontloaded beginning on the first day of employment for the current school year. PTO hours will be prorated for employees hired mid-year. The number of PTO hours an employee is eligible for depends upon hours worked and the number of days an employee works per contract year. Temporary employees are not eligible for paid time off. PTO for part time employees depends on hours worked, but will equate to 1 workday per month in available PTO hours.

Carryover and Forfeiture: Up to 40 hours for regularly assigned employees working more than 36 hours per week, and up to 16 hours for regularly assigned employees working between 30 - 35 hours per week may be rolled over to the next school year. Employees working part time may roll up to 12 hours to the next school year.

Employees working 210 or more days and 36 or more hours per week, can save (or "bank") up to a maximum of 80 hours of PTO. Once the maximum of 80 hours has been reached, any additional rollover (up to 40 hours per year) will go into a separate sick leave bank. Up to 500 hours can be accumulated in this sick leave bank. Unused sick leave will not be paid out when employment ends.

Upon severing employment with STRIDE Academy, any accrued unused PTO will be paid out at the employee's hourly rate. A payout of their PTO will be calculated based on the number of actual days worked and PTO used.

Use of PTO: The Executive Director of STRIDE Academy reserves the authority to decline PTO requests for vacations should such leave negatively impact the operations of the Academy. All leave should be requested in advance and must be approved by the employee's supervisor or designee. PTO will be granted on a first come, first serve basis, at the discretion of the School Administrator or Human Resources. Individual scheduling preferences will be considered in

view of each employee's total length of service with the Academy in relation to the availability of personnel to conduct business.

No more than 5 employees, including a maximum of 2 teachers and 1 para, may schedule Paid Time Off for one or more days at one time unless approved by the Executive Director. The 5 employee limit applies to each school building, totaling a maximum of 10 employees per day organization-wide.

Blackout Days: PTO may not be used during Black Out Days except as granted by the Executive Director or designee. All Paid Time Off requests for the first two weeks or the last two weeks of school must be approved at least one month in advance by the administration.

In special/emergency circumstances, Administration will determine and adjust needed emergency paid time off accrued by the employee.

Unless approved by Administration, accrued paid time off must be used prior to taking unpaid time off.

Employees are responsible for monitoring their own PTO hours/time off. This information is available through your employee Skyward account. Employee absences will be closely monitored. Misuse of paid time off (PTO) may result in disciplinary action. For example, if an employee calls out sick or claims an appointment on short notice for a day that was previously requested and denied, it may be considered an abuse of PTO.

Earned Sick & Safe Time (ESST) POLICY #409

Pursuant to MN ordinance, employees are entitled to earn sick and safe leave. All employees are provided with a front loaded bank of 48 ESST hours. Covered family members include immediate family and/or a member of the employee's household, in addition to themselves. Unused ESST hours will roll over to the next school year for all employees. Unused ESST leave will be paid out when employment is terminated at the employee's hourly rate.

If an employee plans to use ESST for an appointment, preventive care or another permissible reason they know of in advance, inform their direct supervisor and Human Resources as far in advance as possible, but at least seven days in advance. In situations where an employee cannot provide advance notice, the employee should contact their direct supervisor and Human Resources as soon as they know they will be unable to work.

Employees will be required to provide certain documentation regarding the reason for their use of ESST if it is for more than three consecutive days. For earned sick and safe time, reasonable documentation may include a signed statement by a health care professional indicating the need for use of earned sick and safe time. However, if the employee or employee's family member did not receive services from a health care professional, or if documentation cannot be obtained from a health care professional in a reasonable time or without added expense, then reasonable documentation may include a written statement from the employee indicating that the employee is using or used earned sick and safe time for a qualifying purpose.

Unpaid Leave

Unpaid leave will be granted in extenuating circumstances by the Executive Director or designee. Unpaid leave not required to comply with state statutes can be denied at the discretion of the Executive Director or designee.

Bereavement Leave

Full-time employees will be granted up to three workdays of leave with pay in the event of a death of a member of the immediate family or mother-in-law or father-in-law, sister, brother, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandparent, or grandchild. Bereavement leave is also granted for mothers and fathers who suffer a miscarriage. PTO may be used to cover non-eligible funerals, or to extend time off beyond 3 days.

Jury Duty

STRIDE Academy recognizes the responsibility of its employees to the community and urges all employees to fulfill their civic responsibilities. Jury duty is one such responsibility that all employees have. The STRIDE Academy shall assist the employee to fulfill this responsibility by granting them time off with pay for the period of 10 school days. Time off will be granted without pay beyond 10 school days. The employee shall inform the principal or supervisor of upcoming jury duty as soon as possible after receiving a summons.

All Other Leave & Definitions

See Policy #409 for details on all forms of leave.

FMLA & MN FMLA

FMLA: STRIDE Academy fully complies with the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) which requires the school to grant eligible employees leaves of absence for specified purposes. FMLA Leave is up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave.

Eligibility: Full-time employees are eligible for FMLA Leave, including Military Caregiver Leave, if they have been employed by STRIDE Academy for at least one year, worked at least 1250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding commencement of the leave, and are employed at a worksite where STRIDE Academy employs at least 50 employees within a 75-mile radius. Part-time employees may be eligible for FMLA Leave based on the hours they work. An eligible employee's leave entitlement under the FMLA is limited to a total of 12 workweeks of leave in a 12-month period for any one or combination of the events for which FMLA Leave is available. An eligible employee who takes Military Caregiver Leave is entitled to a combined total of 26 workweeks of FMLA Leave during a single 12-month period for Military.

Requesting FMLA: An employee should request FMLA Leave or Military Caregiver Leave by completing a Request Form and submitting it to the office of Human Resources. Employees requesting FMLA or Military Caregiver Leave should provide not less than 30 days' notice, or such shorter notice as is practicable.

When possible, employees must make a reasonable effort to schedule foreseeable planned medical treatments so as not to unduly disrupt STRIDE Academy's operations. Retaliation against employees for taking leave protected by the FMLA is prohibited by law.

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

- Birth of a child;
- Adoption of a child;
- Placement of a foster child;
- A serious health condition of the employee;
- Care of a spouse, child, or parent with a serious medical condition; and/or
- A military qualifying exigency arising as a result of a spouse, child, or parent being on active duty or having been notified of an impending call or order to active duty in the Armed Forces.

For the duration of FMLA leave, the employer must maintain the employee's benefits, including health coverage under any "group health plan," as described above. Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms. Contact the office of Human Resources for inquiries or concerns regarding job reinstatement and pay.

Military Caregiver Leave Provision

Along with the criteria for FMLA Leave, Military Caregiver Leave may be taken up to 26 weeks to care for the employee's child, parent, spouse, who is a current member of the Armed Forces, or a member of the Armed Forces, the National Guard, or Reserves who is on the temporary disability retired list, and has a serious injury or illness that was incurred in the line of duty for which they are undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

MN FMLA: MN FMLA is a state law in Minnesota that mirrors the federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), providing eligible employees with unpaid, job-protected leave for certain family and medical reasons. MN FMLA will provide employees with paid leave benefits for

medical leave (including pregnancy and recovery from childbirth) and other family-related leave (such as parental leave, caregiving leave, and deployment-related leave). This paid leave law will go into effect in January 2026.

Eligibility: Employees must meet specific criteria to be eligible for FMLA leave. This typically includes working for a covered employer (generally those with 50 or more employees within a 75-mile radius) for at least 12 months and having worked at least 1,250 hours in the past year.

Duration: Employees can receive up to 12 weeks of paid leave in each of the two categories (medical and family) per benefit year, according to the Center for American Progress.

Combined Leave: Employees can potentially use up to 20 weeks of combined medical and family leave if they have more than one qualifying event in the same claim year.

Integration with FMLA: If an employee's leave is covered by both the Minnesota paid leave law and the federal FMLA, the employer may require the leaves to run concurrently.

BENEFITS - INSURANCE AND RETIREMENT

Retirement

Teachers Retirement Association – TRA: TRA is a Minnesota statewide public pension fund that provides retirement, disability and death benefits to Minnesota public school teachers. As of July 1, 2025, contribution rates for employees is 8% and contribution rates for STRIDE is 9.81%. Contribution percentage is determined by state statute and subject to change by the Minnesota legislature. Participation is required by law.

Public Employees Retirement Association – PERA: PERA is the counterpart to TRA for non-licensed positions. As with TRA, membership and contributions by both STRIDE and eligible employees are automatic and determined by state statute. Contributions rates for employees is 6.5% of gross wage and for STRIDE it is 7.5% of gross wage. Participation is required by law.

Optional 403b

Employees have the opportunity to participate in an optional 403(b) retirement savings plan, which allows for pre-tax contributions to help build long-term financial security. Participation is entirely voluntary, and employees can choose how much to contribute based on their individual retirement goals. Contributions are made through convenient payroll deductions, and a variety of investment options are available. More information, including enrollment instructions and provider details, can be obtained from the office Human Resources.

Health Insurance:

For full details, refer to the plan year benefit manual

Employee Benefits Eligibility Guidelines -Medical, Dental, Vision and Life Plans:

Medical health insurance: Medica

HSA: Health Equity

Dental: Mutual of Omaha

Life and AD&D: Mutual of Omaha

STD & LTD: Mutual of Omaha

Regular full-time employees as defined by their job description in a position that includes insurance benefits, are eligible to enroll in Medical, Dental and Life coverage along with their qualifying dependents. Eligible dependents include your spouse and dependent children under the age of 26. All coverage will take effect the first day of the month following a 30 day waiting period. STRIDE Academy provides a semi-monthly contribution towards medical, dental and vision insurance based on the employee's Standard Hours. A minimum of 30 hours worked per week is required to qualify for insurance benefits. All employees enrolled will have a share of cost deducted from their paycheck semi-monthly on a pre-tax basis. Dental insurance is voluntary and 100% paid by the employee.

STRIDE provides \$50,000 in Life and AD&D coverage. Eligible employees are automatically enrolled at no cost. Eligible employees may elect Supplemental Term Life coverage 100% paid by the employee.

Short and Long Term Disability for regular full-time employees is 100% paid by STRIDE Academy. The benefit percentage for employees on short or long term disability leave is 60% of the employee's weekly income. When a salaried employee returns from short or long term disability leave, the number of days on leave will be deducted from their worked contract days and their salary will be adjusted accordingly.

Example:

A salaried employee earning \$50,000 per contract year with 178 contract days is on leave for 36 days beginning the 65th day of the contract year. During the 36 days of leave, they receive 60% of their weekly salary from Mutual of Omaha. Upon return, a salary calculation is completed to determine the new semi-monthly pay amount.

\$50,000 working 178 days = \$280.90 per day, \$2341.45 per pay period at 24 pay periods

The Employee worked 64 days prior to starting leave, earning \$2341.45 per pay period for 7 pay dates. The Employee was on leave for 36 days, reducing the total working days for the contract year to 142 days from 178 days. This reduces the amount paid per pay period to \$1178.10 for 13 pay dates.

Any questions regarding employee leave should be directed to the office of Human Resources.

Benefit Continuation (COBRA)/Minnesota Continuation Coverage

The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives Employees and their qualified beneficiaries the opportunity to continue health insurance coverage under the school's health plan when a "qualifying event" would normally result in the loss of eligibility. Some common qualifying events are resignation, termination of employment, or death of an Employee; a reduction in an Employee's hours or a leave of absence; an employee's divorce or legal separation; and a dependent child no longer meeting eligibility requirements.

Under COBRA, the Employee or beneficiary pays the full cost of the coverage plus an administration fee. The school will provide a written notice describing rights granted under COBRA when the individual becomes eligible for COBRA. This notice contains important information about the Employee's rights and obligations.

Staff Availability

Licensed Staff: A maximum of two licensed staff members are permitted to be scheduled for leave on any given day *per building*.

Non-Licensed Staff: A maximum of one non-licensed staff member is permitted to be scheduled for leave on any given day *per building*.

Definitions:

Scheduled Leave: Leave requested by staff members in advance, which is planned and communicated through the proper channels, following the organization's leave request procedures.

Emergency Leave: Leave that is unplanned and required due to unforeseen and unavoidable circumstances. Emergency leave requires immediate communication to the appropriate supervisor or department head. In the case of emergency leave, staff members should notify the administration as soon as possible. A written explanation of the emergency situation should be provided within 24 hours of the leave being taken.

Qualifying Events for Emergency Leave

The following are examples of qualifying events for emergency leave:

- Personal illness or injury requiring immediate attention

- Family member's serious illness or injury requiring care and support
- Bereavement due to the death of a close family member
- Sudden, unavoidable childcare issues
- Home emergencies (fire, flooding, etc.)

Scheduled Leave: Licensed staff members must submit their leave requests at least 14 days in advance. Non-licensed staff members must submit their leave requests at least 14 days in advance. Leave requests should be submitted through the organization's designated leave management system. Emergency Leave: In the case of emergency leave, staff members should notify the administration as soon as possible. A written explanation of the emergency situation should be provided within 24 hours of the leave being taken.

Qualifying Events for Scheduled Leave

The following are examples of qualifying events for scheduled leave:

- Medical appointments (doctor, dentist, etc.)
- Professional development or training related to the staff member's role
- Personal days off for self-care and well-being
- Family events (weddings, graduations, etc.)
- Pre-approved vacations
- Religious observances

Approval and Prioritization

Scheduled Leave: Leave requests are subject to approval based on operational needs. The organization reserves the right to deny a leave request if it conflicts with critical work requirements.

Emergency Leave: While every effort will be made to accommodate emergency leave, it is subject to approval based on the nature of the situation and the organization's operational requirements.

Communication

All leave requests, whether scheduled or emergency, should be communicated promptly and clearly to ensure proper staffing and smooth operation within the organization.

Recordkeeping

All leave requests, approvals, and associated documentation will be maintained by the Human Resources department and documented in SKYWARD for future reference and compliance purposes.

By adhering to these guidelines, we aim to maintain a balanced staffing schedule that ensures effective service delivery while accommodating the personal and professional needs of our staff members.

1. Holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Thanksgiving Friday, Winter Break, Martin Luther King Day, President's Day, Mid-Winter Break, Spring Break Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, 4th of July
2. Maximum of 5 days a month of PTO per employee with a maximum of 3 of those days consecutive. Unique situations may be considered by the administration.
3. Parent contact time is an important professional responsibility, and every effort must be made to be present. Teachers are responsible for the content of parent-teacher conference days and/or staff development days when absent during these days. Missed parent contact time made up with administrative approval will result in no PTO deduction.

STUDENT INTERACTION & CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Attendance - Student

- Attendance must be taken in every classroom by **9:00 a.m.** Calls will be made home between 9:30 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. for students unverified by a telephone call from parents informing the school of the absence. Notify the office of any changes in attendance immediately as they occur throughout the day.
- Refer all notes, e-mails or telephone calls from parents regarding future absences,

especially extended time away from school to the office. Parents/guardians should be directed to speak to the principal regarding extended absences.

Early Dismissal / Late Arrival of a Student

- When a parent/guardian brings their student to school after the start of the school day, they must walk their student inside to the front office to sign the student in. Office staff will notify the teacher that the student has arrived and send him/her to class with a pass.
- When a parent/guardian wishes to remove their student from school prior to the end of the school day, they must report to the office and sign the student out. Office staff will notify the teacher that the student's school day has ended and students will then be sent to the office. Parents should not pick up their children from the classroom.

Student Discipline

Reference Student Code of Conduct ([Link](#))

Substitute Teacher Folder/Alternate Plan

Each teacher must prepare an emergency substitute folder housed in the designated Google Drive. In this folder you must outline your daily schedule from beginning to end of the day. These additional items should be included:

- Class list
- Attendance procedure
- Bathroom procedures
- Prep time
- Lunch time
- Expectations of the class
- Fire drill procedures/Lockdown procedures
- Who to contact for emergencies
- Special needs of students, to include paraprofessional duties, assigned to work in your classroom
- Activities that will keep the students constructively engaged throughout the day

Leave daily lesson plans in a visible spot within your teaching areas. All grade level members should be able to locate this information in your classroom. Adequate planning for substitutes, clear expectations, and good communication will ensure the availability of substitute teachers when we need them. Follow-up with students, based on substitute reports, will delineate a link between teacher and substitute.

Substitutes will be assigned first to classroom teachers. In a situation where more classroom teachers are absent than there are designated substitutes available, licensed staff from other departments will be utilized to cover the classroom. Should an EL, SPED, and Intervention teacher have an absence that will not be covered by a substitute, they need to email/notify the classroom teachers with whom they work to let them know that their students will not be serviced on that day. This is for both planned and unplanned absences. They should make arrangements with teachers to support them with plans/activities in the event of their absence. Should an EL, SPED, or Intervention teacher be assigned to sub in a classroom, they will be compensated at their hourly rate for the day and should submit a timecard to the office of Human Resources.

If a sub is needed for a meeting or staff development during the school day, email the office of Human Resources at least one full week (7 days) before the meeting to ask if an in-house sub can be arranged. In your email, you must state the purpose of the meeting, who has approved the meeting, the hours of the meeting, and the location of the meeting.

If you have an emergency during the school day (illness/family emergency) first call the office of Human Resources who will work with you to arrange a sub. If you cannot reach HR, call the front desk to ask for their support in locating HR to take your call. If HR is out of the building, call the front desk, explain your situation, and ask them to connect you with an administrator who will support you in finding a sub.

Snacks in the Classroom

Teachers/grade levels may provide time for snacks, embedded during instructional time. Snack time should not be a scheduled non-instructional time, but rather a working snack. Please model, practice, and review on how to eat snacks and work at the same time.

Standardized Testing

The State of Minnesota requires administration of the MCA tests (Minnesota Statewide Comprehensive Assessment) for 3rd-8th grades. We follow the MDE (Minnesota Department of Education) calendar of testing dates. FastBridge Tests will be given in the fall, winter, and spring for all Kindergarten – 8th graders.

Daily Transportation Changes

All teachers are directed to refer to the shared Google Doc titled 'Daily Transportation Changes' by 2:00pm. It is imperative that this is checked by 2:00pm to ensure that students are sent to the right spot when they are leaving the building during the day OR at the end of the day. Teachers must make sure they follow the transportation requests listed in the 'Daily Transportation Changes'. In order for a student to go anywhere other than their normal daily transportation, you must have written or verbal permission from the parent, NOT THE STUDENT. All changes made throughout the day will be communicated in the Daily Transportation document up until 2:00pm.

COMMUNICATION

Communication (External)

Communication is essential for efficient functioning of the school and delivering quality education to all students. Teachers are expected to communicate with parents weekly through ParentSquare, newsletters, websites, parent letters, or other ways. Parent communication is essential for academic and behavioral success.

Communication (Internal)

Staff should check their email at least twice daily when school is in session and twice per week during the summer. Emails are expected to be professional and school related. Administrative newsletters contain important information and should be read when sent out to staff.

Voice Mail

Staff receives voice messaging using our telephone system/email. Staff members need to check for messages at least twice daily.

Family Connection Day/Teacher and Parent Engagement

At STRIDE Academy, we believe effective education succeeds only through partnership with families. By working together, we tap into your child's strengths, provide consistent support, foster strong academic and social outcomes, and set high expectations, all while building a supportive learning environment. Your engagement is central to your child's success, and we're committed to supporting you in it.

You're invited to our Family Connection Day on Tuesday, September 23, from 7:30 AM to 3:30 PM. This is a special chance to step inside your child's learning and connect one-on-one with their teachers. This interaction not only strengthens the relationship between home and school, but also fosters better attendance, motivation, and achievement. Throughout the year, we'll continue to offer many opportunities to engage with: conferences, check-ins, and events, and much more, all designed to support your child's academic growth, behavior, and well-being through partnership at STRIDE Academy.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Additional Hours

Any hours beyond your contracted hours MUST be pre-approved by the building administrator in writing and copied to HR.

Appliances, Coffee Pots and Furniture

STRIDE Academy must comply with federal/state occupational safety and fire codes. These are in place to guarantee the safety of students and staff. All staff are expected to comply with these requirements. The only appliances permitted in staff areas must be commercially rated/three pronged plug in.

Copy Machine Use

Please ensure you are familiar with the proper use of the copier(s) before making copies. If the copier malfunctions, notify the technology team immediately.

To conserve paper, use the double-sided printing function whenever possible and recycle any unused copies. Only staff members are permitted to use the copying machines. Please adhere to all guidelines regarding the prevention of plagiarism.

Access to the copiers requires logging in with your employee ID or key card.

Cumulative Student Record

Each student has a Cumulative (CUM) Student Record folder in secure files in a secure location. This CUM record is a permanent record and is forwarded to the next school the student attends. In the CUM record you will find information about the student such as demographic information, standardized test scores, attendance records, progress reports, health records and other personal information. Students receiving special education services will have a Special Education Due Process file included in their CUM record. Should a teacher need to review their students CUM file, they must contact the Student Services Coordinator.

Release of Private Information to Parents

Parents have a right to request/receive information about their child. Non-custodial parents also have a right to request/receive information about their child unless there is a court order to the contrary. Documentation of restricted access to records is retained in the student's CUM file.

End-of-Day Procedures

Please support STRIDE Academy by teaching your students an "end of the day" closing routine which includes putting the chairs up, picking up the classroom floor, setting garbage cans outside of the classroom door and picking up surrounding floor areas, etc. - Leave your teaching area at the end of the day in the same condition (or better) than when you arrived in the morning. Instructing and expecting students to be leaders in keeping our building clean is a high priority.

Grant Proposal Writing

Staff members are encouraged to seek proposals to obtain grant funding to specific projects, activities, equipment or materials. Reach out to the Grant Committee for guidance and collaboration.

Grounds and Adjacent Park Area

Before making any changes to the school grounds, such as planting or planning educational activities, please consult with the Administration. Ensure that you clean up after using the grounds and dispose of all trash properly.

Purchasing Procedure for Ordering, Purchasing, and Reimbursement

1. Obtain a Purchase Requisition form from the copy room.
2. Complete the form with as much detail as possible, including vendor name, address, and fax number, as well as individual items to be purchased and estimated costs (including shipping and handling, if known). Give to accounts payable personnel.
3. Administration will approve or disapprove based on items requested and cost. 4. You will be notified via email the result of your request.

All reimbursement requests must be submitted within 30 days of purchase, or within 30 days of the event for which a mileage reimbursement is requested. We cannot reimburse any tax paid, so please get a copy of the STRIDE Academy tax-exempt form before you make a

purchase.

Repairs & Maintenance

Please report any safety concerns or items in need of repair to your Principal. Principals will then work with Operations to fulfill the request.

Timesheets & Payroll

All timekeeping is done electronically via Skyward. Timeclock kiosks are located at each building. Should the system not be available, or a timeclock correction needs to be made, staff may use paper timesheets. At no other time should paper timesheets be used. Timesheets are kept in a mailbox in the copy room labeled 'Timesheets'. Timesheets must be detailed with exact work times, record work times in the proper department of work performed, and include accurate breaks for deduction. All hours must be added, hours rounded to the nearest quarter hour, and timesheets must be signed in order to ensure timely payment. Pay periods run from the 1st of the month through the 15th, and the 16th through the last day of the month. Staff will be paid on the 15th and the last day of the month. If the pay date falls on a weekend or holiday, staff will be paid on the Friday preceding the 15th or last day of the month.

Bonuses & Stipends

Bonuses and stipends will be paid based on the additional assignments employees receive. Payments will be issued upon completion of the assignment or by June 30th of the contract year at the latest. Specific details, including eligibility and payment amounts, will be outlined in the assignment agreement or communicated by the Executive Director.

Digital Media Usage

The use of digital media, including streaming videos, online content, and educational films, is a valuable instructional tool. However, all digital media must be pre-approved by the principal. If the content is not rated G, parent permission slips must be sent home and returned before showing the media.

When selecting digital media for classroom use, please ensure the following:

1. Appropriateness: The content should be suitable for a school setting.
2. Age Relevance: The media must be appropriate for the age group of your students.
3. Educational Value: The content should be educationally relevant and contribute to the learning objectives.
4. Instructional Goals: The media should be directly related to instructional goals and objectives.

Using digital media to fill downtime is discouraged. If media is used as a reward, please exercise professional judgment to ensure it is suitable and beneficial for the students.

MEETINGS & PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Meetings

Effective communication is essential for the smooth operation of our school. To ensure that all staff are well-informed and engaged, various types of meetings are held regularly. Below are the details for staff meetings, committee meetings, and team meetings.

Staff Meetings: Staff meetings for regularly assigned staff will be scheduled in advance and communicated via email, including agendas. Building administrators will also send routine weekly announcements through a weekly newsletter, emailed to all staff.

Committee Meetings: Committee meetings will be organized as needed and will be communicated to the relevant members through email. Agendas and minutes will be provided to ensure all members are informed and can contribute effectively.

Team Meetings: Team meetings are held to facilitate collaboration and planning among specific groups or departments. These meetings will be scheduled by administration and communicated to team members via email, including relevant agendas and documentation.

SCHOOL ACTIVITIES & PROGRAMS

P.A.C. (Panther Activities Club)

STRIDE Academy Activities Club is an organization composed of parents, staff, and friends of STRIDE Academy. The Activities Club will provide additional support to all extra-curricular activity programs at STRIDE Academy through volunteerism and financial support. The Activities Club will help purchase supplies, equipment, provide scholarships, help with team events, as well as recognize students' participation beyond what the activity fees provide.

P.A.T.H.S. (Parents and Teachers Helping Students)

All parents, guardians, and teachers of STRIDE Academy are members of PATHS, and are invited to attend the meetings. PATHS is a volunteer organization of parents and guardians who want to assist our teachers and staff in making STRIDE Academy the best school it can be. Members of the staff will serve as liaisons of PATHS, so see them with questions. All material/funding requests will need administrative approval before going to PATHS.

Field Trips Policy 610

Grade levels need to plan for field trips in advance. Each grade level is expected to complete the [Field Trip Google Documentation Form](#) at least three (3) weeks prior to the planned event. Scheduling for transportation (bussing) is to be completed by the grade level with support from our accounts payable staff. Field trips should be carefully selected using MN academics academic standards to align/enhance/enrich students' learning. If you must cancel a field trip for which arrangements have already been made, notify accounts payable staff, at least 24 hours in advance. Cancellation on the day of the trip may only be made in case of emergency (i.e. inclement weather) or conditions in which the safety and welfare of the students may be jeopardized.

If a teacher has concerns about a student attending a field trip, they are expected to communicate said concerns with the parents and administration. Denying a field trip to any student is not permitted.

School Calendar

All employees of STRIDE Academy are expected to adhere to their work agreements and to take personal responsibility for ensuring that they follow the terms outlined within. This includes being aware of and adhering to the school calendar, which is essential for planning and scheduling purposes.

The STRIDE Academy school calendar aligns with the St. Cloud public school calendar. Each year, the STRIDE Academy Board of Education approves and adopts the school calendar, ensuring it is synchronized with the local district for consistency and ease of planning.

A copy of the approved school calendar is available on the STRIDE Academy website. Employees are responsible for regularly checking the school calendar to stay informed about important dates, including holidays, breaks, and professional development days.

School Closings

The following process is followed in the event of a school closure:

1. STRIDE Academy Administration will make the determination to close school for the day.
2. Staff will be notified via ParentSquare. (Via text, email, phone call)
3. School closings will be announced on local news channels/stations, and posted to our Facebook page and school website.
4. Hourly staff will be paid for all inclement weather days that are not made up.

Technological Equipment

The equipment available to all teachers includes:

- New Line Board
- Apple Mac Computers
- ChromeBook/iPad Carts
- Other

Please use all technological equipment appropriately and report any malfunction to the Technology Coordinator immediately. If you are uncertain how to operate equipment, ask the Technology Coordinator/Department for assistance.

Volunteers & Visitors

We anticipate having many volunteers working in the building. A background check must be completed on anyone directly interacting with our students in school on a regular basis. Background check forms can be found at the front office or in the office of Human Resources. Volunteers are required to pay for the background check.

All volunteers must be authorized by the building administrator prior to beginning work in the classroom. All staff who wish to have a volunteer, must get prior approval from their Principal.

Volunteers will be expected to comply with school policies and procedures and maintain expectations of the school and classroom. When a volunteer comes to school to work, they must sign in at the office and obtain a badge which will visibly identify them to staff and students.

If you see someone in the building that is not wearing a visitor's badge, ask him/her to report to the office immediately to obtain one. Inform the office that someone is on the way to sign in.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK
2025-2026

I acknowledge, with my signature below, I have been assigned a copy of the STRIDE Academy Staff Handbook and I understand it is my obligation to read the handbook and to understand what it says.

I acknowledge after having read the handbook, I am encouraged to contact the Principal or the Executive Director at any time I have uncertainty about any personnel policy, practice or benefit.

I understand this handbook does not constitute or create a contract of employment between STRIDE Academy and any employee, nor does the handbook establish any terms or conditions of employment.

I understand additions to or alterations or modifications of the rules, policies and procedures contained in this handbook may be made by STRIDE Academy at any time and for any reason and that I am obligated to insert those additions into the handbook to assure it is remaining current. I understand I am to comply with and follow these additional, altered or modified rules.

Date

Employee Name (printed)

Employee Signature

HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE POLICY
2025-2026

I acknowledge, with my signature below, I have been assigned a copy of the STRIDE Academy Harassment and Violence Policy 413. I understand it is my obligation to read the policy and to understand what it says.

I acknowledge after having read the policy, I am encouraged to contact Administration or the Human Resource Coordinator at any time I have uncertainty about the Harassment and Violence Policy.

I understand additions to or alterations or modifications of the rules, policies and procedures contained in the staff handbook may be made by STRIDE Academy at any time and for any reason and I am obligated to insert those additions into the staff handbook to assure it is remaining current. I understand I am to comply with and follow these additional, altered or modified rules.

Date

Employee Name (printed)

Employee Signature