



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

2023-2024

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BOARD MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS	4
ORGANIZATION	5
DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION	6
FUTURE CHANGES.....	7
GENERAL TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT	8
EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT	8
HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION	8
TITLE IX & SEXUAL HARASSMENT.....	8
SECTION 504 AND ADA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES.....	8
HIRING	9
CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK	9
SCHOOL CALENDAR	9
INSERVICE.....	9
SCHOOL DAY.....	9
ASSIGNMENT AND REASSIGNMENT	9
EVALUATION	10
PERSONNEL RECORDS	10
RESIGNATION*	11
DISMISSAL OR NON-RENEWAL*	11
SUSPENSION*	11
RETIREMENT	12
TEACHER LICENSURE.....	12
COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS	12
SALARIES SCHEDULES AND SCALES.....	12
PAYROLL PROCEDURES.....	13
ANNUITIES.....	13
SECTION 125.....	13
TRAVEL AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT.....	14
OVERTIME AND COMPENSATORY TIME	14
HEALTH INSURANCE	15
LIFE INSURANCE.....	15
DENTAL INSURANCE	15
RETIREMENT FUNDING.....	15
WORKERS COMPENSATION.....	15
VACATIONS AND HOLIDAYS.....	16
LEAVES.....	16
SICK LEAVE	16
FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT	17
SICK LEAVE INCENTIVE PAY	18
PERSONAL LEAVE	18
PROFESSIONAL LEAVE	19
EMPLOYEE RULES AND CONDUCT	19
ATTENDANCE	19
ASSAULTS AND THREATS OF VIOLENCE	19
BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGEN TRAINING	19
BUILDING KEYS.....	20
CASH COLLECTION	20

CELLULAR PHONE/ELECTRONIC DEVICE USAGE.....	20
CHILD ABUSE REPORTING	20
CLASSROOM AND OFFICE SECURITY	21
CONFIDENTIALITY.....	21
COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE	21
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT) PHYSICALS	22
DRESS CODE	22
DRUG-FREE/ALCOHOL-FREE SCHOOLS.....	22
ETHICS.....	22
INCLEMENT WEATHER ATTENDANCE	22
LUNCH.....	23
POLITICAL ACTIVITIES.....	23
REMOTE LEARNING PROTOCOLS	23
STAFF-STUDENT RELATIONS	24
TECHNOLOGY USE.....	25
TOBACCO PRODUCTS.....	26
USE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY	26
VEHICLES- PRIVATE	26
VEHICLES- SCHOOL DISTRICT.....	26
VENDOR RELATIONS	26
VIDEO SURVEILLANCE	27
VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLS.....	27
WEAPONS	27
APPENDIX	27
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM	36

BOARD MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

Mission

Our school system will provide a quality, progressive education and positive learning environment.

Vision

Our school system envisions a learning community that inspires and supports all students to:

- excel, discover, and create
- contribute responsibly to a civil society
- enjoy learning throughout their lives

Goals

Accountability

Houston County Schools will demonstrate accountability by using all available information to improve student learning.

Facilities

Houston County Schools will provide facilities that are well maintained, structurally sound, and fully operational.

Funding

Houston County Schools will acquire and maximize all available resources.

Health and Safety

Houston County Schools will provide a safe, disciplined and orderly environment for teaching and learning for all our students and employees.

Instruction

Houston County Schools will provide academic and support programs to meet the needs of all students.

Staff Development

Houston County Schools will maintain a staff development program which will focus on instruction and school leadership through continuous education.

Technology

Houston County Schools will maximize the use of technology to support student learning.

ORGANIZATION

Types of Employees

In Houston County Schools there are the following classifications of employees:

1. Administrative/Supervisory Personnel

To be considered administrative/supervisory personnel, an employee must possess a teaching certificate and have the administrative endorsement or experience in the appropriate area based upon a Master's Degree in accordance with State Board of Education's (SBE) Laws, Rules, and Regulations.

2. Professional/Certified Employees

In order to be considered a certified employee, an individual must possess a teaching certificate/license issued by the Tennessee Department of Education (TDOE).

3. Support/Non-Certified Employees

Employees who do not possess a teaching certificate/license are deemed non-certified employees, as their employment does not require certification in accordance with rules and regulations of SBE. Non-certified employees include, but may not be limited to, the following: bookkeepers, secretaries, clerks, maintenance employees, custodial employees, food service workers, educational assistants, bus drivers, technology employees, extended school program employees, and family resource employees.

Board of Education:

District 1- Sandy Harvey
District 2- Charlie Ligon
District 3- Miller Moore, Vice-Chairman
District 4- Travis Mitchell
District 5- Amanda Fansler
District 6- Jeff Mathis, Chairman
District 7- Wayne Skelton

School Board meetings are held the second Monday of each month at the Houston County Board of Education Office and are open to the public. The work session begins at 6:00PM with the official meeting starting at 7:00PM. See **houston.k12.tn.us/board** for further meeting information.

DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

Houston County Board of Education Office
P.O. Box 209
Erin, TN 37061

Phone: 931-289-4148
Fax: 931-289-5543

Director of Schools	Kris McAskill
Assistant Director of Schools, Federal & Support Programs, Facilities	Mark Beal
K-5 Director of Teaching & Learning, Attendance Supervisor, Safe Schools	Cindy Ryan
6-12 Director of Teaching & Learning, Educator Licensure, Board Policies	Channy Quinn
Director of Special Programs (Special Education, Pre-K, ESL)	Kelly Brown
Student Support Coordinator (ESSER Grants, Social-Emotional Learning)	Robin Fairclough
Technology Director, Student Management System, Assessment	Nicole Douglass
Technology Assistant, Technician	Chris Ross
Technology Assistant, Technician	Randy Garringer
School Psychologist	Keli Rutherford
Coordinator of Food Services	Rachel Shelton
School Board Secretary, Benefits Coordinator	Vickie Hutchinson
Payroll	Jonna Moore
General Purpose & Federal Accounting	Teresa Roby
Receptionist	Terri Mathis
Transportation Director, Grounds	Rick Chadwick
(Transportation Department Phone: 931-289-4293)	

Houston County Adult High School/Alternative School Program	Phone: 931-289-5525
3573 West Main Street	Fax: 931-289-5545
Erin, TN 37061	
Director/Teacher	Jamie Bruce

Houston County Virtual Academy	Phone: 931-289-4148
	Fax: 931-289-5543
Contact: Robin Fairclough or Kelly Brown	

Houston County Coordinated School Health/Family Resource	Phone: 931-289-4159
3571 West Main Street	
Erin, TN 37061	

Coordinated School Health (CSH)	Sandie Short
Family Resource Center (FRC)	Tiffany Singleton

FUTURE CHANGES

Although every effort will be made to update the handbook on a regular basis, The Houston County School District reserves the right to change this handbook and any content within, without notice, except as may be required by state and federal law. As a result, the online version of the handbook shall be the official version.

GENERAL TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT

The Houston County School District is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The District does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, race, national origin, religion, sex, or genetic information, as required by law.

Questions concerning District compliance with state and federal equal opportunity laws can be directed to the Board Secretary at the Central Office.

HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

Any employee who believes that he/she, or any other employee, student, or visitor to the school or District, has been subjected to harassment or discrimination shall bring the matter to the attention of his/her principal/immediate supervisor. Concerns may also be brought to the district complaint managers: Mark Beal, Assistant Director of Schools/Director of Federal Programs or Kelly Brown, Director of Special Programs per board policy. Both may be reached at the Central Office.

Employees shall not be subject to any form of retaliation for reporting in good faith. For additional information concerning reporting and responding to alleged incidents, see board policy 5.500.

TITLE IX & SEXUAL HARASSMENT

In order to maintain a safe, civil, and supportive learning environment, all forms of sexual harassment and discrimination on the basis of sex are prohibited. This shall cover employees, employees' behaviors, students, and students' behaviors while on school property, at any school-sponsored activity, on school-provided equipment or transportation, or at any official school bus stop in accordance with federal law.

The Title IX Coordinator shall respond promptly to all general reports as well as formal complaints of sexual harassment and may be reached at any time by contacting the Director of Special programs at the Central office or emailing civilrightscomplaints@houstonk12tn.net.

For additional information concerning Title IX and sexual harassment, see board policy 6.3041.

SECTION 504 AND ADA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

The District is committed to maintaining equitable employment and educational practices, services, programs, and activities that are accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities. To discuss concerns or seek resolutions related to Section 504 or the ADA, contact the district complaint managers: Mark Beal, Assistant Director of Schools/Director of Federal Programs or Kelly Brown, Director of Special Programs per board policy. Both may be reached at the Central Office. He/she shall respond to all complaints within twenty (20) days with a written

response as well as information on further grievance procedures that may be followed if the complaining party is not satisfied with the coordinator's proposed resolution.

For more information, refer to 5.501.

HIRING

All certified personnel are required to sign a contract with the District.

A list of all District job openings is available at the Central Office and on the District website. For more information on hiring, refer to board policies 5.101 and 5.106.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

All employees are required to undergo a background check, which includes being fingerprinted. The cost of the initial investigation will be paid by the potential employee.

For more information on background checks, refer to board policy 5.118.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

The regular school calendar shall be 200 days and scheduled as follows:

- Minimum of 180 student attendance days
- Minimum of five (5) days (30 hours) in-service for personnel
- One (1) day for parent teacher conference
- Ten (10) days paid vacation for all certified personnel, and
- Four (4) discretionary or “other” days

INSERVICE

Teachers and educational assistants are required to obtain five (5) days or 30 hours of inservice. Refer to the *Houston County Schools Professional Development Handbook* or *Houston County Schools Educational Assistant Inservice Handbook* for requirements and opportunities. Positions that are TASL-mandated (District Administrators, Principals, Full-Time Assistant Principals) are exempt from district inservice, but must obtain and maintain fourteen (14) TASL credit hours from July 1-June 30 of each year.

SCHOOL DAY

The minimum length of the school day shall be 7 hours for all grades (7:45AM-2:45PM). All teachers shall be on duty at least seven and one-fourth (7.25) hours and such additional time at the principal's discretion.

ASSIGNMENT AND REASSIGNMENT

The Director of Schools is responsible for determining the assignment of school system personnel.

Extra assignments for which supplements are provided and upon which initial employment was based, may not be relinquished in part by the employee without the approval of the person making the assignment. Other assignments for which supplemental salary is provided shall be made on an annual contract basis.

The Director of Schools may transfer employees as necessary for efficient operation of the schools. Transfers shall be non-discriminatory and shall not be arbitrary or capricious. Re-assignments (within a school or administrative unit) are made by the employee's immediate supervisor.

EVALUATION

Administrative and Supervisory Personnel

Administrative and supervisory personnel will be evaluated by use of a state-approved evaluation model. The Director of Schools is responsible for ensuring that all administrative and supervisory personnel are evaluated in accordance with state requirements.

Certified Personnel

Full-time licensed teaching personnel will be evaluated annually through the use of a state-approved model or one that has been submitted to the Commissioner of Education for approval. Evaluations will be conducted by a school administrator and/or designee(s) who have been trained and certified through the state-approved training in evaluation procedures prior to conducting evaluations. The principal shall be responsible for the final evaluation.

Non-Certified Personnel

Non-licensed personnel will be evaluated annually. Evaluations will be used to help improve employee performance and as a basis for continuing employment. Evaluation reports will be discussed with the employee who will be given a copy of the evaluation and will sign the supervisor's copy as evidence that it has been discussed.

For information on evaluations and grievance procedures see board policy 5.102.

PERSONNEL RECORDS

A comprehensive personnel file for each employee is maintained in the Central Office. These files contain basic personal information (e.g. name, address) and employment-related information such as applications, contracts, educator licensure information, and certificates.

Employee records are public records, except medical records, and are open for inspection during regular business hours. Members of the public may not obtain the home telephone number, personal cell phone number, bank account information, social security number, residential street address, or driver license information (except where driving or operating a vehicle is considered to be a part of the employee's duties), of an employee or of the immediate family members or household members of an employee, unless release of this information is expressly authorized by the employee. A record of the person inspecting and the date of the inspection will be recorded.

RESIGNATION*

Certified Employees

A teacher is required to give the Director of Schools notice of resignation at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the effective date of the resignation. This notice should be in the form of a letter of resignation which is also copied to the principal or supervisor to which the teacher reports. Failure to do so is considered breach of contract.

Any teacher on leave who does not notify the Director of Schools in writing, at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of return to the position from which they left may be in breach of contract.

Breach of contract may result in the filing of a complaint with the Commissioner of Education to request suspension of a teacher's certificate.

Non-certified Employees

A support employee shall give his/her immediate supervisor written notice of resignation at least two weeks (ten working days) prior to the effective date of the resignation. The ten working days' notice may be waived by the Director of Schools for justifiable reasons. The employee's immediate supervisor shall forward the notice of resignation to the Director of Schools on the day it is received. The employee will receive final payment on the next appropriate scheduled payday.

DISMISSAL OR NON-RENEWAL*

Certified Employees

Dismissal or non-renewals of certified employees as defined by state law will be in accordance with procedures set forth in statute and board policy.

The Director of Schools is under no obligation to re-employ non-tenured teachers at the end of their contract period. If the Director of Schools determines not to renew the contract of a non-tenured teacher, the following action shall be taken:

The Board shall be notified at the next regular board meeting and written notice of non-renewal shall be sent to the teacher by certified mail or overnight carrier, or by email within five (5) business days following the last instructional day for the school year.

Non-certified Employees

All non-certified employees are employed at the will of the director. The Director of Schools may dismiss any non-certified employee during the contract year for any reason.

SUSPENSION*

The Director of Schools may suspend an employee at any time that may seem necessary, pending investigation or final disposition of a case before the board or an appeal. Under no circumstances shall the Director of Schools suspend an employee with pay. If reinstated, the employee shall be paid full salary for the period of suspension, unless suspension without pay is deemed to be an appropriate penalty.

****The Director of Schools is required by the State Board of Education to report to the Office of Educator Licensure whenever a licensed educator is suspended, terminated, or resigns following***

allegations which, if substantiated, could constitute grounds for suspension or revocation of an educator license.

RETIREMENT

Employees eligible for retirement benefits may elect to retire at any age according to the provisions of the retirement system. Central Office personnel shall assist employees in securing retirement benefits, but the retiring employee is responsible for providing verification of eligibility by filing online with the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS). Employees who retire under TCRS may be employed up to one hundred twenty days (120) per year without loss of full retirement benefits.

TEACHER LICENSURE

All certified employees shall be responsible for obtaining a license or certificate, verifying its accuracy, maintaining its validity, registering it with the Houston School Board of Education, and meeting the requirement of T.C.A. 49-5-101. In addition, it is the responsibility of all certified employees to report any name or address changes to the Office of Teacher Licensing at the State Department of Education and the Human Resources Department of Houston County Schools. Certified employees are able to review and must renew their teaching licenses, add degrees, or endorsements at **tdoe.tncompass.org**. If you have questions regarding your license, you may contact:

Office of Educator Licensing
Tennessee Department of Education
12th Floor, Andrew Johnson Tower
710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243
Telephone: (615) 532-4885
Fax: (615) 532-1448
Educator.Licensure@tn.gov

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Compensation for all employee types is established by the adoption of salary schedules and scales by action of the Board of Education.

SALARIES SCHEDULES AND SCALES

Salary schedules within Houston County Schools are available at the Central Office.

Certified Employees

There are two salary schedules which pertain to all certified employees. In order to determine the appropriate salary, employees should refer to the salary schedule based on their position, degree, and years of experience.

It is the employee's responsibility to notify the payroll office via the ***Salary Change Based on Education Level*** form (available in the appendix) for any changes in salary based on additional educational coursework.

Non-Certified Employees

Non-certified pay scales are provided for the various types of employment and years of service in to Houston County Schools.

PAYROLL PROCEDURES

Pay Dates

Houston County School employees are paid monthly on the 20th of each month. If a designated pay date falls on a weekend or a holiday, the pay date will occur on the preceding business day.

All employees will receive 12 payroll checks per school year. Ten- and eleven-month employees will receive the 12th check by June 30th.

Direct Deposit

All employees are required to participate in direct deposit. Upon accepting employment with Houston County Schools, individuals are asked to provide the Finance Department (Payroll) with a voided check for the account or accounts to which they would like their payroll deposited.

Insurance Deductions

Required and voluntary deductions will be made on a monthly basis. Deductions will meet providers' requirements.

ANNUITIES

Employees may elect to individually participate in annuity programs. In order to establish an annuity account, an interested employee should contact the central office. Once the annuity is set up, it is the employee's, or their selected annuity provider's, responsibility to communicate the deduction information to the Payroll department.

The annuity provider's documentation supplies details regarding programs. Annuities are deducted in compliance with the annuity provider's requirements.

SECTION 125

Houston County Schools sponsors a Section 125 Cafeteria plan which enables employees to purchase elective insurances and/or participate in medical and dependent care reimbursement plans and have those premiums deducted from their paycheck on either a taxable or pre-tax basis.

The plans, administered by American Fidelity, are based on group rates, and therefore afford employees the opportunity to purchase individual coverage at reduced rates. Each year during the enrollment period in the fall, American Fidelity will hold open enrollment meetings in each school and Central Office during which employees will have the opportunity to add, delete, or change their elective insurances. At this time, employees also have the opportunity to begin participation, end participation or change their level of participation in the medical reimbursement and/or dependent care reimbursement plans.

Any elections or changes will not take effect until January 1st of each year and will remain intact until December 31st of that same year. During the year, no changes may be made regarding pre-tax deductions unless a qualifying event occurs.

The plans' terms are subject to change and take precedence over any statement in this handbook.

TRAVEL AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

Anytime an employee is required to travel as a result of his or her employment with Houston County Schools, he or she must have prior approval from their principal or immediate supervisor and complete a *Prior Approval Request* signed by the principal/supervisor. Upon completion of the travel, the employee should submit a *Reimbursement Request* with original receipts and verification of attendance (certificate, agenda, handout, or etc.) to the Central Office within three (3) business days from return from the activity in order to receive reimbursement for incurred expenses.

Mileage

Mileage for required travel is reimbursed at a rate determined by the Board of Education. Mileage incurred because of a specific trip should be reported on the *Reimbursement Request* form. The employee is required to indicate the odometer reading on his or her vehicle at the beginning of the trip and the end of the trip. Employees who are required to drive their personal vehicles on a routine basis should complete a Mileage Reimbursement form. This form requires that the employee list the date of the incurred miles, the origination and destination of the trip, and the purpose.

Meals

Meals will be reimbursed at a flat rate per day (no receipts required).

Hotel/Motel

An employee must have obtained prior written approval by their principal or immediate supervisor to request reimbursement for overnight travel. Central office staff will give final approval on all overnight stays. When requesting payment, receipts are required and should be attached to the *Reimbursement Request* form.

Miscellaneous Expenses

All requests for miscellaneous expenses incurred as a result of the trip for which the form is being completed should be documented with receipts in order to receive reimbursement. These expenses might include, but are not limited to, such items as taxi receipts, parking receipts, and conference registrations.

OVERTIME AND COMPENSATORY TIME

Houston County Schools complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to determine eligibility for overtime. The system classifies all employees as either exempt or non-exempt based upon the job description and duties. Non-exempt employees must receive prior approval from the Director of Schools to work additional hours beyond their regular work schedule. Overtime pay for non-exempt employees will be paid at the rate of one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay for all hours worked over forty hours in a workweek. The workweek is defined as 12:00 am Saturday until 11:59 pm Friday. Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime or compensatory time according to the FLSA.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Houston County Schools offers individual health insurance coverage for all full-time employees as defined by the Affordable Health Care Act (AHCA). The school system is a member of the state of Tennessee's health insurance plan, therefore each year employees have the opportunity to choose between different state-sponsored plans to meet the employee's medical insurance needs.

LIFE INSURANCE

Houston County Schools provides life insurance for all employees unless designated as "seasonal".

DENTAL INSURANCE

Houston County Schools provides full-time employees who meet eligibility requirements the option to purchase dental insurance coverage for the employee and dependents. The cost of this optional coverage will be payroll deducted over 12 months. Employees may opt to enroll in this coverage when they are hired or during the annual enrollment period. Employees are responsible for 100% of the dental insurance premiums.

RETIREMENT FUNDING

Certified and full-time non-certified employees participate in the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS). Houston County Schools is required to contribute to retirement funding a certain percentage of each employee's wages each pay period. Employees are also required to have a percent of their gross wages withheld each pay period to be applied toward their retirement funding as well.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

Anytime an employee experiences a work-related injury, it should be reported to his/her principal or direct supervisor immediately. In addition, there is an accident report form to be completed and filed within 24 hours of the injury and may be obtained from the Board Secretary at the Houston County Board of Education.

Houston County Schools maintains workers' compensation insurance for each of its employees. Contact the central office prior to visiting a physician for a workers' compensation claim as there is an approved panel of physicians who are used for treatment of those claims. In the case of an injury requiring emergency treatment, an employee may go or be taken to the emergency room or may be transported by ambulance. In those situations, the school principal or immediate supervisor should be contacted as soon as possible.

Workers' Compensation is designed to provide relief to employees injured during the performance of job duties. An employee who is injured or who becomes disabled while performing his/her job duties is entitled to medical care provided through the Panel of Physicians. It is important to note that sick leave benefits shall be paid to employees only when workers' compensation benefits are not involved.

When seeking emergency treatment, inform the emergency care facility that this is a workers' compensation injury, and it should not be billed to the employee's health insurance provider. Inform them that it is a workers' compensation claim with the Houston County Schools.

All accidents and injuries, regardless of their apparent significance, should be reported on the "Employee Accident Report" form. This requirement applies even if no medical treatment is received at the time of injury.

VACATIONS AND HOLIDAYS

Certified personnel shall receive ten (10) paid holidays per year to be approved by the Director of Schools (included in school district calendar).

All non-certified personnel on active payroll at the time shall be entitled to five (5) paid holidays as follows: Thanksgiving Day, December 24, December 25, January 1, and July 4. Other days shall be approved by the Director of Schools.

Twelve (12)-month employees earn ten (10) vacation days per year as directed by the Director of Schools. These employees may take vacation with the timing approved by the immediate supervisor.

LEAVES

Employees shall inform their immediate supervisor of any planned or emergency absence as soon as possible. General information regarding the types of leave available is listed below. Please note that, for many types of leave, an advanced, written request is required. For additional information, refer to policies 5.301- 5.307.

Absence from work that is not covered by an appropriate request for one of the leave options may lead to disciplinary consequences, up to and including termination of employment.

Employees on extended leave who plan to return the next school year shall notify the Director of Schools/designee in writing of their intention to return to work by May 30.

SICK LEAVE

Employees wishing to request sick leave must notify the immediate supervisor. Sick leave is defined as the following: illness of an employee from natural causes or accident, quarantine, or illness or death of a member of the immediate family of a teacher, including the employee's spouse, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law.

A signed statement listing the cause of absence shall be provided by the employee on forms furnished by the Director of Schools and shall promptly be given to the immediate supervisor in support of all claims for sick leave pay. **A falsified statement shall be grounds for dismissal.**

An employee may use accumulated sick leave until all days are exhausted. **Documentation from a physician may be required in support of any claim for sick leave pay, but is required if the absence is for three (3) consecutive days or more.** At any time, an employee may be required to verify their condition by Board designated physician(s).

Sick leave days may not be used in conjunction with personal or professional days without a doctor's note or the approval from the immediate supervisor.

Sick leave for maternity purposes may be taken during the period of physical disability only. An employee may use up to thirty days of accumulated sick leave for the adoption of a child.

Upon termination of employment, a deduction will be made from the final salary of the employee for sick days used before such days are earned. This deduction shall be an amount based upon the daily rate of pay sufficient to cover the excess sick leave days used and if such final salary is insufficient the employee shall be liable for reimbursement of any amount in excess of his final salary.

Certified Employees

Certified employees shall earn one (1) sick day per month of regular employment. Days are not earned for supplemental assignments (summer school, after school or extra-curricular activities, substitute teacher, etc.). Employees wishing to transfer sick leave from a previous employer should contact Vickie Hutchinson at the Central Office. It is the employee's responsibility to obtain from the previous employer a notarized letter with the number of accumulated days to the Director of Schools.

Non-Certified Employees

Non-certified personnel shall earn one (1) sick day per month of employment. Days are not earned for supplemental assignments (summer school, after school or extra-curricular activities, substitute teacher, etc.). Non-Certified personnel may accumulate a maximum of 20 days of sick leave. If a non-certified employee leaves the district but returns to the same position during the same fiscal year (prior to June 30), he/she may reclaim any sick leave previously earned.

[FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT](#)

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal law that provides eligible employees of covered employers with unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons. Eligible employees may take up to twelve (12) workweeks of leave in a 12-month period for one or more of the following reasons:

- The birth of a son or daughter or placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care, and to bond with the newborn or newly-placed child;
- To care for a spouse, son, daughter, or parent who has a serious health condition, including incapacity due to pregnancy and for prenatal medical care;
- For a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job, including incapacity due to pregnancy and for prenatal medical care; or
- For any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that a spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a military member on covered active duty or call to covered active duty status.

Please see *Houston County School Board Policy 5.305* for full eligibility, benefits, entitlement, and paid parental leave.

SICK LEAVE INCENTIVE PAY

Certified Staff

As an incentive for teacher attendance in order to maintain consistent instruction for students, the Board of Education shall provide annual payouts to teachers according to the following schedule:

\$500 for no use of sick days, personal days, or unpaid days off
\$400 for no use of sick days or any unpaid days off
\$300 for use of no more than one sick or any unpaid days off
\$200 for use of no more than two sick days or any unpaid days off

In addition to the above, if no sick days or unpaid days off are used for five consecutive years, a \$1,000 incentive pay will be awarded, to be reset at the end of the 5th year.

Any missed school days due to disciplinary action may impact incentive pay. Final determinations will be at the discretion of the Director of Schools.

Certified staff attendance incentives will be paid at the close of each school year.

Bus Drivers

As an incentive for bus driver attendance, the Board of Education shall provide **full-time bus drivers** \$500 each semester (Fall semester: July-December and Spring semester: January-May) that they drive with no absences.

PERSONAL LEAVE

Certified Employees

All certified employees receive four (4) personal/professional days per year. These days are earned evenly throughout the year and are prorated for employees who do not work the entire school year. A maximum of two (2) unused personal/professional days will be credited to the employee's sick leave at the end of each year. Personal/Professional Leave may accumulate up to nine (9) days. No more than five (5) personal/professional leave days may be taken in a school year.

Requests for professional leave subject to the following conditions, personal leave days are to be used at their own discretion:

1. Except in emergency, each employee shall give the principal at least three (3) days' notice of intent to take leave.
2. The approval of the Principal shall be required:
 - If more than ten percent (10%) of the staff in any given school request its use on the same day;
 - If requested during any prior established student examination period;
 - If requested on the day immediately preceding or following a holiday or vacation period;
 - If requested for a day scheduled for professional development or inservice training, according to the school calendar adopted by the Board;
 - If requested for a day scheduled for parent-teacher conferences, according to the school calendar adopted by the Board.

Non-Certified Employees

Non-Certified employees receive 2 personal leave days a year which do not accumulate. Requests for personal day usage must be submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor.

1. Except in emergency, each employee shall give the principal at least three (3) days' notice of intent to take leave.
2. The approval of the Principal shall be required:
 - If more than ten percent (10%) of the staff in any given school request its use on the same day;
 - If requested during any prior established student examination period;
 - If requested on the day immediately preceding or following a holiday or vacation period.

An employee's pay will be deducted for any personal days taken beyond those allotted.

PROFESSIONAL LEAVE

Professional leave is a short, temporary absence for the purpose of attending workshops and other meetings relating to school business or serving on boards and commissions which meet during daytime hours when appointed by a mayor, city council, county executive or county commission. Requests for professional leave must be submitted five (5) days prior to the date of the leave.

EMPLOYEE RULES AND CONDUCT

ATTENDANCE

Good attendance is essential for the efficient operation of the school system. Being absent or late often places an undue burden on other employees. If an employee must be absent or late to work, he/she must notify his/her principal or supervisor immediately. If circumstances prevent the employee from this notification, the employee should have someone place the call for him/her. All absences with the exception of illness or injury should have the prior approval of the principal, supervisor, or Director of Schools. If this approval is not obtained, it will be deemed an unexcused absence which may result in disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal.

ASSAULTS AND THREATS OF VIOLENCE

Employees shall report all threats (oral, written, or electronic) to their immediate supervisor. Threats will be handled in accordance with Board policy.

BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGEN TRAINING

All Houston County School employees shall be advised of routine procedures to follow in handling body fluids. These procedures shall provide simple and effective precautions against transmission of diseases to persons potentially exposed to the blood or body fluids of another. Training and appropriate supplies shall be available to all employees. Staff members who are at high risk for occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials will be provided with personal protective equipment, including Hepatitis B vaccinations. The employee should contact their immediate supervisor for more information.

BUILDING KEYS

Building keys may be issued to employees by the school principal or the employee's supervisor. In order to protect Houston County Schools property, students, and employees and to ensure the building is adequately secured when no authorized personnel are present, employees are expected to follow these procedures:

- The duplication of keys is prohibited.
- Keys are not to be left on desks, tables, in mailboxes or other unsecure areas.
- Keys may not be loaned to students or individuals. Lost or stolen keys must be reported to the school principal or the employee's immediate supervisor within 24 hours of discovery of the loss or theft so that measures may be taken to protect Houston County Schools' property.
- Charges for lost or stolen keys may be made to the employee to whom the key(s) have been issued.
- All keys are to be checked in at the end of the school year. Staff members with summer duties requiring building access may make arrangements with the school principal to keep their keys as appropriate.
- This policy also applies to keys to all athletic facilities.

CASH COLLECTION

Money collected by staff as a result of fundraisers or other school-related purposes shall be deposited in the office along with a collection log each day. At no time is money to be kept overnight in classrooms.

CELLULAR PHONE/ELECTRONIC DEVICE USAGE

Employee's personal cellular phone/electronic devices are **not to be used for personal use during instructional time and school related meetings** in order to focus time and attention on the business of Houston County Schools.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

If employees know or have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect, a report shall be filed immediately with the Department of Children's Services, local law enforcement, and the school's Child Abuse Coordinator. The report shall include, to the extent known by the reporter:

1. The name, address, telephone number, and age of the child;
2. The name, telephone number, and address of the parents or persons having custody of the child;
3. The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect; and
4. Any evidence to the cause or any other information that may relate to the cause or extent of the abuse or neglect.

The identity of the person reporting shall remain confidential except when the juvenile court determines otherwise. See appendix for *Child Abuse Reporting Procedures and Indicators*.

CLASSROOM AND OFFICE SECURITY

When leaving the classroom, locker room, or other work areas between classes or at the end of the day, employees are expected to turn off the lights and secure all doors and windows. Employees are asked to refrain from keeping personal items of value in or about their desks. Purses should never be left unsecured. Houston County Schools will not be responsible for the loss of or damage to, personal property due to such causes as fire, theft, or accident.

Appropriate measures should be taken to protect school and system property from theft or vandalism.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Employees should only have access to confidential student information for legitimate educational purposes. This includes when information is needed in order to perform:

1. Required administrative tasks;
2. A supervisory or instructional task directly related to the student's education; and
3. A service or benefit for the student or the student's family such as health care, counseling, student job placement, or student financial aid.

At times, employees may receive confidential information regarding students' or employees' medical, educational, or court records. Employees are required to keep student and personnel information confidential per federal and state law.

Employees are required to confirm with the principal/designee concerning any requests for releasing student records. Except as otherwise permitted by law, employees may only share confidential, personally identifiable student record information with the following:

1. The student;
2. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s); and

Other District employees with a legitimate educational interest.

COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE

A copyright is a form of protection provided by Title 17 of the United States Code to the authors of "original works of authorship" including literary, dramatic, musical, artistic and certain other intellectual works. These laws apply to audio-visual and electronic information as well as printed material. Copyrighted works are protected regardless of the medium in which they are created or reproduced; thus, copyright extends to digital works and works transformed in to a digital format. All employees are required to abide by copyright regulations.

In addition, teachers should follow "fair use" guidelines when utilizing copyrighted material in the classroom. The "fair use" doctrine allows limited reproduction of copyrighted works for educational and research purposes.

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT) PHYSICALS

All employees who drive school buses are required to have an annual physical and mental examination. In addition, all such individuals who are 55 years of age or more shall have two (2) physical examinations each school year, one of which shall be prior to the opening of school and the second during the fifth month of each school year. Federal regulations require all school bus drivers to undergo random drug screening as well.

DRESS CODE

Employees are expected to dress appropriately for their school assignment/role. At a minimum, staff members should adhere to student dress codes. Building administrators have discretion over what is deemed inappropriate work attire. Generally, employees should wear:

- long coverings over fitted leggings/jeggings;
- skirts or shorts at knee length;
- pants or jeans without holes;
- clothing without inappropriate writing, slogans, or images;
- shirts with sleeves that cover undergarments and that are long enough to cover the waist

DRUG-FREE/ALCOHOL-FREE SCHOOLS

Any employee who violates the Board's policy 5.403 on alcohol and drugs in the workplace shall be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension, termination, and/or referral for prosecution

All employees shall report being charged with any criminal offense to their immediate supervisor within seventy-two (72) hours of the offense. The supervisor shall report the offense to the Director of Schools immediately.

ETHICS

Educators shall adhere to the Teacher Code of Ethics. Certified staff shall participate in annual professional development training on what constitutes unethical conduct. See appendix for the *Tennessee Teacher Code of Ethics*.

INCLEMENT WEATHER ATTENDANCE

Schools Closed

On days that school is out due to inclement weather, employees who work a student calendar are not expected to come to work unless notified by their supervisor. All employees would, however, be expected to work on any make-up days.

Employees who work a twelve (12) month calendar such as Central Office, maintenance staff, etc. are expected to report to work or request an appropriate leave.

Delay in Starting Time

On days when the school starting time has been delayed, all employees' schedules are at the discretion of their immediate supervisor or principal. If an employee is going to be late, he or she needs to call and let his or her immediate supervisor know. Any time that needs to be made up will be determined by the school principal or the employee's immediate supervisor.

Early Dismissal

On days when school is dismissed early, all employees' schedules are at the discretion of their immediate supervisor or principal. Any change in normal work hours should be approved by the principal or supervisor. Principals are expected to stay in their buildings until they have received word that all buses have completed their routes.

LUNCH

Staff members are able to purchase meals in school cafeterias based on current staff pricing. Employees are expected to pay for meals at the time of purchase. Charges will be allowed, but may **not** exceed \$25 without written permission from the school principal. Future charges will not be allowed until \$25 balance is paid in full.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Employees have a right to express their views on any issue but shall, in each case, make clear that the view expressed is not the official view of the Board or District. Employees may, on their own time, campaign for or against any candidate or referendum but are prohibited from using District owned property to engage in political activity.

REMOTE LEARNING PROTOCOLS

During periods of school closure due to an emergency as determined by an executive order issued by the governor or an order issued by the local health board, other public health official, or the local board of education, the following protocols are to be followed:

1. Instructional Staff are expected to report to their assigned school Instructional staff are expected to report to their assigned school during virtual/remote instruction contingent upon local health and safety guidelines.* Strict adherence to social distancing and mitigation procedures is required.
2. Remote content will be submitted in accordance with district guidelines and be approved by building level administrator(s).
3. Instructional staff will work in partnership and consult with each school's 504 coordinator to review and ensure virtual/remote materials support student 504 Intervention Plans and necessary accommodations.
4. Eligible students with disabilities and English Language Learners will be provided appropriate academic support as agreed upon in the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), 504 plan, or Individual Learning Plan (ILP), including any necessary instructional and testing accommodations. Classroom teachers who are trained and aware of the accommodations needed for the students will work with special educators to monitor the progress and needs of all students with disabilities during periods of school closure.
5. Instructional staff will work and continue to coordinate and provide schoolwide Title I services for students. This will include necessary supplemental instruction,

completion and implementation of parent-teacher compacts and review of required RTI instructional needs customized for each student. Schoolwide Title teachers will collaborate and assist the instructional staff monitoring student contacts while meeting instructional requirements as specified in the school system's federal consolidated application.

6. Prior to the dissemination of virtual/remote materials, special education staff will be provided the opportunity to review core content to assist in providing recommendations for appropriate accommodations/modifications and planning for needed instructional supports for students with disabilities.
7. Instructional staff will communicate with each student through school-approved means which may include telephone, email, Skyward, and/or Google Classroom.
8. Each instructional staff member will provide families with "office hours" in which they are available via phone or internet to address any learning concerns. Grade level or content area teams may coordinate office hours to provide a range of times for families that may include ones outside of the traditional school day. Office hours must be approved by building administrators and posted for public access.
9. Student skills in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics will be tracked through the benchmarking and universal screening platforms three times per year to identify skill deficits. Students requiring additional academic interventions to address reading, math, or writing skill deficits will be provided daily personalized learning opportunities specific to their needs based on these assessments and with ongoing progress monitoring provided to guide instructional planning.
10. Instructional staff will work with the school system's homeless liaison to ensure students identified as homeless, highly mobile, or in foster care have maximized (as much as possible) continuous access to remote learning and quality instruction. In addition, other needs and requests may be provided if found necessary to promote a productive and safe learning environment.
11. School personnel will make, at a minimum, one (1) daily communication with each student. This may be accomplished via telephone, email, or a virtual platform (e.g., Google Meet, Zoom, Dojo, Remind, etc.), assignment of homework, or completion of activity log, etc. Staff will notify building administrators of any student who has missed their daily interaction for 2 consecutive days.
12. Instructional staff will post grades weekly in Skyward; parents may access grades via the Parent Portal. Progress reports and report cards will be issued in accordance with the HCSD Calendar.
13. Instructional staff will document contact with parents via email, phone, and/or video chat if the student does not participate in the week's learning.
14. Instructional staff will respond to all emails from the student/parent/administrator within one (1) business day.

**Employees requesting to work remotely must be approved at the district level, based upon a recommendation by their building principal, and will be required to be accessible and productive during scheduled work hours. Documentation of off-site work hours will be required. School staff may not engage in outside forms of employment during school work hours.*

STAFF-STUDENT RELATIONS

Staff members are expected to maintain positive professional relationships with students which shall remain wholesome and constructive at all times. Staff members are expected to regard each student as an individual and to afford each student the rights and respect that is due.

Staff members should use good judgment in their relationships with students beyond their work responsibilities and/or outside the school setting and shall avoid excessive informal and social involvement with individual students. Any appearance of impropriety must be avoided. Sexual relationships between employees and students are prohibited.

TECHNOLOGY USE

1. Electronic Mail (E-mail)

Electronic mail capability among employees exists for the purpose of enhancing communication to better perform tasks associated with their positions and assignments. Therefore, all staff that has access to the system-wide network must adhere to the following guidelines when sending or receiving messages via system-wide electronic mail (e-mail):

- Messages shall pertain to legitimate board/system business.
- Because all computer hardware and software belong to the Board, all data including e-mail communications stored or transmitted on school system computers will be monitored. Employees have no right to privacy with regard to such data. Confidentiality of e-mail communication cannot be assured. E-mail correspondence may be a public record under the public records law and may be subject to public inspection.
- Senders are responsible for observing all copyright law
- Employees shall not reveal their passwords to others in the network or to anyone outside of it.
- If anyone has reason to believe that a password has been lost or stolen or that e-mail has been accessed by someone without authorization he/she shall contact the Technology Office immediately
- Messages shall not be sent that contain material that may be defined by a reasonable person as obscene or that are racist, sexist or promote illegal or unethical activity, or that violates any other policies in this Handbook including but not limited to the policy prohibiting harassment or discrimination.
- Any usage contrary to the above shall be reported immediately to the Director of Schools and may result in the suspension and/or revocation of system access.

2. Internet

Before any employee is allowed the use of the Houston County Schools internet or intranet access, the employee must sign a written agreement developed by the school system that sets out the terms and conditions of such use. Any employee who accesses the Houston County Schools computer system for any purpose agrees to be bound by the terms of that agreement, even if no signed written agreement is on file.

Prohibited and illegal activities, include, but are not limited to the following:

- Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures
- Using obscene language
- Harassing, insulting, defaming or attacking others
- Damaging computers, computer systems or networks
- Hacking or attempting unauthorized access to any computer

- Violation of copyright laws
- Trespassing in another's folders, work or files
- Intentional misuse of resources
- Buying or selling on the Internet during regular business hours
- Using another's password/ID's or sharing personal passwords
- Use of the network for commercial purposes
- Personal electronic accounts
- Personal social media accounts (see board policy 4.4061 for more information)

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

All uses of tobacco, electronic/battery operated devices, vapor products, and all other associated paraphernalia are prohibited in all of the District's buildings and in all vehicles that are owned, leased, or operated by the District.

USE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY

Employees are responsible for the materials, equipment, and supplies assigned to them. In addition, employees are responsible for the reasonable preservation and protection of materials, equipment, and supplies not under their direct control. Employees shall not use any District property for personal gain.

VEHICLES- PRIVATE

From time to time, certain employees may need to use their private vehicles for school purposes. To use a private vehicle for school purposes, the person must have permission of an appropriate school representative (Central Office or school administrator) and provide proof of his/her valid driver's license and liability insurance coverage in accordance with Board Policy 3.404. Although the Board carries liability insurance, the personal liability insurance of the driver of the private vehicle will be the primary coverage in the event of an accident.

VEHICLES- SCHOOL DISTRICT

Use of school system vehicles shall be restricted to commuting to and from job-related sites, and must comply with IRS requirements, including implications for reporting taxable income. Employees who are assigned full-time use of Board-owned vehicles shall be on call twenty-four (24) hours a day to perform services required by their job responsibilities. Use of these vehicles for personal use is prohibited.

VENDOR RELATIONS

Employees of Houston County Schools are prohibited from accepting anything of value from an individual or a vendor for the purpose of influencing his/her professional judgment. Material value is defined by law as \$50 or more from a single source in a single year.

In addition, the solicitation of employees by sales people, other staff, or agents during the regular workday is prohibited without prior approval from the school principal or the immediate supervisor. Any solicitation should be reported to the appropriate determining party.

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

In the continuing effort to provide the safest possible environment for the students and employees of the Houston County Schools, video surveillance is conducted in Houston County Schools and school buses.

In the event a video surveillance recording captures an employee, student, or other building user violating school policies or rules, or local, state, or federal laws, the video surveillance recording may be used in appropriate disciplinary proceedings and may also be provided to law enforcement agencies.

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLS

Except on occasions such as school programs, athletic events, open house, and similar public events, all visitors will report to the school office when entering the school. Visitors will be required to present a valid photo ID to be entered into our Raptor identification system before being allowed beyond the front office. Visitor passes shall be issued for all persons other than students and employees of the school district. Couriers or parents dropping off items at the office are not required to obtain a visitor pass. Authorization to visit in the building or on the school campus will be determined by the principal or designee.

The principal has the authority to exclude visitors from school property committing an illegal act, disrupting the educational programs in the classroom, or disturbing the teachers or students during school-related activities.

The principal will engage law enforcement officials when he or she believes the situation warrants such measures.

WEAPONS

Except where expressly permitted by state law, possessing any weapon or dangerous instrument on school property is prohibited. Except for authorized law enforcement officials, carrying concealed weapons on school property is prohibited. Employees who violate this are subject to disciplinary action including termination.

Employees who know or believe that an employee is in unlawful possession of a weapon on school property shall immediately report this to the local police department and building administration.

APPENDIX

Teacher Code of Ethics
Salary Change Based on Advanced Degree Notification Form
Child Abuse Reporting Procedures and Indicator
Acceptable Use Policy for Employees
Acknowledgement and Signature Page

49-5-1001. Short title.

This part shall be known and may be cited as the "Teacher Code of Ethics."

History

Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1.

49-5-1002. Legislative findings.

The general assembly finds and declares that:

- (1) An educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. An educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards; and
- (2) An educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The desire for the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents and of the members of the community provides the incentive to attain and maintain the highest possible degree of ethical conduct.

History

Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1.

49-5-1003. Educator's obligations to students.

- (a) An educator shall strive to help each student realize the student's potential as a worthy and effective member of society. An educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.
- (b) In fulfillment of this obligation to the student, an educator shall:
 - (1) Abide by all applicable federal and state laws;
 - (2) Not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning;
 - (3) Provide the student with professional education services in a nondiscriminatory manner and in consonance with accepted best practices known to the educator;
 - (4) Respect the constitutional rights of the student;
 - (5) Not unreasonably deny the student access to varying points of view;
 - (6) Not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress;
 - (7) Make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety;
 - (8) Make reasonable effort to protect the emotional well-being of the student;
 - (9) Not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement;
 - (10) Not on the basis of race; color; creed; disability; sex; national origin; marital status; political or religious beliefs; family, social, or cultural background; or sexual orientation, unfairly:
 - (A) Exclude the student from participation in any program;
 - (B) Deny benefits to the student; or
 - (C) Grant any advantage to the student;
 - (11) Not use the educator's professional relationship with the student for private advantage;
 - (12) Not disclose information about the student obtained in the course of the educator's professional service, unless disclosure of the information is permitted, serves a compelling professional purpose, or is required by law;
 - (13) Not knowingly make false or malicious statements about students or colleagues;

- (14) Ensure interactions with the student take place in transparent and appropriate settings;
- (15) Not engage in any sexually related behavior with the student, whether verbal, written, physical, or electronic, with or without the student's consent. Sexually related behavior includes, but is not limited to, behaviors such as making sexual jokes or sexual remarks; engaging in sexual kidding, sexual teasing, or sexual innuendo; pressuring the student for dates or sexual favors; engaging in inappropriate physical touching, groping, or grabbing; kissing; rape; threatening physical harm; and committing sexual assault;
- (16) Not furnish alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs to the student;
- (17) Strive to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by the student when the student is under the educator's supervision on school or LEA premises, during school activities, or in any private setting;
- (18) Refrain from the use of alcohol while on school or LEA premises or during a school activity at which students are present; and
- (19) Maintain a professional approach with the student at all times.

History

Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1; 2018, ch. 937, § 1.

49-5-1004. Educator's obligations to the education profession.

- (a) The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professional service. In the belief that the quality of the services of the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens, the educator shall exert every effort to raise professional standards, to promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgment, to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education, and to assist in preventing the practice of the profession by unqualified persons.
- (b) In fulfillment of this obligation to the profession, an educator shall not:
 - (1) Deliberately make a false statement or fail to disclose a material fact related to competency and qualifications in an application for a professional position;
 - (2) Misrepresent the educator's professional qualifications;
 - (3) Assist entry into the profession of a person known to be unqualified in respect to character, education, or other relevant attribute;
 - (4) Knowingly make a false statement concerning the qualifications of a candidate for a professional position;
 - (5) Assist a noneducator in the unauthorized practice of teaching;
 - (6) Disclose information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless the disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law;
 - (7) Knowingly make false or malicious statements about a colleague;
 - (8) Accept any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions; and
 - (9) Use illegal or unauthorized drugs.
- (c) In fulfillment of this obligation to the profession, educators shall:
 - (1) Administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically; and
 - (2) Conduct themselves in a manner that preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession.

History

Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1; 2018, ch. 937, §§ 2, 3.

49-5-1005. Public access to teacher code of ethics.

The state board of education shall post the teacher code of ethics on its web site.

History

Acts 2011, ch. 214, § 1.

49-5-1006. Report of breach of teacher code of ethics -- Failure to report.

- (a) An educator who has personal knowledge of a breach by another educator of the teacher code of ethics prescribed in §§ 49-5-1003 and 49-5-1004 shall report the breach to the educator's immediate supervisor, director of schools, or local board of education within thirty (30) days of discovering the breach.

(b) Failure to report a breach of the teacher code of ethics, or to file a report of any criminal activity or other misconduct that is required by federal or state law, is a breach of the teacher code of ethics.

History

Acts 2018, ch. 937, § 4.

49-5-1007. Professional development training concerning teacher code of ethics.

LEAs must conduct annual professional development training concerning the teacher code of ethics and its requirements. The professional development training shall address what constitutes unethical conduct.

History

Acts 2018, ch. 937, § 5.



SALARY CHANGE BASED ON EDUCATION LEVEL

If a certified employee anticipates a change in salary based on educational advancement he/she must **submit this form to the Board of Education office by March 1st**. If graduating or completing coursework between January 1st-August 9th, salary will be adjusted on the August payroll. If graduating or completing coursework between August 10th-December 31st, a new contract will be provided and salary will be adjusted on the January payroll.

Employee: _____

Work Location: _____

I am requesting to change my education level to:

☐ Master's ☐ Master's +30 credit hours ☐ Educational Specialist ☐ Doctorate

Anticipated completion date: _____

The following **must be submitted** within ten (10) days of completion of the degree or coursework.

- An *official* transcript (not student copy) sent to the Board office showing confirmation of the awarded degree *or* completion of coursework for the Master's +30 designation. The official transcript may be hand-delivered or mailed from the university/college. (*Coursework for a Master's +30 must be graduate hours earned after the Master's degree was conferred as posted on the official transcript.*)
- A “**Transaction**” in **TNCompass** to add the degree to your licensure account.

Signature

Date

If you have any questions regarding educational advancement or need assistance in adding the degree in TNCompass, please contact Channy Quinn (clarkc3@houstonk12tn.net) at the Board of Education office.

Rev. 08/2023

Child Abuse Reporting Procedures and Indicators

Child abuse and neglect occurs when a child is mistreated, resulting in injury or risk of harm. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual. **Employees who have suspicions of child abuse are to report such suspicions to the school Child Abuse Coordinator or Alternate Child Abuse Coordinator.** To report suspected abuse or neglect for a child in Tennessee call the Department of Children's Services at 877-237-0004 or the designated school line at 855-209-4226 or make a report online at apps.tn.gov/carat/.

Physical Abuse is non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child. It also includes a parent's or a caretaker's failure to protect a child from another person who perpetrated physical abuse on a child. In its most severe form, physical abuse is likely to cause great bodily harm or death.

Physical Neglect is the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life endangering physical hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental that results in health threatening conditions, and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child. In its most severe form, physical neglect may result in great bodily harm or death.

Sexual Abuse includes penetration or external touching of a child's intimate parts, oral sex with a child, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child's presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution, and the manufacturing of child pornography. Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent or the child's caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person.

Emotional Abuse includes verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference or constant family conflict. If a child is degraded enough, the child will begin to live up to the image communicated by the abusing parent or caretaker.

Possible Indicators of Abuse and Neglect:

- The child has repeated injuries that are not properly treated or adequately explained.
- The child begins acting in unusual ways ranging from disruptive & aggressive to passive & withdrawn.
- The child acts in the role of parent toward their brothers and sisters or even toward their own parents.
- The child may have disturbed sleep (nightmares, bed wetting, fear of sleeping alone, needing a nightlight).
- The child loses his/her appetite, overeats, or may report being hungry.
- There is a sudden drop in school grades or participation in activities.
- The child may act in stylized ways, such as sexual behavior that is not normal for his/her age group.
- The child may report abusive or neglectful acts.

The above signs indicate that something is wrong but do not necessarily point to abuse. However, if you notice these signs early, you may be able to prevent abuse or neglect.

Parents who abuse or neglect their children may show some common characteristics:

- Possible drug/alcohol history
- Disorganized home life
- May seem to be isolated from the community and have no close friends
- When asked about a child's injury, may offer conflicting reasons or no explanation at all
- May seem unwilling or unable to provide for a child's basic needs
- May not have age appropriate expectations of their children
- May use harsh discipline that is not appropriate for child's age or behavior
- Were abused or neglected as a child

Here is the information you will be asked to provide if you call to report child abuse:

- Nature of the harm or specific incident(s) that precipitated the report
- Specific allegation(s), date(s) and descriptions(s) of the injuries or dangers Identities of alleged perpetrator(s) and their relationships to the victim
- Witnesses to the incident(s) and how to reach those witnesses
- Details of any physical evidence available
- Perpetrator's current access to the child Present condition of the child (alone, in need of medical attention, etc.)
- The location of the child and directions to get there
- Any statements from the child Parent's or perpetrator's explanation of the alleged child victim's condition or the incident
- Parent's current emotional, physical or mental state, especially feelings about the child and reactions to the report
- How the reporter came to know the information and the reporter's thoughts about the likelihood of further harm to the child.

The reporter's identity is confidential, but a name should be given so the department could follow up with the reporter if necessary. The reporter is free from civil or criminal liability for reports of suspected child abuse or neglect made in good faith.

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR EMPLOYEES

Acceptable Use of Computer Equipment:

Provisions:

1. **Acceptable:** uses of computer for activities which support learning and teaching. Computer users are encouraged to develop uses which meet their individual educational needs and which take advantage of the computer's functions.
2. **Unacceptable:** uses of school computers include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Installing or deleting programs from/to the computer from ANY source such as: Internet, DVD, Network, or removable disk/drive. Unless approved by the Technology Coordinator.
 - b) Vandalizing school equipment either physically or electronically.

Acceptable Use of Electronic Networks:

It is the general policy of Houston County Schools that network services are to be used in a responsible, efficient, ethical, and legal manner. Users of the Houston County Schools network must acknowledge their understanding of the general policy and guidelines as a condition of using the network.

Use of the Houston County Public Schools network services is a privilege, not a right. Failure to adhere to this policy and administrative procedures may result in suspension or revocation of network access. Willful or intentional misuse could lead to disciplinary action or criminal penalties under applicable state and federal law.

Provisions:

1. **Acceptable:** uses of the network are activities which support learning and teaching. Network users are encouraged to develop uses which meet their individual educational needs and which take advantage of the network's functions.
2. **Unacceptable:** Uses of network include, *but are not limited to*:
 - a) Plagiarizing, which is the taking of another's words, ideas, or findings, and intentionally presenting them as your own without properly giving credit to their source.
 - b) Revealing home phone numbers, addresses, or other personal information.
 - c) Downloading or copying information without prior teacher approval.
 - d) Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures.
 - e) Using obscene language.
 - f) Harassing, insulting, defaming or attacking others.
 - g) Damaging computers, computer systems or computer networks.
 - h) Hacking or attempting unauthorized access.
 - i) Violation of copyright laws.
 - j) Trespassing in another's folders, work or files.
 - k) Intentional misuse of resources.
 - l) Using another's password or other identifier (impersonation).
 - m) Use of the network for commercial purposes.
 - n) Buying or selling on the Internet.
3. **The staff of Houston County Schools will be responsible for:**
 - a) Teaching students the Houston County Schools Policy and Procedures for Network/Internet use.
 - b) Supervising and guiding student access to the Network/Internet.
4. **All Users of the Houston County School network services are responsible for adhering to the Houston County School Policy and Procedures for Network/Internet Use.**

5. **The following people are entitled to use the network/internet if they have signed the Acceptable Use Policy Signature Page and have it on file.**
- a) All Houston County Schools staff.
 - b) All Houston County Schools students under the supervision of a staff member.
 - c) Others who request Guest Accounts from the Network Administrator. These requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be granted, if warranted, as needs and resources permit.

Acceptable Use of the Internet:

Houston County Schools cannot completely eliminate access to information that is offensive or illegal and residing on networks outside of the Houston County Schools system. However, Houston County Schools are in compliance with CIPA (Children Internet Protection Act) and provide internet filtering through LineWize/Family Zone. Houston County Schools make no express or implied warranties for the Internet access it provides. The accuracy and quality of information obtained cannot be guaranteed. Houston County Schools will not guarantee the availability of access to the Internet and will not be responsible for any information that may be lost, damaged, or unavailable due to technical or other difficulties. Information sent or received cannot be assured to be private.

All faculty members must adhere to the following rules:

Provisions:

1. **Acceptable:** Teachers may work directly with small groups of students or with an entire class. Internet access will be limited to those sites approved by the teacher previewed in advance. Teachers will be responsible for reviewing the Internet policy and procedures with students prior to any directed searches.
2. **Unacceptable:** uses of the Internet include, but are not limited to:
 - a) *Personal Email:* Staff email accounts are available on request and are provided through Google.
 - b) *Chat Programs:* Staff members are not allowed to use/download chat programs via Internet nor any program dealing with internet chat or messaging.
 - c) *File sharing programs:* Downloading and sharing image, audio, and data files illegally. They steal school bandwidth which greatly degrades network performance. Under the “Digital Millennium Copyright Act” file sharing programs are illegal at all Schools, Colleges, and Universities.
 - d) *Games:* Do not download or install games on school computers
 - e) *Web Sites:* Accessing, downloading, storing, or printing files or messages from the internet that are sexually explicit, obscene, or that offends or tends to degrade others. The administration invokes its discretionary rights to determine such suitability.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAGE TO YOUR PRINCIPAL/SUPERVISOR

I have received, read, and understood the *Houston County School District Employee Handbook*.

Employee Name (Print): _____

School Assignment: _____

Employee Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS ACCEPTABLE USE AGREEMENT

I have received, read, and understood the *Houston County Schools Acceptable Use Policy for Employees* and agree to use the network in an appropriate and responsible manner.

Employee Signature: _____ **Date:** _____