



HOUSTON COUNTY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Building Excellence & Success Together

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK
2025-26

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WELCOME

Dear Faculty and Staff,

I hope each one of you had a restful and rejuvenating summer, filled with time for reflection and relaxation with the people you cherish the most.

As we begin a new school year, I want to extend my deepest gratitude for your continued dedication to the students and families of Houston County.

I am thankful for the accomplishments that we have achieved in 2024-2025 and look forward to the new challenges ahead. Each year brings opportunities to change, grow, and inspire. Your work matters more than ever so let's make this school year one of purpose, collaboration, and celebration.

Welcome back!! Let's have a great 2025-2026 school year!!

-Director, Scott Moore

BOARD MISSION, VISION, AND GOALS

Mission

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

Vision

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

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

Goals

Accountability

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

Facilities

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

Funding

Houston County Schools will acquire and maximize all available resources.

Health and Safety

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

Instruction

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

Staff Development

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

Technology

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

ORGANIZATION

TYPES OF EMPLOYEES

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

1. Administrative/Supervisory Personnel

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

2. Professional/Certified Employees

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

3. Support/Non-Certified Employees

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

BOARD OF EDUCATION

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

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

DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION

Houston County Board of Education Office

P.O. Box 209
Erin, TN 37061

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

Director of Schools
Assistant Director of Schools, Federal & Support Programs, 504
PK-5 Teaching & Learning
6-12 Teaching & Learning, Educator Licensure, Assessment
Special Programs (Special Education, ESL, homeschool)
Student Supports (Grants, Student Supports, Board Policies)
Attendance, Data, Technology
School Psychologist
School Nutrition
School Board Secretary, Benefits Coordinator
Payroll
General Purpose & Federal Accounting
Receptionist
Technology Assistant, Technician (office at HCHS)
Technology Assistant, Technician (office at TRES)

Scott Moore
Kelly Brown
Cindy Ryan
Nicole Douglass
Erin Roselli
Robin Fairclough
Josh Rutherford
Keli Rutherford
Rachel Shelton
Vickie Hutchinson
Jonna Moore
Teresa Roby
Amy Clark
Chris Ross
Randy Garringer

Houston County Bus Garage

3549 W. Main St.
Erin, TN 37061
Transportation Director, Grounds

Phone: (931) 289-4293
Fax: (931) 289-4843

Rick Chadwick

Houston County Adult High School/Alt School

3573 West Main Street
Erin, TN 37061
Director/Teacher

Phone: 931-289-5525
Fax: 931-289-5545

Jamie Bruce

Houston County Coordinated School Health/Family Resource

3571 West Main Street
Erin, TN 37061

Phone: 931-289-4159

Danielle Sylvain

FUTURE CHANGES

Although every effort will be made to update the handbook on a regular basis, The Houston County School District reserves the right to change this handbook and any content within, without notice, except as may be required by state and federal law. As a result, the online version of the handbook shall be the official version, and can be accessed on the district website at <https://www.houston.k12.tn.us/>.

GENERAL TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

ASSIGNMENT AND REASSIGNMENT

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

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

The Director of Schools may transfer employees as necessary for efficient operation of the schools. Transfers shall be non-discriminatory and shall not be arbitrary or capricious. Re-assignments (within a school or administrative unit) are made by the employee's immediate supervisor. For additional information concerning staff assignments, reassignments, and transfers, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.115*.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

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

For additional information concerning background checks, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.118*.

DISMISSAL OR NON-RENEWAL*

Certified Employees

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

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

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

Non-certified Employees

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

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT

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

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

EVALUATION

School Administrators

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

Certified Personnel

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

Non-Certified Personnel

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

For additional information concerning evaluations and grievance procedures, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.109*.

HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

Any employee who believes that he/she, or any other employee, student, or visitor to the school or District, has been subjected to harassment or discrimination shall bring the matter to the attention of his/her principal/immediate supervisor. Concerns may also be brought to the district complaint managers: Kelly Brown, Assistant Director of Schools/Director of Federal Programs (931-289-4148) or Josh Rutherford, Student Management (931-289-4148) per board policy. Both may also be reached through district email.

Employees shall not be subject to any form of retaliation for reporting in good faith. For additional information concerning reporting and responding to alleged incidents, see *Houston County School Board Policy 5.500*.

HIRING

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

A list of all District job openings is available at the Central Office and on the District website. For additional information concerning hiring, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.106*.

INSERVICE

Teachers are required to obtain five (5) days or 30 hours of inservice and should refer to the *Houston County Schools Professional Development Handbook* for requirements and opportunities. Non-certificated personnel will be provided a list of state and locally-required training by their building or district supervisor. Positions that are TASL-mandated (District Administrators, Principals, Full-Time Assistant Principals) are exempt from district inservice but must obtain and maintain fourteen (14) TASL credit hours from July 1-June 30 of each year.

PERSONNEL RECORDS

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

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

REQUIRED REPORTING

All employees shall report being charged with any criminal offense to their immediate supervisor within seventy-two (72) hours of the offense. The supervisor shall then immediately report the offense to the Director of Schools, who will inform the Board Chair as soon as practical.

RESIGNATION*

Certified Employees

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

Any teacher on leave who does not notify the Director of Schools in writing, at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of their projected return, of their resignation, may be in breach of contract.

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

Non-certified Employees

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

RETIREMENT

Employees eligible for retirement benefits may elect to retire at any age according to the provisions of the retirement system. An employee should provide notice of retirement to the Director of Schools at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the effective date, although TCRS recommends at least a ninety (90) day period to complete the process in order to receive retirement benefits in a timely manner. Central Office personnel may assist employees in securing retirement benefits, but the retiring employee is responsible for completing their retirement application at treasury.tn.gov. Employees who retire under TCRS may be employed up to one hundred twenty days (120) per year without loss of full retirement benefits.

SECTION 504 AND ADA GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

The District is committed to maintaining equitable employment and educational practices, services, programs, and activities that are accessible and usable by individuals with disabilities. To discuss concerns or seek resolutions related to Section 504 or ADA, contact the district complaint managers: Kelly Brown, Assistant Director of Schools/Director of Federal Programs (931-289-4148) or Josh Rutherford, Student Management (931-289-4148) per board policy. Both may also be reached through district email. He/she shall respond to all complaints within twenty (20) days with a written response as well as information on further grievance procedures that may be followed if the complaining party is not satisfied with the coordinator's proposed resolution.

For additional information concerning complaints and grievances, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.501*.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

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

- Minimum of 180 student attendance days
- Minimum of five (5) days (30 hours) in-service for certified personnel; five (5) days for non-certified personnel during in-service week as assigned by supervisor
- Two half (1/2) days for parent teacher conferences
- Ten (10) days paid holidays for all personnel, and
- Four (4) discretionary or “other” days

Other employees may be paid based on an alternate calendar (i.e. 11 month, 12 month, maintenance etc.). Questions regarding work calendars should be directed to the employee’s direct supervisor.

SCHOOL DAY

The minimum length of the school day shall be 7 hours for all grades (7:45 am-2:45 pm). All instructional staff shall be on duty at least seven and one-half (7.5) hours and such additional time at the principal’s discretion.

SUSPENSION*

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

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

allegations which, if substantiated, could constitute grounds for suspension or revocation of an educator license. Report shall also be made if the licensed educator has pled guilty or nolo contendere to, or has been convicted or otherwise found guilty of such offense or equivalent offense in another jurisdiction.

TEACHER LICENSURE

All certified employees shall be responsible for obtaining an educator license, verifying its accuracy, maintaining its validity, registering it with the Houston School Board of Education, and meeting the requirement of T.C.A. 49-5-101. In addition, it is the responsibility of all certified employees to report any name or address changes to the Office of Teacher Licensing at the State Department of Education and the Human Resources Department of Houston County Schools.

Certified employees are able to review and must renew their teaching licenses, add degrees, or endorsements at **tdoe.tncompass.org**. If you have questions regarding your license, you may contact:

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

TITLE IX & SEXUAL HARASSMENT

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

The Title IX Coordinator shall respond promptly to all general reports as well as formal complaints of sexual harassment and may be reached at any time by contacting Kelly Brown, Assistant Director of Schools/Director of Federal Programs at the Central office or emailing civilrightscomplaints@houstonk12tn.net.

For additional information concerning Title IX and sexual harassment, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 6.3041*.

WORKING ENVIRONMENT

Prior to July 1989, the Houston County Board of Education submitted a Management Plan to the Tennessee Department of Finance and Administration. The Management Plan details all areas where asbestos containing materials are present in Houston County School District and the manner in which the materials will be handled.

The Management Plan is available for public review at the Houston County Board of Education Monday through Friday from 8:30 A.M. to 3:30 P.M. The Plan is updated every six months with progress reports updated annually.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

ANNUITIES

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

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

DENTAL/VISION INSURANCE

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

HEALTH INSURANCE

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

LIFE INSURANCE

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

OVERTIME AND COMPENSATORY TIME

Houston County Schools complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) to determine eligibility for overtime. The system classifies all employees as either exempt or non-exempt based upon the job description and duties. Non-exempt employees must receive prior approval from the Director of Schools to work additional hours beyond their regular work schedule. Overtime pay for non-exempt employees will be paid at the rate of one and one-half times the employee's regular rate of pay for all hours worked over forty hours in a workweek. The workweek is defined as 12:00 am Monday until 11:59 pm Sunday. Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime or compensatory time according to the FLSA. For additional information concerning overtime compensation, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.602*.

PAYROLL PROCEDURES

Pay Dates

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

All employees will receive 12 payroll checks per contract year.

Direct Deposit

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

Insurance Deductions

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

RETIREMENT FUNDING

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

SECTION 125 CAFETERIA PLAN

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

The plans, administered by US Able, are based on group rates, and therefore afford employees the opportunity to purchase individual coverage at reduced rates. Each year during the enrollment period in the fall, US Able will hold open enrollment meetings in each school and Central Office during which employees will have the opportunity to add, delete, or change their elective insurances. At this time, employees also have the opportunity to begin participation, end participation or change their level of participation in the medical reimbursement and/or dependent care reimbursement plans. Any elections or changes will not take effect until January 1st of each year and will remain intact until December 31st of that same year. During the year, no changes may be made regarding pre-tax deductions unless a qualifying event occurs.

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

SALARIES SCHEDULES AND SCALES

Compensation for all employee types is established by the adoption of salary schedules and scales by action of the Board of Education. Salary schedules within Houston County Schools are available at the Central Office.

Certified Employees

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

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

Non-Certified Employees

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

TRAVEL AND EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

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

Mileage

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

Meals

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

Hotel/Motel

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

Miscellaneous Expenses

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

VACATIONS AND HOLIDAYS

Certified and non-certified personnel on a 200-day contract shall receive ten (10) paid holidays per year to be approved by the Director of Schools and included in school district calendar. Employees working variations of the 200 day calendar (including, but not limited to building administrators and front office staff, bus drivers and monitors, custodial staff, maintenance workers, and certified/non-certified central office staff) will be provided work calendars that reflect their vacation/holidays. Staff working beyond the 200-day contract may be required to reflect additional days in the MyBenefits Channel platform for verification and auditing purposes.

For additional information concerning vacations and holidays, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.310*.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

Any time an employee experiences a work-related injury, it should be reported to his/her principal or direct supervisor immediately. In addition, an accident report form must be completed and filed

within 24 hours of the injury and may be obtained from the Board Secretary at the Houston County Board of Education.

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

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

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

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

LEAVES

Employees shall inform their immediate supervisor of any planned or emergency absence as soon as possible. General information regarding the types of leave available is listed below. Please note that, for many types of leave, an advanced, written request is required. For additional information concerning types of leave, refer to *Houston County School Board Policies 5.301- 5.309*.

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

EMERGENCY LEAVE

An immediate supervisor may grant an employee emergency leave during the workday for a sudden, unexpected occurrence demanding immediate attention. Leave shall be taken as personal leave, sick leave, or leave without pay. The employee who uses emergency leave shall confirm said leave on appropriate forms the day after returning to work. Principals or administrative supervisors shall keep a tally of the amount of time individual employees are released under this policy, and when the total time reaches one (1) day, the employee shall be charged with one (1) day of applicable leave.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) is a federal law that provides eligible employees of covered employers with unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons.

Eligible employees may take up to twelve (12) workweeks of leave in a 12-month period for one or more of the following reasons:

1. the birth of a child;
2. the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
3. a serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his/her job position;
4. the care of a spouse, child, or parent of the employee who has a serious health condition; and
5. any qualifying circumstances arising out of the fact that a spouse, child, or parent of the employee is on covered active duty or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty in the Armed Forces.

Eligible employees may take FMLA leave intermittently. When an employee requests foreseeable leave for planned medical treatment and the employee would be on leave for greater than twenty percent (20%) of the total number of working days in the period during which the leave would extend, the school district may require that such employee elect either to take the leave for periods of a particular duration, not to exceed the duration of the planned medical treatment, or to transfer temporarily to an available alternative position offered by the school district for which the employee is qualified and that has equivalent pay and benefits and better accommodates recurring periods of leave.

JURY DUTY LEAVE

If an employee is summoned for jury duty, they shall present written evidence that they have been summoned to serve on a jury. The employee shall be entitled to the usual compensation, less the amount paid by the court.

LONG TERM LEAVE OF ABSENCE

All leaves shall be requested in writing at least thirty (30) days in advance on forms provided by the Director of Schools. The thirty (30)-day notice may be waived or reduced by the Director of Schools upon submission of a certified statement by a physician. The application for leave forms shall require:

1. A description of the type of leave requested;
2. The requested dates for beginning and ending the leave; and
3. A statement of intent to return to the position from which leave is granted.

Each request for leave must be acted upon by the Director of Schools within fifteen (15) days. Each applicant shall be notified in writing of the action of the director and the beginning and ending dates of the leave which is granted.

Positions vacated for less than twelve (12) months by teachers on leave shall be filled with an interim teacher while the teacher is on leave. If the teacher returns from leave within twelve (12) months, the interim teacher shall relinquish the position. If the leave exceeds twelve (12) months, the teacher shall be placed in the same or a comparable position upon return.

Any teacher on leave shall notify the Director of Schools at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of return if the teacher does not intend to return to the position from which he/she is on leave. Failure to give such notice shall be considered breach of contract. Employees on extended leave who plan to

return the next school year shall notify the Director of Schools/designee in writing of their intention to return to work by May 30 of the current school year.

MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE

FMLA leave shall run concurrently with leave provided under the Tennessee Maternity Act, which affords eligible employees leave for a period not to exceed four (4) months for the adoption, pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing of a newborn child.

Spouses who are both eligible employees of the school district are limited to a combined total of twelve (12) workweeks of FMLA leave in a single twelve (12) month period if the leave is taken for the birth and care of a newborn child, for the placement of a child for adoption or foster care, or to care for a parent who has a serious health condition. Under certain circumstances, spouses who share leave for the birth or adoption of a child may be eligible for limited amounts of additional leave for other qualifying FMLA reasons.

Under state law, an additional six (6) work weeks of paid leave is available to eligible employees after a birth, stillbirth, or adoption of a newly placed minor child. An eligible employee taking leave under this provision shall not be required to utilize any other type of accrued leave during this period. Eligible employees include teachers, principals, supervisors, or other individuals required by law to hold a valid license of qualification for employment and who meet the following requirements:

- a. Possess a valid license or an emergency credential issued by the Department of Education per TCA 49-5-106, required for the position the employee holds;
- b. Have been employed with the district full time for at least twelve (12) consecutive months in a position for which the employee is required by law to hold the license or an emergency credential referenced above at the time of the qualifying event; and
- c. Have held a valid license or an emergency credential issued by the Department of Education per TCA 49-5-106 for the entire twelve consecutive months of fulltime employment.

Employees shall provide notice to the school district thirty (30) days prior to the intended use of the leave. If the employee learns about the need for leave less than thirty (30) days in advance, the employee shall give notice as soon as reasonably possible in order to be eligible for the paid leave. This paid leave shall be either: (1) taken consecutively, except in extenuating circumstances, as determined by the Director of Schools; or (2) taken nonconsecutively, but in increments of no less than one (1) week. The paid leave shall be used within twelve (12) months of the qualifying event and shall run concurrently with FMLA leave.

MILITARY LEAVE

Military leave shall be granted in accordance with state law and board policy. Employees are responsible for notifying their immediate supervisor of the relevant dates. A copy of the orders for duty, including the dates of departure and return, shall be submitted to the Director of Schools prior to, or simultaneous with, requesting leave.

PERSONAL LEAVE

Certified Employees

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

Non-Certified Employees

Non-Certified employees receive 2 personal leave days a year. A maximum of two (2) unused personal leave days will be credited to the employee's sick leave at the end of each year. Requests for personal day usage must be submitted to the employee's immediate supervisor.

Requests for personal leave are subject to the following conditions:

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

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

PHYSICAL ASSAULT LEAVE

Physical assault leave shall be grant to teachers who are absent from assigned duties as a result of personal injury caused by physical assault or other violent criminal acts committed in the course of the teacher's employment duties. Teachers utilizing this type of leave shall receive his/her full salary and full benefits until released by his/her physician to return to work or his/her physician determines the teacher is permanently unable to return to work. If the teacher receives workers' compensation or other similar benefits, the Board shall pay the difference between that amount and the teacher's full salary.

A signed statement listing the cause of the absence shall be provided by the employee on forms furnished by the Director of Schools and shall promptly be given to the immediate supervisor in support of all claims. A certificate from the physician on forms furnished by the Director of Schools may also be required to verify the extent of the injury.

PROFESSIONAL LEAVE

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

SICK LEAVE

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

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

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

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

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

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

Certified Employees

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

Non-Certified Employees

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

SICK LEAVE INCENTIVE PAY

Certified Staff

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

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

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

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

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

Bus Drivers

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

UNPAID LEAVE

Leave without pay may be granted upon written request to the principal.

EMPLOYEE RULES AND CONDUCT

ATTENDANCE

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

ASSAULTS AND THREATS OF VIOLENCE

Employees shall report all threats (oral, written, or electronic) to their immediate supervisor. Threats will be handled in accordance with relevant Board policy. Employees who are assaulted by a student have the right to file a report as a private citizen with the appropriate law enforcement agency and judicial authorities and may be entitled to paid leave. Assault of an employee will be handled in accordance with relevant Board and discipline policy. For additional information concerning physical assault leave for employees, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.307*.

BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGEN TRAINING

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

BUILDING KEYS/DIGITAL BUILDING ACCESS

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

- The duplication of keys is prohibited.
- Keys are not to be left on desks, tables, in mailboxes or in other unsecure areas.

- Keys may not be loaned to students or individuals. Lost or stolen keys must be reported to the school principal or the employee's immediate supervisor within 24 hours of discovery of the loss or theft so that measures may be taken to protect Houston County Schools' property.
- Charges for lost or stolen keys will be made to the employee to whom the key(s) have been issued. Loss of digital access devices will result in a replacement fee of \$5/incident; loss of a building/classroom key will be assessed at a fee based on current cost of re-securing the building.
- All keys are to be checked in at the end of the school year. Staff members with summer duties requiring building access may make arrangements with the school principal to keep their keys as appropriate.
- This policy also applies to keys to all athletic facilities.

CASH COLLECTION

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

CELLULAR PHONE/ELECTRONIC DEVICE USAGE

Employee's personal cellular phone/electronic devices are **not to be used for personal use during instructional time and school related meetings** in order to focus time and attention on the business of Houston County Schools. Use of personal phone/electronic devices for official use must comply with local and state policy and must be approved by the relevant school/district administrator.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

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

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

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

CLASSROOM AND OFFICE SECURITY

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

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

CONFIDENTIALITY

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

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

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

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

1. The student;
2. The student's parent(s)/guardian(s); and
3. Other District employees with a legitimate educational interest.

COPYRIGHT AND FAIR USE

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (DOT) PHYSICALS

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

DRESS CODE

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

- long coverings over fitted leggings/jeggings;
- skirts or shorts at knee length;
- pants or jeans without holes;
- clothing without inappropriate writing, slogans, or images;

- shirts with sleeves that cover undergarments and that are long enough to cover the waist

DRUG-FREE/ALCOHOL-FREE SCHOOLS

No employee, while on or in the workplace, shall unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, use, or be under the influence of any illegal or unauthorized drugs or any alcohol.

Any employee who violates this in the workplace shall be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to, suspension, termination, and/or referral for prosecution.

Any employee may be required to submit to substance screening if there is reasonable suspicion of impairment.

For additional information concerning drug-free/alcohol free schools and drug/alcohol testing of employees, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 1.804 and 5.403*.

ETHICS

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

FUNDRAISING

All schoolwide fundraising activities shall be approved by the Board. Requests shall be submitted through principals. Employees shall not engage in online fundraising for educational purposes on an individual basis or make any reference to non-school sponsored fundraisers, online or otherwise, that would lead another to believe such activity is an approved school fundraiser.

Per board policy, an employee may be authorized to raise and use funds for the following noneducational purposes if approved by the principal:

1. Bereavement support;
2. Award recognition;
3. Employee morale;
4. Banquets; or
5. Other situations at the principal's discretion.

These funds shall be derived from vending machine revenue, donations, or other sources approved by the administrator. No student shall be compelled to participate in or meet any kind of quota in a fundraising activity.

For additional information concerning fundraising, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 2.601*.

GIFTS

District employees should not accept gifts from students unless the gifts are of a token value. Employees should not give gifts of material value to staff members who serve in a supervisory capacity.

For additional information concerning staff gifts, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.605*.

ID BADGES

Employees are issued an ID badge which must be worn at all times while on the job or on any school grounds during the work day. Employees must return the badge upon resigning or upon termination of employment. Lost or damaged badges will be replaced at the expense of the employee at a cost of \$5 per incident.

INCLEMENT WEATHER ATTENDANCE

Schools Closed

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

All Central Office staff will report to work at the discretion of the Director of Schools.

Delay in Starting Time

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

Early Dismissal

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

MEALS

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

NON SCHOOL EMPLOYMENT

Certified employees should not perform any duties related to an outside job during his/her regular working hours or use any district facilities, equipment, or materials in performing outside work. Outside employment should not interfere with the employee's completion of regular or additional duties, reflect poorly on the school district, or result in pay for work that is customarily within their regular position.

Teachers entering into an agreement with parents/guardians to tutor children for a fee may not do so with students they are currently teaching. Private tutoring for pay may not occur within school facilities.

Non-certified employees may hold outside employment as long as it does not interfere with their regular and overtime scheduled duties for the school district.

For additional information concerning non-school employment, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.607 and Houston County School Board Policy 5.608*.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Employees have a right to express their views on any issue but shall, in each case, make clear that the view expressed is not the official view of the Board or District. Employees may, on their own time, campaign for or against any candidate or referendum but are prohibited from using District-owned property to engage in political activity. For additional information concerning political activities by employees, refer to *Houston County School Board Policy 5.606*.

REMOTE LEARNING PROTOCOLS

Houston County School District may provide up to two days, per semester, of the required 180 days of classroom instruction through remote instruction in the event of dangerous or extreme weather conditions, serious outbreaks of illness, or during required TCAP, end-of-course, and ACT testing. Remote instruction is defined as “instruction that takes place when a teacher does not provide in-person instruction to students within the traditional class setting.” Remote instruction must provide:

- students enrolled in kindergarten access to at least four hours of instruction each day; and
- students enrolled in grades 1-12 access to at least 6 ½ hours of instruction each day.

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

SOLICITATIONS

Employees shall not use their position for personal gain by soliciting students or fellow employees. Employees shall not be responsible for the collection of any money or the distribution of any fundraising materials within the schools unless such activity has the Director of Schools' written approval. Employees shall not provide a list of parent(s)/guardian(s), students, or employees for solicitation or other purposes without the prior approval of the Director of Schools.

STAFF MEETINGS

In accordance with *Houston County School Board Policy 5.603*, staff meetings shall be held in each school for the purpose of promoting school improvement and professional growth and may be conducted by the principal, teachers, or committees.

All staff members are expected to attend all meetings called by the administration and all in-service programs designed to improve the total school, unless excused by the person calling the meeting.

Staff meetings may include, but not be limited to:

1. Meetings of the entire staff of the school;
2. Meetings of teachers in the same subject area or on the same grade level;
3. System-wide/school-level in-service meetings; and
4. Committee meetings dealing with specific issues.

STAFF-STUDENT RELATIONS

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

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

TECHNOLOGY USE

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

All staff with access to the system-wide network must adhere to the following guidelines when sending or receiving messages via system-wide electronic mail (e-mail):

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

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

- Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures
- Using obscene language
- Harassing, insulting, defaming or attacking others
- Damaging computers, computer systems or networks
- Hacking or attempting unauthorized access to any computer
- Violation of copyright laws
- Trespassing in another's folders, work or files
- Intentional misuse of resources
- Buying or selling on the Internet during regular business hours
- Using another's password/ID's or sharing personal passwords
- Use of the network for commercial purposes
- Personal electronic accounts
- Personal social media accounts

TOBACCO PRODUCTS

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

USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES

Activities sponsored by approved student organizations may utilize school facilities without charge subject to approval by the principal. Use of facilities by school staff representing a community group is permitted in accordance with *Houston County School Board Policy 3.206*.

USE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY

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

VEHICLES- PRIVATE

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

VEHICLES- SCHOOL DISTRICT

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

VENDOR RELATIONS

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

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

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

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

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

VISITORS TO THE SCHOOLS

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

The principal has the authority to exclude visitors from school property who fail to comply with the *Visitor Code of Conduct*. Specifically, actions that are prohibited include but are not limited to:

1. Cursing and use of obscenities;
2. Disrupting or threatening to disrupt school or office operations;
3. Acting in an unsafe manner that could threaten the health or safety of others;
4. Verbal or written statements or gestures indicating intent to harm an individual or property; and
5. Physical attacks intended to harm an individual or substantially damage property.

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

WEAPONS

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

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

WORKPLACE CONDUCT

All employees within the school district shall treat all other employees with respect and shall not engage in threatening, violent, intimidating or other abusive conduct or behaviors. Employees may report abusive conduct to their immediate supervisor or Assistant Director of Schools if their immediate supervisor is named in the complaint. For additional information, see *Houston County School Board Policy 5.5001*.

APPENDIX

Acceptable Use Policy for Employees
Child Abuse Reporting Procedures and Indicator
Code of Ethics
Salary Change Based on Advanced Degree Notification Form
2025-26 Approved Calendar
2025-26 Assessment Calendar
Acknowledgement and Signature Page

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

EMPLOYEE ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR TECHNOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The Employee Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) establishes clear, consistent expectations for the responsible, ethical, and secure use of Houston County School District (HCSD) technology resources. Its goals are to:

- safeguard district data, networks, and devices against misuse, loss, and unauthorized access;
- uphold federal and Tennessee laws and regulations governing privacy, records retention, copyright, accessibility, and student data (e.g., FERPA, HIPAA, COPPA, § 49-2-203);
- ensure that all technology use directly supports HCSD’s mission of providing high-quality instruction and efficient district operations;
- outline employee rights and responsibilities, including the district’s right to monitor, audit, and disclose electronic information; and
- provide a basis for training, annual acknowledgment, and progressive discipline when violations occur.

Scope

This policy applies to all HCSD employees, including certified, classified, contracted service providers, interns, substitutes, and volunteers, whenever they access or handle district information or systems. It covers:

- All devices: district-issued computers, tablets, phones, peripherals, and personally owned devices (BYOD) when connected to HCSD networks, cloud services, or used for district business;
- All networks and services: on-campus wired and wireless networks, remote connections (VPN), district-approved cloud and AI platforms, email, learning-management systems, and any third-party applications approved for instructional or administrative use;
- All locations and times: on school property, at off-site events, during remote work, and outside regular work hours when conducting district business; and
- All data types: staff and student records, financial data, intellectual property, multimedia content, and any other information created, stored, or transmitted using HCSD technology resources.

Individuals and activities not explicitly mentioned are considered within this scope if their technology use could affect district operations, data security, or compliance obligations.

The HCSD employs content-filtering technology that satisfies all requirements of the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). The filter is configured to block or monitor access to obscene visual depictions, child pornography, or content that is otherwise harmful to minors. Although the district takes reasonable steps to provide safe, reliable, and educationally appropriate network access, it makes no warranties—express or implied—regarding the accuracy of online information or the continuous availability of network services. It assumes no liability for data loss or service interruptions.

Definitions

1. *Electronic device(s)* is any device that can create, store, access, transmit, or receive electronic data, images, sound, or communications. This definition includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. Computing Devices: Laptops, desktop computers, Chromebooks, tablets (e.g., iPads, Android tablets), and e-readers.
 - b. Mobile Communication Devices: Smartphones, cellular phones, and smartwatches.
 - c. Storage and Media Devices: USB drives, external hard drives, memory cards, digital cameras, and audio recorders.
 - d. Wearable Technology: Smartwatches, fitness trackers, and smart glasses.
 - e. Gaming and Entertainment Devices: Portable gaming consoles and media players.
 - f. Emerging Technologies: Virtual reality (VR) headsets, augmented reality (AR) devices, and any other new or emerging technologies with similar capabilities.
2. *School Network(s)* is defined as the entirety of the district's information and communication systems, including but not limited to:
 - a. Wired and Wireless Connections: All physical and wireless network connections and access points available on HCSD property or provided by the HCSD.
 - b. Internet Access: Internet access is provided by the school district.

3. *District-Provided Accounts and Services*: Any user accounts provided by the district, including email accounts, learning management systems (LMS) like Google Classroom or Canvas, student information systems, and cloud-based storage and applications (e.g., Google Workspace, Microsoft 365).
4. *Internal District Resources*: All district-owned servers, computers, printers, and other connected devices, as well as the data and software stored on them.
5. *Remote Access*: Any connection made to the district's internal resources or cloud-based services from an off-campus location.
6. *Cloud Services*: Online tools or platforms and storage rooms that you access (a process often called *streaming*) through the internet instead of storing them on your device.
 - a. *Tools*: email, word processing, photo editing, etc., software that allows the user to complete tasks and create products/content/data.
 - b. *Platforms*: spaces that allow the user to access and use content stored on their device or in the cloud for various purposes (e.g., delivering an assignment to students through Google Classroom; accessing another platform through Clever)
 - c. *Storage rooms*: secure spaces where your files are stored, allowing you to access them from any device with an internet connection.

ACCEPTABLE USE PRINCIPLES

It is the general policy of the HCSD that its network services are to be used in a responsible, ethical, and legal manner. Users of the HCSD network must acknowledge their understanding of the general policy and guidelines as a condition of using the network. Users who access the network without this acknowledgement do so illegally and still fall within the scope of the AUP.

The use of HCSD network services is a privilege, not a right. Failure to adhere to this policy may result in suspension or revocation of network access. Willful or intentional misuse may result in disciplinary action and/or criminal penalties under applicable state and federal laws.

Employee Obligations and Responsibilities

1. It is the duty of HCSD staff to instruct and/or supervise students in the safe, responsible use of all digital and internet-connected technology.
2. It is the duty of HCSD staff to model the safe, responsible use of all digital and internet-connected technology.

Acceptable Use of Electronic Devices and School Networks

1. **Acceptable** uses of electronic devices and school networks are governed by ethical behavior and choices as defined in local and state law and policies.
 - a. Generally, electronic devices and school networks used on school property and/or during school hours should be primarily focused on activities that support learning and teaching.
 - b. All employees are encouraged to develop use cases within the bounds of ethics and professionalism that meet their individual needs and take advantage of the capabilities made possible by available connectivity and technology.
2. **Unacceptable** uses of electronic devices and school networks include, but are not limited to:
 - a. install/delete programs, apps, or platforms to/from any school-owned device or any device via the school network, unless approved by the Director of Technology;
 - b. damage electronic devices, networks, or accounts, or cause damage to either, physically or digitally;
 - c. use district devices/internet access for one's own commercial or economic gain;
 - d. plagiarize, violate copyright laws, and/or pass off work done by others as your own (including academic or professional materials purchased from an unapproved vendor);
 - e. copy, download, store, and/or reveal or transmit any personally identifiable information (PII) protected by FERPA, HIPPA, and/or IDEA about any person that was gained through your employment with the HCSD;
 - f. send, share, or display offensive messages, images, language, or ideas;
 - g. trespass in another's physical or digital workspace, or attempt to gain or allow others to gain unauthorized access to such space or information;
 - h. engage in hacking or phishing, or to knowingly allow others to do so, including the use of another person's password or the impersonation of a person's digital presence; and/or
 - i. intentionally misuse resources or conduct any illegal or unethical activities.

EMPLOYEE ACCOUNTS: SECURITY & ACCESS

The Houston County Board of Education, represented by the duly elected school board members, and the Director of Schools, have final approval and authority over all matters related to the use and security of district technology, physical and digital.

The Director of Technology is responsible for immediate oversight of the purchase, use, and security of district technology, physical and digital. As part of this responsibility, the director will implement and manage training opportunities for HCSD staff and will enforce security measures that all HCSD staff must follow.

The staff of the Technology Department will install, maintain, and repair/replace district technology, both physical and digital, as needed. All HCSD staff should contact the Technology Department to resolve issues with district technology, physical and digital.

Authentication Standards (Passwords & 2FA)

1. Use only district-issued accounts; never share credentials.
2. Passwords: \geq 12 characters, unique.
3. Multi-factor authentication (2FA) is mandatory for any system that holds student, personnel, or financial data.
4. Reset compromised passwords immediately and report the incident to the Technology Department.

Physical Device Security

1. Set your screen to lock after \leq 5 minutes of idle time and whenever you step away.
2. Store laptops/tablets in a locked room or cabinet when not in use; never leave devices in vehicles overnight.
3. Keep district asset tags and security software intact; do not add unauthorized hardware.
4. Report lost, stolen, or damaged equipment to the Technology Department immediately.

Access Levels & Permissions

1. Access is granted on a “least-privilege” basis aligned to job duties.
2. Do not bypass filters, elevate your or another’s access, or access another user’s files without their permission and knowledge.
3. Requests for additional access require supervisor approval.
4. Accounts are disabled when employment or role ends; data retention follows the district records schedule.

EMAIL & ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

District Account Guidelines

1. HCSD email addresses and systems are for district business only. Use for personal matters—including e-commerce (buying/selling) or forwarding to personal accounts—is prohibited.
2. All email is district property, subject to monitoring, audit, and Tennessee Public Records law; users have no expectation of privacy.
3. Senders must observe copyright law.
4. Every outgoing message must use the district-approved signature block (name, title, location, phone, disclaimer). No additional quotes, images, or logos.
5. Credentials are private; never share passwords or accounts. If you suspect compromise or unauthorized access, reset your password and notify the Director of Technology immediately.
6. Do not send, share, or display obscene, harassing, racist, sexist, illegal, or unethical content, or anything that violates HCSD harassment/discrimination policies.
7. Employees must report any suspected violation of these guidelines to the Director of Schools immediately.

Uniform Signature Block

1. Attach the district-approved signature (name, title, school, phone, disclaimer) to every outgoing message.
2. Do not add quotes, images, or logos not included in the official template.

INTERNET, CLOUD, AND DIGITAL CONTENT

General Guidelines

1. Do not post, share, or otherwise disclose information about student accounts without prior authorization from a supervisor.
2. HCSD staff who have a presence on social networking platforms or who have access to or share data on any internet or media site are prohibited from posting data, documents, photographs, or other information that is likely to create a material and substantial disruption of classroom activity.
3. Publish student work or photos only if the guardian has provided consent.
4. Group student photos may be posted without consent only when students are identified by group name; individual IDs require prior written consent.
5. Teachers must preview websites and instruct students about the HCSD network and general internet rules before allowing access.
6. All digital or online content must align with HCSD's mission, follow copyright law, and meet WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility standards.

General Internet & Intranet Use

1. All employees must sign the HCSD Technology AUP (which constitutes the written terms for internet/intranet use) before they are granted network access; access implies agreement even if no physical signature is on file. By accessing HCSD networks or cloud services, you agree to these AUP terms, even if no signed agreement is on file. Annual AUP acknowledgment satisfies this requirement.
2. Network and device use for personal electronic accounts (e.g., personal cloud storage, social media, messaging platforms) or one's own commercial or economic gain, to include purchasing or selling of goods or services for personal use or commercial/professional use not expressly approved for and directly related to your work for the HCSD is prohibited.
3. Unacceptable activities include (but are not limited to):
 - a. Sending/displaying offensive messages or images; using obscene language; harassing or defaming others.
 - b. Damaging computers, networks, or data; hacking or unauthorized access.
 - c. Violating copyright or intellectual property laws.
 - d. Trespassing in another's files or accounts.
 - e. Intentional misuse of resources
 - f. The use of third-party personal social media on HCSD devices or networks is permitted only for approved instructional or district-related purposes.

Approved Network & Cloud Resources and Personal Device (BYOD) Usage

1. Connect only to HCSD-managed networks or approved VPNs; filtering may not be bypassed.
2. Use district-vetted and approved platforms and AI tools; submit new requests to the Director of Technology.
3. Store student or confidential data in FERPA-compliant, district-approved cloud services.
4. Staff-owned devices may connect to staff/guest Wi-Fi if they have current OS updates, screen lock, and are approved by your immediate supervisor.
5. Do not save student records or other confidential data on personal devices.
6. Avoid connecting to district platforms that contain any personal, professional, or school-related data about yourself or other staff or students, current and former.

Social Media & Online Presence

1. Maintain professional boundaries by avoiding personal contact with students through social media platforms, especially those that are shielded (e.g., direct messaging), and limiting students' ability to view or engage with your social media profiles.
2. Limit social-media use during duty hours to instructional or district-related purposes.
3. Never post PII or content that could disrupt school operations.
4. Accessing personal social networking sites on school devices during work hours is prohibited, except for legitimate instructional purposes.

District Websites & Digital Publications

1. All sites or pages built "under contract or within the scope of employment" are district property.
2. Create or modify official pages, including social media content, only if authorized to do so by a supervisor.

3. Advertising, sponsorships, or third-party logos require prior written approval from the Director of Schools/designee.
4. The use of any logos or branding that is the property of the HCSD or any of its schools, teams, or departments, including the use of such images or styles that imitate said logos or branding, must be approved by the Director of Schools.
5. Unless a supervisor has approved you to do so, do not post any of the following in such a way as to seem to be representing the HCSD, its schools, or its members, either on an official page or post, or on a personal page or post:
 - a. information, statements, or updates about the HCSD, its schools, personnel, students, etc.;
 - b. school closings or changes to the HCSD schedule;
 - c. information about HCSD events;
 - d. fundraiser information or requests for donations, purchases, or other, similar support;
 - e. information about personnel or students, including the use of their likenesses, photographic or otherwise.

INSTRUCTIONAL DIGITAL RESOURCES (MULTIMEDIA | AI | 3RD-PARTY TOOLS)

Approval & Procurement

1. Submit new apps, cloud services, platforms, devices, or Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools—free or paid—for approval by the Director of Technology.
2. All vendor contracts must include FERPA/COPPA compliance, data-sharing terms, WCAG 2.1 AA accessibility, and breach-notification clauses.

Multimedia and Artificial Intelligence

1. Use district-owned, royalty-free, or licensed titles that support stated learning objectives.
2. Staff should utilize district-purchased content as much as possible, and this content should comprise the majority of instructional materials given to students. All other content must be pre-approved by a supervisor.
3. Principal approval is required before staff can show or share any media not supplied by the HCSD.
4. “Entertainment-only” showings are prohibited; classroom use must follow copyright law.

AI Tools

1. Access only platforms approved for use by the HCSD.
2. Never input PII, assessment items, or confidential data.
3. Verify AI outputs for accuracy and originality before use; cite sources as needed. AI outputs may not be incorporated into proprietary content or works.
4. Annual AI-safety training is mandatory for continued access.
5. Attribute any content or materials created by AI. Staff must disclose their use of generative-AI outputs if non-disclosure would violate tool terms, mislead a supervisor, or breach the teacher code of ethics.

DATA PROTECTION, COMPLIANCE, & INCIDENT RESPONSE

Confidential & Personally Identifiable Information

1. View, store, or share PII only in district-approved systems.
2. Never download or store PII to unencrypted drives or personal devices.
3. Use district file-sharing tools with permissions set to “HCSD only” except where an outside service provider or other entity has been approved for access.
4. Data must be transmitted over HTTPS, VPN, or other encrypted channels.
5. Encrypt removable media before use.
6. Digital content provided to staff, students, or the public must meet WCAG 2.1 AA standards and comply with ADA/Section 504.

Incident Reporting & Response

1. Immediately report suspected breaches, phishing, malware, or lost/stolen devices to the your immediate supervisor.
2. Technology staff will isolate affected systems, investigate, and notify the Director of Schools/designee; legal or regulatory notices will follow state and federal timelines.
3. Complete mandatory cybersecurity/privacy training each school year.

4. Complete assigned trainings throughout the school year.
5. Re-sign and submit the signed AUP annually.
6. Violations of this AUP may result in progressive disciplinary measures (e.g., verbal warning, written warning, access suspension), notification of the violation to relevant supervisors, and, if warranted, notification to law enforcement personnel.

For additional information concerning use of technology within the district, refer to *Houston County School Board Policies 1.805, 4.214, 4.406, 4.407, and 4.408.*

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING PROCEDURES AND INDICATORS

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

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

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

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

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

Possible Indicators of Abuse and Neglect:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



TENNESSEE TEACHER CODE OF ETHICS

49-5-1001. Short title.

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

History

Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1.

49-5-1002. Legislative findings.

The general assembly finds and declares that:

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

History

Acts 2010, ch. 916, § 1.

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

- (a) An educator shall strive to help each student realize the student's potential as a worthy and effective member of society. An educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.
- (b) In fulfillment of this obligation to the student, an educator shall:
 - (1) Abide by all applicable federal and state laws;
 - (2) Not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning;
 - (3) Provide the student with professional education services in a nondiscriminatory manner and in consonance with accepted best practices known to the educator;
 - (4) Respect the constitutional rights of the student;
 - (5) Not unreasonably deny the student access to varying points of view;
 - (6) Not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress;
 - (7) Make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety;
 - (8) Make reasonable effort to protect the emotional well-being of the student;
 - (9) Not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement;
 - (10) Not on any basis, unfairly:
 - (A) Exclude the student from participation in any program;
 - (B) Deny benefits to the student; or
 - (C) Grant any advantage to the student;
 - (11) Not use the educator's professional relationship with the student for private advantage;

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

History

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

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

(a) The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professional service. In the belief that the quality of the services of the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens, the educator shall exert every effort to raise professional standards, to promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgment, to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education, and to assist in preventing the practice of the profession by unqualified persons.

(b) In fulfillment of this obligation to the profession, an educator shall not:

- (1) Deliberately make a false statement or fail to disclose a material fact related to competency and qualifications in an application for a professional position;
 - (2) Misrepresent the educator's professional qualifications;
 - (3) Assist entry into the profession of a person known to be unqualified in respect to character, education, or other relevant attribute;
 - (4) Knowingly make a false statement concerning the qualifications of a candidate for a professional position;
 - (5) Assist a noneducator in the unauthorized practice of teaching;
 - (6) Disclose information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless the disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law;
 - (7) Knowingly make false or malicious statements about a colleague;
 - (8) Accept any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or actions;
- and
- (9) Use illegal or unauthorized drugs.

(c) In fulfillment of this obligation to the profession, educators shall:

- (1) Administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically; and
- (2) Conduct themselves in a manner that preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession.

History

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

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

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

History

Acts 2011, ch. 214, § 1.

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

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

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

History

Acts 2018, ch. 937, § 4.

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

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

History

Acts 2018, ch. 937,



SALARY CHANGE BASED ON EDUCATION LEVEL

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

Employee: _____

Work Location: _____

I am requesting to change my education level to:

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

Anticipated completion date: _____

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

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

A “**Transaction**” in **TNCompass** to add the degree to your licensure account.

Signature

Date

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

Rev. 06/2025

2025-26 APPROVED CALENDAR

JULY 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		
						8

AUGUST 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						21

SEPTEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				
						21

OCTOBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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26	27	28	29	30	31	
						13

NOVEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						14

DECEMBER 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			
						15

July 14 → Work day (Principal Directed); ALL personnel recognition breakfast at HCHS at 8 AM
 July 15-18 → Inservice (See HC PD Handbook for specifics)
 July 17 → EES & TRES Kindergarten Orientation 6 PM
 July 18 → New Student Registration (BEGINS AT 8 AM)
 July 21 → Abbreviated day for elementary students- dismiss at 10:45AM
 July 21 → HCMS & HCHS Orientations (day & evening); No classes
 July 22 → Work Day (Principal Directed)
 July 22 → EES Kindergarten Orientation 10 AM
 July 22 → TRES 1st – 5th Grade Orientation (evening)

August 29 → Staff Development (Principal Directed)
 September 1 → OUT- Labor Day
 September 16 → HCMS & HCHS Parent-Teacher Conf. 4-7 PM
 September 23 → End of 1st 9-week grading period
 September 25 → EES & TRES Parent-Teacher Conf. 4-7 PM
 September 30 → Report Cards

October 3 → EES Harvest Festival
 October 6 → Inservice (Optional)
 October 7-17 → OUT- Fall Break
 November 11 → OUT – Veterans Day
 November 21 → TRES Harvest Festival
 November 24-28 → OUT- Thanksgiving Break
 December 19 → End of 2nd 9-week grading period
 December 19 → Abbreviated day- dismiss at 10:45AM
 December 22-31 → OUT- Winter Break

January 1 → OUT- Winter Break
 January 2 → Staff Development (Principal Directed)
 January 8 → Report Cards
 January 19 → OUT- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
 February 16 → OUT- Presidents' Day
 March 2 → HCMS & HCHS Parent-Teacher Conf. 4-7 PM
 March 10 → End of 3rd 9-week grading period
 March 12 → EES & TRES Parent-Teacher Conf. 4-7 PM
 March 17 → Report Cards
 March 20 → Staff Development (Principal Directed)
 March 23-31 → Spring Break

April 1-3 → Spring Break
 May 16 → HCHS GRADUATION – Time TBD
 May 21 → Work Day
 May 21 → 8th Grade Promotion 6 pm
 May 22 → Report Cards; Abbreviated day- dismiss at 8:15AM

★ OFFICIAL SCHOOL DAY for ALL: 7:45AM-2:45PM
 ★ Houston County Schools operates under the "Snow Bill" (7-hr day). Three (3) days are utilized for staff development. Schools may be closed ten (10) days due to unsafe weather conditions. If schools are closed for more than ten (10) days, the days must be made up. **The first week of Spring Break has been designated as weather make-up days if necessary.**
 Summer Programs: 05/27/26- 06/24/26
 *Summer program dates are subject to change

JANUARY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
						20

FEBRUARY 2026						
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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
						19

MARCH 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
						15

APRIL 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		
						19

MAY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						15

JUNE 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

	Work Day- No Students Present		Staff Development- No Students Present		Teacher Inservice- No Students Present		Abbreviated Day		Instructional Day		No Students or School Staff Present
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2025-26 ASSESSMENT CALENDAR

Houston County School District will participate in the following assessments for the 2025-26 school year. Tests and dates are subject to change pending Tennessee Department of Education mandates.

Assessment Name	Administration Date/Window	Subject(s)	Grade(s)	Purpose
Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) End of Course (EOC) Assessments	Fall 2025 Block <i>Specific dates TBA</i>	ENG I & II, ALG I, & II, Geometry, Biology, & U.S. History	9-12 Enrolled in Course	State-mandated achievement test to measure student skills and academic performance.
	Spring 2026 Block <i>Specific dates TBA</i>			
TCAP Achievement	Spring 2026 <i>Specific dates TBA</i>	English Language Arts (ELA), Math, Science, & Social Studies	3-8	State-mandated achievement test to measure student skills and academic performance.
Grade 2 Achievement	Spring 2026 <i>Specific dates TBA</i>	ELA & Math	2	Optional state achievement test to measure student proficiency.
Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)	Fall 2025 <i>Specific dates TBA</i>	ELA & Math	2-8; 11	Alternative achievement measure for students with most severe cognitive disabilities.
	Spring 2026 <i>Specific dates TBA</i>			
TCAP-Alternative	Spring 2026 <i>Specific dates TBA</i>	Science & Social Studies	2-8; 10	Alternative achievement measure for students with most severe cognitive disabilities.
ACT	Fall Grade 12 Retake: September 30, October 1-3, 2025	English, Math, Reading, Science	11	Diagnostic assessment that measures a student's readiness for college.
	Spring Grade 11: March 10-13 and 16 - 19, 2026			
ACT Senior Retake	September 30, October 1 - 3, 2025	English, Math, Reading, Science	12	Diagnostic assessment that measures a student's readiness for college.
ELPA 21 for English Learners	February 2 - March 27, 2026	Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing	K - 12	English Learners (EL) will take the ELPA21 for ELLs to determine language proficiency. ELPA21 assesses students in the four-language domains: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

For the most up-to-date testing information, please check the school district website at:
<https://www.houston.k12.tn.us/parents-students/assessment-information>.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT BY EMPLOYEE

PLEASE SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAGE TO YOUR PRINCIPAL/SUPERVISOR

By signing below, I acknowledge and affirm that I have received, read, and understood the *Houston County School District Employee Handbook* and the *Houston County School District Acceptable Use Policy for Employees*, and have requested clarification of any guidelines I did not fully understand. I further agree to abide by the guidelines set forth in and affirm that I may be held responsible for violations of this handbook and/or AUP.

Employee Name (Print)

Date

Employee Signature

Employee Primary Location Assignment (circle one)

AHS/CSH

BOE

BUS GARAGE

EES

HCMS

HCHS

TRES