

# Employee Handbook

2025-2026



# MERIDIAN PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

1019 25th Avenue  
Meridian, Mississippi 39301  
[www.mpsdk12.net](http://www.mpsdk12.net)

Meridian Public School District shall not discriminate in its policies and practices concerning compensation, terms or conditions of employment on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, non-disqualifying physical or mental disability, national origin, veteran status, or any other basis covered by appropriate law. All employment is decided on the basis of qualifications, merit, and need.

# Section I: Employment

## AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA)

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and **Meridian Public School District Board Policy GBRIA**, the district is committed to providing equal employment opportunities and access to programs and services for all qualified individuals with disabilities.

The Meridian Public School District prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in all employment practices, including recruitment, hiring, promotion, training, compensation, benefits, and all other terms and conditions of employment. This commitment also extends to admission to and participation in district programs, services, and activities.

The district will make reasonable accommodations, as required by law, to support qualified individuals with disabilities in performing the essential functions of their jobs and in accessing district facilities and services.

For more information or to request an accommodation, employees should contact the Office of Human Resources. Additional guidance can be found in **Board Policy GBRIA**, available on the district's website at [www.mpsdk12.net](http://www.mpsdk12.net).

## ASSIGNMENT

### Assignment and Reassignment of Personnel

In alignment with MPSD Board Policy GBE, the administration reserves the right to assign or reassign personnel in the best interest of the district. Reassignments may be made due to instructional or curricular needs, a reduction in force at the school or district level, teacher requests, or other justifiable factors such as staff morale, personal matters, or operational efficiency. Normal attrition will be considered prior to initiating any staff transfers.

Reassignments or transfers may take effect during the current or upcoming school year, based on the needs of the district.

### Assignment of Athletic Personnel

Per **MPSD Board Policy GBRC**A, athletic coaches, equipment managers, athletic aides, assistants, and other individuals with athletic responsibilities shall be assigned duties by the

athletic director, with the approval of the Superintendent. These assignments are considered *at-will* and are not part of an employee's instructional contract.

The Superintendent, in collaboration with the athletic director and with the approval of the Board, shall determine the responsibilities and number of workdays required for athletic personnel. These decisions will be based on the specific needs of individual sports and the time commitment necessary to effectively fulfill those roles.

All coaches are expected to work cooperatively to support and promote the district's entire athletic program. Coaches not directly responsible for a sport in season may be asked to assist the head coach, as appropriate and within the parameters established by the Superintendent.

***Please note:*** *Athletic-related duties are considered non-instructional and are supplemental to any teaching contract. As such, these roles are not governed by the School Employment Procedures Act.*

## BACKGROUND CHECKS

The employment background screening process shall be conducted on any individual recommended for employment in the Meridian Public School District.

The employment background screening process shall include not less than:

- Reference checks made with the applicant's most recent supervisors.
- A criminal records background check of felony and misdemeanor convictions.
- A child abuse check with the child abuse registry.
- Fingerprinting with checks made at the state and national criminal history levels. **(For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GBD.)**

## CELL PHONE USE/TEXTING/SOCIAL MEDIA

### ELECTRONIC DEVICES

An administrator may decide to implement guidelines that allow for the limited use of electronic devices. These guidelines may address using cell phones during planning time and after the dismissal of students. They may also address emergency needs or other extenuating circumstances. All Meridian Public School District employees are prohibited from providing personal wireless telephone information and text messaging a single student at any time. Contacts through group messaging Apps like SchoolStatus, Groupme, or Remind 101 are permitted as long as only groups are being contacted. Use of Bluetooth devices are prohibited while in the presence of students.

## TEXTING AND SOCIAL MEDIA

All employees, faculty, and staff shall observe the following while participating in any social media websites or applications: Access to social media websites for individual use during school hours is prohibited.

1. Employees, faculty, and staff shall not friend students on any social media platforms.
2. Employees, faculty, and staff shall not give social media passwords to students.
3. Employees, faculty, and staff are solely responsible for the security of their social media accounts.
4. Employees, faculty, and staff are solely responsible for the content posted on their social media accounts at all times.
5. Employees, faculty, and staff shall NEVER use their personal social media accounts in any way purporting to be or speaking for the Meridian Public School District.

Fraternization via the Internet between employees, faculty staff, and students is prohibited and violates the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics standards. Communication with students and parents shall be made in person, over the telephone, through standard mail, and/or email. Social media shall never be used and is not an appropriate form of communication.

Violation of any of this policy may result in disciplinary action.

Nothing in this policy prohibits employees, faculty, staff, or students from using educational websites since educational sites are used solely for educational purposes.

When inappropriate use of computers and/or websites is discovered, the technology director will download the offensive material and promptly take proper action. **(For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GABBA.)**

<h2>CHAIN OF COMMAND</h2>
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The successful operation of the Meridian Public School District relies on a clear organizational structure, strong administrative leadership, informed decision-making at the most effective level, and open communication among all individuals involved.

All employees of the Meridian Public School District—excluding the board attorney—are accountable to the Board of Trustees through the Superintendent. Matters requiring administrative attention should be directed to the immediate supervisor or administrator

responsible for the area in which the issue arises. If further action is needed, the matter should be referred to the next level of authority in the chain of command.

Before any issue is presented to the Board of Trustees, it must first be submitted to the Superintendent for review and investigation. If the Superintendent determines that Board action is required, the matter will be placed on the appropriate agenda for consideration.

For more information regarding organizational roles and responsibilities, please refer to **MPSD Board Policies CC and CD**, available on the district's website at [www.mpsdk12.net](http://www.mpsdk12.net).

## CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS

### Administrative Transfers and Reassignments

In accordance with MPSD Board Policy GBE, the administration may reassign or transfer staff in the best interest of the district. These changes may be made due to instructional or curricular needs, staff reductions, teacher requests, or other considerations such as morale, personal concerns, or just cause. Whenever possible, natural attrition will be considered before reassigning or transferring personnel. Transfers may take effect during the current or upcoming school year.

### VOLUNTARY TRANSFER

#### Certified Employees

Certified employees who wish to transfer to a different school, grade level, or subject area should submit a written request via **Frontline Central** to their building principal or immediate supervisor. Requests are placed on file with the Director of Human Resources and are typically considered for implementation at the start of a new contract year.

Voluntary transfers require approval from the releasing and receiving administrators as well as the Director of Human Resources. If the requesting employee is on a professional improvement plan, the Superintendent's approval is also required. (Refer to **MPSD Board Policy GBE**.)

#### Classified Employees

Classified employees seeking a transfer should complete a **Transfer Request Form** in Frontline Central and submit it to their immediate supervisor, who will forward the request to the Human Resources Department for review and consideration.

### INVOLUNTARY TRANSFER

#### Certified Employees

The Superintendent may reassign certified personnel based on experience, qualifications, and

district needs. Transfers may occur at any point during the current or upcoming school year. (Refer to MPSD Board Policy GBE.)

### **Classified Employees**

Classified employees may also be reassigned by the Superintendent based on experience, training, and district needs. Employees affected by an involuntary transfer may be given first consideration for future vacancies if they apply. (Refer to MPSD Board Policy GBE.)

### **SUSPENSION—ALL EMPLOYEES**

The Superintendent or designee may suspend employees under their supervision for failure to comply with school policies and procedures or reasonable requests of the administration. **(For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GBK.)**

### **DISMISSAL FOR CAUSE—CERTIFIED**

Under state law and MPSD Board Policy GBK, the Superintendent has the authority to recommend the dismissal or suspension of certified staff for the following reasons:

1. Incompetence
2. Neglect of duty
3. Immoral conduct
4. Intemperance
5. Brutal treatment of a student
6. Other good and just cause

Employees shall receive written notice of the charges and may request a public hearing within five (5) working days. Hearings must take place between five (5) and thirty (30) days from the request. If no hearing is requested, the Superintendent's decision becomes final.

### **RETIREMENT**

Employees planning to retire should begin the process at least three months in advance to avoid delays in benefits. Steps include:

1. Notify your principal/supervisor in writing.
2. Complete a Resignation/Termination Form and submit it with your retirement letter.
3. Await Board of Trustees approval.
4. Work with the Payroll Office to complete PERS Form 9A SRVC (Pre-Application for Service Retirement Benefits).
5. PERS will assign a case manager and provide an estimate of benefits.
6. If participating in the district's retirement reception, contact Shannon Kimbriel at 601-484-5177. (Refer to MPSD Board Policy GBQ.)

## RESIGNATIONS

The Superintendent, as the Board's agent, is authorized to accept resignations on behalf of the Board, provided that they are:

- In writing
- Dated and signed
- State an effective date

Once received, a resignation is irrevocable. Resignations must be submitted by certified mail with return receipt requested, or personally delivered to the Superintendent's office with acknowledgment of receipt. The Superintendent may refuse a resignation if doing so is in the district's best interest.

Failure to receive written acceptance may result in a breach of contract and potential license revocation for certified employees.

(Refer to MPSD Board Policies GBO and GBQ.)

## TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Employment may end in one of three ways:

1. **Retirement** – Written notice is required at least two months in advance.
2. **Resignation** – Must follow the procedure outlined above.
3. **Dismissal** – As outlined under state law and Board policy.

## REDUCTION IN FORCE—ALL EMPLOYEES

To maintain quality educational programs, the Board may:

- Abolish or consolidate positions
- Reduce the work year and salary (not below 187 contract days)
- Reduce administrative supplements
- Reduce the number of employees

RIF decisions are made based on attrition when possible, and in accordance with MPSD Board Policy GBKAR. Factors considered may include:

- Enrollment decline
- Budget reductions
- Elimination of programs
- Reallocation of resources

Selection criteria for licensed staff may include:

- Criticality of the position
- Certifications and advanced degrees
- Experience, training, and years of service
- Performance record
- Leadership ability
- Attendance and discipline history

Staff affected by RIF will be placed on a one-year reemployment list. While consideration will be given for future openings, reemployment is not guaranteed. Written notification will be provided, when possible, by June 1.

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING PROCEDURES

The **Meridian Public School District Board of Education** acknowledges its legal and ethical responsibility to report suspected child abuse and neglect. In accordance with **Mississippi Code §93-21-3 and §97-5-23**, all school personnel are designated as **mandated reporters**. This means that if there is *reasonable cause* to suspect that a child has been abused, neglected, or threatened with abuse, school employees are required to report the incident to the **Mississippi Department of Child Protection Services (CPS)** or other appropriate authorities.

Mandated reporters are protected under the law from civil liability when acting in good faith. You do **not** need absolute proof to file a report—it is the responsibility of **Child Protective Services to investigate**.

### Reporting to Child Protective Services

When making a report, provide as much of the following information as possible:

1. Child's name and address, and that of the parents or caretakers
2. Child's date of birth
3. Nature and extent of the suspected abuse or injury
4. Identity and address of the alleged perpetrator (if known)
5. Names and dates of birth of other children in the home
6. Any additional relevant information

### Reporting Within the School System

1. **Immediately inform the school principal** of your concerns.
2. If abuse is suspected, a report **must** be made by the **principal, counselor/social worker, school nurse, or teacher** directly to Child Protective Services.

### Steps to Follow When a Student Discloses Abuse

- **Take the child to a private space** where they can speak freely.



- **Allow the child to share their experience** without interruption or interrogation. Avoid leading questions—ask open-ended prompts such as, *"Can you tell me what happened next?"*
- **Remain calm and supportive.** Your reaction can significantly impact how the child feels about sharing their experience.
- **Affirm the child's disclosure.** Let them know you believe them and that it's okay to talk.
- **Maintain confidentiality.** Share information only with those who need to know.
- **Explain what will happen next.** Reassure the child that you will contact someone who can help and that they are not alone.

**Note:** Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect may result in legal consequences and disciplinary action. For more information or guidance, please refer to **MPSD Board Policy JGI** and contact your school administrator or the Office of Student Services.

<b>CLASSIFIED AND CERTIFIED PERSONNEL HOURS AND DUTIES</b>
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### **Certified Employees**

Certified staff members are expected to work an 8-hour day, with specific arrival and departure times set by the school principal. Adjustments may be made to accommodate transportation schedules or other school-based needs.

All certified employees must adhere to the district's procedures for:

- Clocking in
- Assigned duty hours
- Payroll reporting

Teachers are expected to remain on campus during the full workday unless prior approval to leave has been granted by the principal. (Refer to MPSD Board Policy GBRB for additional guidance.)

### **Classified Employees**

Classified employees are scheduled to work 40 hours per week, with shifts and schedules determined by their specific job assignments. The official work week begins at 12:00:01 a.m. on Saturday and ends at midnight on Friday.

Key expectations include:

- Employees must follow the work schedules assigned to their department or building.
- Any work that would result in more than 40 hours per week must be pre-approved by the Superintendent.
- The work calendar for classified employees is adopted annually by the district.

#### Compensation for Overtime:

Classified employees may be compensated for overtime at a rate of 1.5 hours of compensatory time for each hour of overtime worked, rather than monetary payment. All compensatory time must be requested and approved in advance by the employee's immediate supervisor and the Superintendent.(Refer to MPSD Board Policy GCRAA for additional information.)

### CONFIDENTIALITY

The Meridian Public School District complies with the **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974** and the **Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA)** in the handling, use, and disclosure of student information and education records.

These federal laws outline how schools and educational agencies may collect, maintain, and share student records. Under FERPA, school officials may access a student's education records **without parental or guardian consent** only if they have a **legitimate educational interest**—that is, access is necessary to fulfill their professional responsibilities.

Key expectations include:

- **Confidentiality is required at all times.** The misuse or unauthorized disclosure of student records or personal information by school employees or third parties is strictly prohibited.
- **Electronic access to student data** will be granted based solely on an employee's job responsibilities.
- **Student records must not be printed, transferred, or shared** unless doing so aligns with FERPA guidelines and is necessary for an authorized educational purpose.

All employees are expected to safeguard student privacy and comply with applicable district policies, state regulations, and federal laws. (For more information, refer to MPSD Board Policies **JR** and **JRA**.)

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Employees of the Meridian Public School District are expected to uphold the highest standards of integrity and professionalism in all aspects of their work. In accordance with MPSD Board Policy GAG, staff members shall not hold any financial interest—directly or indirectly—that creates, or appears to create, a conflict with their duties and responsibilities to the district.

Key Guidelines:

- Employees may not engage in any private business activities during work hours or on school property.
- Fundraising or selling of products on behalf of any organization (personal, commercial,

or charitable) is not permitted without prior approval from the building principal.

- These restrictions apply to all MPSD staff, both certified and non-certified.

Employees are responsible for avoiding any actions or relationships that could compromise, or appear to compromise, their ability to perform job duties impartially and in the best interest of the district.

## DONATED EQUIPMENT

All donations of fixed assets to the Meridian Public School District must be processed in accordance with **Board Policy** and properly documented.

### Procedures:

1. The **administrator or supervisor** receiving the donation must notify the **Fixed Asset Coordinator**, providing a description of the item and an estimated fair market value.
2. The donation must be **acknowledged and approved by the Board of Trustees** before it can be officially accepted.
3. Once approved, the Fixed Asset Coordinator will:
  - Affix a **district property tag** to the item at its designated location.
  - Add the item to the **district's fixed asset inventory**.
  - Record the asset as a **"donation"** and assign the **estimated fair market value** in the property record.

No donated fixed asset may be used or recorded as district property until it has been properly approved and tagged.

## DONATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

All donations and contributions made to the Meridian Public School District are considered **public funds** and must be accounted for in accordance with district procedures and **MPSD Board Policy DFK**.

### Guidelines:

- **All donations and contributions are public funds** and will be recorded as such in the district's financial records.

- Any **donation or contribution of \$500 or more** must be formally submitted using the **Proposed Gift to School Form** and forwarded to the **Superintendent** for acknowledgment and acceptance by the **Board of Trustees**.
- Donations **under \$500** may be accepted at the **school level**, but must still be documented and handled in accordance with district accounting practices.

Proper documentation ensures transparency, accountability, and compliance with state and district regulations.

## DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

In compliance with federal law and MPSD Board Policies GBRL and GBRM-2, the Meridian Public School District maintains a strict drug-free workplace policy applicable to all employees, including those working under federal grants.

### **Prohibited Conduct**

Employees shall not unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, or use any controlled substance—including but not limited to narcotics, hallucinogens, amphetamines, barbiturates, marijuana, or other substances listed in Schedules I–V of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. §812)—while on duty or on district premises. This includes:

- Any school building or property
- Any school-owned or authorized vehicle
- Off-campus locations during any school-sponsored activity, event, or trip
- Any location where work funded by a federal grant is performed

### **Substance Use Guidelines**

- Employees are prohibited from being under the influence of drugs or alcohol during work hours or while on district property.
- Use of prescription drugs is permitted only by the person to whom the medication is prescribed and only as directed.
- No prescription or non-prescription drug may be brought onto district property or used in a way inconsistent with medical guidelines.
- Alcoholic beverages are strictly prohibited on school property and at school functions.

### **Criminal Drug Convictions**

As a condition of employment, any employee convicted of a criminal drug statute violation that occurred in the workplace must report the conviction to their supervisor within five (5) days. This applies to all district employees, including those working in connection with a federal grant.

### **Consequences of Policy Violation**

Violations of the Drug-Free Workplace and Substance Abuse Policy may result in:

- Nonrenewal, suspension, or termination of employment
- Disciplinary action in accordance with district procedures
- Referral to law enforcement, where appropriate

Employees must comply with the district's drug-free workplace policy as a condition of employment. Failure to do so may lead to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

## **DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING**

In accordance with MPSD Board Policy GBRM-2, the Meridian Public School District is committed to maintaining a safe, productive, and drug-free workplace. Effective July 1, 2013, the district implemented the following testing procedures for all employees:

### **Types of Testing**

- Pre-Employment Testing: All new hires are required to undergo drug testing prior to beginning employment.
- Reasonable Suspicion Testing: Any employee suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol may be required to undergo testing.
- Random Testing of Bus Drivers: Bus drivers are subject to random drug and alcohol testing. Selection for random testing will be conducted using a neutral, random process, and selections will not be waived under any circumstances.

### **Notice of Medication Use**

Employees are permitted to notify the district of any current or recent use of prescription or over-the-counter medications prior to testing. This information may be considered during the evaluation of test results.

### **Reasonable Suspicion Defined**

“Reasonable suspicion” is a belief, based on objective evidence, that an employee is using or has used drugs or alcohol in violation of district policy. Indicators may include, but are not limited to:

- Direct observation of drug use or physical symptoms of impairment
- Erratic behavior, abnormal conduct, frequent tardiness, or a decline in work performance
- Credible and corroborated reports of drug or alcohol use
- Evidence of test tampering
- Involvement in or contribution to a workplace accident
- Possession, sale, or use of illegal substances or alcohol on school property or while operating district vehicles or equipment

All reasonable suspicion testing must be pre-approved by the Superintendent or designee.

## Positive Test Results and Consequences

If a drug or alcohol test result is confirmed as positive, the employee will be subject to immediate termination for violating the district's drug and alcohol policy.

Employees may:

- Contest the test results or provide an explanation within 10 calendar days of notification by submitting a written statement to the Superintendent.
- Request a retest of the original specimen at their own expense at a certified laboratory of their choosing.

If the employee fails to successfully challenge the results or provide a contrary verified test result, disciplinary action will be taken—up to and including termination of employment.

## Refusal to Test

An employee who refuses to submit to a required drug or alcohol test will be subject to disciplinary action, including immediate termination.

## Substances Tested

The district may test for, but is not limited to, the following substances:

- Alcohol
- Opiates
- Amphetamines
- Phencyclidine (PCP)
- Marijuana (THC)
- Cocaine

<b>EMERGENCY WEATHER PROCEDURES</b>
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At times, it may become necessary for the **Superintendent of Education** to cancel school or initiate an early dismissal due to **emergency situations**, such as inclement weather, utility outages, or other unforeseen events.

## Notification of Closures or Early Dismissals

In the event of a closure or early dismissal, announcements will be communicated through the following platforms:

- **Local radio and television stations**

- **District and school social media accounts**
- **District website and parent notification systems**

Employees should ensure their contact information is up-to-date to receive timely alerts.

## **Make-Up Days**

If a school closure occurs **without a state or federal emergency declaration** (Governor or Presidential), the district will issue **specific guidance on how the missed instructional time will be made up**, in accordance with state requirements and board policy. (For additional information, refer to **MPSD Board Policy AFC.**)

## **EMPLOYEE ARREST**

Any employee who is **arrested or charged with a felony or misdemeanor** must notify both their **immediate supervisor** and the **Director of Human Resources** as soon as possible, but **no later than 24 hours** after the incident.

## **Failure to Report**

Failure to report an arrest or criminal charge within the required timeframe may result in **disciplinary action**, up to and including **termination of employment**.

This requirement ensures transparency, protects the integrity of the district, and allows for timely administrative response.

## **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

The Meridian Public School District partners with Weems Community Mental Health Center to provide a comprehensive Employee Assistance Program (EAP) available to all employees — including their spouses and dependent children.

### **Available Services Include:**

- Outpatient mental health therapy for children and adults  
(Individual, marriage, and family counseling)
- Medication evaluation and monitoring
- Outpatient and residential substance abuse treatment  
(Provided through Weems LifeCare)

These services are offered at no cost to you and are strictly confidential. No information will be shared with the district, co-workers, or family members without your written consent.

### **How to Access Services:**

- Visit: [www.weemsmh.com](http://www.weemsmh.com)

- Call: 601-483-4821 or 1-800-803-0245

**For more details, refer to Appendix A: Employee Assistance Program Flier.**

## EMPLOYEE CONTACT INFORMATION

Each faculty and staff member is required to maintain **up-to-date contact information** on file with:

- The **building principal** or **department administrator**
- **Frontline Central** (district's employee management system)

### **Required Information Includes:**

- Current personal phone number
- Emergency contact phone number
- Current home address

### **Important:**

- **Any changes** to contact information must be **updated immediately in Frontline Central**.
- All official notices and communications required by **law, regulation, or district policy** will be sent to the **address on file**, and the district is not responsible for misdirected communications due to outdated records.

## EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

Employees of the Meridian Public School District are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects positively on both the school district and the broader community. This standard of conduct supports a safe, respectful, and productive environment for teaching, learning, and student well-being.

### **Guidelines for Conduct:**

- The dignity of all students and the integrity of the educational environment must be upheld at all times.
- Employees are strictly prohibited from:
  - Engaging in unseemly or inappropriate dress or behavior
  - Using abusive, foul, or profane language in the presence of students



- Such behavior will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action.

**Employees are held to high standards of professionalism, both on and off campus, and are expected to model appropriate behavior at all times. (For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GAB.)**

**See Appendix B: *Mississippi Code of Ethics for Educators***

## **EMPLOYEE IDENTIFICATION**

All Meridian Public School District employees are issued official identification badges by the district office. Employees are required to wear their badges visibly at all times while on district property to ensure a safe and secure environment.

## **EMPLOYEE PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE**

Employees of the Meridian Public School District are expected to uphold the highest standards of personal conduct, integrity, and job performance. To support this expectation, the District follows a progressive discipline approach designed to correct undesirable behavior through fair and constructive means.

Progressive discipline ensures that the least severe action necessary is taken to address concerns, with more serious measures implemented only when prior efforts fail to bring about improvement. When applied appropriately, this process supports both employee growth and effective leadership, contributing to a positive and productive work environment.

## **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY**

**The Meridian Public School District is committed to providing equal employment opportunities and does not discriminate in its policies or practices regarding compensation, terms, or conditions of employment. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, national origin, veteran status, non-disqualifying physical or mental disability, or any other characteristic protected by applicable law is strictly prohibited. Employment decisions are based solely on qualifications, merit, and organizational needs. (For additional information, please refer to MPSD Board Policy GAAA.)**

### **Inquiries and Complaints**

The following office has been designated to handle inquiries and complaints regarding the non-discrimination policies of the Meridian Public School District:

**Kimberly Kendrick  
Director of Human Resources**

## EVALUATION

All certified employees of MPSD will be evaluated yearly. Employees may check with their immediate supervisors for information in the evaluation guidelines. **(For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policies GBI.)**

## FIXED ASSETS MANAGEMENT

### Standard of Care and Liability for Missing Property

1. Employees assigned responsibility for district property must exercise reasonable care to ensure that all fixed assets are properly maintained and accounted for.
2. While public employees are not considered insurers of school property, they may be held financially responsible for losses resulting from a failure to reasonably fulfill their custodial responsibilities.
3. All employees have a duty to protect and preserve district property. Employees found to be grossly negligent or engaged in misconduct that results in the destruction, theft, or loss of district property may be required to provide replacement or compensation, as determined by the School Board.

### Enforcement

1. Employees may be held financially responsible for all equipment, furniture, and other fixed assets assigned to them.
2. Principals may be held accountable for all assets assigned to their respective schools.
3. Administrative heads and department directors may be held accountable for all assets assigned to their departments.
4. Any lost, stolen, or destroyed items must be reported immediately to Campus Police for investigation. The fixed asset assistant at the location will compile all necessary documentation, including fixed asset retirement forms, and submit them to the district office.
5. The School Board will review the report and determine whether the loss should be charged to the responsible individual or if no action is necessary beyond removing the item from inventory.
6. The value of lost, stolen, or destroyed items will be determined based on the original purchase cost minus depreciation, in accordance with GASB 34 (D-31, DIDA).
7. If repayment is required, the responsible employee will have up to three months to repay the assessed value of the item.

(For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy DPC.)

## FUNDRAISER REQUIREMENTS

The Superintendent shall permit fundraising activities deemed appropriate or beneficial to the district's official or extracurricular programs. The Board authorizes the Superintendent or his designee to approve all fundraising activities. All fundraising activities shall be treated as activity funds (**Policy DK**). When a school, an activity, or a club sponsors a fundraiser, the following procedures must be followed:

1. Whether initiated by the school, PTO, or any other organization, fundraisers require the Superintendent's approval via a Fundraiser Request Form.
2. The activity/club sponsor shall complete the proposal (Fundraiser Activity Form located in Frontline) and submit it to the Chief Fiscal Officer for approval.
3. The activity/club sponsor will supervise the fundraiser and report the results.
4. Funds may be spent only for the sole purpose intended and stated on the fundraiser request form.
5. After the fundraiser activity is completed, a report of funds raised/profit should be reported.

Fundraising activities conducted or authorized by the Superintendent for school pictures, the rental of caps and gowns, or the sale of graduation invitations for which the school receives a commission, rebate, or fee shall contain a disclosure statement advising that a portion of the proceeds of the sale or rental shall be contributed to the student activity fund. At a minimum, the statement must read:

**"NOTICE: This sale is being conducted as a fundraising event. A portion of the sale price will be contributed to the local Activity Fund."**

## GRIEVANCES

The Meridian Public School District provides grievance procedures for all employees, which are addressed through established administrative channels.

Whenever possible, employees are encouraged to resolve concerns informally. If a staff member has a concern regarding the application of Board policies, administrative practices, or working relationships with other employees, they should first consult their immediate supervisor or administrator.

If the staff member is unable to discuss the concern with their immediate supervisor or if the issue is not resolved satisfactorily, the formal grievance procedure outlined in **Board Policy** must be followed.

The formal grievance process outlines clear steps and responsibilities for both the employee (complainant) and the district. In order for a grievance to be considered, it must be initiated and progressed within the timelines specified by policy. All grievances must be submitted in writing and must include:

- A clear and specific description of the grievance
- The policy, practice, or issue in question
- The resolution being requested

(For additional information, refer to **MPSD Board Policies GAE, GAEA, and GAE-R.**)

**See Appendix D: Grievance Form**

## **HARASSMENT**

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is a federal law that prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. In compliance with Title IX, **no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination** under any such program or activity.

The Meridian Public School District strictly prohibits discrimination and sexual harassment of employees or applicants on the basis of sex. This policy also applies to non-employee volunteers working under the supervision of school authorities. Sexual harassment by employees or others acting on behalf of the District will not be tolerated.

### **Title IX Coordinator**

The District has designated a Title IX Coordinator responsible for overseeing compliance with Title IX and related policies. To obtain the most current contact information for the Title IX Coordinator, employees may contact the Superintendent, the Director of Federal Programs, or any school principal. The Title IX Coordinator's name and contact information are also listed in the District's student and employee handbooks and on the District website.

#### **Title IX Coordinator (Employees)**

Kimberly Kendrick  
Director of Human Resources  
(601) 483-6271

#### **Title IX Coordinator (Students)**

Dr. Jackie McFarland

Director of Student Support  
(601) 483-6271

### **Reporting Sexual Harassment or Sex Discrimination**

Any person—regardless of whether they are the alleged victim—may report sexual harassment or sex discrimination. Reports may be made in person, by mail, telephone, email, or any other method that ensures receipt by the Title IX Coordinator.

In K–12 settings, **any employee who receives notice of sexual harassment or allegations thereof is considered to have actual knowledge** and is required to report it immediately.

A school is required to respond to a Title IX complaint when:

- The school has actual knowledge of the harassment;
- The incident occurred within the school’s education program or activity; and
- The incident occurred against a person in the United States.

This policy does not prevent any individual—student, parent, employee, or official—from reporting criminal behavior directly to law enforcement.

Knowingly filing a false or misleading report of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation, or providing false information in an investigation, is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

### **Retaliation Prohibited**

MPSD strongly encourages the reporting of any discrimination or harassment. **Retaliation against any individual for reporting or participating in a Title IX proceeding is strictly prohibited.** Retaliation includes any action that would deter a reasonable person from reporting or participating in an investigation.

The District is required to maintain the confidentiality of the complainant, respondent, and witnesses, **except as permitted by law** to carry out the purpose of Title IX regulations. (34 C.F.R. § 106.71)

Violations of this policy—including retaliation or the harassment itself—may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. (For additional information, refer to **MPSD Board Policy GBR.**)

<h3><b>INTERNET SAFETY</b></h3>
---------------------------------

The Meridian Public School District (MPSD) recognizes that telecommunications, including the Internet, are valuable educational tools that support communication, innovation, resource

sharing, and access to information. Internet use must align with the District's educational mission, goals, and instructional objectives.

### **Policy Statement**

It is the policy of MPSD to:

- a. Prevent user access to or transmission of inappropriate material via the Internet, email, or other electronic communications;
- b. Prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity;
- c. Protect the personal identification information of minors from unauthorized disclosure, use, or dissemination; and
- d. Comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) [Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)].

The Superintendent is responsible for ensuring that all District technology and Internet resources comply with applicable federal regulations, including the use of filtering software and internet safety protocols. Procedures for compliance and enforcement of this policy will be developed by the Superintendent or designee.

### **Access to Inappropriate Material**

In accordance with CIPA, MPSD uses technology protection measures (Internet filters) to block or filter access to:

- Visual depictions that are obscene;
- Child pornography;
- Content deemed harmful to minors.

Filters may be disabled for adults or minimized for minors only for bona fide research or other lawful educational purposes, and only under staff supervision.

### **Inappropriate Network Usage**

To promote safety and responsible use, the District takes active steps to prevent:

- Unauthorized access, including hacking and other illegal online activity;
- Unauthorized disclosure, use, or sharing of personal information—especially of minors.

### **Education, Supervision, and Monitoring**

All MPSD staff members are responsible for educating, supervising, and monitoring student use of the Internet in accordance with this policy, the Children's Internet Protection Act, the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act, and the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act.

The Superintendent or designee will ensure that students receive age-appropriate training in:

- Acceptable standards for using the Internet;

- Online safety, including responsible behavior on social networking sites and in chat rooms;
- Cyberbullying awareness and appropriate responses.

Students will be required to acknowledge that they have received this training and agree to follow the District's Acceptable Use Policy. (For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy IJB.)

## LICENSURE/LICENSE RENEWAL

The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) requires each certified employee to be individually responsible for maintaining and renewing their professional teaching license. Certified staff have five years from the date their certification is issued to meet all renewal requirements, which may include Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and graduate coursework.

### **MECCA: Educator Certification Management**

All certified employees must create an account in the Mississippi Educator Career Continuum Archive (MECCA) to enter and submit their CEUs. It is the responsibility of each employee to:

- Track and maintain their own certification documentation
- Submit CEUs and other required documents through MECCA
- Contact the Mississippi Office of Teacher Certification at 601-359-2778 with any questions

### **Renewal Requirements by Degree Level**

For educators with a Bachelor's degree (Class A):

- 10 CEUs in content or job/skill-related areas  
*or*
- 3 semester hours in a content or job/skill-related college course (e.g., technology, methodology, cooperative learning)  
*and*
- 3 additional semester hours or 5 CEUs in a content or job/skill-related area

For educators with a Master's degree or higher (Class AA, AAA, AAAA):

- 3 semester hours in a content or job/skill-related course  
*or*
- 5 CEUs in a content or job/skill-related area

Note: Administrators should refer to the MDE website for specific renewal requirements pertaining to their licenses.

### **License Class Levels**

- Class A = Bachelor's Degree
- Class AA = Master's Degree
- Class AAA = Educational Specialist Degree
- Class AAAA = Doctoral Degree

If you earn an advanced degree during the school year, you must submit the required documentation to the Mississippi Department of Education to update your teaching license accordingly.

### **Salary Increases Based on License Class Changes**

To receive a salary increase due to a change in your license class level, you must:

- Submit a copy of your updated teaching license to Human Resources
- Submit an official transcript showing the conferral of your new degree (as reflected on your updated license)

#### **Important:**

Salary adjustments will not be made until both the license and official transcript are received by HR and the MPSD Board of Education has approved the change. Once approved, your contract pay amount will be adjusted and you will be notified when your updated contract is ready for your signature.

## **MISSED PUNCHES**

### **Certified Employees**

All MPSD certified employees are required to clock in daily to verify attendance. School clerical staff will review time punches each morning.

- If you are not reporting to work, any missed punch must be accompanied by a completed leave form.
- Repeated tardiness or failure to clock in may result in disciplinary action.

### **Non-Exempt (Hourly) Employees**

In compliance with Federal Wage and Hour regulations, all time worked by non-exempt (hourly) employees must be accurately recorded through the district's automated time and attendance system.

- Employees must **clock in and out** for personal errands and must take a **daily lunch break of at least 30 minutes**.
- If you fail to scan your time correctly, a **Missed Punch Report** must be submitted immediately via **Frontline Central** to your supervisor or administrator.
  - The report must be completed in full, including the **correct date, time**, and the **administrator's signature**.



- Your administrator will review and approve or deny the request before forwarding it to Central Office personnel for correction.
- Requests not submitted within **5 business days** will be denied.

### **Payroll Monitoring**

- **Payroll clerks** must run employee time sheets every **Monday** for the prior week to ensure all missed punches are resolved promptly.
- In addition, per the Superintendent, payroll clerks will run time sheets every **Thursday** to monitor for potential overtime.
  - This allows administrators to manage hours proactively.
  - Employees will be sent home upon reaching their scheduled weekly hours **unless overtime has been pre-approved** by the Superintendent.

### **Important Reminder:**

All employees must adhere to timekeeping procedures. Any missed punch that corresponds with an absence must be supported by a leave form. Repeated failure to comply may result in disciplinary action.

### **NEWS MEDIA CONTACT**

Contact with radio, television, or newspapers should be made with the permission of the administration according to the established guidelines. The building-level administrator and public relations director should be notified. No student may have contact with the media during the school day without the approval of the administrator or parents' permission. No employee should speak on behalf of MPSD without the Superintendent's or designee's expressed permission.

### **OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT**

Employees shall not engage in any outside employment that interferes with the effective performance of their assigned duties, compromises or embarrasses the Meridian Public School District, or creates a conflict of interest.

Employees are prohibited from engaging in private or public business activities during the hours required to fulfill their contractual responsibilities. Additionally, district materials, supplies, or property may not be used for any outside employment purposes. For further guidance, refer to

MPSD Board Policy GBRG.

## **POLITICAL ACTIVITY**

The Board respects the rights of employees, as citizens, to engage in political activities. However, school property and work time shall not be used for political purposes, except as outlined in policies governing the use of school facilities by civic and political organizations.

This policy does not restrict employees from conducting appropriate, non-partisan educational activities that encourage students to become informed and engaged in the political process—whether as members of a political party or as independents. It also does not prohibit the use of political figures as guest speakers or resource persons in the classroom when their participation supports instructional goals. For further details, refer to MPSD Board Policy GAHB.

## **PROCUREMENT CARDS**

Classroom supply funds shall not be expended for administrative purposes. These funds are designated solely to support classroom instruction.

Licensed teachers who are assigned to an instructional area of work, as defined by the Mississippi Department of Education, and who are not federally funded, will receive a classroom supply procurement card.

Procurement cards:

- Will be issued at the beginning of each school year.
- Will be allocated in equal amounts per qualifying teacher, based on the number of eligible personnel and the current state appropriation from the Education Enhancement Fund.
- Will expire on a predetermined date at the end of each school year.

Teachers shall utilize these funds in a manner that directly supports their classroom needs and aligns with the instructional goals of the school. Approved purchases include, but are not limited to, supplies, instructional materials, classroom equipment, computers, and computer software. Classroom supply funds shall supplement, not replace, other local or state funding provided for similar purposes. For additional guidance, refer to MPSD Board Policy DJEAB.

## **PROFESSIONAL DRESS**

Personal appearance has a significant impact on employee success and the learning environment. All Meridian Public School District employees are expected to present themselves in a professional manner consistent with their responsibilities and role in the educational setting.

Professional appearance promotes respect, positively influences student behavior, and reflects the values of the district. Each employee is responsible for maintaining high standards of grooming and attire to support a positive public image.

## Dress Code Guidelines

1. Employee identification badges must be worn and visible at all times.
2. Hair must be clean, neat, and well-groomed.
3. Clothing or accessories displaying patches, decorations, slogans, designs, or advertisements related to alcohol, tobacco, drugs, profanity, sexual references, or gang-related imagery are prohibited.
4. Apparel that references political issues, political candidates, or affiliated clubs/organizations is not permitted.
5. Employees provided with uniforms are required to wear them during working hours.
6. Male administrators are expected to wear long-sleeved dress shirts with ties.
7. Warm-ups, jogging suits, windsuits, sweat suits, and other athletic wear are not permitted, **except** for physical education, gym, or dance instructors.
8. Coaches and physical education personnel may wear loose-fitting shorts no more than three (3) inches above the knee during instructional time. Shorts are prohibited for all other staff members.
9. Spirit Days: Principals may designate **one day per week** as a school spirit/blue jean day. Special attire may also be approved for themed events such as Red Ribbon Week, homecoming, or testing days (this excludes safety officers).
10. Graphic t-shirts, except official school spirit shirts, are not permitted.
11. Virtual instruction: Employees are still expected to dress professionally when teaching or participating in meetings virtually.

***Note: This policy does not limit the authority of principals or supervisors to address dress concerns that may interfere with the educational process, safety, or the orderly climate of the school. If an employee is deemed inappropriately dressed, they will be required to correct their attire promptly.***

<b>Pants</b>	<b>Tops</b>	<b>Skirts/ Dresses</b>	<b>Shoes</b>	<b>Accessories</b>
Pants/trousers must have a hem or cuff. No cut-offs, cut-outs, and/or ragged edges are permitted.	Shirts/blouses shall not expose the midriff or back. Sleeveless shirts/blouses must fit the employee appropriately.	No mini-skirts, halter tops, backless, strapless, and/or cut-out/see-through dresses shall be permitted.	Footwear must be worn at all times and appropriate for safe participation in all job-related activities.	Noisy, distracting jewelry/accessories that could cause a safety hazard may not be worn.
Pants must be sized appropriately. No hip-huggers that reveal flesh are allowed. Pants must not be excessively tight or sagging.	Casual T-shirts (faded, sheer, out of shape, or inappropriately sized) are not allowed.  Graphic T-shirts are not allowed unless school spirit wear.	Tights/leggings are only permitted when worn under a knee-length dress.	Shoes traditionally worn around the home (slippers, house shoes, or beach slippers) or to the beach (flip-flop/shower shoe design or thongs) are prohibited.	No hats are allowed in the building unless part of the employee's uniform or religious headgear is required to be worn by the employee's religion.
No jeans or overalls of any color or fabric are permitted except on such days as designated by the principal.	Tank tops and spaghetti strap garments are prohibited when worn as a single garment.	Dresses and skirts should be knee length.	Tennis shoes that are clean and in good condition may be worn.	
	Shirts or blouses must be tucked in unless designed to be worn outside or of an appropriate length so as not to expose the midriff at any time.			In keeping with professional decorum, earrings may be worn and ears are the only exposed areas of the body on which pierced jewelry may be worn.

## PURCHASE ORDER PROCEDURES

1. Purchase Requisition must be completed (vendor/description/cost).
2. Employees must sign and submit the requisition to the school-site secretary.
3. Requisition presented to an administrator for approval/non-approval.
4. The school-site secretary requests orders through district accounting software from the Central Office—Office of Purchasing.
5. Vendors must be notified through a purchase order only to deliver items to the district.
6. The district warehouse will deliver orders to the school site.

## PURCHASING PROCEDURES

All purchases of goods, services, equipment, and materials for which the Meridian Public School District will be responsible must be made using an official **purchase order**, properly approved and executed according to **state purchasing law**. All purchases must comply with applicable sections of the **Mississippi Code of 1972**, as amended.

Purchasing must be based on **careful planning** to address both short- and long-term needs. All supplies and equipment must be procured through the established process using a purchase order signed by the Purchasing Agent and substantiated by a requisition recommended by the initiating staff member and approved by the appropriate supervisor or school administrator.

**No one is authorized to make purchases or charge any expense to the district without a properly issued purchase order.**

### Requisition Guidelines

All requisitions must include the following:

- a. A concise description of the items requested, including **quantities, pricing, and budget account number**.
- b. The **catalog number**, school/department name, date, and **recommended vendor**.
- c. Items of a similar nature should be grouped together when they can be purchased from a single vendor.
- d. Completed requisition forms must be submitted to the school/department office for appropriate signatures and uploaded to **Integrity** for processing.

- e. After a thorough review of needs and budget, the **administrator/supervisor must approve and submit** the requisition via Integrity to the Business Office.
- f. Disapproved requisitions will be returned to the originating staff member.
- g. Purchase orders will be **issued by the Business Office** and signed by the Purchasing Agent(s). The original purchase order will be forwarded to the school or department that initiated the request for verification.
- h. Merchandise will be shipped either to the **central warehouse** or the work location of the person requesting the goods/services.
- i. Upon receipt, **all items must be inspected**, and a **Receiving Report** must be completed and returned to Accounts Payable.
- j. The employee who initiated the purchase order is **responsible for verifying receipt** of the merchandise and resolving any discrepancies.

### **Quote and Bid Requirements**

- Requisitions **valued between \$5,000 and \$50,000** require a minimum of **two (2) written quotes**.
- Any **purchase exceeding \$50,000** must be **advertised for competitive bids**, per state purchasing laws.

### **Policy Compliance**

- No individual is authorized to **pick up, receive, or accept** any material, supply, or service on behalf of the district **without following the proper procedures outlined in this section**.
- **No substitutions or changes in quantity** are permitted unless **authorized by the Purchasing Agent**.
- **Failure to comply** with this policy may result in the employee being held **personally liable** for payment of the unauthorized claim.

<h3><b>TOBACCO POLICY</b></h3>
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The use of tobacco products is strictly prohibited on all educational property owned, operated, or used by the Meridian Public School District.

“Tobacco products” include, but are not limited to:

- Cigarettes
- Cigars
- Pipes
- Snuff
- Smoking tobacco
- Smokeless tobacco or any substance containing tobacco

“Educational property” is defined as any:

- Public school building or bus
- Public school campus or grounds
- Recreational areas or athletic fields
- Other property used for school activities or owned/operated by MPSD

***Note: This definition does not include sixteenth section land or lien land where no school buildings or facilities are located.***

Employees found in violation of this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Refer to MPSD Board Policy GBRM for more information.

## **TRAVEL AUTHORIZATION/REIMBURSEMENT**

All school-related travel must be **pre-approved** and follow MPSD travel procedures. To be eligible for reimbursement, the following steps must be followed:

### **1. Pre-Authorization Process**

- Complete the **MPSD Pre-Authorization Voucher and Leave Request Form**.

### **2. Required Documentation for Pre-Approval**

- Registration form for the event/conference
- Lodging confirmation
- Airfare/flight itinerary

### **3. Travel Guidelines**

- If traveling out of state by car, use **MapQuest** to determine round-trip mileage.
- Refer to the **Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration** website for current **meal allowance rates**.
- **Meal reimbursements** apply to **overnight travel only**.

### **4. Reimbursement Submission**

Submit the completed **travel packet** to the **Central Office – Accounts Payable**. Required documents include:

- Approved travel packet with attachments
- Hotel receipt
- Receipts for baggage fees, parking, or other reimbursable items

## SECTION 504

The **Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)** and **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990** prohibit discrimination against individuals with disabilities in programs receiving federal assistance.

A person is considered to have a disability if they:

- Have a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
- Have a record of such an impairment
- Are regarded as having such an impairment

MPSD **acknowledges its obligation** under Section 504 to prevent discrimination and ensure access to educational services for eligible students.

The district is responsible for:

- **Identifying and evaluating** students
- **Providing appropriate educational services** for students determined eligible

### **Section 504 Coordinator:**

Fred Liddell

Assistant Director of Special Education  
601-484-4963

## TITLE IX

In accordance with **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972**, no person shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity operated by MPSD.

### **Title IX Coordinator (Employees)**

Kimberly Kendrick  
Director of Human Resources  
(601) 483-6271

### **Title IX Coordinator (Students)**

Dr. Jackie McFarland  
Director of Student Support  
(601) 483-6271



## VIOLATION OF POLICIES

All MPSD policies and administrative regulations are established to support the **effective and efficient operation** of the school district.

- Administrators are responsible for ensuring that staff understand and follow these policies.
- **Continuous or willful disregard** of policies or procedures may be considered **insubordination and/or neglect of duty**.
- Such violations may result in **disciplinary action**, including **termination of employment**.

## WEAPONS

The possession of any weapon by a district employee is strictly prohibited on school premises or at any school-related activity.

This applies regardless of whether the employee possesses a license or permit under:

- Miss. Code Section 45-9-101, or
- Section 97-37-7

Exceptions only apply if explicitly allowed by law.

Employees in violation of this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees are also responsible for reporting any known possession of weapons by other employees to their:

- Principal or immediate supervisor, or
- Supervisor of the school-related event or activity

Appropriate action will include:

- Notification of law enforcement
- Removal of the employee from the premises or activity
- Prevention of admittance to MPSD property or events

Refer to MPSD Board Policy GBEN for additional details.

## WORKPLACE VIOLENCE

Meridian Public School District is committed to maintaining a **safe, secure, and respectful work environment** for all employees, students, and visitors. **Violence, threats, or threatening behavior** in any form will **not be tolerated** on school property or at any school-sponsored event.

### Prohibited Conduct

The following actions are strictly prohibited and may result in **disciplinary action**, up to and including **immediate termination of employment and/or criminal prosecution**:

- Making **verbal or written threats** that could reasonably be interpreted as intent to harm
- Engaging in **physical violence**, including hitting, kicking, pushing, or striking another individual
- **Damaging or attempting to damage** property on district premises
- Any other **acts of intimidation, aggression, or harassment**

Individuals engaging in such behavior may be:

- **Immediately removed** from school property
- **Prohibited from returning** to any MPSD site pending the outcome of an investigation

### Protective and Restraining Orders

Any employee or individual who has obtained a **protective or restraining order** that includes any MPSD school site or facility as a protected location must provide the following documents to their **principal or immediate supervisor**:

- A copy of the **petition and declarations** used to request the order
- A copy of any **temporary protective or restraining order** granted
- A copy of any **permanent protective or restraining order**

This documentation is necessary to help ensure the safety of the individual and others in the workplace.

## Section II: Compensation

### COMPENSATION GUIDE

#### Certified Employees

##### Teaching Experience Credit:

Nine months of actual teaching in a state-accredited public or private school is considered equivalent to **one full year of teaching experience**.

- Parts of a year may be combined to equal a full year.
- **Summer school teaching** does **not** count toward teaching experience credit.

##### Contract Completion Requirement:

Certified employees must **complete all contractual obligations** before receiving their final salary payment.

##### Salary Payment Schedule:

All certified employees (unless otherwise specified by Board policy) will receive their **annual salary in 12 equal monthly installments**, based on the current approved salary schedule.

For more information, refer to **MPSD Board Policy GBA**.

#### Classified Staff

Compensation for classified staff is set according to the current salary schedule. Starting July 1, 2023, all classified employees will receive compensation in 12 monthly installments.

### DIRECT DEPOSIT AND SALARY

#### DIRECT DEPOSIT

- All district personnel shall be paid through a **single monthly payroll**, with **electronic direct deposit** of net pay as the required method of payment.
- Employees whose employment ends during the school year—**for any reason**—will be paid **only for the portion of the term worked**. Final pay will be adjusted accordingly.

For more details, refer to **MPSD Board Policies DJC** (Payroll Procedures) and **GBA** (Certified Staff Contracts and Compensation).

<b>DEDUCTIONS</b>
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**PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS**

Compulsory deductions include:

1. federal withholding tax;
2. state withholding tax;
3. Social Security tax;
4. state retirement (PERS): Retirement benefits are paid each pay period. Effective July 1, 2025, the district will pay 18.4% based on the employee's gross pay and the employee contributes 9.0% of the gross pay;
5. bankruptcies and garnishments (when warranted);
6. child support payments; and/or
7. tax levies.

Optional deductions include:

1. Hospitalization Group Insurance;
2. Dental Group Insurance;
3. Cancer/Intensive Care/Life Insurance;
4. Tax Sheltered Annuity;
5. Salary Protection Plan;
6. United Way;
7. Meridian Mutual Federal Credit Union;
8. Mississippi Deferred Compensation Plan;
9. Child Care/Cafeteria Plan;
10. Medical Reimbursement/Cafeteria Plan; and/or
11. Vision Insurance.

<b>SALARY SCHEDULE</b>
------------------------

**Certified Employees**

All certified employees (except those specified by Board policy) will be paid an annual salary in 12 equal monthly installments based on the current salary scale. (The salary scale may be obtained from the MPSD website.)

**Classified Staff**

Compensation for classified staff is set according to the current salary schedule. Starting July 1, 2023, all classified employees will receive compensation in 12 monthly installments.

## OVERTIME FOR EMPLOYEES

### Certified

- Overtime compensation for certified staff shall be granted in the form of **compensatory time off**, rather than monetary payment.
- **Compensatory time shall accrue at a rate of ½ hour** for every hour of overtime worked (i.e., 1 hour of overtime = 30 minutes compensatory time).
- Employees may **not accumulate more than 240 hours** of compensatory time (equivalent to 160 hours of actual overtime worked).
- Compensatory time must be used at a time that is **mutually agreeable** to both the employee and the supervisor.
  - However, a supervisor's consent **shall not be unreasonably withheld**.

### Classified

#### Hourly Employees:

Overtime will be compensated based on the employee's standard hourly rate for hours worked beyond 40 in a workweek.

#### Salaried Employees:

The monthly salary will be converted to an hourly equivalent, which will serve as the basis for calculating overtime pay.

Overtime pay will be provided for all hours worked over 40 hours per workweek.

#### Employees with Multiple Jobs:

If an employee works two or more jobs within the district:

- Overtime pay will be calculated using a blended hourly rate, determined by dividing the total earnings for the week by the total number of hours worked across all jobs.
- The employee will receive one-half of the blended hourly rate multiplied by the number of overtime hours (hours worked over 40).

## Section III: Employee Benefits

### CAFETERIA PLAN

Meridian Public School District offers all employees a Section 125 Plan (a.k.a. Cafeteria Plan) through Allstate Benefits. Allstate Benefits provides ongoing employee support throughout the year as needed through third-party administrator AmeriLife. A Section 125 Administration Guide is available to all employees on the employee benefits portal provided by the AmeriLife website.

### COBRA

In accordance with federal law, Meridian Public School District employees and their dependents may be eligible to continue their group health care coverage on a temporary basis if coverage ends due to a **qualifying event**. This continuation of coverage is offered under the **Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA)** through the State of Mississippi's group health plan.

#### Qualifying Events

COBRA coverage may be available when group health coverage would otherwise be lost due to any of the following qualifying events:

1. **Death** of a covered employee
2. **Termination of employment** (for reasons other than gross misconduct) or a **reduction in hours** worked by the employee
3. **Divorce or legal separation** from the covered employee
4. The covered employee becoming **entitled to Medicare** under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act
5. A dependent child no longer meeting the eligibility requirements under the plan and **losing dependent status**

#### Duration of COBRA Coverage

The length of COBRA continuation coverage depends on the nature of the qualifying event:

- **Up to 18 months**  
For employees, spouses, and dependents when coverage is lost due to employment termination or reduction in hours.
- **Up to 29 months**  
For employees and qualified beneficiaries if the employee is determined to be **disabled**

by the Social Security Administration at any time during the **first 60 days of COBRA coverage**.

- **Up to 36 months**

For spouses and dependents who lose coverage due to:

- The **death** of the employee
- **Divorce or legal separation**  
A dependent child ceasing to qualify as a covered dependent

Employees will receive additional information about COBRA rights and enrollment procedures at the time of hire, during benefits orientation, and upon separation or another qualifying event.

If you have questions regarding COBRA eligibility or procedures, please contact Consuela Houston (601) 484-4923 in the **Human Resources Department**.

<b>EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM</b>
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Meridian Public School District provides access to the **Weems Employee Assistance Program (EAP)** as a **confidential, no-cost benefit** to support the well-being of employees and their families.

#### **Who Is Covered**

The EAP is available to:

- All MPSD employees
- Their **spouses**
- **Dependent children** (up to age 18, or up to age 21 if enrolled full-time in school)

#### **What Services Are Provided**

Through the Weems Community Mental Health Center, the EAP offers:

- **Outpatient mental health therapy**
- **Medication evaluation and management**
- **Substance abuse treatment programs**

There is **no charge** for these services, and there is **no limit** on the number of outpatient mental health visits.

**Note:** Day treatment, psychosocial rehabilitation, case management, and court-ordered programs are **not covered** under the EAP benefit.

## Weems Office Locations

Services are available at any **Weems Community Mental Health Center** location, including: Clarke, Jasper, Kemper, Lauderdale, Leake, Neshoba, Newton, Scott, and Smith counties.

*You do not need to reside in these counties to use the benefit.*

## Issues Addressed by EAP

The EAP can help with:

- Stress and anxiety
- Depression and mood disorders
- Emotional or behavioral concerns
- Alcohol or substance abuse

## Confidentiality

Use of the EAP is **strictly confidential**. Your name and information will **not be shared with the district** unless:

- You fail a drug or alcohol screen
- You are referred through a **mandatory supervisor referral**

In those cases, limited information will be shared **only with your written consent** via a release form.

## How to Schedule an Appointment

To access services, call the EAP directly:

- **601-483-4821** or toll-free **1-800-803-0245**
- Appointments available Monday–Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- For after-hours emergencies: **1-800-803-0245**

When calling, identify yourself as a participant in the **Employee Assistance Program**.

<b>EMPLOYEE HEALTH INSURANCE</b>
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All **full-time employees** and **bus drivers** are eligible to participate in the **State of Mississippi's insurance program for school employees**. Enrollment details and plan options will be provided during new employee onboarding or upon request from the Human Resources Department.



## GENERAL LIABILITY INSURANCE

Meridian Public School District carries **general liability insurance coverage** to protect employees in the responsible performance of their assigned professional duties. This insurance is intended to safeguard staff from legal liability arising from job-related incidents while carrying out district responsibilities.

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION

MPSD is committed to providing a safe and healthy work environment for all employees. However, in the event of a **work-related injury or illness**, the district provides **Workers' Compensation coverage** in accordance with the laws of the **State of Mississippi**.

### Reporting Procedures

If a workplace accident occurs:

1. **Administer first-aid**, if necessary.
2. The employee must **report the injury immediately** to the **Principal/Supervisor** once they are physically able.
3. The employee and Principal/Supervisor must complete a **"Mississippi First Report of Injury"** form within **24 hours** of the incident.
4. The Principal/Supervisor must report the incident to the **Workers' Compensation Coordinator, Consuela Houston** at 601-484-4923.
5. All employees involved in a job-related injury will be required to undergo a **post-accident drug and alcohol screening**.

*Failure to report an injury promptly may jeopardize eligibility for Workers' Compensation benefits.*

### Exclusions

Compensation may be **denied** if the injury, illness, or death results from:

- Willful misconduct
- Intentional self-inflicted injury
- Intoxication
- Refusal or failure to use prescribed safety devices or follow safety procedures

### Medical Bills & Compensation

Payment of benefits will be made in accordance with the **Mississippi Workers' Compensation Act**.

## **Return-to-Work Policy**

Meridian Public Schools is committed to helping employees who are injured on the job to recover and return to work **as soon as medically appropriate**. The district's **Early Return-to-Work Program** is designed to:

- Support the employee's recovery and job security
- Minimize time away from work
- Maintain organizational productivity
- Reduce workers' compensation costs

## **Return-to-Work Opportunities**

- If the employee is medically able to return to **full duty**, they will be reinstated in their regular position.
- If **medical restrictions** prevent a full return, the district will attempt to provide:
  - **Modified duties** within the employee's current job, or
  - A **temporary alternate assignment** that meets medical restrictions

## **Employee Responsibilities**

- Report all injuries **immediately or as soon as possible**
- Participate in medical evaluations and share updates with your supervisor and the **Workers' Compensation Coordinator**
- Cooperate with return-to-work assignments, including any **modified duty**, in accordance with your healthcare provider's restrictions

For more details, refer to **MPSD Board Policy GBRHA**.

# SECTION IV: PAID LEAVE

## EMPLOYEE LEAVE SCHEDULE

LENGTH OF CONTRACT	SICK DAYS	PERSONAL DAYS		VACATION DAYS
		CERTIFIED	CLASSIFIED	
235 Day Contract				
Less than 5 year	10	4	2	10
5 to 10 years	11	4	2	10
10 to 15 years	11	4	2	11
15 to 20 years	11	4	2	12
20 to 25 years	11	4	2	13
25 to 30 years	11	4	2	14
30 years +	11	4	2	15
220-222 Day Contract				
Less than 5 years	9	4	2	0
5 to 10 years	10	4	2	0
10 to 15 years	10	4	3	0
15 to 20 years	10	4	4	0
20 to 25 years	10	4	4	0
25 to 30 years	10	4	4	0
194 & 199 & 204 & 207 & 209 & 210 & 212 & 217 Day Contract				
Less than 5 years	8	4	2	0
5 to 10 years	9	4	2	0
10 to 15 years	9	4	3	0
15 to 20 years	9	4	4	0
20 to 25 years	9	4	4	0
25 to 30 years	9	4	4	0
187 & 198 Day Contract				
Less than 5 years	7	2	2	0
5 to 10 years	8	2	2	0
10 to 15 years	8	2	3	0
15 to 20 years	8	2	4	0
20 to 25 years	8	2	4	0
25 to 30 years	8	2	4	0

Note: 1 indicates the first year of employment. Example: 1-5 years means first through the fifth year of employment.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

All employees are required to report absences and complete a leave form for any time missed from work. Failure to report an absence may result in loss of pay.

- Leave accrual is based solely on experience earned within Meridian Public School District.
- Up to five (5) days of unused annual leave (personal or vacation) may be carried over each year and will be converted to sick leave, with no cap on the number of sick leave days accrued.

All leave must be approved by the superintendent, assistant superintendent, or director. School-level leave must be approved by the principal.

*Professional leave must directly support school and/or district goals.*

All non-sick leave must be requested at least two weeks in advance. Leave requests submitted after the absence has occurred may not be approved.

For more information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GBRI.

<h3>SICK LEAVE GUIDELINES</h3>
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Sick leave may be used in the event of personal illness or injury or in cases involving serious illness or death of a family member. Approved relationships include:

- Spouse
- Child or grandchild
- Parent or foster parent
- Brother or sister
- Grandparent
- Mother-in-law or father-in-law
- IRS-defined dependent blood relative

The Superintendent may also approve sick leave for the death of a family friend or non-immediate relative under extenuating circumstances.

### Documentation Requirements:

A physician's statement may be required for:

1. Absences on the first or last day of the contract period
2. Absences lasting five or more days, whether consecutive or not
3. Partial-day absences

Employees must use the Staff Absence Report to document the relationship to the ill or deceased individual.

***No certified employee may be absent more than 45 days in a contract year and still receive credit for a year of teaching experience.***

Falsification of leave reasons or documentation may result in:

- Loss of pay
- Entry in personnel record
- Termination of employment

### **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)**

Employees who have worked for MPSD for at least 12 months and have logged at least 1,250 hours in the past year are eligible for up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act for qualifying circumstances (e.g., birth/adoption, serious illness).

- Employees are required to use available paid leave (sick, personal, vacation) during FMLA leave.
- All used paid leave will run concurrently with unpaid FMLA leave.

For more information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GBRIA.

### **DONATING LEAVE**

Any employee of the Meridian Public School District may donate a portion of his or her unused accumulated personal leave or sick leave to another employee of the Meridian Public School District who is suffering from a catastrophic injury or illness or who has a member of his or her immediate family suffering from a catastrophic injury or illness, in accordance with the following:

1. The employee donating the leave (the "donor employee") shall designate the employee who is to receive the leave (the "recipient employee") and the amount of unused accumulated personal leave and sick leave that is to be donated and shall notify the school district superintendent or his designee of his or her designation.
2. The maximum amount of unused accumulated personal leave that an employee may donate to any other employee may not exceed the number of days that would leave the donor employee with fewer than seven (7) days of personal leave remaining. The maximum amount of unused accumulated sick leave that an employee may donate to any other employee may not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the donor employee's unused sick leave.

3. An employee must have exhausted all of his or her available leave before he or she will be eligible to receive any leave donated by another employee. Eligibility for donated leave shall be based upon review and approval by the donor employee's supervisor.
4. Before an employee may receive donated leave, he or she must provide the school district superintendent or his designee with a physician's statement that states that the illness meets the catastrophic criteria established under this section, the beginning date of the catastrophic injury or illness, a description of the injury or illness, and a prognosis for recovery and the anticipated date that the recipient employee will be able to return to work.
5. Before an employee may receive donated leave, the superintendent of education of the school district shall appoint a review committee to approve or disapprove the said donations of leave, including the determination that the illness is catastrophic within the meaning of this section.
6. If the total amount of leave that is donated to any employee is not used by the recipient employee, the whole days of donated leave shall be returned to the donor employees on a pro-rata basis, based on the ratio of the number of days of leave donated by each donor employee to the total number of days of leave donated by all donor employees.
7. Donated leave shall not be used in lieu of disability retirement.

For the purpose of this policy:

1. "Catastrophic injury or illness" means a life-threatening injury or illness of an employee or a member of an employee's immediate family that totally incapacitates the employee from work, as verified by a licensed physician, and forces the employee to exhaust all leave time earned by that employee, resulting in the loss of compensation from the local school district for the employee.
2. Conditions that are short-term in nature, including, but not limited to, common illnesses such as influenza and measles, and common injuries, are not catastrophic. Chronic illnesses or injuries, such as cancer or major surgery, that result in intermittent absences from work and that are long-term in nature and require long recuperation periods may be considered catastrophic.

**(For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GADF.)**

<b>VACATION</b>
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Only employees on 235-day contracts are eligible for vacation days. As shown on the Employee Leave Schedule, vacation days start at 10 and increase with years of service. (For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GBRI.)

<b>PERSONAL LEAVE</b>
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**ABSENCES REQUIRING PRIOR APPROVAL OR ARRANGEMENT**

All **licensed employees** are granted personal leave for absences caused by personal reasons. Leave is granted as follows:

- **2 personal leave days** per year for employees on a standard contract
- **4 personal leave days** for certified employees working **205 or more days**

### **Restrictions on Personal Leave Use**

Except under specific circumstances, **personal leave may not be taken on:**

- The **first day** of the school term
- The **last day** of the school term
- The **day before or after a holiday**

### **Exceptions Permitted by Law**

Licensed employees **may** take personal leave on restricted days if one of the following applies:

1. The employee's **immediate family member** is being deployed for **military service**
2. The employee has:
  - **10 or more years** of service in MPSD or
  - **30 or more days** of unused accumulated leave earned while employed by MPSD
3. The employee is **summoned for jury duty** or to appear in **court as a witness**
4. The employee's **immediate family member dies** or **funeral services** are scheduled for that day
  - *Note: These absences are charged to personal leave per Miss. Code § 37-7-307; no additional bereavement leave is granted.*

### **State Testing Restrictions**

Beginning with the **2014–2015 school year**, no personal leave will be granted during **state testing windows** at an employee's school site unless approved as an **extenuating circumstance** by the **Superintendent**.

For more details, refer to **MPSD Board Policy GBRI**.

## **PERSONAL LEAVE PROCEDURES**

### **Submit Leave Request Form**

Employees must submit a leave request in **Frontline Central** to their principal or supervisor **at least five (5) days in advance** of the intended absence.

1. **Approval Notification**

The employee will be notified of **approval or denial** based on availability and policy compliance.

2. **Emergency Leave**

In emergencies where prior approval is not possible, **verbal approval** may be granted by the principal or supervisor. Upon returning to work, the leave request must be **submitted in writing**.

3. **Holiday Leave Restrictions**

- Only the **Superintendent of Education** may approve personal leave on the **day before or after a holiday** or on the **first or last day of school** for employees with **less than 10 years** of MPSD service.
- Employees with **10 or more years** of MPSD service may take leave on restricted days **without Superintendent approval**.

4. **Conversion of Leave**

Up to **five (5) days** of unused personal/vacation leave may carry over to the next school year.

- Any unused personal/vacation leave **beyond five days** may be **converted to sick leave** with no cap.

## **Important Note**

Non-emergency leave may be denied if:

- All personal days have been used
- The requested day is before or after a holiday (and restrictions apply)  
**More than 10% of the building staff** is absent, and the absence would hinder the **educational process or work operations**

<b>PROFESSIONAL LEAVE</b>
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Follow the same procedure for personal leave, noting the reason for the professional absence on the form.

### **Professional Development Limits:**

Teachers—3 days per year.

Assistant Principals/Lead Teachers—4 days per year.

Principals—5 days per year.

Central Office Administrators—6 days per year.

Cabinet Members—10 days per year.

*These days do not include district-, state-, or federally-mandated PD.*

P.D. limits for principals, central office administrators, and cabinet members do not include off-contract or summer time.



## JURY DUTY

### Jury Duty

Employees summoned for jury duty will not have the absence deducted from their personal leave.

Procedures:

- Submit a staff absence request in Frontline Central
- Provide the “letter of attendance” from the court to the principal or supervisor, indicating the days served

For more information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GBRI.

## LEAVE ENTITLEMENT WITH LOSS OF PAY

Employees who have exhausted all **accrued sick leave** but require additional leave due to **personal or family illness** may be granted up to **ten (10) additional days** of leave at a **reduced pay rate**.

- **Certified Employees:** Substitute pay rate is deducted from the employee’s daily rate
- **Classified Employees:** One-third of the daily pay is deducted
- A **physician’s statement** must accompany the absence report explaining the reason for absence
- **After 10 days**, further absences will result in **full loss of pay**

## MILITARY DUTY

Employees called to active military duty (e.g., through a reserve unit) may be granted a leave of absence without pay for up to one year.

- Must be approved in advance by the Superintendent
- Requests should be submitted by March 1, or as soon as possible upon notification

**Refer to MPSD Board Policy GBRID for additional guidance.**

## RESERVE OR GUARD DUTY

Employees called to **short-term reserve or National Guard duty** will not have salary, sick leave, or vacation time reduced during this period of service.

## SABBATICAL LEAVE

After **six (6) consecutive years of employment** with MPSD, an employee may be granted **one year of sabbatical leave without pay** for the purpose of:

1. Pursuing an **advanced degree**
2. Participating in **educational travel**
3. Accepting **employment** to improve professional teaching competencies

### Important Notes:

- Applications must be submitted by **March 1** for leave or reentry
- **Sabbatical leave does not count toward retirement**

## PERSONAL TRAVEL

Personal travel that occurs on **regular school days** is not excused except in **rare and special cases** of unusual opportunity, and only with **advance written approval**.

- Deductions for approved absences will be made at the employee's **full daily rate of pay**
- Personal travel should otherwise be taken using **approved personal leave**

# SECTION V: Instructional Procedures and Expectations

## ATTENDANCE (TEACHER)

All staff members are to report as scheduled by the principal and clock in immediately. If you will be absent due to illness, notify the principal or person designated by him or her as soon as possible.

Staff members who are late must contact the principal's office for arrangements to be made to cover their duties until they arrive. Excessive tardiness may result in consequences including, but not limited to, a conference with the principal, a written reprimand, and/or suspension. The following action will be taken to address excessive tardiness every nine weeks.

Except in case of emergency, and with the principal's approval, teachers are expected to remain on the school grounds from check-in until check-out time and remain in their classrooms during class sessions or on their duty posts for the entire assigned time. The principal of each school will set duty hours.

## CONFERENCES

Meridian Public School District policy encourages open communication in all areas. Frequent conferences open many doors and create a well-rounded educational atmosphere. Five major categories of conferences and the corresponding guidelines are listed below:

**Principal-Teacher Conference:** Principal-teacher conferences will be held at the principal's discretion or upon the teacher's request. The principal will maintain a record of the conference.

**Principal-Student Conference:** The principal is the final school authority in matters pertaining to students. Each student's request or problem should be treated with respect and as being important to students.

**Teacher-Parent Conference:** It is the teacher's responsibility to take the initiative in scheduling a parent conference. The principal will determine the procedures and time. When a parent calls the office and requests a conference with a particular teacher, the teacher will confirm the scheduled conference according to procedures specified by the principal. The teacher will keep records of all conferences.

**Teacher-Student Conference:** Direct, open communication with students is conducive to appropriate student behavior and progress. Teachers should keep a record of the conferences. The principal or assistant principal will be present at any teacher-parent or teacher-student conference if requested and if he/she is given sufficient advance notice.

**Teacher-Teacher Conference:** Teachers (staff) are encouraged to cooperate directly on matters of a mutually constructive nature. Keep the principal informed.

## **A Guide for Effectively Addressing Parent Issues**

### **Listen**

- Allow the parent to share their concerns without interrupting
- Try to understand what caused the parent to be upset or concerned
- Empathize with the parent to view the situation from their perspective
- Acknowledge the parent's feelings

### **Acknowledge**

- Acknowledge the inconvenience or disappointment of the issue
- Express regret for what the parent may be feeling
- If the problem is not school-related, explain what actions may be taken. Offer support.

### **Problem Solve**

- Avoid arguing
- Ask probing and clarifying questions to understand what is causing the problem.
- Repeat the parent's concerns back to him/her for clarification and understanding.
- Explain the facts
- Emphasize what you can do over what you can't do
- Attempt to respond to the parent's issue or handle their request during the encounter

### **If unable to solve the parent's issue:**

- Personally contact someone who can assist the parent, if able
- Refer the parent to someone in the office, if necessary
- Take ownership by ensuring parent follow-up. Check back in with the parent to ensure the issue has been resolved
- Explain the benefit to the parent for actions taken
- Exercise emotional control
- Avoid defensiveness
- Separate the problem from the parent's emotion

<b>DISCIPLINE GUIDE</b>
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### **A. Teachers should:**

1. Be fair and consistent. Treat each student equally.
2. Be empathetic, accentuate the positive, and avoid the negative.
3. Be thoroughly prepared for all classes and have ample work for all students.
4. Let your classroom reflect positive qualities.
5. Be professional in demeanor and maintain a sense of humor.
6. Admit your errors and apologize if you make the mistake of treating a student unjustly.
7. Let the students establish a minimum number of classroom rules and help them understand why they are necessary.
8. Correct students to prevent minor problems from growing into larger ones.
9. Be considered on duty while on campus or at school functions.
10. Speak in a respectful, well-modulated manner.

### **B. Teachers should not:**

1. Punish the entire class for the misbehavior of a few.
2. Argue with a student.

3. Embarrass a student.
4. Refuse to consider mitigating circumstances.
5. Compare students with one another.
6. Become overly friendly and familiar with students.
7. Repeatedly show favoritism to certain students.
8. Challenge students to repeat an undesirable act or get themselves in a position of “do it or else.”
9. Administer unusual punishments.
10. Punish by leaving a student alone in a classroom, hall, or any unsupervised area.
11. Punish by requiring a student to write lines.
12. Make physical contact in an attempt to discipline. Do not place your hands on students in anger.

## DUTIES/RESPONSIBILITIES OF TEACHERS

### WHAT ARE NON-NEGOTIABLES?

Non-negotiables are the things we will not negotiate on. They follow our values and principles and define not only what we will and won't accept from others but also what we will and won't accept from ourselves. They are unwavering expectations. The expectations below were used to develop MPSD's Non-Negotiables Checklist for Principals.

### GENERAL EXPECTATIONS

**We will have consistent expectations regarding formal student responses during classroom instruction:**

- ☐ Expect students to speak and write in complete sentences, using capitalization and punctuation.
- ☐ Avoid slang (text talk) in speech and writing.

**We will build positive learning environments with high expectations for ALL students:**

- ☐ Cultivate a growth mindset: “With work, it will be easier. I may struggle occasionally, but it’s not due to my ability – it means I need to work on it.”
- ☐ Teach students to apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, empathize with others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (Social-Emotional Learning)
- ☐ Show students they are valued by establishing caring relationships. Every student should be known by name and interests, seen daily, heard daily, and valued daily.
- ☐ Support students and promote self-regulation vs. enabling/over-helping.
- ☐ Be proactive (preteach to misconceptions) vs. reactive (reteaching after failure).

- ☐ Provide ongoing building-level support for new teachers: training from CIA, district technology, and behavior support personnel.
- ☐ Get to know students through prior data so intentional scaffolding and intervention can be provided to prevent failure, not respond to failure: cumulative records, prior MAAP, IEPs, etc.

**We will set up our classrooms appropriately:**

- ☐ Have space/arrange seating for (1) small group teacher-guided instruction, (2) partner/cooperative work, and (3) independent practice/testing.
- ☐ Designate wall space for expectations, anchor charts, a word wall (grade 3+), a sound wall (K-2nd), and a data wall.

**We will ensure safe environments conducive to high levels of teaching and learning:**

- ☐ Create and monitor a space for teacher voice and input.
- ☐ Engage in PLCs based on DuFour's four questions and use MPSD's Planning Support Tool for district-approved HQIM.
- ☐ Monitor PLCs, implementation after training, next steps based on observation feedback, and student achievement data to provide support matched to needs.
- ☐ Protect instructional time.
- ☐ Plan, practice, and be prepared in the event of a crisis.

## CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS

**We will teach using an MPSD-approved curriculum and monitor the fidelity of implementation:**

- ☐ Use district-approved high-quality instructional materials for tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3.
- ☐ Beginning with the end in mind, create standards-based assessments and select graded work that will be used to inform teaching and learning effectively.
- ☐ Collaboration with sped teachers regarding where students will struggle and the likely misconceptions, then preparing on the front-end for necessary adaptations: visual, audio, small group, reducing #, etc.
- ☐ Tier 1 lesson plans aligned to state standards, assessments, and pacing guides.
- ☐ Tier 2 interventions matched to student's deficits, elevated focus on ESSENTIAL state standards, and delivered as intended.

- ❑ Tier 3 interventions matched to student's deficits, elevated focus on ESSENTIAL state standards, and delivered as prescribed by TST on the student's Tier 3 intervention documentation.
- ❑ Including literacy strategies, graphic organizers, and technology integration as appropriate in weekly lesson planning and implementation.
- ❑ Follow MPSD PLCs protocol, ensuring assessments are constructed before teaching and data are used to guide instruction.
- ❑ Students use anchor charts with "tips and traps" for essential standards. Students should be taught to use them during small group, partner/cooperative work, or independent practice /testing.
- ❑ Preparing for instruction, not merely planning.

### **EXPECTATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION in a Standard-Based Classroom**

**We will provide teaching and learning activities that reflect a shared understanding of what students should know, do, and understand and will be built around a common framework for instruction that consists of:**

- ❑ An agenda visible for students that follows the MPSD Instructional Routine and includes the following:

- Standards /learning targets written in student-friendly language
- Bellringer
- Whole Group Activities
- Check for Understanding after the Whole Group Lesson
- Small Group Activities
- Closure

- ❑ Tier 1 Lesson plans that follow the MPSD Instructional Routine and are available in classrooms include all components and follow MPSD's Instructional Models, bellringer to closure. Plans must be submitted on time, reflect HQIM, be personalized based on data (not a "cookie-cutter" plan for the grade), and include sped adaptations. Assessments should be attached to lesson plans.

- ❑ A separate lesson plan for tier 2 interventions for students placed in tier 2 using the district's decision-making protocol: submitted on time, reflect HQIM, complete and personalized based on data (not a "cookie-cutter" plan for all student groups), and include a plan for tier 2 progress monitoring (every other week).

- ☐ Collaboration between gen-ed and sped for pre-planned adaptations and co-teaching is noted in the plans.
- ☐ Shared response to student needs between gen-ed and sped: pre-teaching and reteaching, evident in gen-ed and resource plans. We teach students, not gen-ed and sped students.
- ☐ A lesson plan for resource classrooms.
- ☐ Use of question stems that mirror assessments during instruction.
- ☐ Intentional use of engagement strategies and monitoring of student engagement.
- ☐ Intentional, consistent use of “checks for understanding” throughout lessons to guide the next steps for instruction (scaffolding or addressing misconception, not lowering the expectation)
- ☐ Classroom displays of the following:
  - ✓ Expectations
  - ✓ Anchor Charts
  - ✓ Word Wall (or Sound Wall, K-2)
  - ✓ Data Wall
- ☐ Maximizing instructional time with bell-to-bell instruction and no downtime.
  - Students should not be allowed out of the classroom for any reason within the first and last \_\_ minutes of the period.
  - Distribution of supplies, transitions between activities, etc. do not delay or disrupt instructional time.
- ☐ Proactive monitoring of student behavior to maximize engagement and outcomes.
- ☐ Adaptations to guarantee access to grade-level instruction: visual, audio, teacher-led small group, and other scaffolding.
- ☐ Informally (and formally) checking for understanding to make necessary adjustments to instruction. This includes effective questioning, monitoring student work, etc.
- ☐ Meaningful feedback provided to teachers to improve teaching and learning...
  - using the Classroom Support Tool for tier 1.
  - using the separate WIN template plan for tier 2 intervention and enrichment.
  - using Tier intervention documentation, as prescribed by TST.
- ☐ Compliance walks are based on MPSD’s monthly focus.
- ☐ Monitoring technology for instructional purposes;
- ☐ Monitoring fidelity of Morning Meeting.
- ☐ Celebrating implementation successes, progress to goals, goals met/exceeded, etc.



- ☐ Analyzing intervention progress during TST meetings.
- ☐ Using mid-point and benchmark assessment results to monitor growth.
- ☐ Analyzing/monitoring growth on universal screeners.
- ☐ Monitoring fidelity of tier 3 intervention

### **EXPECTATIONS FOR BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT**

**We will provide evidence-based behavioral support to improve academic outcomes for students:**

- ☐ School-wide implementation of PBIS and Leader in Me in Tier 1.
- ☐ Tier 2 support for behavior.
- ☐ TSTs focus on the "whole child" rather than dealing with behavior and academics separately.

### **ASSESSMENT EXPECTATIONS**

**We will monitor the progress of our students and school in tier 1 by:**

- ☐ Setting SMART goals and tracking progress to goals at the school and class levels.
- ☐ Developing common assessments that are explicitly aligned to standards so standards mastery and progress can be monitored between district assessments.
- ☐ Administering benchmark assessments.
- ☐ Identifying students who are not meeting standards, meeting standards, or exceeding standards after each assessment.
- ☐ Adjusting instruction based on assessment results (differentiation).
- ☐ Analyzing data.
  - Tier 2 monthly in PLCs or 1:1 (school discretion)
  - Tier 3 monthly via TST
  - PLCs after classroom assessments, benchmarks, and universal screening for reteach/retest planning
  - Gradebook for the previous week's graded work.
- ☐ Maintaining a data folder/binder/online platform that includes the following

information:

- ✓ School goals (School Data Tracker)
- ✓ Class goals (Class Data Tracker)
- ✓ Student's previous year data and current year mid-point and benchmark data
- ✓ Response to BMA Data / Standards Analysis
- ✓ SPED Tracking Form

- ☐ Monitoring the use of technology for assessment purposes.

**We will monitor the progress of our students and school in tier 2 by:**

- ☐ Reviewing/weighing in on tier placement using MPSD's Decision-Making Protocol.
- ☐ Using data to identify deficits and addressing multiple skills/standards, primarily focusing on essential standards taught within the current or preceding terms. Using the Flowchart for Digging Deeper to ensure interventions are matched to deficits.
  - ☐ Engaging in tier 2 progress monitoring talks; this may be 1:1 during planning times, during a scheduled PLC for tier 2 monitoring, etc.
  - ☐ Analyzing mid-point and benchmark assessment scores to guide interventions and monitor growth.
  - ☐ Analyzing/monitoring growth on universal screeners.
  - ☐ Monitoring fidelity of tier 2 interventions: time, frequency, resources, explicit instruction, progress monitoring, adjustments.

**We will monitor the progress of our students and school in tier 3 by:**

- ☐ Using the Flowchart for Digging Deeper to ensure interventions are matched to deficits.

## **EXPECTATIONS FOR GRADING and COMMUNICATION**

**We will inform our students and parents about the student's academic progress by:**

- ☐ Consistently entering grades into digital gradebook.
- ☐ Goal setting with students.
- ☐ Having student/ parent conferences at least once per \_\_\_\_.
- ☐ Notifying parents of tier 2 placement and keeping them updated.
- ☐ Formally invite parents to TST meetings and follow up if they are not in attendance.
- ☐ Monitoring attendance, behavior, etc. via MPSD's Early Warning System and partnering with parents.

**We will support our teachers with by:**

- ☐ Providing meaningful feedback after classroom observations ( at least \_\_ per \_\_)
- ☐ Conducting data talks after mid-point and benchmark assessments, including standards performance and student performance levels/growth (Performance Levels at Benchmarks; Does Not Meet, Meets, or Exceeds Expectation after Mid-Points).

- ❑ Conducting monthly walkthroughs to identify trends and allocate support to needs via professional development, consults, collaboration, and/or coaching.
- ❑ Providing support in PLCs for tier 1 and tier 2 planning, tier 1 and tier 2 data analysis problem-solving, and preparation.

### **COPYRIGHT MATERIAL USE**

The Meridian Public School District's Board of Education intends to adhere to the provisions of current copyright laws and congressional guidelines. Copyright infringement is illegal, unethical, and contrary to the school district's policy. It is also the policy of the Meridian Public School District to adhere to the provisions of the copyright laws in microcomputer software. The principal at each school is responsible for establishing practices that will enforce district copyright policy at the school level.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trip request forms must be submitted to the building principal for approval before being sent to the appropriate elementary or secondary administrator for approval. Overnight field trips must be approved by the School Board.

### **ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNER PROGRAM (ELL)**

#### **Philosophy:**

The Meridian Public School District recognizes the need and the requirement to provide ELL students with linguistic and academic instruction and support services to develop English language proficiency such that, over time, they progress through school at a rate commensurate with their native-English speaking peers. To ensure educational efforts are consistent district-wide, the following requirements will be met:

- Language minority children will be allowed to attend school, regardless of their ability to produce a birth certificate, social security number, or immigration document.
- Language minority children will be placed within one year of their age-appropriate grade level.
- Language minority children will not fail a subject or be retained in a grade because they do not speak English.

#### **Identification**

The Home Language Survey will be completed during school enrollment to identify the students who qualify for ELL Program Services. Students identified by this survey as needing ELL services will be assessed for placement in the ELL program.

**Assessment**

ELL students will be tested for English language proficiency within the first week to ten days following initial identification. This assessment will reveal individual student's strengths and weaknesses to plan the student's academic placement. This assessment will include four areas of language: understanding, speaking, reading, and writing to ensure the student's language needs are properly identified and addressed. Before placement, parents will be notified, through communication they can understand, of the student's placement in the ELL program, the parent's right to visit the program, and the parent's right to withdraw the student from the program. As a part of exiting the ELL program, students will be assessed on functional abilities in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Multiple measures will be used since no single instrument can provide all the information needed to place and exit students from ELL.

**Programming Pullout**

Programming services will be provided for ELL students. This service requires the student to be pulled out of the regular classroom for special instruction in English. An itinerant teacher will provide pullout instruction for individual students or small groups as dictated by the number of students and scheduling feasibility. Programming will address the four areas of language: understanding, speaking, reading, and writing.

**Grading**

Strict adherence to a "letter" grading system is often inappropriate for ELL students. To ensure grading consistency between teachers and/or schools and to ensure ELL students do not fail due to English proficiency, the policy for grading ELL students in the Meridian Public School District will be "Pass" or "Fail." A "Pass" will equal 70% for ELL students who are less than proficient in a subject or course due to English proficiency. These students must be ELL program students, and the teacher may award a "Pass" with the approval of the principal only. NO FAILING GRADES MAY BE GIVEN DURING THE ELL'S PROGRESS FROM LEVEL 1—ENTERING THROUGH LEVEL 3—DEVELOPING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY.

<b>LESSON PLANS</b>
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- A. Teachers will prepare and submit lesson plans the week before instruction. If a teacher assistant is assigned, the plan will include activities for the teacher assistant.
- B. the lesson plan will include objectives, procedures, materials, assessments, and assignments for each class.
- C. Lesson plans should be placed on the teacher's desk in the substitute folder at the end of the day (except when the lesson plans are submitted to the principal for review).
- D. The teacher should provide the substitute with a neighboring teacher familiar with the class routine.
- E. Lesson plans for day one and forward should reflect grade-level standards/frameworks.
- F. Lesson plans should reflect continued instruction during the week of nine-week exams.

## **MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORT (MTSS)**

The Multi-Tiered System of Supports integrates Response to Intervention (RtI) for academics and RtI for behavior into a unified model that recognizes the reciprocal influence academic performance and social/emotional/behavior have on each other. The main goal of the MTSS is to be prevention-oriented by knowing which students need support and implementing support as early as possible each school year. Interventions will be evidence-based and targeted to the student's needs. Progress monitoring data will be used to determine when to make changes in instruction.

**TEACHER SUPPORT TEAMS (TST)** The Mississippi Department of Education shall require every school district to follow the instructional model which consists of three (3) tiers of instruction:

- Tier I: Quality classroom instruction based on Mississippi College-and-Career-Readiness Standards and Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks
- Tier II: Focused supplemental instruction
- Tier III: Intensive interventions specifically designed to meet students' individual needs. If Tier 1 and Tier 2 strategies are unsuccessful, students must be referred to the Teacher Support Team (TST). On those occasions when the Teacher Student Team (TST) interventions are unsuccessful, the procedures for assisting students considered at risk of academic failure will be followed. This committee will recommend improvements and/or forward the referral to the MET. This Board of Education-approved procedure is provided to principals, who chair the TST and is published in the District Policies and Procedures Manual.
- It is the policy of the Meridian Public School District that the referral of a student to the Multidisciplinary Evaluation Team (MET) will begin the State of Mississippi's process for determining a student's eligibility for special services. Under the provisions of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students should only be considered after appropriate instructional variations and interventions have been implemented in the regular classroom, the student continues to be "at risk," or if the student is obviously disabled. Teachers must conduct probes and submit results according to the timelines dictated by the Teacher Support Team.

## **Over-the-Counter Medication**

School personnel will not administer prescription medicine to a student unless the student's physician authorizes school personnel to administer the medicine and the parents/guardians have signed the Indemnity Agreement associated with this policy. The parents/guardians are responsible for obtaining a statement from the physician authorizing school personnel to administer the medicine. The statement should include:

1. Student's name
2. Diagnosis
3. Name of medicine

4. Method of administration
5. Time/s to administer the medicine
6. Amount of medicine
7. Date to discontinue or review administration of medicine
8. Physician's signature
9. Date

The parents/guardians are responsible for getting the medicine to the school. All medicine must be in a proper container with a label from the pharmacy which states the following:

1. Student's name
2. Name of medicine
3. Method of administration
4. Time/s to administer the medicine
5. Prescription number
6. Name of pharmacy
7. Date filled

**(For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy JGCD.)**

### SEARCH AND SEIZURE

When a principal or his/her designee has probable cause or reasonable suspicion, that school official has a legal right and responsibility to search personal belongings, desks, persons, cell phones, and/or vehicles for any item specifically prohibited by School Board policy. A witness should be present during any search. It is not necessary to give prior warning of a search.

The school official should seek cooperation from the student if a search is to be made of his person, requesting, for instance, that the contents of a purse or pocket be placed on a table for inspection.

Students are permitted to park on school premises as a matter of privilege, not of right. The interior of a vehicle driven by a student on the school premises may be searched if the school authority has reasonable suspicion to believe that illegal, unauthorized contraband items are contained inside.

### SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

- A. When the regular classroom teacher must be absent, it is the responsibility of the principal or his/her designee to obtain a substitute teacher. The principal or his/her designee must be notified as soon as possible when the teacher is to be absent.
- B. Classroom teachers shall not contact a substitute teacher.
- C. All substitute teachers will be obtained from an outside approved agency by the Meridian Public School District.
- D. Classroom teachers will maintain a substitute teacher file which remains in the classroom at all times. The file must contain any information that might be needed by a substitute in the

classroom (schedule, class roll, plans for instruction, current duty assignment, etc.). (For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GBRJ.)

## STAFF/STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS

It is the policy of the MPSD Board of Education to prohibit any sexual relationship, contact, or sexually nuanced behavior or communication between a staff member and a student while the student is enrolled in the school system. The prohibition extends to students of the opposite sex or the same sex as the staff member and applies, regardless of whether the student or the staff member is the initiator of the behavior and whether or not the student welcomes or reciprocates the attention.

### Staff Guidelines for Non-Fraternization

Staff members are expected to use good judgment in their relationships with students both inside and outside of the school context including, but not limited to, the following guidelines:

1. Staff members shall not make derogatory comments to students regarding the school and/or staff.
2. Staff members shall not exchange gifts with students.
3. Staff-sponsored parties, at which students are in attendance, unless they are a part of the school's extracurricular program and are properly supervised, are prohibited.
4. Staff members shall not fraternize, written or verbally, with students except on matters that pertain to school-related issues.
5. Staff members shall not text students nor participate in any student blogs.
6. Staff members shall not associate with students at any time in any situation or activity which could be considered sexually suggestive or involve the presence or use of tobacco, alcohol or drugs.
7. Staff members shall not date students. Sexual relations with students, regardless of age and/or consent, are prohibited and will result in dismissal and criminal prosecution.
8. Staff members shall not use insults or sarcasm against students as a method of forcing compliance with requirements or expectations.
9. Staff members shall maintain a reasonable standard of care for the supervision, control, and protection of students commensurate with their assigned duties and responsibilities.
10. Staff members shall not send students on personal errands.
11. Staff members shall, pursuant to law and Board policy, immediately report any suspected signs of child abuse or neglect.
12. Staff members shall not attempt to counsel, assess, diagnose or treat a student's personal problem relating to sexual behavior, substance abuse, mental or physical health and/or family relationships but instead, should refer the student to appropriate school personnel or agency for assistance, pursuant to law and Board policy.
13. Staff members shall not disclose information concerning a student, other than directory information, to any person not authorized to receive such information. This includes, but is not limited to, information concerning assessments, ability scores, grades, behavior, mental or physical health and/or family background. **(For additional information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GABB.)**

## STUDENT SUPERVISION

To the extent reasonably possible, all students should be supervised at all times throughout the school day from arrival on campus until departure at the end of the day. Nothing herein removes the discretion allowed to principals, teachers, resource officers and administrators to implement this policy.

1. Staff will be on duty during the school day to see all students as they arrive and leave campus, either by bus, car, or on foot. If you are assigned a duty post and are unable to be there, you must notify your immediate supervisor in advance so a replacement can be assigned to cover your post.
2. Staff will be on duty in the hallway and teachers will be standing at the doorway of their classroom; observing the students as they enter the classroom.
3. Students will only be allowed out of class for emergency or valid reasons. Usually only one student shall be allowed to leave the classroom at a time. All students will be required to carry a hall pass when they are given permission to leave for an emergency or valid reason. Exception: elementary campuses may routinely allow students to leave in pairs, but students must carry a note with them from the teacher.
4. During class periods staff will be assigned to be in hallways checking to ensure that all students not in class have hall passes and are going where they are supposed to be. Students who are caught without a pass shall be escorted back to their class and reported to a school administrator. **Middle and High Schools only.**
5. All staff will be posted so as they are able to supervise the entire playground area.
6. At dismissal when the bell rings, staff will be on their assigned duty posts to supervise a safe and orderly departure from the building, the grounds, bus loading area, parent pickup area and student driver parking lot.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION EDUCATION TRAINING

The Board of Trustees of the Meridian Public School District recognizes that suicide is a major cause of death among youth and should be taken seriously. It is the policy of this school district that in-service training on suicide prevention education will be conducted for all newly employed school district employees.

The board establishes this policy in an effort to take positive steps toward reducing student suicide through:

1. **Prevention.** To provide in-service training to all newly employed school district employees with information about the recognition of the signs of suicidal behavior; including, but not limited to, early identification and delegation of responsibility for planning and coordination of suicide prevention efforts along with steps for reporting students who they believe to be at an elevated risk for suicide.
2. **Intervention.** To take affirmative action when an immediate referral is warranted, such as when a student verbalizes about suicide, presents overt risk factors such as aggression



or intoxication, the act of self-harm occurs, or a student self-refers and to understand the emergency procedures when a referral is made and to provide support for students.

3. **Postvention.** To respond to suicide or suicide attempt, utilizing the district's crisis response, documentation, and reporting procedures.

Beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, the school district shall conduct, every two (2) years, refresher training on mental health and suicide prevention for all school employees and personnel, including all cafeteria workers, custodians, teachers, and administrators. This training shall be in connection with the Mississippi Department of Mental Health. The district shall report completion of the training to the State Department of Education. **(For more information, refer to MPSD Board Policy GADAC.)**

## TECHNOLOGY WORK ORDERS

All requests for technology assistance must be submitted via email to TechnologyTechnology. Tickets will be assigned to the appropriate technician and prioritized.

## VIRTUAL INSTRUCTION

Employees of Meridian Public School District are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will reflect positively on the school district and the community, thus promoting a positive learning environment for teaching, learning, and student well being.

The dignity of students and of the educational environment shall be maintained at all times. Unseemingly dress, conduct, or the use of abusive, foul, or profane language in the presence of students is expressly prohibited and will not be tolerated in person or virtually.

# Appendix

Appendix A: Employee Assistance Program Flier

Appendix B: Mississippi Code of Ethics for Educators

Appendix C: MPSD Complaint Form