



# Innovations Academy

Powerfully creating our lives through self-expression  
compassionate connection and  
purposeful learning

## Employee Handbook 2013/14 School Year

10380 Spring Canyon Rd.  
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[InnovationsAcademy.org](http://InnovationsAcademy.org)

## Employee Handbook: Table of Contents

Welcome to Innovations Academy	4
<i>Disclaimer</i>	4
Innovations Academy Mission Statement	4
<i>Career Opportunities</i>	5
<i>Open Door Policy</i>	5
<i>Code of Conduct</i>	5
Employment Expectations	5
Policies and Procedures	5
<i>Equal Opportunity Employment:</i>	5
<i>Eligibility For Employment:</i>	6
<i>Familial Employment:</i>	6
<i>Part-Time Employment:</i>	6
<i>Criminal Convictions:</i>	6
<i>Violence:</i>	6
<i>Weapons:</i>	6
<i>Alcohol, Drugs &amp; Illegal Substance Abuse:</i>	7
<i>Drug Testing:</i>	7
<i>Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment:</i>	8
<i>Domestic Violence Statement:</i>	8
<i>At-Will Employment:</i>	9
<i>Severance:</i>	9
<i>Personnel File:</i>	9
<i>Attendance:</i>	9
<i>Work Schedule Requirements:</i>	9
<i>Staff Meetings:</i>	9
<i>Parking:</i>	9
<i>Feedback/suggestions:</i>	9
<i>Lunch Break:</i>	10
<i>Workplace Dress Code:</i>	10
<i>Medical Attention:</i>	10
<i>Compensation:</i>	10
<i>Wage and Salary Disclosure:</i>	10
<i>Payroll Schedules:</i>	10
<i>Payroll Deductions for Federal Tax, State Tax, FICA and Medicare:</i>	10
<i>IRA's - Individual Retirement Accounts:</i>	10

<i>Performance &amp; Evaluation Reviews:</i>	10
<i>Reimbursement of Expenses:</i>	11
<i>Personal Property:</i>	11
<i>Personal Safety:</i>	11
<i>Food &amp; Beverage:</i>	12
<i>Smoking:</i>	12
School Property	12
<i>Confidential Information Security:</i>	12
<i>Classroom Conditions:</i>	12
<i>Facilities Security:</i>	12
<i>Office Supplies, Postage &amp; School Accounts:</i>	12
<i>School Equipment:</i>	12
<i>Conservation and Recycling:</i>	13
Computer Related	13
<i>Computers and Related Equipment:</i>	13
<i>Internet:</i>	13
<i>Email &amp; Electronic Communication:</i>	13
Policies for Leave of Absence	15
<i>Personal Leave of Absence:</i>	15
<i>Sick Leave:</i>	15
<i>Personal Time:</i>	15
<i>Short-Term Disability Leave:</i>	15
<i>Unpaid Family &amp; Medical Leave:</i>	15
<i>Funeral Leave:</i>	16
<i>Jury Duty:</i>	16
Benefits	16
<i>Overview:</i>	16
<i>Eligibility:</i>	16
<i>Group Medical Insurance:</i>	16
<i>Life Insurance Policies:</i>	16
<i>401K Plan:</i>	16
<i>Retirement:</i>	16
<i>Worker's Compensation:</i>	17
Discipline Policies	17
<i>Communication/Conflict/When Something Isn't Working for You Policy:</i>	17
Teacher Expectations	3

# **Welcome to Innovations Academy**

The following pages contain information regarding many of the policies and procedures of Innovations Academy. These policies are a condition of employment. Labor relation laws require that all employees maintain a written policy that is applied non-discriminately to all employees.

**Have questions or need assistance** reviewing this document? Please contact:

Christine Kuglen (Director) at (858)-271-1414

Christine@InnovationsAcademy.org

## **Office hours:**

Monday - Friday: 8:00am to 4:30pm

Saturday: Closed

Sunday: Closed

## **Important Phone Numbers:**

Main Office Line - (858) 271-1414

For life threatening emergencies dial 911

## **Disclaimer**

This handbook is intended only to outline the employment policies, procedures and benefits of Innovations Academy. This manual is not intended to be all-inclusive and should not be considered to be an employment contract. Innovations Academy reserves the right to change employment policies, procedures, benefits or this manual at any time without notice. It is the responsibility of the employee to stay abreast of policy. Innovations Academy will make every effort to notify employees of any policy changes, additions or deletions. Said changes will immediately become a part of this manual.

## **Innovations Academy Mission Statement**

At Innovations Academy we powerfully create ourselves through self-expression, compassionate connection, and purposeful learning.

## **Career Opportunities**

It is our desire to see each and every employee achieve their highest potential through our mission. We will do our best to provide the opportunity and offer training, education, and guidance whenever possible. Stay in communication with the Director regarding professional development.

## **Open Door Policy**

It is our objective to provide a work environment free from elements that would deter employees from performing their best work. All concerns may be expressed through our open door policy. The Director at Innovations Academy maintains this open door policy to discuss any issues you may have. Feel free to express yourself about work related or personal matters. Your input is welcome.

## **Code of Conduct**

Employees of Innovations Academy are to conduct themselves in a responsible, professional, and ethical manner. Report unethical or dishonest behavior to the Director.

Reported activities will be investigated by Innovations Academy administrative staff. The appropriate means for resolution will be determined. Employees found to be conducting themselves in an unethical manner may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

## **Employment Expectations**

Teachers are expected to know and follow the "Teacher Employment Expectations 2013-14' found at the end of this handbook\*\*. All teachers are expected to seek help for any area of the expectations that are unclear or challenging during any point in the year. Expectations will have been reviewed by staff during staff development.

## **Policies and Procedures**

### **Equal Opportunity Employment:**

Employees are hired based solely on Innovations Academy personnel requirements and the qualifications of each individual candidate.

We will not tolerate nor condone discrimination due to age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability. We will comply with the spirit and letter of all local, state and federal laws pertaining to employment. Furthermore, we will not discriminate due to age, race, color, religion, sex, national origin or disability when making decisions regarding termination of employees.

Any questions or concerns regarding any aspect of this policy should be directed to the Director.

**Eligibility For Employment:**

Federal law requires both new employees and re-hires to provide documentation of eligibility to work in the United States plus proper identity. A properly submitted form I-9 is required for employment.

**Familial Employment:**

Innovations Academy does allow family members and relatives of employees to be considered for employment, provided they are qualified for the position and no other conflict of interest exist. Hiring decisions will be the exclusive responsibility of the Director.

**Part-Time Employment:**

Innovations Academy does offer part-time employment positions. Direct all questions regarding part time positions to the Director.

**Criminal Convictions:**

Criminal convictions are taken seriously at Innovations Academy. We reserve the right to disqualify any applicant for employment that has been convicted of a criminal offense.

Furthermore, conviction of a crime may result in an automatic termination. Innovations Academy will make every effort to evaluate the nature and circumstances of the conviction. With the safety and well being of co-workers at stake, convicted employees may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Violence:**

Threats of violence and acts of violence are strictly prohibited. Employees threatening or committing acts of violence will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Report any such activity to your immediate supervisor or the Director.

**Weapons:**

Weapons are generally defined as guns, knives and other objects universally considered a weapon by the vast majority of society. A "weapon" can also be any object which would do harm to another when used as such. Innovations Academy shall deem any such object a "weapon" for the purpose of enforcing of this policy.

Possession of weapons is prohibited on company property and while on duty performing company business at any location. Any employee on duty or on company premises in possession of a weapon will be subject to appropriate

disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Report any weapon possession to your immediate supervisor or the Director.

### **Alcohol, Drugs & Illegal Substance Abuse:**

Possession of alcohol, illegal drugs or other illegal substances is not permitted on company property, or while on duty in the employment of Innovations Academy. Furthermore, employees are not permitted to report for duty while under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs or other illegal substances. Employees failing to adhere strictly to this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Report any suspicious activity to the Director.

### **Drug Testing:**

Innovations Academy does not tolerate the use of alcohol or nonprescription drugs on company premises or during work hours at any other employment location as required by Innovations Academy. If an employee is suspected of working while under the influence of illegal drugs and/or alcohol, the employee may be suspended and required to submit to a drug and/or alcohol test. Suspension shall be without pay until the results of the test are obtained by Innovations Academy. If the results are negative, the employee will be reinstated and compensated for normal hours of work missed as a result of the suspension. Positive test results may result in termination of employment.

All employees and prospective employees are hereby notified that test results may be used in arbitration, administrative hearings and court cases arising as a result of the employee's drug testing. Results will be sent to federal agencies as required by federal law. In all other instances every reasonable effort will be made by Innovations Academy to protect the confidentiality of the information.

### **Sexual and Other Unlawful Harassment:**

It is the objective of Innovations Academy to provide a working environment free from discrimination and conduct commonly referred to as sexual harassment.

The E.E.O.C. (Equal Employment Opportunity Commission) has provided a broad definition of sexual harassment. It is general in nature and may not always be clear when evaluating everyday situations.

“Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when

submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment,

submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or

such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.”

Sexual harassment refers to behavior inappropriate in the workplace because it is offensive, unwelcome behavior which would not occur but for the sex of the

offended person. Both sexual harassment, and accusations of sexual harassment, are disrupting to the work environment.

If you or a co-worker experience what you believe to be sexual harassment or accusations of sexual harassment, report it promptly to the Director. Innovations Academy will investigate any employee, regardless of job position when such allegations are made. Based on available information, Innovations Academy will take appropriate action and communicate on a need-to-know basis.

Appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination will be taken against any individual for sexual harassment charges determined to be valid.

#### **Domestic Violence Statement:**

Innovations Academy recognizes that domestic violence can have an adverse impact on employee job performances and may also impact co-worker's performance.

Innovations Academy will assist employees affected by domestic violence, both the victim and the abuser within reasonable guidelines. Information will remain confidential as long as the safety of others is not at risk.

#### **At-Will Employment:**

Employment with the Innovations Academy is on an "At-Will" basis which means that employment can be terminated by either the employer or employee at any time for any reason or for no reason at all.

This understanding is explicit and unaffected by any statements, comments, terms or agreements, express or implied, verbal or written unless approved by the Board of Directors of the Innovations Academy.

Employees choosing to terminate their employment with Innovations Academy are required to return all school property to the staff director before leaving the premises on their final day of employment. Upon receipt of all school owned property, the employee will receive their final paycheck.

Innovations Academy may terminate employment at any time for any reason. If an employee is terminated for a severe violation of policy they will be escorted from the premises immediately. Any personal property, plus their final paycheck will be given to the employee upon receipt of all school owned property.

The Director will provide opportunity to all employees leaving Innovations Academy to have an exit interview. Request for exit interviews must be made with reasonable time for the Director to schedule the interview.



**Severance:**

Innovations Academy does not offer severance benefits for employees terminating employment for any reason.

**Personnel File:**

Innovations Academy maintains a confidential personnel file for each employee. Files are controlled by the Director. Consult with the Director in order to view or obtain a copy of your file. These files are the property of Innovations Academy, no documents may be altered or removed by the employee. Every reasonable effort is made to keep the information confidential, access is limited to staff members who require access to perform their job functions. Copies will not be distributed to any third party unless mandated to do so by a court of law.

**Attendance:**

Punctual attendance is mandatory for efficient job performance. All teachers must be on campus between the hours of 8:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. all school days (except when explicitly noted in expectations). If you are not going to arrive on time, please call the Director to communicate this information.

Absence from work for a teacher effects the lives of many people. In case of absence for any reason, notify the Director as well as the front office immediately. Best notification takes place the night before by 9pm to the Director's cell phone (619-379-9275). Teachers are responsible for coordinating and scheduling with a substitute from our list of approved personnel. If assistance is necessary, please contact the director immediately.

Poor attendance, absence without notification or habitual tardiness will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Work Schedule Requirements:**

The work schedule for full time staff are from 8:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m Monday - Friday as well as All School Functions that take place in the evenings (such as but not limited to: Exhibition Nights, Student Conferences, Fundraisers, etc.) and staff meetings scheduled during the week. Unless otherwise agreed upon by staff and administration, all staff are expected to be on campus during these work hours.

**Staff Meetings:**

Full Staff Meetings take place on Fridays (12:45-3:45). Unless otherwise agreed upon, all staff are expected to be present. Grade level meetings, team meetings, committee and other meetings may take place before or after school. It is the responsibility of each staff member to know their meeting schedules and to be an active participant in the ongoing development of a creative work environment.

**Parking:**

Innovations Academy employees are required to park in the employee parking area. All other parking is reserved for families and visitors.

**Feedback/suggestions:**

All staff are encouraged to submit suggestions, comments or new ideas which may benefit the school. If you wish to remain anonymous, every precaution will

be made to preserve your privacy. Feedback/suggestions can be placed in the Directors mailbox or email.

**Lunch Break:**

Aides are provided so that teachers may take a lunch break. Teachers may be asked to participate one day per week in the supervision on the lunch court.

**Workplace Dress Code:**

Innovations Academy encourages employees to dress comfortably in attire appropriate for working with children.

**Medical Attention:**

Innovations Academy requires employees to notify a supervisor when medical attention is required for any reason, accident or illness. Transportation and medical costs are the responsibility of the employee.

**Compensation:**

Innovations Academy employs both hourly and salaried employees. All salaries are stated in contracts signed upon hiring.

**Wage and Salary Disclosure:**

Compensation programs are confidential between the employee and Innovations Academy. Disclosure of wages or compensation to any third party or other employee is prohibited and could be grounds for termination.

**Payroll Schedules:**

Employees are paid semi-monthly. Paydays are the 15<sup>th</sup> and the last day of the month. In the event payday falls on a holiday or weekend, paychecks will be distributed the day prior. Employees are required to enroll in automatic deposit. Paychecks shall be distributed or deposited according to this section. Federal, state and any other required taxes will be withheld from wages as will any voluntary deductions.

**Payroll Deductions for Federal Tax, State Tax, FICA and Medicare:**

As required by law, Innovations Academy withholds taxes from employee earnings, as well as social security (FICA) and Medicare. Innovations Academy also participates in matching programs as required.

**IRA's - Individual Retirement Accounts:**

Innovations Academy encourages employees to plan for retirement. IRA saving programs offer the employee advantages for retirement as well as tax savings at the time of purchase. Contact the Director for details and information regarding automatic payroll deductions.

**Performance & Evaluation Reviews:**

Performance Evaluations have been the source of considerable dissatisfaction for teachers in traditional school settings because of the many shortcomings that have plagued the system. At Innovations Academy we recognize the need for full participation in goal setting and evaluation by our staff with the objective of continuously working to perfect our practice as professional educators.

Please note: Our At-Will contract supersedes any evaluation process. Successful participation in the performance evaluation process does not guarantee that a

contract will be renewed. The intention is to provide support to staff for continual professional growth.

**Reimbursement of Expenses:**

Expenses to be reimbursed by Innovations Academy (see expense protocol below) must be approved in writing prior to expenditure. To receive reimbursement you must furnish the Program Manager in charge of expenses with two items: receipts for all expenses (other than per diem or mileage) and a properly completed expense form (available from Donna).

We appreciate your approved expenditures on behalf of Innovations Academy and will make every effort to reimburse you in a most timely fashion.

If you require an advance for expenses, see Donna.

**Expense Protocol:**

All teachers will be given access to a fund (set amount) prior to the commencement of the school year and to be determined by the current budget to use for their classrooms in the following manner:

A designated part from that fund (specified at the onset of the school year) will be used for the purchase of consumables and other items that will be used for the current year (single use type items) specific art supplies, science experiment supplies, party supplies etc.for the material they teach that year.

A designated amount from that fund (specified at the onset of the school year) will be used for items that are reusable. All items purchased with this money will be labeled with “Innovations Academy” and be considered permanent property of IA. Examples might be posters for the wall, teacher reference books, reading books, etc..

A third portion of the fund is for the exclusive use by students to start an endeavor that will make this fund grow. Examples include fundraisers and other business endeavors that by the end of the year will give them more than the original funds to use for anything that they choose.

**Reporting Personal Information Changes:**

Employees must notify the Director whenever there is a change in their personal information on file with Innovations Academy This includes address, phone number, income tax withholding information, emergency contacts and if applicable, any information which may impact your insurance coverages.

**Personal Property:**

Innovations Academy is not responsible for personal property of employees in facilities, vehicles or parking areas.

**Personal Safety:**

At Innovations Academy the safety of our employees is a top priority. We will make every effort possible to ensure the safest working environment possible. If you have suggestions or concerns discuss them with the Director. If you feel you

are in danger performing your job duties, stop working and report the hazard immediately.

**Food & Beverage:**

Without exception, food and beverage is strictly prohibited within immediate proximity of any computers, servers and related hardware. All rules regarding food and drinks for students will also apply for all adults.

**Smoking:**

Smoking is not allowed in Innovations Academy facilities or anywhere on campus.

**School Property**

**Confidential Information Security:**

As a matter of course employees of Innovations Academy will have access to confidential information. This information includes, but is not limited to, student information, personal family information and school matters. It is a condition of employment that you not disclose this information to third parties during or after employment. Disclosure of Innovations Academy confidential information without express written approval is prohibited.

**Classroom Conditions:**

It is the responsibility of each teacher to maintain the cleanliness and order in their room AND the surrounding area outside the classroom door and around the picnic table including all items left behind by students, the class microwave, old lunch materials etc. Teachers are encouraged to create a class structure in which students will actively participate in the upkeep of their classrooms.

**Facilities Security:**

It is the responsibility of all employees to make sure the facilities and work areas are secure. Any employee entrusted with facility keys shall make certain the facility is secure when that employee is the last to leave. If the building is accessed on the weekend, the security of the facility is of utmost importance. This includes, but is not limited to, turning off appropriate lights and closing and locking all doors and windows, signing in and out with SDUSD police, and locking gates. Report any potential security risks

**Office Supplies, Postage & School Accounts:**

Innovations Academy postage, postage systems, shipping accounts and accounts with various vendors and suppliers are to be used for school purposes only. Improper use of these items may result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**School Equipment:**

School property, such as laser printers, copiers, computers, projectors, doc cams and all tools, are to be used for Innovations Academy purposes only. Inappropriate use of school property may result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

**Conservation and Recycling:**

Conserving energy and resources is a priority at Innovations Academy. Employees are required to conserve power and water in all reasonable ways. Recycling containers are provided throughout the facility for collection. Containers are marked for various materials. Please be certain to separate all recyclables and put them into the appropriate containers.

**Computer Related****Computers and Related Equipment:**

Innovations Academy provides employees access to computers, printers and other equipment on an as-needed basis, to perform their job requirements. Employees are required to maintain their computers and related equipment in good working order. If any of your equipment needs service, repair or maintenance, notify the staff director immediately. Employees shall not use school systems to knowingly violate any city, state or federal laws. School equipment shall not be used to store or display images depicting violence, sexually explicit material or are racially offensive material. Software installed on school computers must be properly licensed and installed at the direction of the Administration.

**Internet:**

Innovations Academy will comply with any reasonable requests from law enforcement to review internet activities of any employee. While accessing the internet, employees should be fully aware of the global reach of the media. Employees are required to maintain a high level of dignity and be mindful that they represent Innovations Academy to the world at large while online.

**Email & Electronic Communication:**

Each teacher is provided a school email for school purposes only. Personal use should be kept to an absolute minimum. Please use a personal email account for mail not related to Innovations Academy.

All teachers are expected to check their email accounts on a daily basis.

All emails, sent or received, are school records and as such, are accessible to administration.

No anonymous emails can be sent from company systems. All employees are required to identify themselves by name and email address.

Innovations faculty and staff using email to correspond with parents are required to adhere to the following guidelines:

Staff must use a school provided email account for all parent communications.

All official emails must be retained for a period of two years.

Email must never be used to discuss contentious, emotional or highly confidential issues. These issues must be dealt with face-to-face or via telephone.

Email messages to parents should be consistent with professional practices for other correspondence. This includes grammar, format and salutation.

Emails using I.A. email addresses may not be confidential. Email messages may be requested by the public under the Right-to-Know Law and may, unless exempt under the law, be open to public inspection.

Emails should be short and directional in nature and only include facts.

Care should be given when using student names. Refer to students by first name, initials or 'your son/daughter' depending on the content. Do not discuss non-related students.

The school maintains email accounts for staff to facilitate parent/teacher communication and internal staff communication. The director reserves the right to block or filter email messages to staff that are not directly related to school business or to I.A.'s mission.

#### Acceptable Use of E-mail Parent Communication

Email should be used for general information such as: class activities, curriculum, assignments, tests, deadlines and special events.

To arrange for a meeting/phone call regarding a student issue including a general description of the issue e.g. "I would like to arrange a meeting to discuss your daughter's attendance."

To follow up on an issue that has previously been discussed on the phone or in person.

#### **Unacceptable use of Email Communication**

Email should never contain any discussion related to other students.

Personal information about other students

Specifics about a sensitive student issue which was not initiated by the parent or had not previously been discussed with the parent. (e.g. "I am concerned that your daughter failed the last test and was not at school again.")

Any discussion related to other staff.

Any sensitive student information that would normally be discussed face to face or by phone (e.g. "I am concerned that your daughter have a learning disability")

## Policies for Leave of Absence

### **Personal Leave of Absence:**

Innovations Academy will make every reasonable effort to consider personal leave of absence. Apply for unpaid personal leave of absence authorization from the Director. Many factors are considered when determining eligibility for personal leave of absence and is granted or denied solely at the discretion of Innovations Academy. When granted, the maximum allowable is 30 days per calendar year.

### **Sick Leave:**

Sick leave benefits are earned at a rate of one day of paid sick leave for every 2 completed calendar months worked. Eligible employees can earn up to six days of sick leave per year. At the end of employment with Innovations Academy, employees will not be paid for unused sick leave days.

Notify the Director in advance when you plan to use sick leave for scheduled medical procedures or doctors appointments.

If you are sick and unable to attend work or if you must leave before the end of your shift because of illness, notify the Director immediately.

### **Personal Time:**

**Innovations Academy does not offer paid personal time as part of compensation packages. Hours not worked will be deducted from the employees check. See supervisor for options to make up the time**

**Short-Term Disability Leave:**  
Innovations Academy offers short term disability benefits to eligible employees for extended illness or injury when the employee is deemed unable to perform their job duties for more than 5 consecutive scheduled workdays. Short term disability leave benefits are earned at a rate of one day of paid leave for every 2 completed calendar months worked. Eligible employees can earn up to six days of short term disability leave per year. Unused short term disability leave may not be carried to the next year. At the end of employment with Innovations Academy, employees will not be paid for unused short term disability leave days.

Notify your immediate supervisor or the Director in advance when you plan to use short term disability leave for scheduled medical procedures or pregnancy related disability. Innovations Academy reserves the right to verify any employees inability to perform job duties through consultation of medical experts selected by Innovations Academy

### **Unpaid Family & Medical Leave:**

Innovations Academy employees are eligible to take unpaid leave as per the terms of The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993. Consult with the Director for details and notify your immediate supervisor if you choose to take this unpaid leave of absence.

**Funeral Leave:**

Innovations Academy will provide reasonable time off for employees to attend funerals of friends and loved ones. In the event of a death in the immediate family of the employee, up to three days paid time off may be granted to attend to family matters and funeral arrangements. Additional unpaid time off may also be granted. Contact the Director concerning your specific needs.

**Jury Duty:**

Notify your immediate supervisor if you are summoned for jury duty. Time off from work will be granted as necessary in compliance with applicable law.

## Benefits

**Overview:**

Benefits provided to employees are provided at the will of Innovations Academy and Innovations Academy reserves the right to modify or eliminate benefits without notice under conditions of law. The benefits listed herein are intended to be a general description only. Details of specific benefits are outlined in the documentation for the benefit program.

**Eligibility:**

To qualify for benefits an employee must be considered full time and have completed a minimum of ninety (90) days continuous employment with Innovations Academy. Full time employees are employees who have been assigned a regular 40 hour per week work shift. Employees scheduled for less than 40 hours weekly are not eligible. Innovations Academy reserves the right to, without notice, revise these eligibility requirements. If you have questions contact the Director.

**Group Medical Insurance:**

Innovations Academy provides medical and dental benefits to full time employees and their dependents. Details of the plans are available through the Administration.

Notice: Plan details may change without notice.

**Life Insurance Policies:**

Innovations Academy does not offer life insurance policies to employees at this time.

**401K Plan:**

Innovations Academy does not offer a 401K plan at this time.

**Retirement:**

All certificated staff members will participate in the State Teachers Retirement System (STRS). They shall retain all previous vested rights in STRS. This will



include the Director, if certificated, and teachers. The Director will insure compliance with this provision.

All classified staff will participate in the federal social security program..

**Worker's Compensation:**

State and federal law governs eligibility requirements. All premium costs are paid by Innovations Academy. Claims are paid directly to employees. All employees are expected to return to work immediately upon release by their physician. Employees are required to report job-related injuries immediately. Failure to comply could result in difficulty with the employee's claim. Report all accidents or injuries to your immediate supervisor.

**Discipline Policies**

**Communication/Conflict/When Something Isn't Working for You Policy:**

The solution to most problems is often found through communication. We first model our 8toGreat Highways by going straight to the source. We can also use NVC language and conflict resolution techniques to assist. The administration will make every reasonable effort to assist in solving problems or disputes amongst employees.

We recommend the following steps:

- For disputes between employees, first discuss the problem between the two employees and make every attempt to resolve it.
- If no resolution is reached, both employees together approach the director and allow the director to participate in the resolution.
- If a resolution is not reached, additional Administration will be asked to participate in the resolution.
- If there is an ongoing need, the director will consult with Roots and Wings, an NVC expert or other mediator to introduce professional mediation into the situation.
- If the discomfort is with the director, the staff member will alert the director via personal conversation, email or a note (see Feedback Form) left in the director's mailbox. If desired the staff member can find another staff member to assist in the discussion.
- If the situation does not resolve, then mediation with Roots and Wings or an NVC professional will support the development of open communication.
- Use the Feedback Form to encourage the process.

**Feedback Form**

(in place of a typical Uniform Complaint Policy Form)  
To be turned into the front office

Name/Anonymous: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

If you would like to provide feedback, please be as specific as possible. Please take your time and turn it in to the director

Summary of my issue/observation: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to (check all that apply):

To talk to a particular staff member (name: \_\_\_\_\_)

To meet with the Director

Receipt of this form to be acknowledged

To thank the parties involved who are \_\_\_\_\_.

To express my appreciation for \_\_\_\_\_.

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Any further comments:

—

## **Innovations Academy      Teacher Employment Expectations 2013-14**

Innovations Academy is a progressive K-8 charter school with a project/problem/process-inquiry based academic focus combined with a strong social emotional character development program.

The focus for the 2013-14 school year will be *academic excellence* and *accountability*. Our project focus will be supporting student inquiry. Each teacher will be able to articulate how they are improving accountability and academic excellence in their class environment throughout the year.

*“A piece of work deserves either an A or a Not Done Yet.” Ron Berger*

### **Academic Excellence:**

#### **Examples of what *academic excellence* means at I.A.**

- Students will understand and expect to complete multiple drafts of work.
- Students will be taught to give and receive feedback (kind, helpful and specific) and to incorporate feedback into their revisions.
- Students will have ongoing discussions about what it means to "be your best you" and "do your best work."
- Teachers will create a class culture such that students understand that punctuality has a positive impact in life. This will be reflected by students being in class at 9:00 a.m. Starting class on time is a priority. This includes returning from breaks and lunch as well.
- Academic excellence requires increased learning time. Teachers will develop a class culture in which time is used efficiently, students and teachers will not waste learning time.
- All work displayed will be of a high quality. posters/ads for fundraisers, events etc will be approved by Christine. Students will present a first draft to Christine and will then be expected to create a final draft.

### **Accountability:**

#### **Examples of what *accountability* means at I.A.:**

- Incomplete is unacceptable. All assignments will have a due date and the teachers work with students, provide support as needed and monitor progress. Teachers are responsible in communicating with parents when students are not keeping up.
- Grades and tests are not considered ways to hold students accountable. If a student takes a test, they should be required to correct any incorrect responses and utilize the test as another way of learning.
- Each week students need to know what work will be required and when it is due. Students need to be given enough time to complete the work and the support they need. If weekly work is not completed by Thursday, a parent will be contacted and the student will stay on Friday to complete the work.

- Students are expected to be kind on campus. If a student is habitually mistreating other students in class, at lunch or breaks the teacher is expected to intervene until a plan is put in place. It is understood that students are not ready for the independence of Friday clubs, field trips until they demonstrate solid caring behavior.

**General Philosophical Expectations:**

- Teachers have knowledge of constructivist philosophy and developmental stages of learning and can explain how both areas are reflected in their daily lessons, classroom design, projects and language.
- Teachers make learning fun while maintaining academic excellence.
- In addition to projects, teachers provide opportunities and experiences for students to explore, make, build, and do (i.e. projects, experimentation and hands-on experiences).
- Student work is connected to the world outside school.
- Teachers experiment with a range of teaching strategies that align with the Innovations' core philosophies.
- Students will discuss, present and reflect on their work on a weekly basis.
- Students will be taught that most work requires multiple revisions.
- Teachers create engaging, creative, and developmentally appropriate lessons.
- Teachers limit the use of textbooks and publisher created worksheets. (The school maintains the right to monitor copy machine usage.) If any work requires that the students give the same answers or the final product is the same for all students, teacher should check with another teacher about its relevance.
- Teachers can talk about their curriculum and projects with confidence to parents, guest teachers, and anyone else entering the community.
- Multiple meetings that focus on critique, feedback and meaningful work will take place weekly. Students will give specific, kind, and helpful feedback on a regular basis.
- Teachers create lessons and projects that are driven by students' interests.
- Teachers use student questions as an opportunity to provoke critical thinking. Teachers understand the importance of student questioning and teach strategies that increase student ability to formulate effective questions.

- Teachers will work with other classrooms in the school to help create a school community. Both cross grade level learning and collaboration are expected. Each class will be partnered with another class at least one grade level apart weekly. Teachers will take time to collaborate on creating meaningful experiences for both partner classes.
- Teachers will teach a weekly club, open to students of other grades.

*“Teaching is some kind of connection between people, not rules on a piece of paper.”  
John Taylor Gatto*

### **Expectations for Creating Culture:**

- The classroom will be a safe, respectful, and encouraging environment where children feel comfortable exploring, making mistakes, and trying new things.
- Mutual respect is the foundation for a strong learning community. Mutual respect will be an expectation in every classroom and the components for achieving this respect will be taught.
- Teachers will be called by their first name.
- Teachers will not use any systems of rewards and/or punishments.
- Teachers will use kind and firm discipline with expectations aligned with respectful behavior to all. Teachers will understand that their needs and student needs are equally important.
- Teachers will implement strategies, language and structures of Positive Discipline (by Jane Nelsen) to create a classroom culture in which students actively work with each other to solve problems. Students will treat all others with care, compassion, respect and dignity and use the language of conflict resolution. Creating this culture requires modeling and teaching the necessary skills and language of positive discipline, NVC and conflict resolution. When students request assistance of teachers in handling situations, the help will be forthcoming. All students will learn check in procedures and teachers will take the time to support students to effectively work out problems, develop plans and follow through.
- Teachers access several programs to create a classroom and a school culture of respect, compassion and dignity in which conflict resolution and problem solving occur regularly. These programs are NonViolent Communication, Positive Discipline in the Classroom, The Responsive Classroom, Second Step, 8toGreat,
- Students and teachers will make classroom agreements (procedures) that are reviewed and revised and that evolve with the class. Teachers will NOT finalize

the agreements without making sure that ALL students agree with them without coercion. Teachers will firmly hold students accountable for following the agreements. These agreements/expectations are considered to be part of a living document that changes and evolves with the class. Review will take place when new students are introduced to the class. Teachers will refer to these agreements when they are broken in class. Class behavior will revolve around these agreements which will be taken seriously by all.

- New students will be assigned a peer buddy daily for the first week they are in school. This buddy will serve as a mentor both inside and outside of class. The mentor should understand how to support a new student.
- Students will hold class council at least weekly (as needed by class and grade level). The council agenda will be created by all members of the community. The students will hold each other accountable for their behaviors and actions. Students will keep a class council notebook that can easily be reviewed which lists issues discussed, resolutions and follow up. The council format will be used consistently.
  - Appreciations
  - Follow up on prior solutions
  - New agenda items
    - Share feelings while others listen
    - Discuss without fixing
    - Ask for problem solving help
  - Future class plans

**Expectations for Curriculum:** The school's central concept is learning through inquiry with active exploration and engagement. Children are encouraged to explore and engage in activities that interest them. Likewise, curriculum will be generated in response to children's interests and implemented accordingly. Innovations teachers will address the standards throughout the curriculum.

- feedback and critique as well as incorporation of the feedback will be a part of ongoing learning
- Teachers will be aware that the learning process includes: model- practice- reflect/assess. It is important to be conscientious of these steps in all learning
- A first step in learning anything is to have a model. Examples of models are:
  - models of finished work done by other students
  - models of work done by professionals
  - examples of products similar to one being created
  - our actions and the actions of other adults

**A. Project Based Learning** The following requirements will be met for each project:

- Teacher will not begin a project without doing a project collaboration, receiving feedback, and demonstrating reflection on the feedback with their peers
- Students will be provided at least one model of high quality related finished products at the onset of the project. Students will be given time to explore models.
- Incorporate a minimum of one speaker, expert, or community member
- Include at least one fieldtrip per project.\*
- Weekly DP updates on project including a description of the learning and progress, a list of assignments with due dates and skills addressed in the project
- Display of the essential question in the classroom and work in progress.
- An evaluation
- Be able to identify each of the following components at the onset of the project: essential question (and possible subsidiary questions), expected final outcomes and product(s), an understanding of the evaluation.
- State how the project has a real world application and makes a contribution to someone or something.
- A translation for families and students of traditional skills/standards that will be learned within the project which will be posted to the blog
- An exhibition or final culmination activity, performance, closure

## **B. Non-project Learning**

- Teachers will strive to have students making, building and exploring with their hands.
- Teachers will strive to have students building and constructing their own ideas, concepts and meanings in learning.
- Classes will go on one field trip per month throughout the year
- Reflection is a part of every activity and learning experience.
- Questioning is used more than explaining and is an integral component of learning all the time.
- Teachers who teach Science and Math are required to teach those subjects weekly. Both subjects are equally important and must be given ongoing attention.
- Math teaching at I.A. will include: 1) skill based instruction, 2. open ended Math and Math journaling 3. Mathematics incorporated into projects.
- Science instruction will be composed of exploration and experimentation
- Teachers who teach Language Arts and Social Studies are required to teach those subjects weekly. Both subjects are equally important and must be given ongoing attention.
- Language Arts includes listening, speaking, reading and writing.
- Reading includes decoding and comprehension. Students in grades 3 and above will read at least 5 books per year.
- Writing includes grammar, letter formation, vocabulary, reading, and writing.
- Teachers in grades K-4 will teach aspects of letter formation.

*“Teaching isn’t about paper and pencils; teaching is about relationships.” Ron Berger*

### **C. Social Emotional Curriculum**

- Morning Meeting
  1. Done daily
  2. Greeting, Activity, Sharing, Message.
  3. All activities within MM will be about acknowledging students and building teamwork and collaboration.
- Class Meeting (council)
  1. Consider doing just after lunch
  2. Done a minimum of 2 times per week.
  - 3, must have agenda book and take note that anyone can follow
  4. follow PD model
- Brainology for 4/5 grades

### **Procedures/Classroom Management/Expectations:**

In order for a class to function smoothly all students must have the skills to be successful. Students must be taught procedures/expectations. Students learn these through instruction, role play and rehearsal at the beginning of the year. The following books are required reading:

"The First Six Weeks" and  
"Learning through Academic Choice"  
"Positive Discipline in the Classroom"

Teachers will be expected to teach, practice and continually reinforce specific procedures for the following:

Entering and leaving the classroom

Moving about class

Going to and from bathroom

Transitioning between activities and classes (with the goal of shortening wasted time)

Taking positive time out

Self regulation choices

Expected lunch behavior

Use of materials

Checking in with others

Acceptable use of time when “finished” or in down time

Acceptable and unacceptable playground behavior

What to do when you see someone upset, whether they are in your class or not

What to do when someone is doing something that potentially hurts themselves or others (stealing, cussing, insulting, threatening)

How to handle mistakes on campus such as bumping into someone, hitting someone with a ball on the playground etc.

Gossip/name calling

How to join in a game on the playground

Children will be asked to reflect on:



## Habits of the Mind

Six character pillars: trustworthiness, responsibility, respect, fairness, caring, citizenship

“Managing Yourself Responsibly”

“Treating Others the Way You Like to Be Treated”

“Telling Yourself the Truth”

“Improving Yourself Continually.”

Skills that include recognizing and managing emotions, developing concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and effectively handling challenging situations

## Playground/Campus Rules

Teachers are expected to support the following campus and playground rules;

- No wheels on campus or in the parking lot. That includes skateboards, skates, bicycles, scooters, etc
- All students will wear shoes/sandals on their feet when outside the classroom
- Competitive team games will have referees or will not be played
- No students are allowed in the backyard without their teacher or another adult physically present with them.
- No students allowed to climb on the basketball hoops
- Students are expected to clean up after themselves (picking up trash, returning their backpacks to the hooks outside of the classroom)
- Recycle bins are for recycled materials only.

*“The most important assessment that goes on in school isn’t done to students but goes on inside students.”*

## Expectations for Assessment:

- Teachers and students will maintain student work portfolios documenting student learning and providing work samples from all core subjects (Math, Language Arts, Science, Social Studies) and each project. Portfolios may be hard copy or digital – writing, images/videos of work, critiques/feedback, etc. Portfolios should reflect work from multiple subject areas and disciplines. There should be a minimum of one sample from each subject for each of the ten months of the school year. These are kept in the classroom and are available to parents at all times.
- Portfolios will also include a Learning Style Assessment
- Teachers will be responsible for students completing the MAP (Measurement of Academic Progress) by designated dates early and late in the year.
- Teachers will develop measurement tools for all projects during the year. Ongoing assessment will be a part of the culture of each class. All assessments will be considered an opportunity for feedback and improvement.

- Teachers will be able to explain how their assessments and tests foster the general class culture and curriculum. (“A piece of work deserves either an A or a Not Done Yet.” Ron Berger)
- Teachers will hold Student Lead Conferences as designated on school calendar. Teachers are required to have 100% parent attendance at conferences. Teachers will enlist the support of administration if parents are difficult to contact or to commit.
- Teachers will have students do Presentations of Learning during designated weeks.
- Teachers will participate in exhibition nights on scheduled days.
- Progress report cards will be done as designated by calendar in a timely manner. Copies will be handed out to parents and given to the front office by the determined deadline.

### **Expectations for Documentation:**

Documentation is an important part of a teacher's role. This includes documenting learning, documenting material completed, documenting communication, documenting behavior and interventions etc.

- Anything resulting in a child going home, being out of class for an extended period of time (more than 10 minutes), or for reoccurring behavior is documented before the teacher leaves that same day. The teacher is responsible for a follow up call home.
- Teachers are responsible for keeping in touch with parents through phone, email, digital portfolios .....to update on successes or areas that they need family support.
- Attendance is the responsibility of the teacher. If the task is delegated to a student the teacher takes responsibilities for errors. All attendance sheets need to be signed before Friday. If a teacher chooses to input attendance directly into Zangle, it is their responsibility to review and sign attendance sheets weekly.
- Teachers will keep a cash count on field trip and fundraiser money and turn it into Donna on a daily basis with the appropriate form given them.

**Expectations for Organization and Cleanliness:** The physical arrangement of the classroom environment directly affects children’s abilities and desire to learn. Likewise, outward order can facilitate order and peace. Teaching children to be involved in the care and maintenance of the school and classroom allows them to be more invested in their work and the materials provided and teaches them organizational skills that will help them be successful in their lives. Each teacher will collaborate with other educators

and support admin to gain the most effective use of space. The trend in our classrooms at Innovations Academy is to have students effectively using many areas throughout the class as a lab. This usually means that a child has more than one spot at one desk to work.

- Teachers will post a list of the materials for their classrooms to their DP by August 1<sup>st</sup>. There will be one list for each student, requiring that partner teachers (teaching the same kids) will coordinate with each other. Each student will be required to have:
  - A portfolio
  - A writing journal, a math journal
  - Writing utensils
  - Ruler, calculator, protractor
  - A plastic plate, cup, metal fork and spoon
- Teachers will have all materials for projects, events, parties, fieldtrips etc. in the classroom at the latest the day before the activity, event etc. This means that they will NOT be running around asking for pencils on test days, cups on the day of a birthday party or wood, rulers, paint etc on the day the of the actual activity.
- Classrooms will be organized in a child-centered way with most things (aside from dangerous or harmful objects or substances) accessible to children at all times. Teacher will teach the use and care of each material in a structured way so that all IA students use materials with respect and care.
- The quantity of the space that is not for student use is kept to a minimum. Most of the environment is for and used by the students to promote the concept that the room belongs to the students, instead of the teacher only. We will use language to maintain this expectation (ex: the use of “our” when referring to the class on the blog, on signs outside the door etc.).
- The organization of the environment is critical to the classroom culture. For example: Bins of disorganized materials send a message of not having to treat materials with care. This also lowers the quality of work and wastes students’ time. Students will participate in daily upkeep of the classroom environment.
- Teachers will set an expectation that the classroom floors will be free of debris. Floors must be cleared of any trash or materials at the end of each day. Chairs will be stacked or left on top of desks EVERY night and whiteboards and desktops will be cleaned fully at least once per month. Teachers will allot time and develop a system with student responsibilities for cleaning and hold ALL students accountable for cleaning.
- Outer order can facilitate the creation of inner order. An example of thoughtfulness and external order is instructing students on the use of both sides of the paper, the purpose of a margin line and using it to visually present your

work, name and date placement on an assignment etc. This is also true of organization of student materials. Cubbies, containers, folders etc that are organized will contribute to a sense of order and peace. Teachers will assist students in creating order in the classroom.

- Teachers will actively engage students in caring for the classroom and school environment by keeping play and work spaces clean, leaving all areas as they have been found and reporting broken or missing equipment to the Tony. This expectation will also be communicated with students. All teachers are required to have the following cleaning materials and equipment:
  - at least one dustpan, a broom (especially for cleaning area immediately outside of classroom.
  - sponges/rags and a non-toxic cleaner to allow for child-initiated clean-ups
- Teachers will support students to upkeep this during their work time so that the environment (physical and emotional) feels conducive to successful work for all in the classroom and so that they do not create big clean up times that are overwhelming.
- Additionally, before students engage in a large project involving a potential mess such as papier mache, painting, using tools, clay etc. they will be given instruction about:
  - preparation of the space to decrease impact on the area being used,
  - use of the equipment and materials
  - clean up, (who will clean, the time involved etc.)
  - students will be monitored, given support needed to learn these skills and held accountable for the condition of the space.
- Only blue painter's tape will be used to hang papers up around campus and in the classrooms.
- Respect for the environment means not wasting materials. Teachers will notice how students are using materials and create an environment in which materials will not be wasted.
- Each classroom will have a recycle bin and a garbage can (landfill). Students will use the bins appropriately.
- Each classroom will be assigned a day to clear the campus of debris. Teachers will make sure students understand what clean looks like and assist and monitor students during clean up.
- As we are the best models for the students, staff will also have the visible classroom spaces in order. There will be no stacks of papers and cluttered counter spaces. Teachers will leave common spaces clear and ready for others to use. There will be a committee of teachers that organizes cleaning of the staff lounge, shared refrigerator, microwave and common areas every Friday.

- All teachers will have a first aid kit in the classroom that will include band-aids, antibiotic ointment, Q-tips etc. It is a teacher's job to replenish supplies from the office as needed.
- Each classroom is required to have play equipment (balls, jump ropes, hoola hoops...) for their students that gets checked in and out of their room at breaks each day. All equipment will be labeled with grade/class of ownership.
- Teachers model appropriate use of play equipment and are responsible for re-teaching and role playing when the equipment is not being used properly by their students. Equipment will NOT be left out on the playground after school hours.
- Teachers will not allow students to take P.E. equipment from the P.E. closet.

### **Expectations Regarding Technology:**

Teachers in grades 3 and above will have one laptop per two students. Laptops are expensive and need to be well cared for.

- Students will be instructed in the use of the laptops. The instruction will include: how to take out, how to carry, how to set up, power cord safety, ongoing care of laptop (keyboard and screen cleaning, keeping keys on keyboard, downloading information...), careful putting away and storage.
- Laptops will be monitored daily either by teacher or trained student so that laptops are cared for properly and missing keys noted immediately
- Damaged equipment will be reported immediately to Tony.

### **Classroom Management:**

- Students will be supervised by adults at all times. Students will not be sent out to play on the playground without a supervisor.
- All teachers will be able to account for all of their students at all times.
- A strong tenet of Positive Discipline is kind and firm interactions. Teachers will make their words meaningful communicating firmly and kindly with students and assuring follow through on their communications.

### **Nutrition Agreements:**

As a staff we understand that good nutrition will support a child to be more productive at school. We agree that it is not our job to police students but that we can make a contribution.

- If teachers see students drinking energy drinks or sodas on campus we will take them from the student and keep the item until after school.
- If teachers notice that students are bringing more junk than nutritious food to school a teacher will call or email home to discuss with parents.
- All teachers who work with the snack shack will make sure that only healthy snacks are sold on campus.

## **Expectations for Teacher Collaboration and Professionalism:**

- Teachers are prepared to teach classes daily (materials prepared/purchased by the day before).
- Each teacher will prepare one topic of Professional Development for the 2013-14 school year.
- Teachers will return from breaks and lunch time at the designated end of lunch time.
- Teachers will communicate with administration as far in advance as possible about impending absences.
- Teachers will collaborate with Explorations teachers weekly. This may be done informally or formally via email, on a break, at lunch or during any of the staff meeting times.
- Teachers will collaborate with each other on a weekly basis during release time and after school. The schedule of meetings is as follows:
  1. Morning Check-In 8:30 daily
  2. Staff Meetings: Fridays 12:45-3:30
  3. Team Collaboration/Planning: 1-2 hours of release time per week.
  4. Mondays 3:45-4:30: grade level groups project presentation and development
- Teachers will not gossip, complain or vent with any parent at any time.
- If a teacher has a problem with anyone on staff they will go to that person and work it out. If desired, they can ask to be accompanied by another staff member, administrator or a positive discipline expert assigned by Christine. Teachers will not gossip about any staff member to another staff member.
- If a staff member witnesses another educator complaining or venting, they are obligated to hold the staff member accountable for solving the problem by going to the source and following up. All staff members will model professionalism in these interactions.
- Teachers will attend all IEP meetings of their special ed students.
- Teachers will have read the charter and thoroughly support the mission and vision of Innovations Academy, asking any questions needed for clarification and seeking mentoring when needed.

- When teacher has complaints, concerns, and/or professional needs they will be brought up for discussion and collaborative problem-solving during staff council.
- Teachers will identify a field trip parent and room parent who will help with class fundraising for the year. Teachers will encourage parent participation and communicate with these helper-parents at least monthly.
- Teachers will engage in ongoing communication with parents, staff, and administration.
- Teachers will check emails daily and respond to any community member (parent, staff) within 24 hours on weekdays.
- Teachers update all parts of their digital portfolio before the start of each week. This info will highlight class curriculum and events weekly.
- All staff meetings and school events are mandatory. Teachers will inform the staff of any absence at the prior staff meeting (one week before) and email the Director. (examples of school events are Open House, Back to School Night, community outreach day, a parent information session, Exhibition Nights...)
- Teachers will take turns facilitating and note taking at staff meetings in addition to contributing thoughts, feedback, and suggestions. Teacher participation is needed for optimum growth and challenge to peers in the creation of the best learning community possible.
- Teachers will support the school by participating in committees when needed.
- Teachers will make the time for morning connections (8:30am), meetings, classes, and meetings/collaborations.

**Professional Development:**

Teachers will participate in the staff development provided by the school (staff meetings, professional development days, collaborations.) Additionally, teachers take responsibility as professionals for continuously striving to perfect their craft.

- Teachers will provide professional development activities during professional development days and staff meetings.
- Teachers will write concrete goals in August and take steps to meet them. There will be a structure for evaluations throughout the year to enroll in an optional merit pay option.
- Teachers are expected to attend professional development days:

June 16-19

- Through observations with reflection, teachers can have insight, generate ideas and continue to be creative.
  1. Teachers are expected to observe a minimum of one teacher on campus per semester.
  2. Teachers will do a minimum of two observations off campus per semester: one at another school and another at an enrichment class).
- All observations will include a written reflection.
  
- If a teacher chooses a Prof. Development with a cost, then teacher will incur that cost. Teachers are expected to participate in at least one professional development every 6 weeks. Due dates: October 12<sup>th</sup>, November 30<sup>th</sup>, January 25<sup>th</sup>, March 8<sup>th</sup>, April 26<sup>th</sup>, June 14<sup>th</sup>. They may be chosen from the following free opportunities:
  - ❖ Family Ed Centers-Roots and Wings
  - ❖ Reggio Emilia Round Table meetings (<http://www.sdreggioundtable.com/>)
  - ❖ HTH Collegial conversations
  - ❖ Visitations at other schools with written observation to share
  - ❖ Read a book and do a presentation
  - ❖ Trainings through the County office of Ed or SDUSD
  - ❖ Providing a presentation at staff PD days or staff meetings
  
- All teachers at Innovations Academy will be expected to have read:

An Ethic of Excellence by Ron Berger  
 Positive Discipline in the Classroom by Jane Nelsen  
 The First Six Weeks  
 Morning Meetings  
 Rules in School  
 Learning through Academic Choice  
 The Innovations Academy Charter.

Other support materials:

Child Development Book: Yardsticks: Children in the Classroom Ages 4-14  
 The Power of Our Words  
 Constructivism: <http://www.auroraschool.org/constructivistclassroom.html>  
 Any Reggio Emilia Trainings or books  
 The Compassionate Classroom(An NVC Classroom Tool)  
 Art of Constructivist Teaching in the Primary School: A Guide for Students and Teachers  
 Solving Thorny Behavior Problems by Caltha Crowe  
 Punished by Rewards by Alfie Kohn  
 Other Alfie Kohn articles



Constructivist Resource Books:

<http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/w2resourceshtml>

Edutopia (<http://www.edutopia.org/>)

Expeditionary Learning Schools (<http://elschools.org/>)

I have read and understand that I will be held accountable for meeting the above expectations.

----- date \_\_\_\_\_

**Acknowledgement**

I have read this policies outlined in this handbook. I understand that while this is not an employment contract I am bound to abide by the policies set herein.

I further understand that Innovations Academy may modify, revise and update this manual at any time. I am also aware that this updating may include additions or deletions.

I also certify that I have had ample time to discuss this handbook and its contents with Innovations Academy administration and I fully understand the contents.

With this knowledge I accept the policies outlined herein as a condition of employment.

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Printed Name

Employee Signature

Date

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Innovations Academy reserves the right to make changes to this handbook for the purpose of modifying, revising and updating school policy and this manual. Notice of changes will be sent to all employees and become a part of this manual. Violation of any school policy may result in immediate termination.

