



ARKANSAS
VIRTUAL ACADEMYSM

2015-2016 Classified Personnel Policies

Mission Statement

The mission of the Arkansas Virtual Academy (ARVA) is to support, guide, and assist families and colleagues in a positive way through teamwork to promote academic growth that leads to high achievement for the entire ARVA community.

By embracing change through teamwork and good communication, we will keep sight of our mission to ensure family commitment to accomplish our purpose.

\s\John Riggs IV, Chairman of the Board
Approved July 21, 2015

Application of Social-Networking Technology

Arkansas Virtual Academy teachers, administrators and staff will follow the policies set forth by the Arkansas Professional Licensure Standards Board (PLSB) described below.

Recommendations and Guidelines Regarding the Educational Applications of Social-Networking Technology Issued by the Arkansas Professional Licensure Standards Board

Increasingly, educators are utilizing social-networking technology tools for professional educational purposes. The Professional Licensure Standards Board, in concert with the Arkansas Education Association, the Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators, and the Arkansas Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, offers the following cautionary guidelines to assist educators in assuring that their usage of these tools is consistent with the spirit and intent of the Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators.

- 1) Prior to establishing professional social media accounts, a written explanation of the purpose of the account should be provided to district level administrators for approval. Professional use of social media should be approved by a district-level administrator, or his or her designee.
- 2) If Districts approve the use of professional social media accounts, parents/guardians should be notified of the purpose and provided an opportunity to “opt out.”
- 3) E-mail and/or social media tools and accounts should be kept separate. Professional accounts should be created and maintained separately for student and/or parent interaction and communications. An authorized administrator or his or her designee should regularly monitor professional accounts and have full rights to modify the accounts.
- 4) Personal accounts should be for personal use only. School personnel should not add students and/or parents as “friends” or “associates” to personal accounts.
- 5) Use of social media during business/school hours should be on professional accounts and for professional or educational use only.
- 6) Digital correspondence between school personnel, students, or parents should be limited to professional and educational purposes only, and be conducted at appropriate times.
- 7) Images, audio, or videos of any school activities or students should not be digitally transmitted or streamed without prior written parental consent and/or must adhere to local district policies.

- 8) District policies should encourage personnel to report inappropriate use of digital and/or social media to appropriate district administrators. Possible ethics violations may be reported to the Professional Licensure Standards Board utilizing the “Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators Allegation of Violation” form.
- 9) Districts should orient, educate, and/or provide guidance to students, parents, and staff regarding legal, safe, and ethical use of social media.

Communication with Families

Ongoing and consistent communication is required between the student, parent, and teacher(s) for many reasons, including school compliancy. A teacher or other staff member may need to address non-attendance, insufficient progress or other compliancy issues with a learning coach. To establish a record detailing the action plan made with a family, the use of KMail and the designated ARVA office phone should be the primary method to communicate official school concerns. Employees should use email or text only as a last resort to make contact when addressing concerns regarding student or school compliancy. After successful contact has been made, communication should resume through Kmail and phone as previously described.

Texting a learning coach during the school day should only be done when an immediate need arises, for example, the learning is to meet the teacher or staff member for a face-to-face meeting or testing and has not arrived, the learning coach sends a text for directions to an outing, a teacher is waiting on a student to begin a class connect session, etc. While texting does engage parents, it should not be involved in any compliancy proceedings. Texting should be used for school business purposes only, not for casual exchange. Providing timely reminders on a regular basis via the school’s Facebook page, the Online School announcement tool and the ARVA website would help reduce the number of miscellaneous text messaging that may occur.

No employee of ARVA should communicate with students via text messaging. Should any wrongdoing occur or accidents happen while texting is in use, the school will be held harmless.

Employment Agreement Renewal and Non-Renewal

Arkansas Virtual Academy is an open-enrollment charter school and was granted a waiver from teacher contracts and Teacher Fair Dismissal Act. The school utilizes at-will employment agreements. Employment agreements can be terminated at any time by either party.

Agreements are approved by the Board of Directors as needed based on student enrollment. All offers shall expire if not accepted in writing within two weeks from the date issued.

Employee Leave Policy

In an effort to achieve a cohesive working environment between ARVA employees, central office staff, ARVA Board of Directors and K¹² Inc., the following policy regarding leave has been established.

Annual Leave

Arkansas Virtual Academy full-time employees receive one (1) paid annual leave day for each month of the employment period. Part-time employees receive one half (1/2) paid annual leave day for each month of the employment period. Annual leave time must be taken in half or full day increments. Annual leave will generally not be granted during periods of standardized testing or face-to-face professional development. Annual leave time does not include approved holidays such as:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving
- Winter Break
- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King Day
- President's Day
- Spring Break
- Memorial Day

If an employee does not participate in scheduled weekly conference calls with administrators by Blackboard Collaborate and phone call each week as expected, one half (1/2) day of leave must be taken. Scheduled internal professional development days will be treated in the same manner. If an employee does not attend the full day(s), leave must be taken. Leave for missed weekly conference calls or internal professional development will be taken from annual or sick leave, whichever is applicable. If a professional development opportunity is missed but can be made up, it is the employee's responsibility to follow through and get approval from the Academic Administrator or other supervisor to do so. If this occurs, then no leave time will be charged.

If annual leave time is requested for more than two consecutive days, prior planning and approval must be obtained two weeks in advance in order to ensure that an extended gap in services to ARVA families does not occur. A "Request for Time Off" form must be submitted to your direct supervisor. If annual leave time is requested for two consecutive days or less, the request must be submitted two days prior to the requested date. Extenuating circumstances may not allow for prior notice, however, as much notice as possible should be given for each request. The supervisor will work with each ARVA employee in order to approve annual leave requests; however, adjustments may be necessary if multiple employees submit leave requests for the same time frame.

Annual leave cannot be carried over from one year to the next. Employees will work with their supervisor in scheduling annual leave to ensure that all ARVA students receive the best possible service during absence.

Sick Leave

Arkansas Virtual Academy full-time employees receive one (1) paid sick day for each month of the employment period. Part-time employees receive one half (1/2) paid sick day for each month of the employment period. In accordance with §6-17-1205 employees can accrue up to ninety (90) days of unused sick leave. Sick leave will be taken in half or full day increments. Upon departure or dismissal from ARVA, an employee's sick leave bank can be transferred to another public school entity upon the employee's written request.

If there is a noticeable interruption of service to families due to illness of an ARVA employee, their child or immediate family member(s), sick leave time must be taken. As a general rule, sick leave should be requested if families, when asked, would indicate an interruption in service.

A "Request for Time Off" form should be submitted within one business day of the illness or use of sick leave. Prior approval, when possible, should be obtained for use of sick leave for extended illness, surgery, etc., to allow for arrangements to be made ensuring coverage of services to ARVA families. Documentation, including doctor's notes, may be required.

Maternity/Paternity/Adoption Leave

Arkansas Virtual Academy employees must utilize any unused sick leave when a leave of absence is for the purpose of maternity/paternity or adoption, prior to applying for unpaid leave under Family Medical Leave Act (if the employee qualifies for coverage). During such leave, the employee shall have the option to continue any/all benefits at the group rate, provided appropriate payment is made by the employee as indicated by selected insurance coverage.

Annual leave can be utilized for maternity/paternity or adoption leave, however, it is not required.

Arkansas Virtual Academy employees should provide a sixty (60) day notice, if possible, when a leave of absence is for the purpose of maternity/paternity or adoption to allow for arrangements to be made ensuring coverage of services to ARVA families.

Leave Without Pay

Guidelines provided under the federal Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) will be adhered to by the Arkansas Virtual Academy regarding leave without pay (LWOP) for specific reasons. Contact the Operations Manager for additional information on FMLA. Request for leave without pay outside of FMLA guidelines will be considered on an individual basis with the decision made jointly by the Academic Administrator and the

Head of School. All LWOP requests should be submitted four weeks prior to the requested leave period, when possible. The Head of School will provide in writing a decision regarding the request within ten (10) days of the request. Arkansas Virtual Academy employees on LWOP will not be reimbursed for home office expenses such as; internet connection, monthly phone bills, etc.

Equal Opportunity Employer

Arkansas Virtual Academy (ARVA) is an equal opportunity employer committed to a policy of equal employment opportunity for all applicants and employees.

It is the policy of the ARVA Board of Directors and ARVA administration to ensure that all employees comply with the spirit and intent of federal, state and local law, government regulations, executive orders regulating affirmative action and equal opportunity in employment. Arkansas Virtual Academy will hire, train, promote, compensate, and administer all employment practices and benefits without regard to race, sex, pregnancy, childbirth, religion, marital status, age, national origin, disability, veteran status, or any other category protected by federal, state, or local laws.

Arkansas Virtual Academy fully supports the Americans with Disabilities Act and will reasonably accommodate disabled employees and applicants who can perform the essential functions of a job for which they are qualified, with or without accommodation, unless undue hardship to ARVA exists.

Grievance Procedure

The grievance procedure is a process in which employees can bring workplace problems to supervisors. Before the grievance process begins, the employee needs to address the problem with their immediate supervisor. If the problem has not been resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant through informal discussion with their immediate supervisor, she/he has the right to file a grievance in accordance with the following procedure. A grievance should be filed within ninety days (90) of the incident(s) in the following manner:

1. Submit a letter to the Operations Manager to include the following:
 - a. A summary of the complaint, including nature of the complaint, relevant dates and incidents, and information on any informal discussion that may have occurred with the person(s) directly
 - b. Identify the person alleged to be responsible
 - c. Resolution sought
2. If the Operations Manager is the person the complaint is against, submit the letter to the Head of School.

Within two weeks (10 working days) the Operations Manager (or Head of school when appropriate) will attempt to resolve the situation by discussion, investigation, or formal

meeting(s) between the parties. The Operations Manager will meet with both parties and offer a resolution. Within ten working days the Operations Manager will submit findings and proposed resolution to both parties, with a copy going to the Head of School and the Chair of the ARVA Board. The grievant has five (5) working days to respond to the proposed resolution in writing, either accepting the resolution or rejecting and requesting to move forward with the process. The written response from the grievant should be directed to the Operations Manager. The Operations Manager shall decide the matter and that decision will be final.

Harassment Policy

Policy and Definition

It is the policy of the Arkansas Virtual Academy that all decisions shall be made on the basis of merit and without unlawful discrimination because of race, sex, color, creed, age, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability status.

Sexual harassment is sex discrimination under Title IX and will not be tolerated. It is the policy of ARVA to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from sex discrimination, including sexual harassment.

Sexual Harassment – could include:

- Any behavior which patronizes, intimidates or offends
- Any behavior which causes an individual to feel viewed as a sexual object and/or which causes offence
- Provocative suggestions, propositioning an individual
- The display of pornographic, semi-pornographic or suggestive material, electronic or paper
- Deliberate, potentially objectionable physical contact to which the individual has not consented or had the opportunity to reject
- Threats of negative evaluation, demotion, or promises of success or other rewards in exchange for sexual favors
- Submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, a term or condition of the individual's job
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment evaluation
- Such conduct which has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's professional performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment

Racial Harassment – could include:

- Any behavior which causes discomfort, intimidates or offends or which incites others to do so

- The display or circulation of offensive material, including through electronic mail
- Verbal abuse and threats of physical attack

Personal Harassment – could include:

- Behavior which makes direct or indirect reference to disability or impairment - and thus causes discomfort, patronizes, insults or offends people with a physical, sensory or mental disability
- Behavior which makes direct or indirect reference to religion or culture thereby causing discomfort or offense
- Repeated gibes in reference to personal traits, appearance or sexual orientation
- Pressure to become involved in anti-social or criminal behavior
- Messages to or about a person, including electronic mail, that are offensive, insulting or cause discomfort

Resolution by Informal Discussion

Violations of this policy should be reported to the Operations Manager immediately and appropriate action will be taken. If after a fact finding process it is determined that behavior occurred that violates this policy, the employee in violation may be recommended to the ARVA Board for immediate termination.

The above referenced types of harassment are not intended to be a complete listing of all types/forms of harassment but to provide employees some general guidelines.

Personnel Assignment

All Arkansas Virtual Academy employees are subject to assignment at the direction of the Head of School. Assignments will be made with the consideration of student needs, area of expertise and the need for balance across employee caseloads. Reasonable efforts will be made to honor staff preferences in assignments.

Reduction in Work Force

The Arkansas Virtual Academy acknowledges its authority to reduce the workforce (employees) whenever such a reduction is deemed as necessary or desirable. The reduction in force may also apply to the amount of hours worked by an employee.

Reimbursement Policy

Reimbursable expenses should be filed within 30 days of incurred expense. ARVA employees are eligible for the following reimbursable expenses:

Travel

- Mileage
Mileage to attend professional development training, field trips, or other ARVA related events or business are eligible for reimbursement. Mileage will be reimbursed at the rate of \$.55/mile.
- Miscellaneous Expense
Expenses incurred for parking, taxi, subway, etc. will be reimbursed at the rate incurred. Receipts are required.
- Lodging
In-state lodging: If the current state rate is not available, the employee will be fully reimbursed up to \$98, plus tax, per night if travel is over 100 miles from the ARVA employee's home office, otherwise overnight stay must be pre-approved by the Operations Manager or the Head of School.
Out-of-State lodging will be fully reimbursed at the rate incurred plus tax. Out-of-state travel and lodging must be pre-approved by the Operations Manager or Head of School.

Please make every effort possible to find the most economical lodging when traveling on ARVA business. **Receipts are required for all lodging reimbursements. The receipt must show a zero balance.**

- Meals
In-state expenses for meals will be reimbursed up to \$39 per day **only** when overnight stay is required, unless otherwise approved by the Academic Administrator.
- During times when employees are required to work outside of their home office at events such as outings, test administration, parent trainings and professional development, the employee will be reimbursed for meals. Meals will be reimbursed up to \$20 per day.
- **Out-of-State** expenses for meals will be reimbursed up to \$50 per day for pre-approved out-of-state travel. Expenses for meals that are provided by the conference will not be reimbursed.

Itemized receipts are required for all meal reimbursements. Alcoholic beverages, personal entertainment and tips are not reimbursable expenses.

Home Office Expenses

- High-Speed Internet Access

Monthly internet connection will be reimbursed at the rate charged, up to \$50 plus tax. If Internet service cannot be obtained for less than \$50 per month prior approval must be obtained before any installation or service contract is entered into. New employees will be reimbursed for the installation of high-speed internet for ARVA business. This fee will only be reimbursed once, therefore, if for some reason an employee wishes to have the line moved, service provider switched, etc., the cost will be incurred at the employee's expense, unless pre-approved by the Operations Manager. Part-time employees will be reimbursed \$25 per month towards their Internet service plan.

- Office Supplies/Expenses

Receipts for purchases must be submitted along with the reimbursement form. Reimbursable expenses may include: ink cartridges, paper, folders, pens, binders, copying, etc. Student gifts are not a reimbursable expense. Each employee should buy what is needed. If an item is \$50 or greater, the employee must get approval from the Operations Manager.

ARVA Outing Expenses

Room rental, parking fees and employee admission fees are covered expenses for ARVA sponsored outings. Room rental fees that are over \$25 and other miscellaneous expenses should be pre-approved, when possible, by the Operations Manager. Expenses for non-ARVA sponsored outings are not reimbursable.

Suspension, Termination and/or Non-Renewal

All employees are engaged through an at-will employment agreement and can be terminated or non-renewed at-will. When the Head of School has cause for suspension or termination, the Head of School will provide the employee with a written notice of the suspension or termination.

Termination of Employment

When employment is terminated with the Arkansas Virtual Academy, either by ARVA administration or by an employee, unused annual leave will be forfeited. Unused sick leave, in accordance with state law, can be rolled to the next employment position if it is with another Arkansas public school entity.

Whistleblower Protection Policy

Definition:

“Protected Disclosure” means an allegation, made in good faith, that the Arkansas Virtual Academy or one or more of its employees, contractors (acting in the course of its work for the Arkansas Virtual Academy) or members of the Board of Directors, has in the

course of his, her or its duties to the Arkansas Virtual Academy acted unlawfully or in violation of published Board of Directors' policies.

Preamble:

The Arkansas Virtual Academy has moral, ethical and legal responsibilities for the stewardship of its resources and the public and private support that enables it to pursue its mission. Although the Arkansas Virtual Academy internal controls and operating procedures are intended to deter, detect and prevent improper activities, as at any institution, intentional and unintentional violations of laws, regulations, and policies may occur. This policy is intended to result in the internal identification and remediation of such violations.

Policy:

Reporting Protected Disclosures:

Any person may make a Protected Disclosure. It is the responsibility of all employees and board members to report Protected Disclosures. Protected Disclosures should be made in writing so as to assure a clear understanding of the issues, but may be made orally. Reports should be factual and contain as much specific information as possible. Protected Disclosures shall be made

1) by employees to their immediate supervisor or other person upwards in the supervisory chain, and 2) by other persons to the Head of School. However, when there is a potential conflict of interest, such reports may be made to another person in management who you may reasonably expect to have either responsibility over the affected area or the authority to review the alleged improper activity on behalf of the Arkansas Virtual Academy.

Protection from Retaliation:

The Arkansas Virtual Academy and its employees and board members are prohibited from 1) retaliating or attempting to retaliate against any person who has made a Protected Disclosure or who has refused to obey an order that is illegal or in violation of published Board of Directors policies, and from 2) directly or indirectly using or attempting to use the authority or influence of his or her position for the purpose of interfering with the right of the person to make a Protected Disclosure. Anyone who retaliates against or interferes with someone who has made a Protected Disclosure is subject to discipline which, for employees, could be up to and including termination.

Investigations:

Supervisors to whom a Protected Disclosure is made are required to report them to the Head of School. The Head of School will undertake or cause to be undertaken an investigation and resolution of the alleged violations. The Head of School will advise the board chair and/or board vice chair, of all Protected Disclosures regarding accounting practices, internal fiscal controls or auditing. All internal complaints will be investigated promptly and with discretion, and all information obtained will be handled on a "need to know" basis. At the conclusion of an investigation, as appropriate, remedial and/or disciplinary action will be taken where the allegations are verified and/or otherwise substantiated.

