

STILLWATER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

2026-2027





Dear Stillwater Public Schools Team,

Welcome to a new year in Stillwater Public Schools! Whether you are returning for another year or joining us for the first time, I want to personally welcome you to the Pioneer family. It is an exciting time to be a part of SPS, and I am honored to serve alongside each of you in our shared mission to inspire and empower every student to achieve their fullest potential.

Our vision at Stillwater Public Schools is to actively and strategically build a school system that champions fairness and a supportive environment for all, with a focus on creating an educational setting where students and staff from all backgrounds and perspectives feel like they belong. This vision should live in our classrooms, hallways, cafeterias, buses, offices, and every interaction we have with our students and one another. Every role matters, and every person makes a difference.

Each of you is an integral part of advancing the educational excellence of **our** community's children. No matter your position, your work is essential to the success of our students and the strength of our schools. Our students thrive when we work together with purpose, pride, and a deep commitment to excellence.

As we embark on this new year, I encourage you to lean into the values of collaboration, integrity, compassion, and growth. Take time to build relationships, extend grace, and bring your unique strengths to the table. Together, we will continue building a strong culture where staff feel supported and students are known, valued, and challenged to achieve at high levels.

Thank you for choosing to be a part of Stillwater Public Schools. I am excited for the journey ahead and confident that, with your dedication and passion, we will continue to make SPS the premier school district in Oklahoma.

With appreciation,

Tyler Bridges

Superintendent

Stillwater Public Schools

GENERAL INFORMATION

All Stillwater Public School employees must be approved and hired by the Stillwater Board of Education. Unless specified in the negotiated agreement, nothing in this handbook shall constitute a contract of employment between the school district and any employee. The Board of Education reserves the right to amend, rescind or add any provisions to this handbook at any time, without prior notice, for any reason necessary for the proper operation of the school district.

The most up-to-date policies, procedures and information will always be located online at www.stillwaterschools.com. This handbook is not all-inclusive. There are additional policies that affect employees. As a new employee you are expected to review and maintain an understanding of all Stillwater Public School policies. The Employee Handbook is available at www.stillwaterschools.com.

HUMAN RESOURCE DEPARTMENT

The Human Resource Department serves you and Stillwater Public Schools. This office maintains master records of employment, classification, and benefits offered to Stillwater Public School personnel.

Employee changes to the following: address, phone numbers, direct deposit, and taxes can be completed using the employee portal.

NONDISCRIMINATION

Stillwater Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, disability, gender, gender expression or identity, genetic information, national origin, pregnancy, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran status in its programs, services, activities, and employment. The district also provides equal access to the Boy Scouts of America and other designated youth groups. This policy will prevail in all matters concerning staff, students, the public, employment, admissions, financial aid, educational programs, events, services, facilities access, individuals, companies, and firms with whom the board does business. Racial discrimination shall include racial slurs or other demeaning remarks concerning another person's race, ancestry, or country of origin and directed toward an employee, student, or visitor. ([Nondiscrimination Policy - DAA](#)).

Inquiries concerning application of this policy may be referred to the superintendent or designee at:

Stillwater Public Schools
314 S. Lewis
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74074

HARASSMENT

Stillwater Public Schools will not tolerate or condone any form of harassment by employees, students, or third parties. Harassment is defined as any unwelcome conduct, whether verbal or physical, directed towards an individual based on that individual's race, color, religion, age, national origin, ethnicity, disability, or sex and shall include, but not be limited to, sexual harassment. ([Harassment of Employees & Other Individuals Who Are Not Students - DA](#))

ATTENDANCE

Each job in our district is accompanied by a contract that outlines the number of contract days and hours per day. We expect all employees to work their scheduled days and hours and be on time. Supervisors must be notified in advance if you are to be absent or late.

PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

The clothing that you wear to work should conform to your job duties. District-provided clothing should be laundered. Questions about proper attire should be directed to your supervisor.

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

You will be issued a photo identification card. The card identifies you as a Stillwater Public Schools employee. The card should be worn at all times above the waist on a lapel, breast pocket, or lanyard so you can easily be identified. Additionally, when entering district buildings other than your own, each employee must sign in and out as a visitor.

Damaged identification cards will be replaced for free, with proof of the damaged card, while there will be a \$10 charge for lost cards. ([Identification Badges for Employees Requirements - CLCA](#))

TOBACCO/ SMOKE FREE CAMPUS

Federal and state law prohibit smoking in any indoor facility or the grounds thereof, which is used to provide educational services to children. Therefore, the use of tobacco or tobacco simulating products by staff, students, visitors, and members of the public is prohibited 24 hours a day, seven days a week while on or in school property. The use of tobacco or tobacco-simulating products at any school-sponsored event outside school premises, school-authorized vehicles, or in personal vehicles while on school property is prohibited at all times. Tobacco and tobacco simulating products and devices include, but are not limited to

cigarettes, cigarette papers, cigars, snuff, chewing tobacco, electronic cigarettes, vapor products, or any other form of said products and devices. ([Tobacco/Smoke Free Campus - CKDA](#))

The district will refer employees, parents/guardians, family members, and students to the Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline (1-800-QUIT-NOW or OkHelpline.com) and other available cessation resources. The district will communicate and promote the available tobacco cessation benefits and insurance coverage to all prospective and current employees.

TELEPHONE, FAX MACHINES, COPIERS, PRINTERS, COMPUTERS AND EMAIL

Telephones, fax machines, copiers, printers, computers, and email are available to employees for the purpose of performing job duties. Personal use should be limited and must not interfere with job performance. Stillwater Public Schools reserves the right to monitor all phone, fax, and e-mail communications. ([Internet & Other Computer Networks Acceptable Use & Internet Agreement - EFBCA](#))

CONFIDENTIALITY

Working for a school district will regularly put you in contact with confidential information about students. Federal law dictates that you must not share this information with others. All employees must respect the confidentiality of information obtained either by accident or through the course of their job duties. ([Compliance with Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 - FL-R](#))

Employees are also responsible for understanding the confidentiality involved with Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA). The Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act prohibits a school from disclosing personally identifiable information from students' education records without the consent of a parent or eligible student ([Compliance with Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act of 1974 - FL-R](#)). Improper use of personal information may result in disciplinary action and/or legal action as appropriate.

LICENSED & CERTIFIED PERSONNEL

If you are required to be licensed or certified by virtue of your job description to perform your job at Stillwater Public Schools, proof of licensure/certification must be provided to the Human Resources Department upon hire or prior to the renewal date. **You are responsible for maintaining your license or certification in an active status.** Stillwater Public Schools is under no obligation to hold a licensed/certified position for an employee whose license or certification is not active. Employees are required to immediately notify their supervisor or the Human Resources Department if their license or certification is restricted, lapsed, or any other circumstances that result in their license/certification not being considered *active* and in

good standing. Disregard of licensure/certification requirements may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

NEGOTIATED AGREEMENTS

All teachers and most support employees are covered by the contents of a negotiated agreement. These agreements are negotiated each year and are valid for the following school year. They are found at www.stillwaterschools.com. It is the responsibility of each employee to read and understand his or her respective negotiated agreement. Administrators and employees not otherwise covered by a negotiated agreement should refer to the Board of Education Policy Manual for guidance.

BENEFITS

As an employee, health benefits available to you represent a significant component of your compensation package. They also provide important protection for you and your family in the case of illness or injury.

Your plan offers a series of health coverage options. Choosing a health coverage option is an important decision. To help you make an informed choice, your plan makes available an Employee Benefits Options Guide (BOG), which summarizes important information about any health coverage option in a standard format, to help you compare options.

The BOG may be found on the OMES website under [Employee Group Insurance Division](#) Section.

HEALTH INSURANCE

New employees have 30 days from the date of employment to enroll in health insurance. Stillwater Public Schools will pay the amount of the HealthChoice high option; the employee will cover any additional premiums. If an employee chooses not to take health insurance, they will be given a cash flex benefit in lieu of the medical flex benefit. This amount is to be determined by the Oklahoma State Department of Education. The health plan follows the calendar year and has an option period enrollment once a year, usually starting in mid-October, with a deadline for new enrollment or plan changes by early November. Certain *Qualifying Events* are considered for changes or enrollment during the course of the year that do not fall into the *new employee* or *option period* enrollment times. If you have questions, please contact the Stillwater Public Schools Benefits Specialist, Jacklyn Ahrens, jahrens@stillwaterschools.com, or visit the website listed for information and forms. [Health Insurance Information Link](#)

RETIREMENT

All classified employees are required to participate in the Oklahoma State Teachers Retirement System (OTRS). All nonclassified optional personnel regularly employed for twenty (20) or more hours per week may participate in the Oklahoma Teachers' Retirement System (OTRS), and they have thirty (30) days from their initial hire date to make a one-time irrevocable election to opt in or opt out of participation in OTRS. Should no election be made, employees will be deemed to participate. Finally, nonclassified employees who opt out will be ineligible for any future participation, unless hired in a classified position, but in that event, they would not be eligible for prior service credit.

Effective: July 1, 2021. Questions about retirement should be directed to Desiree Burnsed at dburnsed@stillwaterschools.com or 405-533-6300 x5033.

SECTION 125

All employees may elect on an annual basis to deduct certain amounts from their salary before taxes to pay for childcare or unreimbursed medical expenses. The enrollment period is during the spring and will also include options to invest in additional types of insurance and investment plans. Questions about Section 125 should be directed to Jacklyn Ahrens at jahrens@stillwaterschools.com or 405-707-5039.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP): Emotional well-being and work-life balance resources to keep you at your best; Anytime, Anywhere, No-cost, confidential solutions to life's challenges.

Everyone faces problems or situations that are difficult to resolve. We know there are times when everyone needs a little extra help. For employees who may need assistance to overcome issues that are interfering with their ability to function in the workplace, SPS offers up to 5 (five) visits per qualifying event through Support Linc, our EAP provider. SupportLinc offers expert guidance to help you and your family address and resolve everyday issues.

To learn more about the EAP, please visit supportlinc.com and use group code: stillwaterschools or call 1-800-475-3327

In addition, an excellent resource for assistance is United Way of Payne County. United Way of Payne County identifies more than twenty Partner Agencies whose mission is to provide support in a variety of areas, including counseling, legal aid, household necessities, adult day care, healthcare, transitional living services, meals, training, and others. United Way of Payne County can be contacted at 405-377-2161 or by visiting 109 E. Ninth Ave in Stillwater.

WORKER'S COMPENSATION

If you are injured on the job, it is your responsibility to immediately report the injury to your supervisor. You must go to your supervisor and fill out workers' compensation paperwork within 24 hours. If you choose to go to the doctor, you must go to Stillwater Medical Urgent Care and Occupational Medicine at 518 East Lakeview Road, Stillwater, OK 74075, and take the Medical Care Authorization Form and the First Fill Prescription form with you. Send all receipts and doctor's forms to Jacklyn Ahrens at the Administration Building.

LEAVE

Negotiated agreements and policy allow for several options regarding paid and unpaid leave. Please refer to your negotiated agreement or policy manual to learn about all the various leaves available to you at www.stillwaterschools.com. Employees who have questions about his or her leave should contact Jacklyn Ahrens at jahrens@stillwaterschools.com or 405-707-5039.

FMLA-FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Stillwater Public Schools complies with the requirements of the [Family Medical Leave Act](#) of 1993. This Act requires that a covered employer provide up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave to eligible employees. In order for the school district employees to qualify for FMLA leave, they must have been employed by the school district for at least 12 months and at least 1,250 hours during their first year. All eligible employees who meet the Act's requirements may be granted a total of twelve (12) weeks of unpaid family leave. Questions or inquiries regarding FMLA should be directed to Jacklyn Ahrens at jahrens@stillwaterschools.com or at 405-707-5039.

CERTIFIED LEAVE

All certified leave should be entered into Frontline Absence Management before the date you will be gone. If you are unable to enter it before your absence, you will need to have your supervisor enter it for you. Refer to the Certified Negotiated Agreement to find the amount of leave you receive each year.

Accessing the Frontline Absence Management website: From the Stillwater Public Schools website, go to Staff Links, select *Frontline*, and then select *Login (SPS Email)*.

Monitoring absence approvals: You may monitor your absences and your approval status from the homepage.

Creating an absence: To create an absence, go to *Create an Absence*. You will enter the dates, reason, length, and if a sub is needed. Select *Create Absence*.

Monitoring absence leave balances: To monitor your absence leave balances, select *Account*, then *Absence Reason Balances*. It will show what your balance is as of that day. Any future balances are not deducted until the absence date arrives.

Changing Personal Information: To change your Login ID, select *Change Personal Information*. Select *Edit Info* and enter your home phone number, including the area code. Select *Apply Changes*, and you will be able to log in with your phone number. To change your PIN, select *Change PIN*. Enter the required information and select *Apply Changes*.

Creating Preferred Substitutes: To set up a list of substitutes you would like for the system to call first, select *Add New Substitutes*. Select the *On List* box and the *Include* box next to each substitute you would like to add to your list. Select *Apply Changes*.

SUPPORT LEAVE

All support leave should be entered into Frontline Absence Management before the date you will be gone. If you are unable to enter it before your absence, you will need to have your supervisor enter it for you. Refer to the Non-Certified Negotiated Agreement to find the amount of leave you receive each year.

Accessing the Frontline Absence Management website: From the Stillwater Public Schools website, go to Staff Links, select Frontline, and then select Login (SPS Email).

Monitoring absence approvals: Select Absence Management. You may monitor your absences and your approval status from the homepage.

Creating an absence: To create an absence, go to Create an Absence. You will enter the dates, reason, length, and if a sub is needed. Select Create Absence.

Monitoring absence leave balances: To monitor your absence leave balances, select Account, then Absence Reason Balances. It will show what your balance is as of that day. Any future balances are not deducted until the absence date arrives.

Changing Personal Information: To change your Login ID, select Change Personal Information. Select Edit Info and enter your home phone number, including the area code. Select Apply Changes, and you will be able to log on with your phone number. To change your PIN, select Change PIN. Enter the required information and select Apply Changes.

To view timesheets: Select Time and Attendance when logging in, or switch between the two systems at the top left corner. Select Timesheet on the homepage to review your timesheet.

Creating Preferred Substitutes: To set up a list of substitutes you would like for the system to call first, select Add New Substitutes. Select the On List box and the Include box next to each substitute you would like to add to your list. Select Apply Changes.

SICK LEAVE BANK

The sick leave bank is an extension of the Stillwater Public Schools sick leave policy. It covers sick leave beyond an employee's accumulated sick leave and may be used in the event of an extended illness, disability, or injury. You may choose to join the sick leave bank by giving an

initial donation of 2 sick leave days within the first 30 days of the school year. To use days from the sick leave bank, you must submit a letter of request to the superintendent for his/her approval, along with a doctor's written verification. You may apply for 10 days for each year you have been employed with Stillwater Public Schools, but you may not borrow more than 60 days. After you have used 20 days from the sick leave bank, you must provide another statement from your doctor further verifying the illness. When you use the sick leave bank, you must pay back 3 days of sick leave each year until all of the days are paid back.

If you would like to attend a workshop or training, you may enter the absence into Frontline. You must provide the name of the workshop, location, and any cost to the district. This information can be entered in the *Notes to Administrator* section when entering the absence and will require the principal's approval.

PAYROLL

PayDay: Payroll is released on the last day of the month that the Administration Building is open with the exception of December. The Administration Building will open for a partial day towards the end of December to release payroll. All employees are encouraged to request direct deposit of their paychecks.

Deductions: The only deductions automatically made from your payroll check are those required by law. The deductions are: Social Security (FICA), Medicare, federal income tax, and state income tax.

Other items that may be deducted with your authorization include: organization dues, retirement savings, SPEF, United Way, health, dental, and vision insurance premiums, and life insurance.

Your direct deposit record/pay stub shows your earnings before deductions. Deductions are itemized, showing your net pay.

Wage Garnishments: A garnishment is a court order requiring an employer to withhold part of an employee's earned wages to satisfy unpaid creditors. If a garnishment is received, the employee will be notified, and the garnishment will be processed by the payroll department.

Overtime: An employee is not to work more than their contracted hours without prior approval from their supervisor. If an hourly employee, with the supervisor's approval, has worked additional time beyond their contracted amount, they are entitled to payment for their work.

CAFETERIA

Employees are encouraged to take advantage of the school cafeteria's high-quality, high-value meals.

Adult Portion Sizes: Adults may receive an entrée and any or all side items offered, including milk. Adult meals can be no larger than the largest portions allotted to students.

Payments: Meals are available to adults with pre-paid meal accounts or who pay cash. Stillwater Public Schools encourages the use of prepayment through www.schoolcafe.com for breakfast and lunch. Nutrition Services staff are not charged for meals. All other adults must pay the board-approved price for meals. All staff may purchase additional a la carte items, if available, at the listed price.

Charge Policy for Adults: Faculty and staff can charge up to the value of two lunches. Adults cannot charge a la carte items such as bottled water, drinks, or snacks

Meal Prices: Nutrition Services staff are not charged for meals. All other adults must pay the board-approved price for meals. All staff may purchase additional a la carte items, if available, at the listed price.

MISCELLANEOUS

District Transportation: When multiple vehicles are required for staff traveling to the same event, it is required that a request be submitted for the use of a district vehicle. If it is determined that a district vehicle is not available, mileage reimbursements for the use of personal vehicles may be allowed. However, a vehicle must be requested before mileage reimbursement will be considered.

In order to drive a school vehicle, an employee must have a valid Oklahoma driver's license and a clean Motor Vehicle Record (MVR) on file in the transportation office. To obtain an MVR, employees must submit a valid Oklahoma driver's license at least two weeks before their planned trip. For long-distance trips, a PIN should be requested at the time the driver's license is submitted in order to use the fuel card. All requests must be submitted a minimum of 5 business days in advance and must be approved by the site administrator.

Vehicles are to be picked up at the transportation office and are expected to be returned in a timely manner after the trip. Drivers are expected to remove all belongings, trash, etc., and return the vehicle in the condition it was received.

All accidents are to be reported to the transportation office as soon as possible. Obtain all relevant information – people involved, officer writing the report, agency of the reporting officer, etc. Major accidents should be reported as soon as emergencies are handled. Minor accidents can be reported the next business day. ([Requirements to Drive a Stillwater Public Schools Vehicle - CN-R1](#))

Keys: Employees will be issued keys for those doors appropriate to their job duties. Lost keys must be reported immediately. All keys must be turned in to the supervisor upon request or when leaving employment with the school district.

Evaluation: All district employees must have their job performance evaluated on an annual basis. Negotiated agreements and district policies outline evaluation procedures for different classifications of employees. ([Teacher Evaluation - DNA](#)) ([Support Staff Evaluation - DNAB](#))

CONTACTS

Dr. Trent J. Swanson

Chief Human Resources Officer
405-533-6300 ext. 5030
tswanson@stillwaterschools.com

Jana Bradshaw

Administration Building Receptionist/Human Resources Assistant,
Background Checks, TA/ Para Certifications, Class Cover Compensation,
Volunteer Applications
405-533-6300
jbradshaw@stillwaterschools.com

Desiree Burnsed

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Jacklyn Ahrens

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Marilyna Kopecky

Human Resources Specialist
Substitutes, Frontline Absence Management, Employee Badges, Employment Verification
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EXTERNAL WEBSITES & CONTACTS

EGID-OMES	https://omes.ok.gov/ or 1-800-543-6044
American Fidelity	http://www.americanfidelity.com or 1-800-933-1853
Oklahoma Teacher Retirement	http://www.ok.gov/trs/ or (405) 521-2387
Stillwater Public Education Foundation	http://www.spef.stillwaterschools.com/ or 707-5006

FREQUENTLY VIEWED POLICIES

All Stillwater Public School employees are required to review all policies as an employee of Stillwater Public Schools. The policies listed below are the most common policies.

[Negotiated Agreements - DDF](#)

[Teacher Qualifications - DPA](#)

[Teachers Duties & Responsibilities \(Regulation\): DB-R](#)

[Standards of Performance & Conduct for Teachers: DBCA](#)

[Sick Leave Regulations: DEC-R1](#)

[Sick Leave Bank: DEFA](#)

[Family Medical Leave: DECA](#)

[Drug & Alcohol-Free Workplace: DCC](#)

[Workplace Drug & Alcohol Testing \(Employees & Applicants for Employment other than Bus Drivers\): DCC-R](#)

[Teacher Evaluation: DNA](#)

[Support Staff Evaluation: DNAB](#)

[Suspension, Dismissal and Non Reemployment of Teachers: DO](#)

[Support Personnel Suspension, Demotion, Termination or Non-reemployment: DOAC](#)

[Reduction-In-Force Support Personnel: DOCB](#)
