

SCHOLARS' COMPASS LEADERSHIP ACADEMY



FACULTY AND STAFF
HANDBOOK

ACADEMIC YEAR
2026-2027

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Purpose and Status

This draft is written for an Indiana nonpublic, faith-based high school pursuing accreditation and preparing for Indiana Choice Scholarship participation. Named position holders and direct contact assignments remain to be finalized by school leadership.

These handbooks establish the operating expectations for Scholars' Compass Leadership Academy for the 2026-2027 academic year. They are designed as schoolwide guides for employees, families, and students and should be read alongside future board-adopted plans, enrollment agreements, annual notices, and state-required updates.

The school is being structured as a small, cohort-based high school serving grades 9 through 12 in Gary, Indiana. The academic program blends college readiness, leadership formation, entrepreneurship, project-based learning, responsible AI literacy, and trade- and workforce-aware planning.

Because the school is pursuing accreditation and preparing for Indiana Choice Scholarship participation, this edition uses conservative, compliance-forward language. Where a state process, approved plan, or designated contact is still pending, the handbook establishes the operational rule now and reserves named assignment for leadership completion prior to publication.

School Contact Information

School	Scholars' Compass Leadership Academy
Address	201 West Ridge Road, Gary, Indiana 46408
Website	scla.io
Main Email	info@scla.io
Main Phone	219-500-8190
Applications	Apply through the website application at scla.io
School Status	Indiana nonpublic, faith-based high school pursuing accreditation and preparing for Indiana Ch
Head of School	TBD
Principal	TBD
Admissions Contact	TBD
Attendance Contact	TBD
Title IX Coordinator	TBD
Section 504 Coordinator	TBD
Health / Nurse Contact	TBD
Safety Coordinator	TBD

All named position holders, direct extensions, and assigned reporting routes will be published by school leadership before final public release.

Daily Schedule and Weekly Logistics

Time	Day A	Day B
8:00 - 8:30	Compass Room (Advisory)	Compass Room (Advisory)
8:30 - 10:05	Humanities Studio	Science Studio
10:05 - 10:15	Break	Break
10:15 - 11:50	Mathematics Studio	Humanities Studio
11:50 - 12:30	Lunch	Lunch
12:30 - 1:35	Innovation & Enterprise Lab	Innovation & Enterprise Lab
1:35 - 2:35	Applied Learning Workshop	Applied Learning Workshop
2:35 - 3:15	Mentorship & Leadership Studio	Mentorship & Leadership Studio

- Doors open at 7:30 AM. Arrival, breakfast, quiet prep, and staff supervision happen before first bell.
- Compass Room anchors attendance, uniform check, daily notices, and goal-setting.
- Lunch includes meal service, hydration, restroom access, and prep for the afternoon lab-and-workshop sequence.
- After 3:15 PM, students either depart through approved family transportation or move into approved programming and end-of-day meal service.

Sample Five-Day Week

Day	Rotation	Operational Focus
Monday	A	Goal-setting, Humanities, Mathematics, and launch tasks
Tuesday	B	Science, Humanities, intervention groupings, and coaching
Wednesday	A	Project drafting, mentor touchpoints, and review
Thursday	B	Lab review, presentation practice, and advisory coaching
Friday	Flex	Assessments, exhibitions, service, college/trade planning, and family close-out

Mission, Identity, and Staff Culture

Scholars' Compass Leadership Academy is a faith-based, non-denominational high school with a public-facing posture of dignity, discipline, and preparation. Employees are expected to model calm authority, intellectual seriousness, respectful communication, and visible care for students and families.

The school culture is leadership-first. Staff members are expected to arrive prepared, teach with precision, protect instructional time, maintain orderly spaces, and speak to students in a way that combines warmth, accountability, and high standards.

Faith is part of the school's identity and values framework, but the current operating model does not assign denomination-specific worship practices, doctrinal curriculum requirements, or event mandates. Staff should support a respectful faith-based environment while delivering the approved academic program professionally and consistently.

Core staff standards

- Protect the mission, dignity, and reputation of the school in all settings.
- Teach and supervise with consistency, visible structure, and timely follow-through.
- Maintain professional dress, language, and boundaries at all times.
- Promote belonging without lowering expectations for conduct, work quality, or attendance.
- Use restorative practices to repair harm without minimizing safety, disruption, or repeated misconduct.

Employment Status, Hiring, and Background Checks

Employment is at-will unless otherwise stated in a written contract or controlling law. Before any employee begins work involving direct student contact, the school will complete the hiring steps required by its internal policy and applicable Indiana school standards, including credential review when appropriate, reference checks, prior-employment verification, and criminal background screening.

The school uses a child-safety-first hiring posture. Candidates may be removed from consideration or separated from employment if information obtained through background checks, reference checks, or employment verification indicates a risk to student safety, school operations, or professional integrity.

Volunteers, contracted personnel, coaches, vendors, and any adult with recurring student access may also be subject to screening requirements before assignment.

Standard hiring sequence

- Application, interview, and mission-fit review
- Professional reference and employment verification
- Credential and licensure review when the role requires it
- National and state background check completion before unsupervised student contact
- Onboarding for confidentiality, safety, FERPA, reporting, technology, and emergency procedures

Professional Expectations and Workday

The faculty and staff workday extends beyond the student bell schedule. Employees are expected to arrive with enough lead time to prepare spaces, welcome students, complete supervision duties, and begin the day in a composed, fully ready posture.

Planning, grading, student support meetings, family communication, and professional collaboration are part of the ordinary workday. Timely attendance at required meetings, training, and supervision assignments is mandatory.

Employees are expected to maintain response discipline with school communication channels, keep accurate records, follow chain of command, and document concerns that affect student safety, compliance, or school operations.

Baseline staff workday expectations

- Arrival before student supervision begins unless otherwise assigned
- Visible participation in arrival, transition, lunch, and dismissal routines
- Timely gradebook, attendance, and incident documentation
- Professional communication with families, students, colleagues, and leadership
- Use of paid time, leave, and schedule adjustments according to school policy and administrative approval

Instructional Model and Academic Delivery

SCLA uses a cohort-based A/B block model designed to create longer learning blocks, stronger relationships, and interdisciplinary application. Core subjects are delivered through extended studios, while afternoon blocks support entrepreneurship, applied learning, mentoring, and leadership development.

Teachers are expected to use lesson design that values direct instruction, guided practice, discussion, writing, projects, exhibition-quality work, and responsible use of technology. Every class should feel orderly, purposeful, and demanding without becoming rigid or impersonal.

The school's academic direction is intentionally modern. College readiness, trade awareness, financial literacy, entrepreneurship, workforce preparation, and responsible AI literacy are treated as part of a complete secondary education rather than as separate tracks.

Instructional delivery standards

- Protect the full learning block and minimize avoidable interruptions
- Use clear learning targets, meaningful checks for understanding, and timely feedback
- Teach students how to think, revise, present, and apply knowledge, not just how to finish tasks
- Integrate postsecondary and workforce relevance across the curriculum when appropriate
- Use AI tools only when they strengthen learning, never as a replacement for judgment or authorship

Student Supervision, Safety, and Duty of Care

Every employee shares responsibility for student safety, building order, and timely intervention. Active supervision means adults are present, alert, moving, and responsive during transitions, breaks, lunch, arrival, dismissal, and any program period in which students are in school care.

Employees must immediately address unsafe behavior, bullying, threats, medical distress, unauthorized visitors, or violations that place a student or staff member at risk. Delayed reporting or passive supervision is inconsistent with the school's expectations.

Students should never be left without appropriate supervision in classrooms, labs, hallways, common spaces, or during school-controlled events unless a specific approved procedure says otherwise.

Adult duty-of-care standards

- Maintain line-of-sight awareness during assigned supervision periods
- Report suspected abuse, neglect, threats, or serious misconduct immediately
- Follow visitor, sign-out, reunification, and emergency release procedures exactly
- Use de-escalation, restoration, and administrative support early before issues expand
- Document incidents accurately and without unnecessary delay

Technology, Records, FERPA, and Responsible AI Use

School devices, networks, software accounts, and instructional platforms exist for legitimate school business. Employees must protect passwords, safeguard devices, follow acceptable use standards, and maintain a clean boundary between professional systems and personal convenience.

Student records, discipline information, health details, and family communications must be handled with discretion and only by authorized personnel. Employees should not disclose student information casually, discuss confidential matters in public settings, or use unofficial channels to store protected school data.

Responsible AI use is permitted for planning, drafting, organizing, and support tasks when it does not expose protected information, compromise authorship standards, or replace professional judgment. Staff must not upload sensitive student records into unauthorized tools.

Required practice

- Follow school-approved platforms for attendance, grades, discipline, and communication
- Treat FERPA-covered student information as protected and access it only for school purposes
- Never use AI or technology tools to generate false records, inflate performance, or evade supervision
- Preserve digital professionalism in email, messaging, social media, and online instruction

Faith-Based Culture, Meals, and Family Partnership

SCLA is a faith-based school with a broad, non-denominational identity. The school seeks to be welcoming, disciplined, and mission-centered. Employees should communicate in ways that are respectful to a wide range of families while remaining aligned to the school's values language and educational vision.

The school intends to provide breakfast, lunch, and an end-of-day supper or dinner service. The meal program is designed to feel modern, healthy, and student-centered, with attention to dietary accommodations such as gluten-free, keto-conscious, kosher-style, vegetarian, and allergy-aware options as feasible through school operations.

Family partnership is part of the job. Staff are expected to communicate proactively, present concerns clearly, celebrate student growth, and reinforce consistent expectations between school and home.

Family-facing standards

- Use respectful, timely communication that is direct and solution-oriented
- Avoid jargon, sarcasm, and public conflict with students or families
- Keep a professional tone when discussing discipline, attendance, grades, or supports
- Honor lawful dietary, health, and privacy accommodations through the proper channels

Emergency Operations, Health, and Campus Security

Employees must know the basic response expectations for evacuation, shelter in place, secure campus, lockdown, severe weather, medical emergencies, fire response, and reunification. Campus access, visitor entry, and emergency release rules are part of daily operations, not occasional add-ons.

Student medication, illness response, injury response, and health documentation must be handled through school-approved procedures. Staff should never administer medication or make independent medical exceptions outside the school's approved health process.

Once the school reaches accredited status, the handbook will operate alongside an adopted seclusion and restraint plan and any board-approved emergency or safety plans. Staff training and reporting responsibilities connected to those plans are mandatory.

Campus security expectations

- Challenge and redirect unauthorized visitors through approved procedures
- Keep doors, access points, and student release practices aligned to school rules
- Respond first to safety, then to convenience, speed, or preference
- Participate in drills, trainings, and post-incident documentation as required

Reporting, Grievance, Title IX, and Child Protection

Employees are expected to report concerns rather than absorb them silently. Suspected abuse or neglect, safety threats, discrimination, harassment, retaliation, serious misconduct, or conduct that may trigger Title IX review must be escalated promptly through the school's required route and, when required by law, to the proper outside authority.

The school uses a professional chain of command for routine concerns, but emergency safety matters and mandated reporting duties bypass ordinary delay. Employees must not wait for a perfect set of facts before reporting a good-faith concern.

Complaints from students, families, or employees should be routed calmly, documented accurately, and handled without retaliation.

Default reporting chains

- Instructional issue: teacher or supervisor to principal or head of school
- Student safety or abuse concern: immediate report to administration and to the proper child-protection or law-enforcement authority as required
- Harassment, discrimination, or sex-based misconduct concern: Title IX coordinator or compliance route
- Formal employee grievance: supervisor, head of school, then governing board review

Handbook Use, Annual Review, and Acknowledgment

This handbook is intended to be used as an annual operating guide. It does not replace contracts, board resolutions, separate safety plans, payroll materials, benefit documents, or annual state and federal notices that may be issued during the school year.

Leadership may issue written updates, administrative procedures, or annual notices that clarify and strengthen this handbook. Employees are responsible for reading and following those updates once issued.

Each employee should sign the school's handbook acknowledgment process at the start of employment or at the beginning of the school year.