

PERSONNEL

Communication and Maintaining an Effective Work Environment

Virginia Beach City Public Schools requires school and work environments that are respectful of the rights of all individuals in the school community.

A. Requirements:

All Employees are to:

1. Remain civil, professional, and honest in all communications, even when disagreements arise;
2. Represent VBCPS in a positive and ethical manner at all times;
3. Attempt to resolve complaints regarding the workplace in a timely manner;
4. Report circumstances that may affect satisfactory work performance to administration, including the need for workplace accommodations or medical leave; and
5. Maintain communication with supervisors, as appropriate, when in a leave status.
 - a. Employees on medical leave shall maintain contact with the Office of Employee Relations regarding information requests and return-to-work statuses.
 - b. Employees on administrative leave or suspension without pay due to an employee relations matter must be available to meet with an administrator within one hour of a request. Failure to do so may result in the loss of paid administrative leave and/or disciplinary action.

B. Communicating Concerns and Complaints:

1. The employee's direct supervisor should be the first and primary source for answering questions and resolving issues. As such, all employees shall allow their direct supervisors an opportunity to remedy workplace issues before forwarding a concern or complaint to the next level of supervision within the organization.
2. If concerns cannot be resolved by the immediate supervisor, or if the employee's supervisor is the alleged perpetrator of inappropriate behavior, the issue may be elevated to the principal or director.
3. If concerns cannot be resolved by the principal or director, or if this individual is the perpetrator, the employee may make the complaint to the Department Head/Chief Officer or to the Office of Employee Relations in the Department of Human Resources.
4. Complaints should be addressed within a reasonable period after an incident occurs.
5. If the basis of a complaint is conduct that would be considered discrimination or harassment under other School Board policies or regulations, the complaint should be addressed through the procedures in those policies or regulations.

C. Work Environment Free of Abuse or Threats:

1. No employee shall physically or verbally threaten or intimidate another employee or create an abusive work environment. Any employee who engages in conduct prohibited under this Regulation or who encourages such conduct by others shall be subject to corrective action, up to and including dismissal.
2. Prohibited conduct includes physical assault or threatening behaviors:

- a. Threatening behaviors create a credible fear of injury to another person or damage to property, or subject another individual to extreme emotional distress, or cause material disruption to the educational or work environment.
- b. Behavior is such that a reasonable person would typically find it severe or pervasive and persistent, creating an abusive work environment.
- c. Behaviors may also be considered discriminatory or harassing if they are predicated on the targeted person's protected class according to federal and state laws, and/or VBCPS policies and regulations.

D. "Reasonable Person" Standard:

An employee has the right to a working environment free of abuse; however, this does not guarantee a working environment free of stress. Every job has its frustrations, challenges, and disappointments. Thus, an employee should not be unreasonably sensitive to his/her working environment. For example, abusive or threatening behavior does not include:

1. Changes in, or dissatisfaction with, assignments, work duties, or work schedules;
2. Required attendance at meetings;
3. Compliance with applicable law, policy or regulation;
4. Denial of leave or accommodations;
5. Evaluations, observations, or Performance Improvement Plans and attendance at meetings to discuss performance;
6. Discipline, including investigation procedures;
7. Differences of opinion, or feeling unfairly criticized;
8. Subjective perceptions regarding coworkers or supervisors.

E. Retaliatory Actions

1. Employees who, in good faith, make complaints of inappropriate workplace conduct or provide information related to such complaints will be protected against retaliation. If retaliation occurs, the complainant(s) should report the retaliation through the appropriate complaint procedure, as described in section B.
2. Retaliation against any School Board employee who makes a complaint under this Regulation is prohibited and is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.
3. Employees who make false complaints may be subject to disciplinary action.

Editor's Note:

See School Board Policy 4-2 for Employee Conduct.

See School Board Policy 4-4 for Equal Employment Opportunity, Non-discrimination and anti-harassment and Compliance.

See School Board Policy 4-6 for Healthy Work Environment.

Approved by Superintendent: _____, 2019