

## V. Personnel

### 5.01 *Employee Qualifications and Duties*

5.01.1 General Requirements – Employees have a duty to perform their jobs responsibly and in a conscientious manner. In addition to any specific job requirements set forth in job descriptions or elsewhere, employees are expected to meet the following general performance and service standards:

- a. Employees are required to be punctual and to attend work regularly.
- b. Employees are required to perform the duties and responsibilities that are assigned to them by the Board, the Superintendent, or their supervisor(s). Such duties and assignments may extend beyond or outside the instructional day and may include off-campus functions, events, and activities.
- c. Employees are expected to treat all students, co-employees, visitors, and guests of the Board with respect. Employees are expected to demonstrate moderation, restraint, and civility in their dealings with others and, in general, to serve as appropriate role models for students in their behavior and demeanor.
- d. Employees are required to obey all laws, ordinances, Board policies, and supervisory directives, and are expected to follow the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics and other pertinent authority while carrying out duties for the Board.
- e. Employees whose duties include the instruction or supervision of students must provide effective supervision, discipline, organization, and instruction of the students.
- f. Employees must complete and submit required reports accurately and in a timely fashion.
- g. Legal, professional, and ethical standards that would otherwise apply to correspondence and other forms of communication generated by employees apply to communications and statements made publicized through social media.
- h. Employees must respect, protect, and exercise due care in the handling, use, and operation of Board property and equipment.
- i. Employees shall at all times maintain an appropriate and professional relationship with students and shall not engage in conduct (including communication of any kind) that constitutes, solicits, or suggests sexual, romantic, or inappropriately familiar interaction with students.

- j. *Employee Attire* – Employees are required to report to work or to school functions in attire that is appropriate to their position and the nature of the function and that is in keeping with generally accepted standards of decorum and professionalism. Service and other employees who are issued uniforms shall wear uniforms when required.
- k. Employees shall promptly disclose to the Board any fact that would disqualify them from employment or that renders them unable to perform their essential job functions.

5.01.2 Special Requirements –

- a. *Work Schedules (Teachers)* – Supervisory and instructional duties of teachers commence a minimum of fifteen (15) minutes prior to the beginning of the instructional day and conclude fifteen (15) minutes after the dismissal of students. Assignments and duties may extend beyond the instructional day and may include off-campus functions, events, and activities; conferences and meetings with parents; supervision of student arrival and departure; and preparation for the following instructional day. Teachers will be provided with a minimum of thirty (30) minutes free of instructional and supervisory responsibilities each teaching day.
- b. *Work Schedules (Support Personnel)* – The Superintendent is authorized to establish work schedules, including minimum work times, for support personnel.
- c. *Professional Certification* – In addition to requirements established by the State Board of Education and the pertinent job description, professional employees must hold a degree from an accredited college or university and hold a current, valid, and properly-endorsed Alabama Educator's Certificate, which will be maintained in the Superintendent's office. A teacher who has completed the certification process but has not received the certificate may be employed on tentative or temporary compensation pending verification of certification from the State Department of Education. Upon receipt of such verification, appropriate adjustments will be made to the teacher's salary. If an employee earns a higher certificate that merits increased compensation under the approved salary schedule, the employee will be paid for the advanced degree as soon as the degree is certified to the State Department of Education as being earned.
- d. *Substitute Teachers* – Substitute teachers must, at a minimum, possess a high school diploma and a valid and current Alabama Substitute Teacher's Certificate or Alabama Teacher's Certificate. The Superintendent is authorized to hire substitute teachers who meet the minimum requirements prior to their approval as substitutes by the Board. However, should the Board vote not to approve any substitute teacher, that substitute teacher

may not perform any further substitute teaching work for the Board absent subsequent approval by the Board.

- e. ***Bus Drivers*** – In addition to the requirements established by the State Board of Education, a bus driver must: (i) hold a valid commercial driver’s license, (ii) complete a minimum of twelve (12) hours of approved instruction in school bus driving, and (iii) satisfactorily complete a written examination driver’s performance test approved or administered by the State Department of Education or State Superintendent. A bus driver must also meet any requirements of the entity providing the Board’s automobile liability coverage.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 16-27-4 (1975)]

- f. ***Dual Employment*** – When an employee is hired to perform the functions of two or more distinct positions within the school’s daily operations (e.g., teacher and athletic coach), and when maintenance of that dual employment is deemed essential by school authorities to meeting the budgetary and staffing needs of the school, the employee’s unwillingness, inability, or failure to faithfully discharge the duties of one of the positions may constitute grounds or cause for removing the employee from both positions in accordance with provisions of applicable law.

## **5.02 Hiring**

- 5.02.1 **Application Procedures** – Job applicants for all positions must file a formal application with the Personnel Department of the Board. Applications must be completed in full. All information provided in the application must be truthful. Any misrepresentation of a material fact on an employment application may disqualify the applicant from consideration for the position and may subject an employee to adverse employment action, including termination.
- 5.02.2 **Qualifications** – Applicants must meet the minimum qualifications, with or without reasonable accommodations, of the position as provided in Board policy, the job description for the position, the posted advertisement for the position, or as may otherwise be established by the Board, applicable law, or regulation. Applicants must hold such degrees, licenses, certificates, and like credentials as may be necessary, appropriate, or customary for the position in question.
- 5.02.3 **Hiring Authority** – The Board is responsible for making all final hiring decisions, and no hiring decision is official, final, or effective unless and until it is approved by a vote of the Board. No principal, administrator, supervisor, or other employee has authority to hire an applicant without Board approval or to commit the Board to specific action regarding employment.
- 5.02.4 **At-Will Employment** – Except as may otherwise be provided or required by law, by contract, or by the specific terms of their appointment, all personnel are

deemed “at-will” employees and may be terminated, demoted, reassigned, suspended, or disciplined with or without pay, or with reduced pay, and with or without cause.

- 5.02.5 **Resignation** – Voluntary resignations of employment submitted by certified employees within thirty (30) calendar days before the first day of the next school term for students must be approved by a majority of the members of the Board.

Otherwise, voluntary resignations by employees are automatically approved by the Superintendent to become effective and do not require approval by the Board (although Board approval may be obtained). The Superintendent has the authority to revoke approval of a resignation upon the written request of an employee within forty-eight (48) hours of an employee having tendered his or her resignation, unless the Board has otherwise approved the resignation.

- 5.02.6 **Transfers** – The Board may permit personnel transfers between schools within the school system for good cause. Transfer requests must be submitted in writing and must include detailed reasons for the request. The Board may approve or deny a transfer request in light of the stated reasons for the request, the capacity and resources of the schools, the employee’s performance, the best interests of the relevant schools and of the District, or as otherwise required by any applicable order or plan adopted to comply with the Board’s desegregation settlement requirements. If a transfer request is inconsistent with the Board’s hiring goal that each school’s faculty and staff be comparable, the principal requesting the transfer must provide a rationale for requesting the transfer to the Superintendent. If granted, the Superintendent will retain the rationale for the transfer consistent with the Board’s desegregation settlement plan. The existence or availability of a transfer process does not create or give rise to any right to work at a particular school, and employee assignment remains wholly with the discretion of the Board.

- 5.02.7 **Nepotism** –

- a. Employment actions, decisions, and relationships that violate any provision of Alabama law, including state ethics and nepotism laws, or could give the appearance of favoritism due to a familial or romantic relationship are prohibited. The Superintendent is authorized to take action to identify and correct violations of this provision in a manner consistent with applicable law – including through the use of the procedures identified in section “b.”, below.
- b. Alabama law governs the circumstances that arise when relatives of a principal, supervisor, director, manager, member of the Board of Education, or the Superintendent apply for, or are employed by, the Board of Education. The Board of Education will adhere to Alabama law governing these relationships including by doing the following:

- i. ***Relative.*** For purposes of this provision, a relative shall mean a spouse, a dependent, an adult child or his or her spouse, a parent, a spouse's parent, or a sibling or his or her spouse.
- ii. ***Relative of Superintendent.*** The Superintendent may not recommend a relative for employment to the Board of Education. If a relative of the Superintendent applies for employment with the Board, the Superintendent shall take no direct action. Instead, the Superintendent shall submit the application to the President of the Board of Education who shall select an impartial person to conduct any interview and to decide whether to recommend the applicant to the full board for consideration. If any recommendation is made, the impartial person will issue a report in writing. The Board shall consider the recommendation and written report without any comment or input from the Superintendent.
- iii. ***Relative of Board Member.*** If a relative of any member of the Board applies for employment for the Board, that member shall recuse himself or herself from any discussion, debate, consideration, or vote on the Superintendent's recommendation regarding that position.
- iv. ***Relative of Principal or Supervisor.*** If a relative of any principal or other supervisory employee who is typically charged with conducting interviews, vetting, or recommending candidates, or otherwise taking part in the hiring process, applies for employment for the Board, that principal or supervisor shall not take any part in the hiring process, directly or indirectly, and any interviews, vetting, or recommendations shall be assigned by the Superintendent to another supervisory employee in the system who does not report to the disqualified principal or supervisor.
- v. ***Immediate Supervisor.*** No person shall be eligible to apply for or be hired into a position for which his or her immediate supervisor would be a relative.
- vi. ***Chain of Command.*** A person may apply for and be hired into a position where a relative would be in the applicant's chain of command if hired, but would not be the applicant's immediate supervisor, as long as the applicant's supervisor made no recommendation, cast no vote, and otherwise had no direct or indirect involvement concerning the employee's hiring.
- vii. ***Limits on Actions that Impact Subordinate Relatives.*** No person may evaluate the performance of, have input into the compensation

of, or otherwise set the terms and conditions of employment of a subordinate relative. Additionally, if the Superintendent receives a recommendation from a subordinate supervisor that would impact his or her relative, the Superintendent shall delegate a third party to act on the recommendation or to make the recommendation to the Board as described in ii., above.

[Reference: ALA. CODE §16-22-15.1; ALA. CODE § 36-25-1, *et seq.*]

### **5.03 *Probationary Employment***

Employees are required to serve the maximum period of any probationary service provided or permitted by law before tenure, non-probationary status, or any other statutorily sanctioned form of employment security will be recognized by the Board.

### **5.04 *Non-Teaching Supplemental Duties***

Compensation in the form of supplements may be paid for non-teaching supplemental duties in accordance with rates specified or established for such duties in the Board's official salary schedule. Such duties may include coaching and sponsorship of athletic support organizations, as well as scholastic support activities. Such supplemental duties are considered additional non-teaching assignments to be made and approved on an annual basis or otherwise as the needs of the school system require. Such supplemental duties are not considered to be a part of a teaching contract or appointment, and no tenure, continuing service status, non-probationary status, or contractual right to continued employment or compensation for such supplemental assignment will be recognized or implied in the absence of a separate written contract of employment providing for such rights.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 16-24C-4(3)b (1975)]

### **5.05 *Professional Development***

The Superintendent will develop and implement an ongoing program of professional training and development that is designed to enhance the competencies of professional and support staff. Employee attendance and participation in such training institutes, workshops, seminars, and programs may be made mandatory by the Superintendent. The unexcused failure of an employee to attend or participate in such professional development activities may constitute grounds for termination of employment or other disciplinary action.

### **5.06 *Employee Conflicts of Interest***

- a. Employees may not use their offices or positions for personal gain or for the gain of a family member, which includes those related by blood (first cousin or closer), marriage, step relationships, and in-laws, and must avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of conflict of interest with their professional responsibilities. Employees may not use or disclose confidential information acquired through

Board employment for their personal gain or for the benefit of a third party. No list of rules or guidelines can provide direction for every circumstance in which a conflict of interest may arise; therefore, the good judgment of each employee is essential. Employees who have a question about a potential conflict of interest must discuss the situation with their immediate supervisor.

- b. Employees are also expected to adhere to all applicable provisions of the Alabama Ethics Law, Ala. Code § 36-25-1, *et seq.*
- c. Employees may only engage in outside employment under the following terms and conditions:
  - i. Employees will not engage in outside business activities or render any service for another employer during such time as duties and responsibilities have been assigned by the Board;
  - ii. Employees will not accept outside employment that would interfere with or impair the ability of the employee to perform duties as a Board employee effectively; and
  - iii. Employees may not accept work that could compromise the employee's independent judgment in the exercise of duties for the Board.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 36-25-1, *et seq.* (1975)]

### **5.07 Employee Gifts**

Employees may accept gifts from students or other members of the public if the gifts are in accordance with the Alabama Ethics law and any other applicable law.

The Board allows employees to accept gifts or gift cards purchased from pooled donations within a class, team, or other school group or organization for the employee's personal use provided that the individual donations that make up the pooled donation do not violate the Alabama Ethics law.

Absent additional facts indicating otherwise, gifts with a value of thirty-two dollars (\$32.00) or less are presumed not to be a violation of the law by the Ethics Commission as such gifts do not qualify as personal gain and are presumed not to be given for the purpose of influencing official action. Therefore, the Board suggests that the person coordinating pooled donations limit the requested donation to thirty-two dollars (\$32.00) or less to safeguard against such donations violating the Ethics law or being financially burdensome.

Pursuant to the Alabama Ethics law, board employees cannot knowingly solicit a gift of any kind from the employee's subordinate or any person that the employee directly inspects, regulates, or supervises in their official capacity (e.g. a student in a teacher's class or an employee that person evaluates).

In addition, employees cannot through some act use their position to obtain a gift (e.g. initiate the idea of gift giving) or accept any gift that is given to them for the purpose of corruptly influencing an official action or in exchange for any action, inaction, or decision (e.g., better test grades, promotion, positive recommendation, etc.).

Nothing in this policy should be construed to create restrictions on gifts beyond those that are specifically provided for by law or to allow conduct specifically prohibited by law. Any person with a question about the application of the Ethics law to a particular gift should contact the Ethics Commission for clarification.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 36-25-1, *et seq.*; Alabama Ethics Opinion 2011-12 & 2016-34]

## **5.08 *Employee Evaluations***

- 5.08.1 **Certified Personnel** – Certified employees (other than contract principals) will be evaluated in accordance with an evaluation program approved for use by the Alabama State Board of Education. Contract principals will be evaluated in accordance with rules, regulations, and requirements promulgated by the State Department of Education or as may otherwise be permitted by law.
- 5.08.2 **Non-Certified Personnel** – Non-certified personnel may be evaluated in accordance with criteria and procedures to be developed by the Superintendent.
- 5.08.3 **Use of Evaluations in Connection With Employment Decisions** – Unless prohibited by law (including applicable regulations) or the terms of the evaluation instrument, employment evaluations may be considered in making employment decisions, together with such other information and considerations as may reasonably bear upon the wisdom, necessity, or advisability of the employment decision. However, employment evaluations are intended to enhance the overall quality of the school system’s instructional program and are not intended to confer, constitute, or give rise to any individual right, entitlement, or enforceable expectation of continued employment or advancement. Accordingly, except as may be specifically provided otherwise in state law applicable to “contract principals,” employees do not acquire any employment right or right of legal action based on any actual or alleged failure on the part of the Board or the evaluator to follow specific evaluation policies, regulations, or procedures.
- 5.08.4 **Special Evaluation Situations** – The Superintendent, the Chief School Financial Officer, and other employees who serve in positions of special trust or sensitivity may be evaluated by such means as may be permitted by law or applicable regulation or as agreed to in an employment contract.
- 5.08.5 **Exempt Personnel** – Except when required by law or contract, temporary, substitutes, and occasional employees, or employees appointed to supplemental positions (e.g., coaches, extracurricular activity sponsors) will not be formally evaluated in those roles.

## **5.09 Personnel Records**

- 5.09.1 Content of Personnel Files – A central personnel file will be maintained for all regular employees. The personnel file may contain information regarding the employee’s current assignment, payroll status, and work history, including, but not limited to, job qualifications, certification, licenses, employment contract(s), evaluation data, disciplinary information, and such other documents, written materials, and data as may be reasonably deemed necessary and appropriate by the Board for sound and efficient personnel administration. Anonymous material and other matters that are prohibited by law, regulation, or Board policy from being maintained in personnel files may not be included therein. Employees may reasonably supplement or respond in writing to any material contained in the personnel file with which they disagree, and such responses will also be included in the personnel file.
- 5.09.2 Alternate Data Storage – Personnel file data may be stored or maintained electronically or digitally.
- 5.09.3 Confidentiality – In general, the contents of an employee’s personnel file will be deemed confidential except for documents, information, and materials that are matters of public information or public record under applicable state or federal law.
- 5.09.4 Access to Personnel Files – Board members, Superintendent, Board administrators (including principals), employees of the Personnel Department, and other persons whose duties reasonably require access to personnel files are authorized to view, copy, and use the contents of personnel files for purposes that are required by or in keeping with their official duties on behalf of the Board.

## **5.10 Employee Leave**

- 5.10.1 Work Attendance an Essential Job Function – Punctual, regular attendance is an essential job function of every job and position, and employees are expected to report to work when scheduled to work and to remain at work each working day.
- 5.10.2 Absences – Except as otherwise authorized under Board policy, employees may be absent from work only in the following circumstances:
- a. Illness, injury, or other qualifying reason for sick leave or on-the-job injury leave under state law or the Family Medical Leave Act;
  - b. Personal leave;
  - c. Vacation leave;
  - d. Professional leave;

- e. Military leave;
- f. Court leave;
- g. Other unpaid leave that is specifically approved by the Board upon a showing of substantial hardship or extraordinary circumstances.

Employees who know in advance that they will be absent from work must notify the Board of the expected absence in accordance with procedures specified by the Superintendent or the Board. In the event of an emergency or incapacity that makes advance notice impractical, employees must notify the Board of their absence as early as possible. Except as otherwise provided or permitted, an employee who is absent from work without approved leave will be considered absent without leave in violation of Board policy and subject to appropriate disciplinary measures. Employees who are approved for paid leave of absences will be paid at the regular daily rate of pay; however, a day of paid leave of absence will not be counted as a day worked for the purposes of computing overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Pay will be reduced on a *pro rata* basis for leaves or absences not covered by sick leave, vacation, or personal days, or other appropriate form of paid leave. The continuation of benefits during an approved absence is subject to the provisions of the particular benefit policy or plan.

### 5.10.3 Paid Sick Leave –

- a. *Persons Eligible for Paid Sick Leave* – All regular full-time employees are eligible for paid sick leave.
- b. *Earning and Accumulation of Paid Sick Leave* – All eligible employees earn sick leave days at the rate provided for in state law. Eligible employees may accumulate sick leave as provided by state law.
- c. *Use of Sick Leave* – Eligible employees may only use paid sick leave for absences caused by:
  - 1. Personal illness or doctor’s quarantine;
  - 2. Incapacitating personal injury;
  - 3. Attendance upon an ill member of the employee’s immediate family (parent, spouse, child, foster child currently in the care and custody of the employee, sibling, child currently in the care and custody of the employee for whom a petition for adoption has been filed) or an individual with a close personal tie;
  - 4. Death of a family member (parent, spouse, parent, child, sibling, mother or father-in-law, son or daughter-in-law, brother or

sister-in-law, nephew or niece, grandparent, grandchild, aunt or uncle;

5. Death, injury or sickness of another person who has unusually strong personal ties to the employee, such as a person who stood in loco parentis; or
6. Attendance upon an adopted child, who is three years of age or younger.

Sick leave taken for this purpose of attending to an adopted child may be taken for a maximum of eight weeks, or 320 consecutive hours.

- d. ***Certification*** – By taking sick leave, the employee is certifying that the sick leave is being used for one of the reasons provided in state law. If the employee’s immediate supervisor has probable cause to believe that an employee has abused or misused sick leave, a physician’s statement verifying the existence and nature of the illness or medical condition or documentation verifying a petition for adoption or death may be required by the school system. Abuse of sick leave may subject the employee to disciplinary action.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 16-1-18.1 (1975)]

5.10.4 **On-The-Job Injury Leave** – On-the-job injury includes an accident or injury to an employee that occurs in the course of performing job duties for the Board or when the employee is directed or requested by the employer to be on the property of employer, and which prevents the employee from working or returning to the job. Employees who are accidentally injured on the job may be approved for paid “on-the-job-injury” leave without using sick days, provided that:

- a. The employee submits a signed written account of the accident attested by a principal or department head within twenty-four (24) hours after the injury occurred. If the injured employee is not able to notify the Board, another person reasonably knowledgeable about the employee’s condition and circumstances leading to the injury may provide the required notification.
- b. The injured employee submits written medical certification from the attending licensed physician stating that the employee was injured and cannot return to work due to a specified injury, if there is a reasonable expectation that the employee will return to work and, if so, the expected date of that return. The Board may require a second opinion from a Board specified physician, at its expense.

Upon a determination that the employee has been injured on the job and cannot return to work, the Board may maintain the employee's salary and benefits for the period of incapacity caused by the injury, not to exceed ninety (90) days. An employee who is injured on the job may file a request for unreimbursed medical expenses and costs with the State Board of Adjustment. The Board will provide such reasonable assistance to the employee in filing the Board of Adjustment claim as is required by law but assumes and will have no responsibility or liability for processing the claim or directly reimbursing the employee any unreimbursed medical expenses and costs. On-the-job injury leave will be administered in accordance with and subject to the requirements and limitations imposed by state law regarding such leave.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 16-1-18.1 (1975)]

- 5.10.5 **Personal Leave** – All regular, full-time employees are eligible for three (3) non-cumulative personal leave days each scholastic year without loss of pay. Two of the personal leave days accrue at the beginning of the scholastic year. One (1) additional personal leave day accrues at the beginning of the second semester. Personal leave must be requested in writing in accordance with such procedures as may be established by the Superintendent or the Board.

Employees can be compensated for unused personal leave at the end of the school year at the same daily rate of pay used for substitute teachers or convert unused personal leave days to sick leave days at the end of the school year.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 16-8-26 (1975)]

5.10.6 **Vacation** –

- a. ***Eligible Employees*** – Twelve-month full-time employees are eligible for paid vacation.
- b. ***Vacation Benefits*** – Twelve-month employees are entitled to earn up to twelve (12) days of vacation leave a year. These employees earn vacation at the rate of 1.00 day per month, and it accrues on a monthly basis.
- c. ***Accrual and Accumulation of Vacation Time*** – Vacation days will be accrued from October 1st of each year through September 30th of the following year. Employees may not accumulate more than 20 days of vacation and may not roll over vacation time to the next year.

Vacation days may not be bought, sold, or donated.

An employee shall be compensated for up to twenty (20) accumulated, unused vacation days at the employee's then effective rate of pay upon the employee's resignation, termination, or death.

- d. **Scheduling – Vacations must be scheduled with the knowledge and approval of the employee’s department head.**

**5.10.7 Professional Leaves of Absence for Employees –**

- a. ***General* – The Board authorizes the Superintendent (for administrators and classified employees) and the Principal (for teachers) to grant professional leave to participate in short-term study, conferences, and general educational development activities related to common goals and objectives held by personnel and the school system.**
- b. ***Application Procedure* – Requests for professional leave must be submitted at least five (5) working days prior to the date of departure. The request must be submitted at least two (2) weeks prior to the date of departure if advance payment is requested. All such leave shall be approved in advance, and such leave time shall be at the discretion of the Principal, Superintendent, or designee based on available finances, educational value to the school system, and the number of employees on leave at any given time.**

**5.10.8 Military Leave – Military leave is available to all eligible employees in accordance with state and federal law.**

**5.10.9 Court Leave – Permanent and full-time employees are entitled to regular compensation while performing jury duty (Ala. Code § 12-16-8) or when the employee is summoned for school-related purposes under subpoena or other legal requirement to testify at trial in a court of law, or in an administrative proceeding constituted under the statutory authority of the agency conducting the proceedings. Paid leave is not authorized for employees to meet with attorneys, to attend depositions, or to otherwise prepare for legal proceedings unless the presence of the employee is requested or required by the Board.**

**5.10.10 Unpaid Study Leave – Upon written application by the employee, the Board may provide an unpaid leave of absence for up to one year to pursue study or professional growth opportunities or for other good cause without impairing the tenured or non-probationary status of the employee. For valid reasons, the Board may extend the leave of absence for one (1) additional year. Except as provided to the contrary by applicable law, the employee shall not be entitled to return to the same position held before the commencement of leave and may be assigned to a different work location or position upon return from leave at the discretion of the Board.**

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 16-24C-13]

**5.11 *Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)***

- 5.11.1 **Eligible Employees** – The FMLA is applicable to all persons who have been employed for at least twelve (12) months and have worked a minimum of 1,250 hours during that twelve (12) month period.
- 5.11.2 **Medical Leave Provided by the Act** – Under the FMLA, eligible employees are entitled to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave during any twelve (12) month period for one or more of the following reasons:
  - a. The birth and first year care of a newborn child;
  - b. The placement of a foster child or adoption;
  - c. The care of an immediate family member, defined as a spouse, child or parent, with a serious health condition;
  - d. The taking of medical leave because of the employee’s own serious health condition.

For the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child, the entitlement to leave for childcare expires at the end of the twelve (12) month period beginning on the date of birth, adoption, or placement. Leave associated with the illness of a child will only be provided if the child is under eighteen (18) years of age or is incapable of self-care due to physical or mental disability.

- 5.11.3 **Serious Health Conditions** – The term “serious health condition” means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves the following:
  - a. Any period of incapacity in connection with or following inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility.
  - b. Continuing treatment by a health-care provider, to include any period of incapacity due to:
    - 1. A health condition, including treatment and recovery, lasting more than three (3) consecutive days, and any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity relating to the same condition;
    - 2. Pregnancy or prenatal care;
    - 3. A chronic, serious health condition which continues over an extended period of time, requires periodic visits to a health care provider, and may involve episodes of incapacity (e.g., asthma and diabetes);

4. A permanent or long-term condition for which treatment may not be effective (e.g., Alzheimer's disease, severe stroke) and for which supervision of a health-care provider is required;
5. Multiple treatments for restorative surgery or for a condition which would likely result in a period of incapacity of more than three (3) days if not treated.

**5.11.4 Military Family Leave Provided by the Act –**

- a. **Qualifying Exigency Leave** – Under the FMLA, an eligible employe with a spouse, child, or parent on active duty or call to active-duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may utilize the twelve (12) week medical leave entitlement to address qualifying exigencies resulting from that service.
- b. **Military Caregiver Leave** – An eligible employee, who is the spouse, child, parent, or next of kin of a covered service member, is entitled to take up to twenty-six (26) weeks (including any medical leave provided by the Act) of unpaid leave during any twelve (12) month period (beginning the first day of the leave) to care for an individual covered service member with a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty while on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member's office, grade, rank, or rating. A covered service member is a member of the Armed Forces, including the National Guard and Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty.

**5.11.5 Spouse Employed by the Board** – Spouses who are both employed by the Board are limited to a combined total of twelve (12) weeks of family leave for the birth and care of a newborn child, for the placement of a child for adoption or foster care, for the care of a parent who has a serious health condition, and for qualifying exigency leave. Spouses who are both employed by the Board are limited to a combined total of twenty-six (26) weeks for military caregiver leave.

**5.11.6 Intermittent Leave** – An employee may take leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule only when medically necessary to care for a spouse, parent, or child or to receive planned medical treatment. Intermittent leave should be scheduled to the extent practicable so as not to unduly disrupt the operations of the Board. Intermittent leave may be further limited for teachers in accordance with federal law.

5.11.7 **Use of Vacation and Sick Leave** – An employee has the option of using earned sick leave, vacation leave or other applicable paid leave in accordance with established leave policy and/or applicable law concurrently with unpaid FMLA-protected leave; however, any paid parental leave taken in accordance with the Alabama K-12 Public School and State Employee Paid Parental Leave Act of 2025 (“PPL”) must run concurrently with FMLA-leave. In no instance shall the use of any sick leave, vacation leave or other applicable paid leave, including PPL, extend the duration of FMLA-protected leave beyond twelve (12) weeks.

[Reviewed and Approved July 7, 2025]

5.11.8 **Notice** – Employees seeking leave under the FMLA must provide thirty (30) days advance notice of the need to take leave when the need is foreseeable. When the need for leave is unforeseeable, employees should notify their supervisors as soon as possible. Employees must also provide notice of the need for qualifying exigency leave as soon as practicable.

5.11.9 **Certification for Medical or Military Caregiver Leave** – Every request for FMLA leave based upon the serious health condition of the employee or employee’s spouse, children, or parents, or leave as a military caregiver must be supported by medical certification issued by the appropriate health care provider on forms provided by the Board.

For leave based on the serious health condition of the employee or employee’s spouse, child, or parent, the Board reserves the right to obtain a second opinion from an independent health-care provider designated by the Board. If the opinion received by the employee and the second opinion conflict, the Board and the employee must agree on a third provider to issue a binding opinion. Both the second and third opinions (if necessary) will be at the expense of the Board.

5.11.10 **Certification for Qualifying Exigency Leave** – Certification will be required by the Board for requests for qualifying exigency leave. Certification must be timely- submitted on forms available from the Board. For the first such request, certification may include a copy of the military service member’s duty orders or other military documentation.

5.11.11 **Return to Work** – The Board may require an employee who has taken leave due to the employee’s own serious medical condition to provide the Board with a healthcare provider’s certification in order to return to work. Any employee who takes leave under these provisions will be entitled to be restored to the original position held when the leave commenced or to an equivalent position with equivalent benefits, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment.

- 5.11.12 **Maintenance of Benefits** – Benefits accrued by the employee before leave is taken are not lost when approved FMLA leave is taken. Employees who are on approved FMLA leave will remain eligible to participate in benefit programs in which the employee was enrolled at the time of the leave, provided that the employee will continue to be responsible for payment of employee’s portion of any cost, premium, or like payment that is required to maintain eligibility for the coverage or benefit. An employee that does not return to work after FMLA leave will be required to reimburse the Board for the cost of benefits coverage extended to the employee during the leave, unless the reason for the employee’s failure to return to work is (i) a continuing serious health condition suffered by either the employee or a family member, or (ii) other circumstances beyond the employee’s control.
- 5.11.13 **Instructional Employees** – Medical leave taken by eligible instructional employees is subject to further limitations and provisions established by the FMLA. The Superintendent or his designee is authorized to develop additional information and guidelines concerning Instructional Employees.

## **5.12 Sick Leave Bank**

A “Sick Leave Bank” plan for full-time certified and classified employees is hereby established in accordance with applicable provisions of state law. A Sick Leave Bank Committee will oversee the operations of the Sick Leave Bank in accordance with state law and the following provisions:

- a. ***Sick Leave Bank Committee*** – The Sick Leave Bank Committee will be composed of one (1) member representing the Board and four members representing participating members of the sick leave bank.

***Board Representative*** – The Member representing the Board will be appointed by the Superintendent, subject to Board approval.

***Participant Representatives*** – The participant representatives will be selected by the sick leave bank members.

- b. ***Procedures for Selecting Participant Representatives on Committee***

1. ***Nomination*** – Before each election of participant representatives, the Board will hold an open nomination period. Any employee who is eligible to participate in the sick leave bank may be nominated for one of the participant representative positions. Nominations must be written and must be received in the Personnel Department by the deadline specified in a notice to be provided by the Superintendent or his designee through Board publications and other means of communication that are generally used for such purposes.

2. *Voting* – Each eligible nominee will be placed on the Sick Leave Bank Committee ballot. Voting will take place by ballot at Board facilities at the time specified or as may otherwise be provided by the Board. Supervision of voting will be by local facility personnel. Voting members will be required to verify their ballot by signing the Board’s voter record. Votes will be forwarded to the Payroll Department for final tabulation. The four (4) candidates receiving the highest number of votes will serve as participant representatives on the Sick Leave Bank Committee.
  3. *Lack of Nominations* – If the Board does not receive enough nominations to fill the committee, the participant representatives will be selected by the Superintendent and the appointed Board representative from among the school system’s assistant superintendent(s) and assistant principals.
- c. *Term of Committee Members* – Sick Leave Bank Committee members will serve for a term of one year and may not serve for more than five (5) years.
  - d. *Chairman of the Sick Leave Bank Committee* – The Sick Leave Bank Committee will elect a chairman from among its representatives at its first annual meeting. The chairman will be responsible for recording organizational minutes, for conducting meetings, and for organizing meetings as necessary.
  - e. *Meetings* – The Sick Leave Bank Committee will meet at least annually following each enrollment period. The Committee will also meet as necessary in its discretion.
  - f. *Sick Leave Bank Committee Duties* – The Sick Leave Bank Committee will develop proposed rules and regulations for the Sick Leave Bank, to be submitted to participating members for approval. At a minimum, said rules and regulations must include those terms and provisions that are required by statute. The Committee has the authority to review both participation in the Bank and requests for leave to ensure compliance with state law, Board policy, and such rules and regulations as may be adopted by the Sick Leave Bank Committee.
  - g. *Employee Participation* – Participation in the Sick Leave Bank is voluntary and open to all full-time employees of the Board. However, employee participation is subject to such rules and regulations regarding enrollment procedures, deposits, withdrawals, and participation as may be developed by the Committee.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 16-22-9 (1975)]

## **5.13 Equal Employment Opportunity**

- 5.13.1 **Unlawful Discrimination Prohibited** – The Board is an equal opportunity employer. Personnel actions and decisions will be made without regard to factors or considerations prohibited by federal or state law (as such laws may from time to time be amended), including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, color, religion,

sex, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, genetic composition, service in the military, veteran status or engagement in protected activity.

- 5.13.2 **Implementing Regulations Authorized** – The Superintendent is authorized and directed to implement such rules, regulations, procedures, and directives as necessary and appropriate to implement and enforce this policy and any law prohibiting discrimination in the workplace, including the designation of one or more complaint/grievance investigators, officials, or coordinators, the development of complaint or grievance procedures for responding to allegations of unlawful discrimination, the provision of training or dissemination of instructional materials and advisories to appropriate staff members, and the administration of corrective or remedial action in response to violations of the law and of this policy.

## **5.14 Unlawful Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited**

- 5.14.1 **Unlawful Discrimination and Harassment Prohibited** – The Board strictly prohibits unlawful discrimination and harassment of any person or group of persons on the basis of a legally-protected characteristic or status. These include, but may not be limited to, race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, pregnancy, national origin, age, disability, genetic composition, service in the military, veteran status or engagement in protected activity. Every employee is expected to uphold this policy and is responsible for maintaining a respectful and professional educational work environment. When proper notice is provided, the Board will investigate allegations of unlawful harassment and will take disciplinary action where warranted, including termination as dictated by the nature and severity of the violation and other relevant considerations. If appropriate, the circumstances constituting the violation may be reported to law enforcement agencies for further investigation and action.

With respect to harassment on the basis of sex, please also see the Title IX Policy found in Section 4.06.

- 5.14.2 **Definition of Unlawful Harassment** – Unlawful Harassment is unwelcome verbal, physical, visual, written, electronic, or other conduct directed against any person or group, based upon characteristics or activities protected by federal or state law that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s working environment or work performance or creating an offensive, demeaning, or intimidating environment for that person or group of persons. To be unlawful, the conduct must be severe or pervasive, but the Board prohibits any such harassment.
- 5.14.3 **Examples of Prohibited Conduct** – The following are examples of conduct that may constitute unlawful discriminatory harassment, depending on individual circumstances:

- a. Verbal harassment or abuse may include, but is not limited to, epithets, derogatory comments or slurs based on one of the characteristics noted above;
  - b. Physical harassment may include, but is not limited to, assault, unwanted touching, impeding or blocking movement, or any physical interference with normal work or movement, when directed at an individual because of an individual's protected class or status;
  - c. Visual forms of harassment may include, but are not limited to, derogatory posters, cartoons, or drawings based upon an individual's protected characteristic; or
  - d. Sexual harassment, as one example of unlawful harassment, may include, but is not limited to, repeated unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, inappropriate sexual touching or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature because of an individual's sex when (1) submission to such conduct is an explicit or implicit condition of employment; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions; or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.
- 5.14.4 **Reporting Required** – When an employee feels as if the employee has been unlawfully harassed or observes or is otherwise aware of an incident of unlawful harassment, the employee must report the matter immediately through the Unlawful Harassment Complaint Procedures below.
- 5.14.5 **Unlawful Harassment Complaint Procedures** – Under no circumstance should an employee pursue resolution of a potential harassment situation through informal reporting only. Informal complaints to co-workers and reports to first-line supervisors will not comply with this policy and cannot provide notice to the Board of the problem. Therefore, an employee must file a complaint using the Discrimination and Harassment Complaint Procedure found in Section 4.07.
- 5.14.6 **Confidentiality** – To the extent possible, reports of unlawful harassment will be kept confidential; however, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.
- 5.14.7 **Retaliation Prohibited** – No retaliation or adverse action may be imposed as a result of a good faith complaint or report of unlawful harassment. False accusations that are made in bad faith or for improper reasons may result in disciplinary action.

## **5.15 *Reduction-In-Force***

### **5.15.1 Definition and Scope –**

- a. This policy applies to reductions-in-force that are implemented by “layoffs” as contemplated by Ala. Code §16-1-33 (1975).
- b. A reduction-in-force may be declared by the Board of Education and layoffs approved thereunder if the Board determines that decreased student enrollment or a shortage of revenues requires a reduction in the work force (beyond normal attrition) in order to maintain effective provision of educational services or to meet the Board’s financial, legal, or operational obligations.
- c. A “layoff” within the meaning of this policy is a separation from employment with the Board of Education. However, employees who are laid off under authority of this policy are eligible for recall to employment as conditionally provided in this policy. The term “layoff” does not include or apply to the expiration of temporary, occasional, or “at-will” appointments, or to decisions not to renew or extend employment beyond the expiration of annual or other specified terms of appointment.

### **5.15.2 Criteria for Implementing Layoffs –**

- a. The order, priority, rank, or selection of individual employees who are to be laid off under the authority of this policy shall be determined on the basis of objective criteria. However, nothing herein shall be deemed or construed to limit or abridge the Board’s legislative discretion to identify areas, departments, groupings, or classifications for reductions (layoffs). (For example, the Board is not required to justify by objective criteria or otherwise, a decision to implement layoffs in noninstructional categories or employees before doing so with instructional staff).
- b. The criterion or criteria on which the layoffs are to be based shall be announced or otherwise made known by the Board to employees affected by the layoff no later than the date notice of the layoff is provided to the employees.
- c. “Objective criteria” within the meaning of this policy may include any lawful selection standard (or combination of standards) that is verifiable, calculable, measurable, or otherwise determinable by means or methods other than the personal or subjective judgments or opinions of the person(s) applying the criteria, and that would be expected to produce the same result if applied to the same employees or group of employees by different persons. For purposes of this policy, objective criteria may include, but are not limited to:

- Seniority, longevity, or time in service that will be more specifically described in the notice of layoff that is provided to affected employees
- Years of experience
- Degrees, certification, or licensure
- Job classification
- Written or otherwise documented performance evaluations that can be fairly, accurately, and objectively compared to other similarly situated employees for the purpose of ordering or ranking, provided that such evaluations predate the RIF announcement or declaration by not less than thirty (30) days

5.15.3 **Recall** – Employees who have been laid off under the terms of this policy will be given priority in filling positions as enrollment or financial circumstances warrant, provided that:

- a. The nature of the position and qualifications therefore have not materially changed;
- b. The laid-off employee remains properly qualified, licensed, or certified; and
- c. The laid-off employee confirms in writing his or her availability for and interest in re-employment to the Board’s Director of Human Resources in accordance with any directives that may be contained in or transmitted in conjunction with the notice of layoff.

Circumstances permitting, and to the extent practicable, the selection of employees for recall will be based on the criteria that were applied to the layoffs themselves if there are more employees eligible for recall than positions available to fill. When layoffs occur over a period of time, the Board will take the relative length of separation from service into consideration in assigning recall priority, other factors being equal. In no case will any right to be recalled to employment extend beyond one (1) year from the effective date of the employee’s layoff. Recalled employees will retain credit for tenure, years of service, and the pay and benefit status they held on the effective date of their layoff. No pay, benefits, status, or additional rights will accrue or be credited to the recalled employee for the time he or she has been laid off.

5.15.4 **Notice** – Notification of layoff and recall shall be by United States certified or registered mail, hand delivery, or such other means as are reasonable under the circumstances. Upon receipt of notification of recall, a laid-off employee shall respond affirmatively to the notice of recall in accordance with such specific

directions or instructions as may be contained therein. Any laid-off employee who does not so respond or who otherwise declines an offer of reemployment by the Board will be deemed to have waived any right to be recalled under the terms of this policy.

[Reference: ALA. CODE § 16-1-33 (1975)]

## **5.16 *Unauthorized Payments***

5.16.1 Notification to the Employee – Upon discovery of any unauthorized or erroneous payment or disbursement of funds to an employee, the Board will attempt in good faith to notify the employee of such unauthorized payment and to reach agreement with the employee, if possible, regarding the amount and terms of repayment. Notification to the employee will consist of a letter mailed or delivered to the employee's last known address. The notice will specify the amount owed, the method by which the amount was calculated, a proposed schedule of repayment, an opportunity for the employee to review or examine any documents or other evidence supporting the claimed overpayment, and an opportunity for the employee to object in person or in writing to the amount or manner of the proposed withholding to provide an alternative plan of repayment. Unless the Board's ability to recover the funds in question could be jeopardized by doing so, the Board will arrange a reasonable schedule of repayment so as to avoid undue hardship to the employee.

5.16.2 Retention and Recovery Authorized – If no objection to the proposed withholding is received within a reasonable time (to be specified in the notification letter), monies may be retained in the manner and to the extent described in the notification. If the employee objects to the proposed withholding, the Superintendent or his designee may, upon consideration of the objection and information and argument (if any) submitted in connection therewith, take such action as may be warranted under the circumstances and inform the employee in writing of the decision. If the employee is dissatisfied, he may contest the decision through the Board's complaint procedure. Monies may be withheld by the Board pending completion of the grievance process, provided that, should the Board later pay over to the employee monies that have been retained under authority of this policy, such payment(s) will reflect all appropriate deductions and will include accrued interest from the date of withholding at the rate specified by the then-effective rate applicable to interest on unpaid judgments under Alabama law. If, after exhausting reasonable efforts to do so, the Board is unable to contact the employee in the first instance, the Board may retain or withhold from compensation or other payments due the employee an amount sufficient to satisfy the indebtedness, provided that any such retention or withholding will be subject to review and reconsideration at the request of the employee.

5.16.3 Repayment Required as a Condition of Reemployment – The Board reserves the right to require repayment of any outstanding indebtedness as a condition to the reemployment of any former employee.

5.16.4 Procedures Not Exclusive – The provisions, procedures, and method of review specified herein are in addition to those that are otherwise available to the parties under law for the retention or recovery of funds, and for administrative or judicial review thereof.

### **5.17 *Drug and Alcohol Testing of Safety Sensitive Employees***

5.17.1 Scope – The Board will conduct employee drug and alcohol testing for employees in safety sensitive positions as required by and in accordance with federal law. Testing will be required for all employees holding a commercial drivers' license (CDL) or who occupy a safety sensitive position as designated by the Board (“covered employees”).

5.17.2 Prohibited Alcohol and Controlled Substance-Related Conduct – In addition to activities identified in other policies, rules, and procedures, covered employees are prohibited from the following:

- a. Reporting for duty or remaining on duty to perform safety-sensitive functions while having an alcohol concentration in excess of the standard set by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA);
- b. Being on duty or operating a vehicle while using or possessing alcohol;
- c. Consuming alcohol while performing safety-sensitive functions;
- d. Consuming alcohol within eight (8) hours following an accident for which a post-accident alcohol test is required, or prior to undergoing a post-accident alcohol test, whichever comes first;
- e. Refusing to submit to an alcohol or controlled substance test required by post-accident, random, reasonable suspicion, or follow-up testing requirements;
- f. Consuming alcohol or being under the influence of alcohol within eight (8) hours of going on duty, operating, or having physical control of a vehicle;
- g. Reporting for duty or remaining on duty when using a controlled substance identified in 21 CFR 1308.11 Schedule I, an amphetamine, a narcotic, or any other habit-forming drug. An employee may use such a substance or drug, if the substance or drug is prescribed by a licensed practitioner who is familiar with the medical history and assigned duties of the employee and has advised the employee that the prescribed substance or drug will not adversely affect his/her ability to perform assigned duties and documentation shall be provided in the Safety Concern Documentation for Medical Examiner or Prescribing Physician Form. A

DOT Physical will be required along with a Safety Concern Form for employees with CDL License.

[Revised and Approved May 4, 2026]

- h.** Reporting for duty, remaining on duty, or performing safety sensitive functions with controlled substances in the employee's system.

In the event of a violation of this policy, the employee shall be removed immediately from safety-sensitive duties and shall be subject to such further actions, including disciplinary action up to and including termination, as deemed appropriate by the Superintendent and the Board.

**5.17.3 Testing Program Authorized** – All covered employees will be tested for the presence of alcohol and controlled substances in accordance with applicable law:

- a.** *Pre-employment Testing* – Prior to the first time a covered employee performs a safety-sensitive function for the Board, the employee must undergo testing for controlled substances.
- b.** *Post-accident Testing* – Each surviving driver who is involved in an accident involving a school bus shall submit to alcohol and controlled substance testing as soon as practicable following such accident if such driver:
  - (1)** Was performing a safety-sensitive function with respect to such vehicle and the accident involved the loss of human life, or
  - (2)** Such driver receives a citation within eight (8) hours of the occurrence under state or local law for a moving traffic violation arising from the accident and the accident involved either:
    - (i)** Bodily injury to any person who, as a result of the injury, immediately receives medical treatment away from the scene of the accident, or
    - (ii)** One or more motor vehicles incur disabling damage requiring the motor vehicle to be transported away from the scene by a tow truck or other motor vehicle.

Each such driver shall remain readily available for such testing and if he does not remain so readily available, may be deemed to have refused to submit to testing. Transportation supervisors shall provide drivers with necessary post-accident information, procedures and instructions, prior to the driver operating the school bus, so that drivers will be able to comply with the requirements of this policy.

The tests required by this subsection shall be administered as soon as practicable following the accident. If the alcohol test is not administered within two (2) hours following the accident, the supervisor will prepare and maintain a record stating the reasons. If the alcohol test is not administered within eight hours, and the controlled substances test within thirty-two (32) hours, the same record shall be made and further efforts to administer such tests shall cease.

- c. *Random Testing* – The Board will conduct unannounced random alcohol and controlled substance testing of its covered employees.
- d. *Reasonable Suspicion Testing* – A covered employee must submit to alcohol or controlled substance testing whenever there is reasonable suspicion of alcohol misuse, or the use of controlled substances based on specific, contemporaneous, and articulable observations concerning the appearance, behavior, speech, or bodily odors of the employee.
- e. *Return-to-Duty Testing* – A covered employee must submit to a return-to-work alcohol and/or controlled substance test before being permitted to return to work following a positive alcohol or controlled substance test or other violation of this policy or federal regulations.
- f. *Follow-up Testing* – Any employee who continues performing safety-sensitive functions for the Board, following a determination that the employee requires assistance in resolving problems associated with alcohol misuse or the use of controlled substances, shall be subject to unannounced follow-up alcohol or controlled substance testing as directed by the Board’s substance abuse professional (SAP).

5.17.4 Administration of Program – The Superintendent is authorized to oversee the Board’s testing program, to contract with appropriate providers to implement the program, to develop guidelines, rules and regulations, to implement training programs, to develop and distribute educational materials and appropriate notices to covered employees, and to take such further action as may be required by federal law.

5.17.5 Compliance with Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse Requirements – In accordance with federal law, covered employees must consent to an appropriate federal Drug & Alcohol Clearinghouse query in order to operate a commercial motor vehicle for the Board. Each covered employee must sign a limited consent for the Board’s designee to conduct a limited Clearinghouse query. Any covered employee who declines to give consent for a limited query will not be permitted to operate a commercial motor vehicle for the Board until such consent is given. Limited queries do not reveal specific information about employees. If a limited query shows that there is information in the Clearinghouse on the covered employee, the covered employee must consent to a full query, which must be conducted immediately. The covered employee will not be permitted to drive or perform

safety-sensitive functions until the query results confirm that the employee's Clearinghouse record contains no prohibitions as defined under the regulations. Any covered employee whose record reveals such prohibitions will not be permitted to drive or otherwise perform safety-sensitive functions until the covered employee successfully completes the return-to-duty process. Any covered employee's refusal to consent or to successfully complete the return-to-duty process in accordance with federal law will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

**5.17.6 Reports to Clearinghouse** – The following information will be reported to the Clearinghouse in accordance with FHWA regulations:

- a. A verified positive, adulterated, or substituted drug test;
- b. An alcohol confirmation test with a concentration of 0.04 or higher;
- c. A refusal to submit to any test required by law, as enumerated above;
- d. The Board's report of actual knowledge as defined by law (i.e., direct observation, information from previous employer(s), or a traffic citation for driving a commercial motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances), of:
  - 1. On duty use;
  - 2. Pre-duty use;
  - 3. Alcohol use following an accident;
  - 4. Controlled substance use;
- e. A substance abuse professional's (SAP) (as defined by law) report of successful completion of the return-to-duty process;
- f. A negative return-to-duty test; and
- g. The Board's report on completion of follow-up testing.

**5.17.7 Disciplinary Action** – The availability of a return-to-duty process and/or follow-up testing under this policy does not obligate the Board to provide an employee with those opportunities. The Board reserves the right to terminate or otherwise discipline employees who violate this policy in accordance with applicable state law.

[Reference: 49 U.S.C. § 31306a; 49 C.F.R. § 382.701, *et seq.*]

## **5.18 Searches (Personnel)**

- a. **Board Property** – All school system property, facilities, and grounds may be entered, inspected, and searched for any lawful purpose by Board officials or their designees at any time, without prior notice and to the fullest extent permitted by law. The right to enter, inspect, and search includes and extends to (but is not limited to) Board-owned or controlled offices, desks, file cabinets, lockers, storage areas, computers, files, documents, data, and devices however and wherever kept, stored, or maintained.
- b. **Employee Property** – The Board reserves the right to inspect employees' vehicles, purses, files, and other personal property if a supervisor forms a reasonable individualized suspicion that the property contains evidence of a violation of Board policy or contains any material, object, or substance that otherwise creates or presents a risk of harm or injury to the school, the workplace, or persons therein.
- c. **Use of Recovered Items** – Property, material, substances, information, or records that are obtained, discovered, or recovered as a result of a search may be retained and used for any lawful purpose.

## **5.19 Prohibition on Aiding and Abetting Sexual Abuse**

Neither the Board nor any employee, contractor, or agent of the Board shall assist another school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new job if the individual or the Board knows, or has probable cause to believe, that the other employee, contractor, or agent engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law. This prohibition does not apply to the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files.

In addition, this prohibition does not apply if the information giving rise to probable cause has been properly reported to a law enforcement agency with jurisdiction over the alleged misconduct, and has been reported to any other authorities as required by local, state or federal law, and at least one of the following conditions applies:

- a. The matter has been officially closed or the prosecutor or police with jurisdiction over the alleged misconduct has investigated the allegations and notified school officials that there is insufficient information to establish probable cause that the school employee, contractor, or agent engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law; or
- b. The school employee, contractor, or agent has been charged with, and acquitted or otherwise exonerated of the alleged misconduct; or
- c. The case or investigation remains open and there have been no charges filed against or indictment of the school employee, contractor, or agent within four (4)

years of the date on which the information was reported to a law enforcement agency.

[Reference: 20 U.S.C. § 7926]

## **5.20 Teachers' Bill Of Rights**

The Teachers' Bill of Rights requires every teacher to have an approved classroom management plan and affords teachers the right to exclude disruptive students from their classrooms in limited circumstances if they follow that plan. The purpose of this policy is to outline the standards applicable to the development and approval of required classroom management plans; the standards applicable to the removal of a student from classroom by a teacher; and the appeal process available to a teacher if a student is returned to the classroom by the principal.

For purposes of this policy, the term principal also includes assistant principal, vice principal, or his or her designee.

### **5.20.1 Classroom Management Plans –**

- a. *Development of Classroom Management Plans* – To be eligible to use the exclusion procedures in this policy, a teacher must develop a classroom management plan for his or her classroom that is age and developmentally appropriate for the grade(s) served. The classroom management plan must align with the Student Code of Conduct; local school or school system behavior management policies, plans, and procedures; and any Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports or other behavior management systems adopted by the local school or school system. To comply with these limitations, implementation of an approved classroom management plan may preclude student exclusion for instances of behavior listed below. The Superintendent or designee is authorized to develop model classroom management plans that a teacher may adopt or use for the development of his or her plan.
- b. *Approval of Classroom Management Plans* – Each classroom plan must be approved by the principal before the tenth day of instruction for students during each academic year. Principals are authorized to set a deadline for submission of classroom management plans by teachers that provides them with ample time to review and approve plans and seek revisions.

Principals shall review submitted plans promptly and approve them if they meet the standards outlined above. If the principal does not approve a teacher's initial classroom plan, the teacher must either submit a revised plan within two (2) working days or opt to use a model plan if one is available. If the teacher's revised plan is not approved, the principal is authorized to require the teacher to use a model plan or another approved plan.

5.20.2 **Exclusion of Student from Classroom by Teacher** – A teacher may exclude any student from his or her classroom due to their behavior only if:

- The student has:
  - Engaged in disorderly conduct, which is defined as any conduct that intentionally disrupts, disturbs, or interferes with the teaching of students or disturbs the peace, order, or discipline at any school;
  - Behaved in a manner that obstructs the teaching or learning process of others in the classroom;
  - Threatened, abused, intimidated, or attempted to intimidate an education employee or another student;
  - Willfully disobeyed an education employee; or
  - Uses abusive or profane language directed at an education employee.
- The referring teacher followed his or her approved classroom management plan before excluding the student from the classroom; and
- The referring teacher completes any required referral form and submits it to the principal or his or her designee when the student is excluded and referred to the school administration.

5.20.3 **Principal Review and Decision** – The Superintendent shall develop guidance and procedures for principals to handle instances of student exclusion pursuant to this policy and consistent with Alabama law.

5.20.4 **Appeal** – An appeal may be filed by a teacher if (1) a principal refuses to allow a student to be excluded from the classroom under this policy, or (2) a teacher believes the principal has prematurely ended the exclusion of a student from the classroom under this policy.

The appeal process available under this policy may not be invoked to challenge or seek review or reconsideration of disciplinary or placement decisions if:

- The decision to not exclude a student from the classroom or to return a student to the classroom results from a decision reached at the end of a school disciplinary hearing required by the Code of Student Conduct or state or federal law;
- A 504 or IEP team or another legally authorized person or entity determines that a student with a disability has the right to remain in or return to the classroom under the Individuals with Disabilities

Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; or

- The student is otherwise legally entitled to remain in or return to the classroom.
- a. *Filing of Appeal* – The teacher must complete and submit the approved appeal form to the Superintendent within one (1) school day of the principal’s refusal to exclude the student from the classroom or the return of the student to the teacher’s classroom. The appeal form must be completed in full and signed by the teacher.
- b. *Status of Student During Appeal* – During the pendency of any appeal, the decision of the principal regarding the placement of the student, if any, will remain in effect.
- c. *Administrative Review* – Upon receipt of a timely appeal, the Superintendent or his designee shall start an investigation of the appeal. The investigation may include interviews of the teacher, the principal, and/or witnesses; obtaining or reviewing written statements, classroom management plans, or other pertinent documents; holding administrative conferences; and any other lawful action deemed necessary to reach a just disposition of the appeal at the discretion of the investigator.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Superintendent or designee shall prepare a written recommendation regarding the issues raised in the appeal. If the recommendation is made by the Superintendent’s designee, the Superintendent may adopt, reject, or modify the recommendation based on his or her review of the evidence. If the recommendation includes disciplinary action that entitles a student to a disciplinary hearing and/or manifestation determination and it has not been held, the disciplinary action will be treated as a recommendation subject to the outcome of the hearing or manifestation determination process.

The written recommendation of the Superintendent should be made and mailed or transmitted to the teacher within five (5) school days of the date on which the appeal is filed, unless more time is reasonably needed based on the particular circumstances of the appeal, as determined by the Superintendent. Should the Superintendent need such additional time to issue a written decision, the teacher shall be notified of same in writing and advised of when the decision will be issued.

- d. *Appeal to Board of Education* – A teacher dissatisfied with the decision of the Superintendent or designee may appeal the decision to the Board of Education by filing a written notice of appeal with the Superintendent within three (3) workdays of receipt of the Superintendent’s written decision.

The Superintendent shall transmit to Board Members for their review a copy of the written appeal, the decision, and all statements, recommendations, documents, recordings, transcripts, or other written or tangible evidence filed, submitted, or considered at any stage of the administrative review process.

Not later than ten (10) days following receipt of the notice of appeal by the Superintendent at the next regularly scheduled meeting, the Board shall meet to consider the appeal. After consideration of the appeal and administrative record, the Board may, by majority vote:

- Affirm the decision of the Superintendent;
  - Reverse the Superintendent's decision; or
  - Defer final action until a Board hearing is held on the appeal.
- e. Hearing Process – If a hearing is requested by a majority of the Board, the hearing shall be set within ten (10) school days of the Board's decision to have a hearing or at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board, unless reasonable more time is needed based on the particular circumstances of the appeal, as determined by the Superintendent or Board President. Written notice of the hearing date shall be given to the person who filed the appeal. The hearing shall be closed to the public.
- The appropriate hearing procedures shall be determined by the Board. A final Board decision on the appeal shall be issued within five (5) calendar days after the hearing ends. The Board shall give written notice of its final decision to the teacher who filed the appeal.
- f. Board's Decision – The Board's decision will be final, and the Superintendent will take steps to implement the decision, provided however, that if the Board votes for disciplinary action that entitles a student to a disciplinary hearing and/or manifestation determination and it has not been held, the disciplinary action will be treated as a recommendation subject to the outcome of the hearing or manifestation determination process.

## **5.21 General Complaints and Grievances**

- 5.21.1 General Complaints (Grievances) – Subject to the limitations set forth below and elsewhere in this policy manual, any employee may present to the Board a concern, complaint, grievance, or request for corrective action regarding any aspect of school system operations. Before requesting corrective action or relief from the Superintendent or the Board, persons with such complaints, grievances, or requests should present them for resolution to the employee, supervisor, or administrator at the lowest administrative level who has the authority and ability

to address the problem or to implement the requested action. The Superintendent is authorized to develop specific procedures that will provide for fair consideration and orderly review of complaints and grievances. Such procedures may not unreasonably burden or delay the presentation or processing of such matters, and will be subject to Board review, modification, and approval.

- 5.21.2 Limitations Regarding Availability and Application of General Complaint/Grievance Policy – The general complaint/grievance policy and any procedures adopted thereunder do not apply to specific complaint or grievance policies and procedures that are established by Board policy or law for application to special factual or legal circumstances (including, but not limited to, Title IX; review of personnel matters under the Students First Act; “due process” hearings provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act; ADA; or Section 504 complaints). In such instances, the specific statutory, regulatory, or policy-based process is the applicable procedure. The general complaint/grievance procedures authorized under the terms of this policy may not be invoked to challenge or seek review or reconsideration of adverse personnel decisions that have received final Board approval. A grievance may not be used to challenge the Board’s exercise of its discretion to adopt, approve, modify, or repeal a policy, budget, regulation, or procedure or on its failure to exercise such discretion (e.g., adoption of a school calendar, compensation policies, etc.). Grievances may not be used to bypass or deviate from statutorily mandated prerequisites to approval of board action, including, but not limited to, the recommendation of the Superintendent.