



# **SURPRISE SCHOLÉ ACADEMY**

## **STUDENT-PARENT HANDBOOK**

(Revised & Updated February 2025)

# CONTENTS

I. About Surprise Scholé .....	3
Mission .....	3
Surprise Scholé Is Cooperative.....	4
Cooperative for Students & Parents .....	5
The Role & Responsibility of the Parent .....	5
The Role & Responsibility of the Student .....	6
The Role & Responsibility of the Academic Mentor .....	6
Membership & Fees .....	7
Communication.....	8
II. The Scholé Learning Philosophy .....	9
Student Virtues .....	11
Virtues .....	12
Vices .....	14
Liturgical Learning .....	15
Christian Traditions and Our Schole Community .....	16
III. Community Policies.....	20
Statement of Faith .....	20
Supervision of Students at SSA .....	21
Parents on Campus .....	21
Parents in the Classroom .....	22
Dispute Resolution .....	22
Conversation .....	22
Etiquette.....	23
Best Left at Home.....	23
Electronic Devices .....	24
Clean Up.....	24
Lunchtime Decorum.....	25
Visitors.....	26

Student Placement & Academic Levels.....	27
Little Learners.....	27
Cancellation Policies & Procedures.....	28
Uniform Policy & Dress Code .....	29
SSA Academy Attendance Policy.....	31
Sick Policy.....	34
IV. Parent Agreement .....	36
V. Student Agreement.....	42

The policies in this handbook govern all meetings, events, dates, circumstances, etc. beginning with and related to the 2025–26 academic year until a revised edition is issued.

# I. ABOUT SURPRISE SCHOLÉ

## **Mission**

To come alongside local homeschooling families as they raise up children who passionately seek virtue and wisdom. Our desire is to renew the classical methods in a restful way from a biblical worldview. Through weekly meetings, families will delight in fellowship, accountability, and an environment which cultivates virtue and produces enjoyable and permanent learning.

## **Vision**

Our vision is to empower parents with a viable option to reclaim their children's hearts and minds throughout their grammar, dialectic and rhetoric years.

## **A Homeschool Co-op**

We are a Christian homeschool co-op which meets one full day per week for thirty weeks. We offer classes for grammar, dialectic & rhetoric aged students (K-12).

## **An Academic Co-op**

Surprise Scholé Academy is an academic co-op. The classes within SSA are core academic classes designed to give parents and students a springboard from which to manage their homeschool week. The level and number of assignments increases with each academic level (pre-grammar-rhetoric) according to the age, ability, and expectations of students.

In the Pre-Grammar & Lower Grammar years, optional homework assignments are provided to parents to implement at home as they wish.

In the Upper Grammar years, assignments increase as students utilize their time in class to grow in understanding of the topics covered. Parents are able to encourage work on assignments based on their child's age and ability.

In Dialectic & Rhetoric levels, assignments and projects develop to be commensurate with the work required for high school credit.

Because SSA is an academic co-op, it is essential that Academic Mentors are prepared for classes and provide valuable content to the students of SSA. It is also essential that Academic Mentors and families make every effort to attend each meeting day for the benefit of all students and families in the co-op.

### **Surprise Scholé Is Cooperative**

Surprise Scholé Academy is truly a cooperative group. We operate under a volunteer governing board. The leadership roles are clearly defined and all board members work together with equal voice and accountability. A board member should be a person of character and competence who influences the community to achieve a God-given calling through the power of Christ. Surprise Scholé Academy board members will pursue that goal prayerfully and faithfully.

Because we are cooperative, we require that a parent or other guardian remain on campus for the full day and faithfully serve in a specific role(s). Each family is required to participate in the Service Credit System, ensuring that there is shared responsibility and balance in the co-op. At SSA, all families participate in Academic Mentoring. For more information on Service please see the SSA website.

## **Cooperative for Students & Parents**

SSA is an entirely cooperative entity wherein all parents are cooperative through their participation as Academic Mentors in (often multiple) classrooms and students participate in the cooperative process by completion of weekly assignments, class participation and in Learning Symposium activities. There is a long-standing expectation of participation of all academic-age students in all Learning Symposium activities.

## **One Body, Many Gifts**

Surprise Scholé Academy is a parent-run organization. We believe that all homeschool parents have been equipped by Christ for the good work of homeschooling and because of this each parent is also equipped to provide Academic Mentorship within Surprise Scholé Academy. All parents serve as Academic Mentors in the community which allows Surprise Scholé Academy to operate at a lower cost than other co-ops.

## **The Role & Responsibility of the Parent**

- Parents remain the primary educators of their children.
- Parents must remain on campus and with their children for the full day, half-days are not permitted.
- Because we are a volunteer-based cooperative homeschool group, we require all parents to faithfully teach and serve in some capacity.
- Families are required to meet the minimum service credit hours as outlined in the service credit system description (see appendix).
- Parents should read and be familiar with this handbook.
- Parents must communicate well with their Academic Mentors and leadership team. This includes discussing expectations, special

needs, when students will be absent, and questions regarding assignments.

- Parents should inspire and encourage their students in their work and in their character development (virtue formation).

### **The Role & Responsibility of the Student**

- Students are expected to be obedient and respectful to his or her Academic Mentors.
- Students are expected to interact with fellow students with kindness and respect.
- Students are not permitted to run in the church building.
- Students are expected to speak with reverence (quiet voices) while in the church building.
- Students are expected to arrive on time, in dress code, and ready to fully participate.
- Students are expected to clean up after themselves.

### **The Role & Responsibility of the Academic Mentor**

- Academic Mentors will seek to create an atmosphere of restful learning by modeling peace, tranquility, and love of the subject.
- Class time will be unrushed with meaningful and deep engagement of fewer books and concepts (comparatively speaking), so that learning becomes memorable, enjoyable, and permanent.
- Academic Mentors are students of the Bible, the classical course of study, and restful learning. As students themselves, Academic Mentors will engage in ongoing education in these areas.
- Academic Mentors will treat all parents and students with dignity, kindness and respect.

- Academic Mentors will communicate well with parents. This includes communicating expectations, assignments, and general class information.
- Academic Mentors will be dependable by preparing for each class, submitting block lesson plans ahead of each academic block, and faithfully attending community days.
- Academic Mentor absences are a loss for students and the community. (Excessive absences: see *absence policy*.)

## Membership & Fees

Admission to Surprise Scholé Academy is a multi-step process:

- phone call
- info meeting
- visit day
- board interview
- application

The purpose of the application process is to ensure that families align with our mission and that a solid partnership is fostered.

Surprise Scholé Academy is organized as a religious educational non-profit.

Members must uphold the Statement of Faith to participate.

Mentors must agree with and adhere to the Statement of Faith & Statement of Principles.

All members must acknowledge and sign the SSA Waiver of Liability for parents and students.

Family registration fees are due with submission of the family application.

All fees are due by June 1<sup>st</sup> for the following academic year.



## Communication

- Governing Board communications are sent via email and the SSA website.
- BAND is utilized for community networking and short/time sensitive posts.
- All families are expected to join BAND.
- *Please do not use group text messaging for these types of communications.*
- BAND invitations are sent upon approval of family applications.

# II. THE SCHOLÉ LEARNING PHILOSOPHY

The word scholé (pronounced skoh-LAY) comes from a Greek word meaning “restful learning,” with connotations of reflection, contemplation, and leisure. Put simply, scholé means undistracted time to study the things that are most worthwhile. As our name implies, we at Surprise Scholé Academy value learning that is restful rather than frenetic.

How do our educational philosophy and methods differ from those represented by progressive education? Modern, progressive education is largely an education in anxiety. In this system, students commonly take eight or more courses at a time, which contributes to the stress and anxiety now associated with the term school. Students are typically graded numerically by mentors who are often driven to “teach to the test” and who must use assessments that produce easily quantified data or who justify the education enterprise in purely material terms. Students in such a system learn to cram, pass, and then forget.

By contrast, our courses of study cultivate unrushed learning with meaningful, deep engagement of fewer books and concepts (comparatively speaking), so that learning becomes memorable, enjoyable, and permanent. SSA mentors create an atmosphere of restful learning by modeling peace, tranquility, and love of the subject, and they utilize methods of evaluation that assess understanding and mastery of the subject rather than just the input and output of facts.

This means that Surprise Scholé Academy mentors work to create engaged discussion and learning and seek to build relationships with

and among students. We work hard at the Dialectic & Rhetoric levels to structure our courses so that the amount of work required is in accord with high school credit requirements, while also cultivating an atmosphere of contemplation, conversation, and reflection. SSA mentors will seek to wed truth to beauty in their teaching and cultivate education in its fullest sense.

As part of our commitment to providing a restful education, we carefully look for mentors who willingly demonstrate a commitment to these ideals. If you are interested in exploring the concept of scholé in more depth, we recommend the following resources to you:

- Bringing Scholé Back to School by Dr. Christopher Perrin
- Scholé over Schooling: Learning to be Mary in a Society of Martha with Dr. Christopher Perrin
- “Scholé in the Scriptures: Choosing What Is Better” by Dr. Christopher Perrin
- The Scholé Way by Dr. Christopher Perrin
- An Introduction to Classical Education (Audiobook) by Dr. Christopher Perrin
- The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education by Kevin Clark and Ravi Jain – 3rd Edition with Practical Application

In pursuit of scholé, Surprise Scholé Academy employs two key pedagogies that set it apart from other co-operative learning environments. First, we emphasize the development of virtues in our students; second, we employ patterns of “liturgical learning.” In fact, liturgical learning is an important part of developing student virtues.

While it is beyond the scope of this handbook to fully describe the student virtues and how we seek to cultivate them, the student virtues should nevertheless be briefly described.

## **Student Virtues**

“ . . . there is little enthusiasm for the patient acquisition of virtue, little inclination to sign up for a long apprenticeship in what earlier generations of Christians called holiness.”

- Eugene Peterson, *A Long Obedience in the Same Direction*

Augustine described education as essentially teaching students to “love that which is lovely,” following on Plato’s idea that affections and taste must be cultivated. The classical and Christian traditions have emphasized that it is critical to model for students the love for the true, good, and beautiful, and by various means to cultivate and stir up a love for them.

C.S. Lewis makes this case persuasively in his little book *The Abolition of Man*. He tells us that we need to cultivate not only minds but also chests (the visceral, affective part of us), especially since presently our modern schools neglect the cultivation of affections, rendering us as “men without chests.” He comments that modern students are not so much “jungles to be cut” as “deserts that need to be irrigated.”

Even the word “student” suggests this. It is derived from the Latin word *studium*, which means “zeal,” “fondness,” and “affection.” Thus, etymologically considered, a student is someone who is affectionately zealous and eager for truth, goodness, and beauty—that is, for wisdom. Is it not true that there are many students who are not really students? Until we have a child before us who is seeking and zealous for wisdom, we really don’t have a student before us; instead, we have someone who we must force to do academic work, usually by means of the carrot and the stick. Such a “student” will be generally uncooperative and resistant

(even if passively so), and he will quickly forget what he is forced to “learn.” Teaching such “students” is no fun at all. By contrast, once a child becomes eager to learn—to know—and is, in fact, “in love” with math, history, language, or logic—then teaching is a joy. Great mentors know instinctively that they must cultivate this studium, this zeal, in their students. Naturally, parents play the most vital role in this development—and in education, a partnership between parents and mentors is required for true success. (Please note that we include guardians when we refer to parents, but for the sake of space, we use parents throughout this handbook.)

So what are the key student virtues that we need to cultivate in our children? What are the corresponding vices that they must overcome?

## **Virtues**

- **Love:** Love is beautifully described in I Corinthians 13. Love is a master virtue that fuels and empowers the other student virtues. Paul teaches in 1 Corinthians 13 that even if we speak in the tongues of angels (high linguistic achievement!) and fathom all mysteries (surpassing the learning of a genius) but do not have love, our achievement will be worth nothing. Students are called by God (and thus should be called by us) to “love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” There is a whole-hearted expectation of our affection. What’s more, we are to “love the lovely,” which means we must glory in God Himself and His revealed mind in nature, Scripture, and ourselves. Knowing of God’s goodness in the world, and His goodness toward us, we can live out of love and gratitude in all we do and study.

- **Humility:** Humility is another master virtue that leads to other virtues. Humility is the necessary posture of a learner. We cultivate humility by taking students to the heights and showing them greatness.

In the presence of greatness, students become conscious of their own slender resources and will not take on anything beyond their power, but instead learn to rejoice in what is given them in their measure.

Humility will also lead to gratitude—gratitude even for those friends whose gifts and capacities surpass our own. In *The Intellectual Life*, Sertillanges writes, “In face of others’ superiority, there is only one honorable attitude: to be glad of it, and then it becomes our own joy, our own good fortune.”

- **Patience:** Patience involves bearing difficulties well, enduring the hardship and “suffering” that does come occasionally (and sometimes regularly) as part of learning new skills and acquiring new knowledge.
- **Constancy:** Students who exhibit noble constancy keep steadily at a task, remaining focused and diligent. This virtue enables students to push away even “good” distractions that would inhibit learning and mastery.
- **Perseverance:** Perseverance is similar to constancy, but this virtue requires a willful spirit to do what must be done, and even to love what must be done (reminding us that love is a master virtue). Students will be motivated and inspired to persevere by the vision of mastery, capacity, and wisdom that mentors lay before their eyes. Small wins and slowly increasing capacity will also kindle perseverance, constancy, and patience.
- **Temperance/Studiosness:** Students need to avoid excessive negligence (laziness) and excessive curiosity and ambition (vain ambition and overreach). To master an art, students must walk the wise, proven path, starting at the beginning and mastering each step. To leap ahead (even when they can to some degree) does damage to the necessary discipline of mastering an art. Sertillanges says, “If you want to see things grow big, plant small,” and go to the sea by way of the

streams and rivers—it is folly to go jump in the sea. Recall as well the tortoise and the hare.

Students also must balance or temper their studies with other academic work and with their other responsibilities as human beings (good exercise, prayer, worship, family living and contributions, etc.).

## Vices

- **Pride:** Pride drives students to love their own opinions and thoughts such that they cannot learn from others or discern the broader wisdom from other minds that would inform them.
- **Envy:** Envy agitates the mind by refusing to honor the gifts and capacities of others; it hinders students from learning from other honorable and able students.
- **Sloth/Laziness:** This is where the good gifts and capacities of students go to die.
- **Sensuality:** Indulgence in sensuality (not only of the sexual variety) creates lethargy, befogs the imagination, dulls the intelligence, and scatters the memory; sensuality distracts from learning.
- **Irritation/Impatience:** Irritation and impatience repels exhortation, direction, and constructive criticism, and thus deters students from mastery and leads them to increased error.
- **Excessive Ambition** (a form of intemperance): Excessive ambition leads students to leap ahead of their capacity without true mastery and integration (often out of pride), which ultimately slows down learning and leads to patchy, nonintegrated understanding.

All of these vices compromise a student's ability to attend, to judge or assess, and therefore to truly know. All of these vices also tend to come together and lead to one another—they are interconnected.

Virtues are not so much taught as they are cultivated and modeled. We should make students aware of these virtues and we should, in fact, occasionally teach them directly. However, it is very important that students begin to hunger for these virtues themselves and cry out to God for them.

This seems to be the point of Proverbs 2—if students won't cry aloud for wisdom and seek it as hidden treasure, they won't ever get it. Therefore (among other things we do), we must exhort our students to ask God for virtue and wisdom—a prayer He delights to answer (James 1).

### **Liturgical Learning**

“Liturgical learning” is a phrase that describes the use of the embodied patterns from church worship and tradition for shaping the way we order time, space, and language in our schools and homeschools. At Surprise Scholé Academy, we believe that using a liturgical pattern within our classes is an effective way to recover reflection and contemplation as part of learning. We think that it is a faithful application of the classical tradition, and one that differentiates us from other classical co-ops. For example, one could use the following “order of worship” as a pattern for ordering a lesson. This pattern is a guide that is not followed to the letter but nonetheless shapes the “learning liturgy” to distinguish classes at Surprise Scholé Academy. Our mentors have long embraced and loved incorporating this approach, and we believe our students will too.

Please note that the pattern of a class is determined by the prescribed SSA classroom liturgy.

- **Welcome/Greeting:** Students are greeted by beautiful image(s) and music, perhaps with an inspirational quotation or key question, which they are asked to contemplate for several minutes.



- Grateful Acknowledgement: The students and the mentor express gratitude for the art, one another, and the opportunity to study some aspect of God’s creation, mind, nature, humanity, etc.
- Opening Prayer- Each class opens with a mentor- student reading/recitation of the prayer designated for the current academic block.
- Teach/Present/Discuss: The mentor leads a traditional lesson, ensuring that students are engaged and participating.
- Confess What We Know/Have Learned: The mentor leads a summary and review, sometimes taking the form of a “creedal” confession that edifies.
- Closing Prayer- Each class period closes with a mentor and student reading or recitation of the closing prayer for the year.
- Benediction/Dismissal: The mentor gives a prepared benediction written by the mentor or from traditional sources.

As we seek to recover and renew the scholé tradition of education, we know that we will misstep and veer from this path—after all, we don’t know the path nearly as well as we would like. Still, we believe that finding and walking that path will be enriching to students, parents, and mentors. As we seek to recover the classical tradition of scholé, we welcome parental feedback and ideas about how we can better embody scholé in our classrooms.

### **Christian Traditions and Our Scholé Community**

The community of Surprise Scholé has become a patchwork of individuals, stitched together by the common threads of classical education. It reflects what we see across the broader renewal of classical Christian education, which certainly serves a variety of Christian traditions.

It is important for parents to recognize that classes at SSA are mentored by parents who themselves may come from a variety of Christian traditions, including Protestant, Orthodox, and Catholic. Our mentors will all be familiar with the three main Christian traditions and will demonstrate patience, rationality, and a spirit of open inquiry when engaging with students from any of these traditions.

## **Faith and Culture**

All families of Surprise Scholé Academy affirm the dogmas expressed in the Apostles Creed without exception, and the Surprise Scholé Academy community affirms traditional moral teachings of the faith such as:

- the sanctity of life (treating life as sacred from conception until natural death);
- historic orthodox standards of human sexual behavior (including gender as assigned at birth, sexual identity, and chastity—exclusive monogamous fidelity within marriage and abstinence outside of marriage); and
- Christian marriage as defined as the sacramental union of one man and one woman

Our mentors should respect and seek to be familiar with the multi-faceted Common Tradition (Christianity as expressed universally until the Great Schism of 1054) or "Canonical Theism," including:

- the centrality of the Bible as Holy Scripture
- the liturgy as a manifestation of common worship (i.e. Sunday worship)
- the important role of spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting/feasting, giving, etc.) as formative in the Christian life

- the historical and ecclesial significance of the Seven Ecumenical Councils as expressions of a common Christian belief and practice
- the historical significance and value of religious art (icons, painting, sculpture, architecture, music, etc.)
- the historical significance and witness of the church fathers as explicators of the faith (through councils, homilies, commentaries, poetry, and hymns)
- and the historic view of the saints as role models and witnesses to the truth.

## **Academic Mentor Conduct**

Surprise Scholé Academy mentors will conduct their personal and professional lives in accordance with the following:

- Regularly attend Christian worship, pray, and study Scripture;
- Respectfully defer to the authority of students' parents and clergy on controversial issues;
- Uphold and exemplify the above stated Faith and Culture convictions;
- Refrain from advocating personal religious convictions that fall outside the Common Tradition;
- Refrain from advocating personal political views in class (a range of political examples may still be utilized in various classes when the mentor determines those inclusions are valuable for instruction of course content) that might not be shared by other Christians who adhere to the Common Tradition; \*

- Treat those who sin without shaming, judgment, or condescension; restore students who stumble with compassion, grace, and Christian charity;
- Abstain from behaviors that would hinder their ability to serve as role models to the students; and
- Out of a pastoral concern for students, mentors will feel the freedom to briefly depart from their lesson plans to offer timely life wisdom on issues that affect the lives of their students and are relevant to the goals and content of the course.

## **Mentor Character**

In line with the previous “Student Virtues” section of this handbook, we expect that our mentors will be individuals who pursue virtue and holiness in their own lives as they are challenged to serve as living examples for our students.

# III. COMMUNITY POLICIES

## Statement of Faith

As our name implies, we seek to present all teaching and learning restfully with scholé. While scholé as an idea originated with the Greeks, it was transformed and extended by the church, especially in monastic centers of education. Surprise Scholé Academy seeks to recover this approach to education that is contemplative, “liturgical,” restful, and full of Christian peace.

Our mentors teach from within the Christian faith and will relate class concepts to the Christian faith when pertinent.

Surprise Scholé Academy mentors will affirm the dogmas expressed in the Apostles Creed without exception (noted below), and affirm traditional moral teachings of the faith.

*We believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.*

*We believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.  
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.*

*He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.*

*He descended to the dead.*

*On the third day he rose again.*

*He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.*

*He will come again to judge the living and the dead.*

*We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian church,  
the communion of the saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

At Surprise Scholé, we have carefully considered how we should engage our contemporary culture as those who believe that Christ is the Truth (John 14:6), and that all truth has its source in him.

We think it is important to provide our upper school students (in grades 7-12) with tools and opportunities for critically examining various cultural trends, issues, and mores without fear and through the lens of orthodox, Christian beliefs.

Being confident in the truth revealed to us in creation, the Scriptures, and the tradition of the church, we are not afraid to follow the truth and its implications nor to address error and falsehood.

### **Supervision of Students at SSA**

- Parents are responsible for their children.
- Please monitor your child's whereabouts, behavior, and participation at all times.
- Second Mentors will monitor their classes' students during restroom breaks.

### **Parents on Campus**

Parents must remain on campus at all times. A note assigning responsibility for your child(ren) to another parent will be required in order for you to leave campus briefly, in case of emergency only. Please

honor that our Academic Mentors work hard to equip parents, and parents are expected to be an example to their students. Surprise Scholé Academy is not a drop off program.

### **Parents in the Classroom**

Parents are required to actively participate in the classroom. We all love to connect with our community, but please honor and respect the Academic Mentor and the students and save conversation and fellowship for times when class is not in session.

### **Dispute Resolution**

Please uphold the Matthew 18 principle for resolving all conflict. “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his faults, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”

If there is a conflict, first bring the issue directly to the other person. If the issue remains unresolved, then bring a Surprise Scholé Academy leader into the conversation. If the issue still remains unresolved, we will seek the assistance of our host church.

It is important to remember that we are all sinners, and as a result there will be times of conflict and unintentional hurt feelings. As scripture teaches, it is important to believe and speak the best of each person involved, to speak graciously and listen well.

### **Conversation**

At Surprise Scholé Academy, we are committed to cultivating a community built on virtue, wisdom, and Christlike character. Gossip, backbiting, and slander have no place among us, as they undermine trust, sow division, and hinder the spirit of fellowship we seek to foster. Scripture warns us against such behavior, as Proverbs 16:28 states, "A

perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends," and Ephesians 4:29 instructs, "Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up."

In keeping with these biblical principles, we expect all concerns and questions to be addressed with humility and brought directly to the board in a spirit of unity and resolution. By upholding this standard, we ensure that SSA remains a place of encouragement, integrity, and mutual edification. Gossip, slandering and backbiting have no place at Surprise Scholé Academy and are grounds for immediate removal from the community.

### **Etiquette**

- ARRIVE on-time (or early), every time.
- SUPERVISE your children AT ALL TIMES
- RESERVE cell phone use for emergencies only
- PARTICIPATE in community and class activities
- HELP with clean-up
- LEND a hand to your mentor
- HONOR God in words and deeds
- RESPECT the church grounds and property.

### **Best Left at Home**

Students must leave all\* personal items not required for class at home or in the car.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Cell Phones
- Wheels, to include wheelie shoes, scooters, hoverboards, skates, etc.
- Weapons including, but not limited to: knives, pocket knives, guns, ninja stars, etc.



- Animals (live & stuffed!)
- Tablets, laptops, phones, smartwatches, and other electronic devices.
- Sports equipment
- Toys

*\* The Little Learners classroom is an exception to this rule; stuffies, toys, blankies, etc. are often needed by this age group and are certainly permissible within reason. Please discuss your LLs needs with the Little Learner's Coordinator.*

## Electronic Devices

- Use of cell phones and other electronic devices by adults should be respectfully limited on campus.
- Cell phones may not be used in class, with the exception of the occasional use by the mentor for teaching purposes.
- If there is an emergency, parents, please step out of the classroom, to avoid being a distraction to those in class.
- **Students are not permitted to bring cell phones or tablets to campus.**
- Every mentor is authorized to collect any student cell phones at the beginning of class, to be returned at the end of the day.

## Clean Up

Each family in our community shares the responsibilities associated with gathering as a group. Everyone is expected to clean up after him/herself and to participate in the weekly end of the day tasks. It is a privilege that we have this facility available for us to use and we must treat it with the utmost respect and reverence.

## Lunchtime Decorum

- Students may have a cold packed lunch. No microwave use is permitted for student lunches.
- Parents may pack a hot lunch and use the microwave for their own lunch. *Please note that no other kitchen appliances are available for Scholé use.*
- Lunchtime is observed in the Parish Hall.

### Students Will Observe the Following Rules

- Stay at your table until you have finished eating your lunch.
- Clean up after yourself without being asked.
- Throw away your garbage.
- Clean up your mess without being asked.
- Replace your lunch bag on the lunch bag table.
- Use soft voices in the lunch room. No yelling or shouting is permissible.
- No running or running-games are permitted in the lunch room.
- Throwing food for any reason is strictly prohibited.
- *No lunchtime food or drink may be consumed outside of the Parish Hall.*

There is no assigned lunchtime monitor. Parents are expected to ensure that their children act according to the lunchtime rules. Students who repeatedly violate these rules will be required to sit with their parent during the lunch hour.

There is no scheduled or supervised recess time. If you would like your child to have time outside during the lunch period, you may take them to play on the patio but they must remain with you and may not be outside unattended.

**Note:** *Playing in the rock gardens or landscaped areas on the patio is not permitted.*

## **Visitors**

We welcome the participation of extended family on community day. Please notify a Board Member if anyone other than the registered student(s) and parent(s) will be on campus as they need to be noted for insurance purposes.

Adults who exceed 3 visits per year (not counting Symposium) must have a valid background check on file. (Please see the SSA Child Protection Policy for more details.)

Student visitors are limited to announced opportunities only.

***Visitors, student or adult, are not permitted in the Little Learners classroom except on specific SSA visit days for prospective families.***

## Student Placement & Academic Levels

Students are generally placed in academic levels based on their age, as outlined below:

- Pre-Grammar (Ages 5–7)
- Lower Grammar (Ages 6–9)
- Upper Grammar (Ages 9–12)
- Dialectic (Ages 12–15)
- Rhetoric (Ages 15–18)

Parents have the flexibility to place their child at the level that best suits their needs, with the following exceptions:

- **Pre-Grammar:** Students must be at least 5 years old by September 1 of the current academic year.
- **Dialectic:** Students must be at least 12 years old by September 1 of the current academic year.

This structure ensures students are placed in an environment that aligns with both their developmental readiness and academic progress.

## Little Learners

Little Learners must have a parent on campus and are not permitted to attend in absence of a parent. (LLs may not be under the primary care of a guardian other than a parent or another Scholé parent member.)

Children in Little Learners must arrive each Academy Day with the following supplies:

- Lunch
- Water bottle
- Diapers

- Wipes
- Change of clothes (in backpack)
- Nap mat/blankets for nappers

Parents of LLs may occasionally be asked to serve in the LLs room in the absence of regular LLs workers.

Little Learners must be picked up by a parent at the end of the day.

***Visitors, student or adult, are not permitted in the Little Learners classroom except on specific SSA visit days for prospective families.***

### **Cancellation Policies & Procedures:**

- Surprise Scholé Academy seeks to provide weekly learning and fellowship opportunities for registered families according to the published schedule and SSA calendar. Occasionally, due to illness or other unforeseen events which affect the wider community, cancellation may be necessary.
- Cancellations will occur when illness or other unforeseen events (national or local emergencies, etc.) cause a staffing deficit and the community is unable to secure an adequate number of substitutes to lead all classes for the day. **Mentor/student absences that do not result in understaffing will not be cause for cancellation.**
- No individual level of classes may be canceled (PG/Dialectic, etc.) unless ALL students in that level are absent.
- Hourly scheduled classes may be canceled, but they must be canceled for the entire hour across ALL levels. (i.e.: **all** humanities classes may be canceled or all second or third period classes may be canceled.)
- In no circumstance may a class operate with 1 adult and 1 student. In the event of reduced class sizes, the smaller classes with

inadequate adult: student ratios should be relocated from any closed classroom area (i.e.: conference room) to an open area (i.e.: Narthex or Parish Hall).

## Uniform Policy & Dress Code

### Philosophy: The Importance of Wearing a Uniform

- 1- A uniform enables students to concentrate on studies rather than clothes, improving learning by reducing distraction, sharpening focus on schoolwork and making the classroom a more serious environment, allowing pupils to perform better academically
- 2- A uniform helps to create rest by knowing each week what the student is going to wear; it means that students do not have to worry about peer pressure when it comes to their clothes.
- 3- A uniform includes items that are affordable, comfortable, made from easy-care and easy-wear, appropriate for activity and suitable for all body shapes.
- 4- A uniform provides students with an opportunity to dress smartly and take pride in their appearance. It helps them to prepare for when they leave their school years and may have to dress smartly or wear a uniform.
- 5- A uniform creates an identity in the community, reinforcing a sense of belonging in the pupils who feel they are part of an organization or a group.
- 6- A uniform removes subjective evaluation of a student's clothing.

### Uniform:

- Short sleeve navy blue collared polo shirt
- Uniform quality *light or dark* khaki pants or shorts for boys
- Uniform quality *light or dark* khaki pants, skirt or jumper for girls

- Socks
- Close-toed shoes

### **Cold Weather Additions:**

- Navy blue tights or leggings under skirt or jumper
- A navy-blue sweater, hoodless sweatshirt with full, half, or  $\frac{3}{4}$  zipper, or well-fitted zip up jacket free from logos, emblems, designs, branding or other insignia

### **Additional Guidelines**

- Uniform pieces shall be well-fitted and clean.
- Hats and sunglasses may not be worn inside the building for any SSA sponsored event.
- All uniform pieces must be of uniform style and quality
- All uniform pieces must be free from logos, emblems, designs, branding or other insignia. No oversize or baggy clothes or pull-over hoodies.
- No denim fabrics, jeans, or joggers
- Coats, jackets and other clothing items worn over the uniform should be left in the Parish Hall

*Little Learners do not have a dress code, but must wear closed-toe shoes any time they are outside the Little Learners classroom.*

By adhering to this dress code, we maintain a unified, modest, and restful environment conducive to the pursuit of excellence and community.

## SSA Academy Attendance Policy

At Surprise Scholé Academy, attendance is vital to fostering the rich culture of learning, fellowship, and virtue that defines our community. Our mission is to support homeschooling families in raising children who passionately seek wisdom and virtue through classical education in a restful, biblical environment. Consistent participation in our weekly meetings strengthens the bonds of fellowship, provides accountability, and nurtures an atmosphere where students and parents alike can grow in both knowledge and character. By prioritizing attendance, families fully engage in the shared pursuit of enjoyable and lasting learning, ensuring that the principles of classical education take root and flourish. As we work to reclaim our children's hearts and minds, presence within our community is not just beneficial—it is essential to the success of our collective vision.

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### Mandatory Attendance Events

The following events are considered **Mandatory Attendance Events**, and participation is required unless a documented extenuating circumstance (e.g., long-term illness, hospitalization, or bereavement). Documented extenuating circumstances will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis:

- **Academy Days** (weekly meeting day)
- **Symposiums**
- **Student Orientation** (applies to students and academic mentors)
- **Parent Orientation** (applies to parents)
- **Startup Parent Meetings**



- **Startup Student Meetings** (Upper Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric levels)
- **Mid-Year Parent Meeting**

Attendance at these events ensures full engagement with the curriculum, academic excellence, and active participation in the SSA Academy community.

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## **Policy Details**

### **1. Allowed Absences:**

Each student and parent are permitted a maximum of **five (5)** absences per academic year from **Mandatory Attendance Events**. This limit ensures that students and families can participate fully in the co-op's learning opportunities, fostering academic excellence and a sense of community.

### **2. Reporting Absences:**

- All absences, regardless of reason, must be reported to your supervising board member as soon as possible.

### **3. Exceeding Allowed Absences:**

- Absences exceeding the allowed five (5) may result in removal from the community at the discretion of the Governing Board.
- Special consideration may be given for documented extenuating circumstances such as extended illness, hospitalization, or bereavement.

#### 4. **Symposium Participation:**

- Participation in symposium-themed projects is required unless extenuating circumstances prevent attendance on the day of the symposium.
- Students may opt out of **one (1)** symposium project per year (History, Poetry, or Science) to allow for focus and excellence in their other academic pursuits. (Attendance at the Symposium is still required.)
- Attendance at the Entrepreneur Fair during the Christmas Symposium is required, though project participation is optional.

#### 5. **Absences Not Related to Extenuating Circumstances:**

- Absences for reasons such as vacation, sports events, non-academic activities, or other optional travel should be planned during built-in rest weeks to every extent possible.
- Ongoing absences due to regular commitments to non-academic activities should be avoided, ensuring students can fully engage in their academic responsibilities.

#### 6. **Enforcement of the Policy:**

- This policy will be strictly enforced, especially at the Upper Grammar, Dialectic and Rhetoric levels, where greater commitment to academic excellence and personal growth is expected.

## 7. **Flexibility for Illness:**

- The policy is designed to accommodate flexibility for illness or other emergencies, ensuring that the community remains supportive while maintaining high standards of accountability and academic performance.

### **Sick Policy**

By adhering to this policy, Surprise Scholé Academy fosters a strong, collaborative learning environment, ensuring that students and families grow in virtue, wisdom, and academic excellence while delighting in fellowship and the pursuit of truth.

*By helping to observe good health standards, you will be protecting your child, yourself and others in Surprise Scholé Academy. Please inform a Board Member if your child has an infectious disease and other children may have been exposed, so that we may confidentially and discretely notify families of possible exposure. Also remember that there are no facilities to contain sick children. If your child should become ill while participating in Surprise Scholé Academy, your prompt attention is appreciated.*

Please keep your child home if he/she has:

- An oral temperature above 100.4 degrees in the morning. Children must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to a classroom setting.
- Conjunctivitis, which is an eye infection commonly referred to as "pink eye." The eye is generally red with some burning or itching and there is thick yellow or green drainage secreted.
- Rashes that you cannot identify or that have not been diagnosed by a physician.

- Diarrhea for any reason - allergies, illness, medication, etc.
- Vomiting
- Severe cold with fever, sneezing, and yellow or green colored nasal discharge.
- A contagious disease. Some of these are: Measles, German Measles, Chicken Pox, Roseola, Hand/Foot and Mouth disease.
- If a doctor diagnoses an ear or throat infection, strep, or staph and places your child on an antibiotic, the child should not return to the classroom until he/she has been on the medication for at least 24 hours. If a culture has been taken, wait for the results before determining if the child should be in the classroom.

### **Additional Sick Policy**

When a parent is unable to attend SSA because of a sick child, it is the parent's responsibility to find a replacement for volunteer responsibilities. Siblings of sick children may attend SSA if the sibling is not vulnerable to spreading illness to other SSA AND if the parent is able to secure another SSA parent member as the responsible party for the siblings AND if the parent has arranged teacher/helper subs for their classes. The parent off-site form must be submitted and approved by a Board member prior to leaving the children at Co-op in the care of another member.

Academic age students (**not** Little Learners) may be brought to SSA by another adult family member; please notify a Board Member ahead of time. Please remember: the background check policy applies to any adult attending/on campus 3 or more times per year (Symposiums do not count).

Any adults (family or otherwise) who will be substituting as a teacher or helper in a classroom must have a background check completed ahead of time (to be paid for by the family). Otherwise, the parent must also find an SSA member to substitute in the classroom/cover any additional responsibilities, cleanup, etc.

## IV. PARENT AGREEMENT

I certify that I am only registering children for whom I am the legal guardian.

\*By signing this agreement and submitting my non-refundable registration fee, I recognize that I am registering for a year-long commitment. If I withdraw before the end of the academic year, I realize I am creating additional work for others and that my actions may negatively impact the learning of students in the co-op.

\*I agree to pay the full year fees by the agreed upon date(s) to hold space for my family in the community. By failing to pay by the agreed upon date, I acknowledge that classroom space may be released to other families and that the Surprise Scholé Academy reserves the right to release this space based upon my nonpayment of fees.

\*My spouse and I will read the entire SSA Handbook found on the SSA website and will discuss it with our children. I will read the Student Agreement as well and be aware of what is expected of my students. I will willingly abide by all policies and rules.

\*I understand and agree that one parent must remain on the

premises the entire time and be responsible for my children regardless of their age whenever they are participating in co-op and co-op activities unless I have made prior arrangements with the governing board and signed a proper temporary guardianship form for my child(ren). I understand that if anyone in my family (including myself) violates the rules, it will jeopardize our participation in the co-op and that SSA reserves the right to deny participation to any student or family.

\*I have read, understand and agree with the Statement of Faith and Statement of Principles.

\*I will refrain from any gossip, unwholesome talk, or unwholesome behavior both during and outside of Academy Day.

\*I understand that SSA does not give legal protection or legal assistance. SSA is not obligated to testify regarding my homeschool's validity, authenticity, or effectiveness to legal authorities or in court.

\*I agree that my children will attend Academy Day in accordance with the SSA attendance policy. They will arrive on time, fully participate in the class by completing any homework assignments, and engage with other students and the mentors during class time. (If you know you will be missing 5 or more Academy Days/mandatory meetings, we recommend you do not register your family this year.)

\*I understand and agree that the SSA Board, mentors, and/or the host church will at no time be responsible for mishaps, injuries, or accidents that may occur during the year. We will read and sign the waiver of liability and submit the form before classes start this current year.

\*I agree to pay for any item that my children or I damage or break at the host church, or in connection with any visiting speaker, guest, event, field trip or other SSA activity whether on or off of the Crown of Life Church Campus.

\*I understand and agree to fulfill my responsibilities (classroom mentoring/cleaning) as I volunteered for or was assigned by the SSA Board. If I am unable to attend one day, I will find a replacement for all of my assignments (mentoring, clean up, etc.), and I will contact the board and all those affected either by email or text as soon as possible.

\*I understand that I may need to substitute or help during times other than my scheduled mentoring periods.

\*I will remember that parents on the governing board are volunteers like me and are not being compensated for their time. I understand that their decisions are for the health and longevity of SSA as a whole, in support of the mission of Surprise Scholé Academy and are prayerfully considered.

\* As a parent enrolling my child, I agree to submit to the authority and leadership of the governing board, recognizing that God calls us to respect and honor those placed in positions of leadership. Romans 13:1 reminds us, *“Let every person be subject to the governing*

*authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God.”* Likewise, Hebrews 13:17 instructs, *“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.”* I commit to supporting the decisions and policies set forth by the board in a spirit of cooperation, unity, and biblical accountability, trusting that they seek to lead with wisdom and integrity in the best interest of the community and students.

\*I understand that Surprise Scholé Academy (SSA) is a homeschool cooperative, not a traditional school, and that I remain fully responsible for the education of my child.

\*I acknowledge that one day per week at SSA is not sufficient for complete learning in any subject, and I agree to continue the study of my child’s SSA coursework at home on non-meeting days.

\*I understand that SSA does not hire or pay academic mentors and that the quality of coursework may vary from year to year as mentors change. While SSA strives for consistency and excellence in instruction, I recognize that there are no guarantees whatsoever regarding the quality, continuity, or effectiveness of coursework due to the cooperative nature of the program.

\* I acknowledge that classes at Surprise Scholé Academy are offered based on student number, mentor availability, and available space. I understand that each class, with the exception of the Rhetoric level, requires a minimum of three students to be held and that if enrollment falls below this threshold, the class may be canceled. I also recognize that the Governing Board reserves the right to adjust or reduce the class schedule as necessary to best serve the cooperative community.



## **Response to Unfulfilled Responsibilities**

I acknowledge and agree that my participation in Surprise Scholé Academy (SSA) is contingent upon my compliance with all policies, commitments, and responsibilities outlined in this agreement. In the event of unfulfilled parent responsibilities, the following responses shall apply:

### **1. Non-Payment of Fees**

- Failure to pay fees by the agreed-upon due date(s) may result in the **forfeiture of my child's space**, which may be released to another family.
- Late payments may be subject to a **late fee of \$100**.
- SSA reserves the right to **deny participation** in classes, activities, and events until all outstanding fees are paid in full.

### **2. Early Withdrawal from the Academic Year**

- No refunds will be issued for any fees paid.
- I acknowledge that by withdrawing, I create additional administrative burdens and may negatively impact students and mentors.
- A **30-day written notice of withdrawal** is required.

### **3. Failure to Fulfill Volunteering or Classroom Responsibilities**

- If I fail to fulfill my assigned or volunteered responsibilities (mentoring, cleaning, substituting, etc.), I am required to **find a replacement**.
- Repeated failure to meet responsibilities may result in **probation** or **removal from SSA** for the remainder of the academic year.

#### **4. Violation of SSA Policies, Community Standards, or Code of Conduct**

- **First offense:** Written warning from the SSA governing board.
- **Second offense:** Formal meeting with the governing board and a written behavioral agreement.
- **Third offense: Expulsion from SSA, with no refund of fees.**

#### **5. Damaging Property (Church, Mentor Supplies, or Other SSA Items)**

- I accept full **financial responsibility** for any damage caused by my child(ren) or myself.
- I agree to reimburse SSA, the host church, mentors, or any affected party for the **cost of repairs or replacement.**

#### **6. Excessive Absences or Failure to Meet Attendance Requirements**

- If my student or I miss more than **five (5) Mandatory Attendance events** without prior arrangements, SSA reserves the right to **revoke our participation.**
- Continued failure to attend may result in **non-renewal of family registration** for the following academic year.

#### **7. Dispute Resolution**

- Any disputes related to this agreement shall first be addressed **through mediation** with the governing board.
- If a resolution cannot be reached, SSA reserves the right to make the **final decision** regarding participation, without obligation to refund fees.

- I waive my right to pursue legal action against SSA, its board members, mentors, or the host church regarding any decisions made in accordance with this agreement.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have read, understand, and agree to the terms outlined in this **Parent Agreement**, including the stated response to unfulfilled responsibilities.

**Parent Signature:**

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**Printed Name:**

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**Date:**

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## V. STUDENT AGREEMENT

As a student participating in Surprise Scholé Academy (SSA), I realize I am God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that I should walk in them, and I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Ephesians 2:10, Philippians 4:13).

Thus, I agree to wholeheartedly enjoy a safe and supportive learning environment free from discrimination, harassment, and bullying, and acknowledge that I take a proactive part in making this environment safe, too. Therefore, I will become familiar with what is appropriate behavior and conduct myself accordingly. Moreover, I agree to understand the heart and goal of this agreement, which is to build one another up to become more Christ-like, growing and maturing in our faith.

The Bible says “Whatever you do, *work at it with your whole being, for the Lord and not for men*, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward” (Colossians 3:23-24), thus I will:

- Complete all assignments for my classes thoroughly and on time.
- Give my best effort.
- Be a positive example.
- Adopt a servant’s heart and attitude.

The Bible says “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9), therefore I will:

- Be peacemakers with all peers; resolve conflicts peacefully, and avoid fighting inside or outside of Academy Days;
- Adhere and practice the Conflict Resolution Guidelines outlined in the Surprise Scholé Academy Handbook.

The Bible says “And we urge you, brothers and sisters, warn those who are idle and disruptive, encourage the disheartened, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.” (1 Thessalonians 5:14-15), thus I will:

- Be an encouraging voice\* to peers, other students, class mentors and others I encounter on Academy Day.

\*An encouraging voice does not make fun of another person, including when they make mistakes, struggle, or are different from you.

\*An encouraging and helpful comment might look like: “I struggle with this too, but let’s try together to [insert goal].”

\*An encouraging comment is not given with sarcasm, discouraging body language, nor a harsh tone.

- Ask God how I can help my peers stay on task, and become more Christ-like, looking at my own faults before correcting another.

The Bible says:

“Never speak harshly to an older man, but appeal to him respectfully as you would to your own father. Talk to younger men as you would to your own brothers” (1 Timothy 5:1);

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another” (John 13:34–35); and

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:8-9), thus I will:

- Speak with kindness and gentleness to each person I encounter during all SSA events and activities.
- Show respect for all members of the learning community; behave respectfully, without arguing or talking back, and cooperate when a class mentor, parent or other adult gives direction or makes a request. I understand that I will be given an opportunity to voice my concerns at an appropriate time if I do not agree with the request.
- Refrain from gossip, unwholesome talk, slander and negativity about other members of the Surprise Scholé Academy community both during SSA activities and when engaging with other

members of Surprise Scholé Academy outside of SSA meetings, activities, and functions.

- Share information with parents and SSA leaders that might affect the health, safety or welfare of the SSA community.
- Do my best to keep my parents/guardians informed about SSA related matters and make sure I give them any information sent home.

**I will also:**

- Take responsibility for my personal belongings and respect other people's property, including this church campus;
- Abide by campus rules (buddy system, walking,) for my own safety and the safety of others;
- Raise my hand to request help;
- Keep all four legs of chairs on the floor;
- Be forthcoming with any questions to assist in my learning;
- Dress appropriately as is indicated in the uniform policy;
- Speak with reverence (quiet voices) while in the church building;
- Clean up after myself.
- Make every attempt to come to class prepared, on time, and ready for work;
- Bring appropriate materials and assignments for all classes;
- Not bring weapons, illegal drugs, controlled substances and alcohol;

- Refrain from bringing personal possessions, especially and including those that are disruptive (e.g., phone, entertainment devices, toys) to Academy Day.
- I will be obedient and respectful to my academic mentors & all adults.
- I will interact with fellow students with kindness and respect.
- I will not run in the building.
- I will speak with reverence (quiet voice) while in the church building.
- I will arrive on time, in dress code, and ready to fully participate.
- I will clean up after myself.

## **Student Relationship Policy**

We recognize that decisions regarding opposite-sex student relationships lie with the individual families, however, if SSA students are dating, we should not be able to discern as much from their conduct while participating in any Surprise Scholé Academy events including, but not limited to meeting days, other events, field trips, or other activities.

Physical contact, including but not limited to, hand-holding, hugging, kissing, walking, leaning, or sitting with arms around another, between young men and women is not appropriate or acceptable conduct.

## **Inappropriate Classroom Behavior**

The Bible says:

“Listen to your teacher and learn all you can” (Proverbs 23:12), thus I will:

- Respond cheerfully and quickly to my class mentor's requests to get back on task in class;
- Speak in respectful tones to mentors and others in the classroom;
- Be respectful of the classroom environment, otherwise I may face the following actions:
  1. Given a warning/reminder/redirection.
  2. My on-campus parent may be alerted to the behavior.
  3. If I need another correction, I acknowledge I will be escorted back to my on-campus parent on campus, therefore missing the rest of my class time.
  4. If repeated corrections are needed or there is no change to my behaviors, I will be held accountable as follows below.

## **Accountability**

The SSA Governing Board desires to respond to policy violations with grace and gentleness while being mindful of the impact violations have on both the engaged student(s) and other members of SSA. We recognize that we are born as sinful beings into a fallen world, and therefore recognize that students will not always act perfectly in accordance with SSA policies. The Governing Board also recognizes that policy violations can provide opportunity for student character growth and virtue formation and we approach infractions with this in mind. Our goal is to redeem the student to appropriate conduct by encouraging the student to listen and respond to the Holy Spirit. In order to limit distractions, as well as safeguard our environment, church relationship and student engagement, the following procedures may be used in any order as determined appropriate by the governing board:



- Notification to student(s) and parent(s) of the violation.
- Notification to student(s) and parent(s) of the violation; within one week of the violation the student(s) involved will submit a written document detailing their plan and resolve to refrain from the behavior and/or actions in question. This document must be signed by the student and the parent.
- Notification to student(s) and parent(s) of the violation and meeting with the SSA Governing Board\* to address the infraction and develop a plan to restore the student to fellowship with the community. The SSA Governing Board may impose suspension or dismissal of the student from this community.

\*The SSA Governing Board reserves the right to apply discretion and forgo any policies as deemed appropriate in individual situations, which may result in immediate suspension/dismissal of a student or family.

Surprise Scholé Academy acknowledges that some content and inspiration for this Handbook were borrowed from Scholé Academy, and we appreciate their commitment to classical education and community-driven learning and are grateful for their guidance.