

**Spring Hill  
Independent School District**

**Employee Handbook**

**Effective August 17, 2009  
2009-2010 School Year**

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# Employee handbook receipt

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Campus/department \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby acknowledge receipt of my personal copy of the Spring Hill ISD Employee Handbook. I agree to read the handbook and abide by the standards, policies, and procedures defined or referenced in this document.

Employees have the option of receiving the handbook in electronic format or hard copy.

Go to [www.springhill.esc7.net](http://www.springhill.esc7.net) and link to Administration – Employee Information to open the Employee Handbook

A hard copy may be copied by contacting your campus office.

Please indicate your choice by checking the appropriate box below:

I choose to receive the employee handbook in electronic format and accept responsibility for accessing according to the instructions provided.

I choose to make a hard copy of the employee handbook from the Master Copy located in the campus office.

The information in this handbook is subject to change. I understand that changes in district policies may supersede, modify, or eliminate the information summarized in this booklet. As the district provides updated policy information, I accept responsibility for reading and abiding by the changes.

I understand that no modifications to contractual relationships or alterations of at-will relationships are intended by this handbook.

I understand that I have an obligation to inform my supervisor or department head of any changes in personal information, such as phone number, address, etc. I also accept responsibility for contacting my supervisor or the Director of Finance if I have questions or concerns or need further explanation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information that will help with questions and pave the way for a successful year. Not all district policies and procedures are included. Those that are have been summarized. Suggestions for additions and improvements to this handbook are welcome and may be sent to the Director of Finance and Curriculum.

This handbook is neither a contract nor a substitute for the official district policy manual. It is not intended to alter the at-will status of employees in any way. Rather, it is a guide to and a brief explanation of district policies. District policies and procedures can change at any time; these changes shall supersede any handbook provisions that are not compatible with the change. For more information, employees may refer to the policy codes that are associated with handbook topics, confer with their supervisor, or call the appropriate district office. Policy manuals are located in the central administration office and at each campus office and are available for employee review during normal working hours.

## District information

### Description of the district

Primary: Pre-kindergarten – grade 2

Intermediate School: grades 3-4

Middle School: grades 5-6

Junior High: grades 7-8

High School: grades 9-12

### Mission statement

*Policy AE*

The District is committed to the premise that all students need to develop essential academic skills and to acquire a knowledge base on which to build lifelong learning. All students will be taught a core curriculum of English language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, health, physical education, and technological literacy. All students will acquire knowledge of citizenship and economic responsibilities and an appreciation of our common American heritage including its multicultural richness. To the full extent of their individual abilities, students will be provided the opportunity to develop the ability to think logically, independently, and creatively and to communicate effectively. Educating our children to be productive in a changing future necessitates an excellent educational system. A system that can accomplish this mission must be characterized by quality, equity, and accountability.

Instruction must be provided at the highest levels of quality. Educational opportunities and resources must be distributed with equity for all students. The educational system must maintain accountability for demonstrated results and continuous improvement.

The District will have the vitality to prepare our children for the changes and the challenges of the future, a future which will belong to the educated.

## **Board of Trustees**

*Policies BA, BAA, BBA, BBB, BBE, BE, BEC, BED*

Texas law grants the board of trustees the power to govern and oversee the management of the district's schools. The board is the policy-making body within the district and has overall responsibility for the curriculum, school taxes, annual budget, employment of the superintendent and other professional staff, facilities, and expansions. The board has complete and final control over school matters within limits established by state and Federal law and regulations.

The board of trustees is elected by the citizens of the district to represent the community's commitment to a strong educational program for the district's children. Trustees are elected by place and serve three-year terms. Trustees serve without compensation, must be registered voters, and must reside in the district.

Board members:

Larry Baker	(term expires 2010)	James White	(term expires 2010)
John Borens	(term expires 2011)	Tim Womack	(term expires 2010)
Dan Droege	(term expires 2012)	Karen Wright	(term expires 2011)
Walt Irwin	(term expires 2012)		

Trustees usually meet on the second Monday of each month at 7 p.m. at the central administration building. In the event that large attendance is anticipated, the board may meet at the high school cafeteria. Special meetings may be called when necessary. A written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted in front of the central administration building at least 72 hours before the scheduled meeting time. The written notice will show the date, time, place, and subjects of each meeting. In emergencies, a meeting may be held with a two-hour notice.

All meetings are open to the public. Under the following circumstances, Texas law permits the board to go into a closed session: to discuss prospective gifts or donations, real property acquisition, personnel issues including conferences with employees and employee complaints, security matters, student discipline, or to consult with attorneys regarding pending legislation.

### **Board meeting schedule**

See superintendent's secretary

### **Administration**

Superintendent: Wes Jones

Director of Finance: Gary Nash

Director for Curriculum and Instruction: Penny Fleet

Principals: Bobby Watkins, David Reed, Kelly Stansell, Dana Robertson and Peggy Mayfield.

Athletic Director: Robert Bero

Maintenance Director: Billy Miller

### **School calendar**

See campus principal or school web site at [www.springhill.esc7.net](http://www.springhill.esc7.net).

## **Helpful contacts**

From time to time, employees have questions or concerns. If those questions or concerns cannot be answered by supervisors or at the campus or department level, the employee is encouraged to contact the appropriate department as listed below.

## **School directory**

Superintendent: Wes Jones  
Director of Finance: Gary Nash  
Director for Curriculum and Instruction: Penny Fleet  
Primary Principal: Peggy Mayfield  
Intermediate School Principal: Dana Robertson  
Middle School Principal: Kelly Stansell  
Junior High Principal: David Reed  
High School Principal: Bobby Watkins  
Athletic Director: Robert Bero  
Maintenance Director: Billy Miller

## **Employment**

### **Equal employment opportunity**

*Policy DAA*

The Spring Hill ISD does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, disability, military status, or on any other basis prohibited by law. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant's job qualifications, experience, and abilities.

Employees with questions or concerns relating to discrimination on any of the bases listed above should contact the curriculum director.

### **Job vacancy announcements**

*Policy DC*

Announcements of job vacancies by position and location are distributed on a regular basis and posted at the central administration building, campus offices, and on the district's Web site.

### **Employment after retirement**

*Policy DEG, DPB*

Individuals receiving retirement benefits from the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) may be employed in certain positions or on part-time positions without affecting their benefits, according to TRS rules and state law. Service retirees who retire before May 31 may return to work in a Texas public school without a reduction in benefits one full calendar

month after the retirement date provided they meet certain strict conditions. Retirees may work in the following capacities without a loss of retirement benefits:

- As a principal or assistant principal or a teacher in an acute shortage area on a full-time basis, if appropriately certified and following a 12-month break in service. Retirees that retired under early age or disability provisions are excluded.
- As a full-time bus driver (early age and disability retirees excluded).
- As a substitute at no more than the established daily substitute pay rate (Individuals receiving disability retirement benefits may not work for more than 90 days in a school year.)
- On a half time or less basis during any month. Half-time employment cannot exceed the lesser of 50 percent of the position's full-time load or 92 hours in a month.
- On a full-time basis for a six-month period during a school year, provided that this is their only employment in a Texas public school. Individuals who retire in August may begin employment in October of the school year following their retirement.

Under this last provision, retirees must submit annual written notice to TRS by the last day of the first month of full employment to avoid a disruption in benefits. Working any part of a month counts as a full month.

Other restrictions apply when a person takes early age or disability retirement. These individuals should contact TRS for details about employment restrictions.

**Shortage areas.** Certain retirees may return to teaching on a full-time basis as a principal or assistant principal or teacher in an acute shortage area without a reduction in their annuities. Acute teaching shortage areas are determined by the board based on Commissioner of Education guidelines. When filling acute shortage area positions, the district must give hiring preference to certified applicants who are not retirees. To be eligible for full TRS benefits, a retiree must meet the following criteria:

- Have not been subject to a reduction in benefit for retirement at an early age or retired under disability provisions
- Have a 12-month continuous break in public school service since retirement
- Be appropriately certified for the position in the applicable school year

Employees can contact the Director of Finance for additional information or contact TRS by calling 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. TRS information is also available on the Web [www.trs.state.tx.us](http://www.trs.state.tx.us).

### **Contract and non-contract employment**

*Policies DC, DCA, DCB, DCC, DCD, DCE*

State law requires the district to employ all full-time professional employees in positions requiring a certificate from the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) and nurses under probationary, term, or continuing contracts. Employees in all other positions are employed at will or by a contract that is not subject to the procedures for non-renewal or termination under Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code. The paragraphs that follow provide a general description of the employment arrangements used by the district.

**Probationary contracts.** Nurses and full-time professional employees new to the district and employed in positions requiring SBEC certification must receive probationary contracts during their first year of employment. Former employees who are hired after at least a two year lapse in district employment also may be employed by probationary contract. Probationary contracts are one-year contracts. The probationary period for those who have been employed in public schools for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district may not exceed one full school year. For those with less experience, the probationary period will be three school years (i.e., three one-year contracts) with an optional fourth school year if the board determines it is doubtful whether a term contract should be given.

**Term and continuing contracts.** Full-time professionals employed in positions requiring certification and nurses will be employed by term contracts after they have successfully completed the probationary period. Teachers employed after that date are employed by term contracts. Campus principals and central office administrators are employed under two-year term contracts. The terms and conditions of employment are detailed in the contract and employment policies. All employees will receive a copy of their contract and employment policies.

**Non-certified professional and administrative employees.** Employees in professional and administrative positions that do not require SBEC certification (such as non-instructional administrators) are employed by a one or two-year term or probationary contract that is not subject to the procedures for non-renewal or termination under the Texas Education Code.

**Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees.** Paraprofessionals and auxiliary personnel, regardless of certification, are employed at will and not by contract. Employment is not for any specified term and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the district.

### **Searches and alcohol and drug testing**

#### *Policy DHE*

Noninvestigatory searches in the workplace, including accessing an employee's desk, file cabinets, or work area to obtain information needed for usual business purposes may occur when an employee is unavailable. Therefore, employees are hereby notified that they have no legitimate expectation of privacy in those places. In addition, the district reserves the right to conduct searches when there is reasonable cause to believe a search will uncover evidence of work-related misconduct. Such an investigator search may include drug and alcohol testing if the suspected violation relates to drug or alcohol use. The district may search the employee, the employee's personal items, work areas, including district owned computers, lockers, and private vehicles on district premises or used in district businesses.

### **Employees required to have a commercial driver's license.**

Any employee who is required to have a commercial driver's license (CDL) is subject to drug and alcohol testing. This includes all drivers who operate a motor vehicle designed to transport 16 or more people, counting the driver; drivers of large vehicles; or drivers of vehicles used in the transportation of hazardous materials. Teachers, coaches, or other employees who primarily perform duties other than driving are subject to testing requirements when their duties include driving.

Drug testing will be conducted before an individual assumes driving responsibilities. Alcohol and drug tests will be conducted when reasonable suspicion exists, at random, when an employee returns to duty after engaging in prohibited conduct, and as a follow-up measure. Testing may be conducted following accidents. Return-to-duty and follow-up testing will be conducted when an employee who has violated the prohibited alcohol conduct standards or tested positive for alcohol or drugs returns to duty.

All employees subject to alcohol and drug testing will receive a copy of the district's policy, the testing requirements, and detailed information on alcohol and drug abuse and the availability of assistance programs. Employees with questions or concerns relating to alcohol and drug policies and related educational material should contact representative named by the superintendent per review of local policy.

### **Health Safety Training**

*Policy DBA, DMA*

Nurses, physical education teachers, marching band directors, coaches, athletic trainers, or sponsors of an extracurricular athletic activity (including cheerleading) that is sponsored or sanctioned by the district or University Interscholastic League (UIL) must maintain and submit to the district proof of current certification in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED). Certification must be issued by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or another organization that provides equivalent training and certification.

### **Reassignments and transfers**

*Policy DK*

All personnel are subject to assignment and reassignment by the superintendent. Campus reassignments must be approved by the principal at the receiving campus. When reassignments are due to enrollment shifts or program changes, the superintendent has final placement authority. Extracurricular or supplemental duty assignments may be reassigned at any time. Employees who object to a reassignment may follow the district process for employee complaints as outlined in this handbook and district policy DGBA (Local).

Employees with the required qualifications for a position may request a transfer to another campus or department. A written request for transfer must be completed and signed by the employee and the employee's supervisor. Requests for transfer during the school year will be considered only when the change will not adversely affect students and after a replacement has been found. All transfer requests will be coordinated by the superintendent's office and must be approved by the receiving supervisor.

### **Workload and work schedules**

*Policy DL*

**Professional employees.** Professional and academic administrators are exempt from overtime pay and are employed on a 10-, 11-, or 12-month basis, according to the work schedules set by the district. A school calendar is adopted each year designating the work schedule for teachers and all school holidays. Notice of work schedules including required days of service and scheduled holidays will be distributed each school year.

Classroom teachers will have planning periods for instructional preparation and conferences. The schedule of planning periods is set at the campus level but must provide at least 450 minutes within each two-week period in blocks not less than 45 minutes. Teachers and librarians are entitled to a duty-free lunch period of at least 30 minutes. The district may require teachers to supervise students during lunch one day a week when no other personnel are available.

**Para-professional and auxiliary employees.** Support employees are employed at will and will be notified of the required duty days, holidays, and hours of work for their position on an annual basis. Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees are not exempt from overtime and are not authorized to work in excess of their assigned schedule without prior approval from their supervisor.

### **Notification to parents regarding qualifications**

*Policy DK, EHBD*

Texas law requires that parents be notified if their child is assigned a teacher for more than 30 consecutive days who does not hold an appropriate teaching certificate. Inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers include individuals serving with an emergency permit (including individuals waiting to take the EXCET/TeXes exam) or individuals who do not hold any certificate or permit. No later than the 30<sup>th</sup> instructional day after the date of assignment the superintendent or designee will send a written notice to parents. Information relating to teacher certification will be made available to the public upon request.

In schools receiving Title I funds, the district is also required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to notify parents at the beginning of each school year that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's teacher. NCLB also requires that parents be notified if their child has been assigned, or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by, a teacher who is not highly qualified.

Employees who have questions about their certification status can call the superintendent's secretary at 903-323-7740.

### **Outside employment and tutoring**

*Policy DBF*

Employees should not accept outside employment or engage in other activities for profit that would interfere with their district employment.

### **Performance evaluation**

*Policy DN, DNA, DNB*

Evaluation of an employee's job performance is a continual process that focuses on improvement. Performance evaluation is based on an employee's assigned job duties and other job-related criteria. All employees will participate in the evaluation process with their assigned supervisor at least annually. Written evaluations will be completed on forms approved by the district. Reports, correspondence, and memoranda also can be used to document performance information. All employees will receive a copy of their

written evaluation, have a performance conference with their supervisor, and get the opportunity to respond to the evaluation.

## **Employee involvement**

*Policy BQA, BQB*

At both the campus and district levels, Spring Hill ISD offers opportunities for involvement in matters that affect employees. As part of the district's planning and decision-making process, employees may either be asked or elected to serve on district- or campus-level advisory committees. Plans and detailed information about the shared decision-making process are available in each campus office or from central administration office.

## **Staff development**

*Policy DMA*

Staff development activities are organized to meet the needs of employees and the district. Staff development for development of instructional personnel is predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives, addressed in the campus improvement plan, and approved by a campus-level advisory committee. Staff development for noninstructional personnel is designed to meet specific licensing requirements (e.g., bus drivers) and continued employee skill development.

Individuals holding renewable SBEC certificates are responsible for obtaining the required training hours and maintaining appropriate documentation.

# **Compensation and benefits**

## **Salaries, wages, and stipends**

*Policy DEA, DEAA*

Employees are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and a pay structure established for each position. The district's pay plans are reviewed by the administration each year and adjusted as needed. All district positions are classified as exempt or nonexempt according to federal law. Professional employees and academic administrators are generally classified as exempt and are paid monthly salaries. They are not entitled to overtime compensation. Other employees are generally classified as nonexempt and are paid based on hourly wages or provided compensatory time for each hour worked beyond 40 in a workweek. (**See Overtime, page 14.**)

Salaries and wages are reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted according to the budgeted amounts approved by the board. All employees will receive written notice of their pay and work schedules before the start of each school year. Classroom teachers, librarians, counselors, and nurses will be paid no less than the minimum state salary schedule. Contract employees who perform extracurricular duties may be paid a stipend in addition to their salary according to the district's extra-duty pay schedule.

Employees should contact the Director of Finance for more information about the district's pay schedules or their own pay.

## **Paychecks**

All professional employees are paid monthly. Auxiliary employees are paid monthly. During the school year, paychecks are delivered to each campus. Paychecks will not be released to any person other than the district employee named on the check without the employee's written authorization. During summer breaks, paychecks will be mailed or made available for employee pickup.

An employee's payroll statement contains detailed information including deductions, withholding information, and the amount of leave accumulated. Call the Director of Finance or the bookkeeper if you have any questions about your payroll statement.

Copies of pay dates for the school year are posted in each campus office and the Business Office, and school website, [www.springhill.esc7.net](http://www.springhill.esc7.net).

## **Automatic payroll deposit**

Employees can have their paychecks electronically deposited into a designated account. A notification period of 15 days prior to payday is necessary to activate this service. With automatic deposit, an employee's pay is immediately available on the pay date. Contact the bookkeeper for more information about the automatic payroll deposit service.

## **Payroll deductions**

### *Policy CFEA*

Automatic payroll deductions for the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and federal income tax are required for all full-time employees. Medicare tax deductions are required for all employees hired after March 31, 1986. Temporary and part-time employees who are not eligible for TRS membership must have their Social Security contributions deducted.

Other payroll deductions employees may elect include deductions for the employee's share of premiums for health, dental, life, and vision insurance; annuities; the Texas Tomorrow Fund; savings deposits and loan payment through area teachers' credit unions. Employees also may request payroll deduction for payment of membership dues to professional organizations or the United Way. Salary deductions are automatically made for unauthorized or unpaid leave.

## **Overtime compensation**

### *Policy DEA*

The district compensates overtime for nonexempt employees in accordance with federal wage and hour laws. Only nonexempt employees (hourly employees and some paraprofessional employees) are entitled to overtime compensation. Nonexempt employees are not authorized to work beyond their normal work schedule without advance approval from their supervisor.

Overtime is legally defined as all hours worked in excess of 40 hours weekly and is not measured by the day or by the employee's regular work schedule. Employees who must

work beyond their normal schedule but less than 40 hours per week will be compensated in straight-time pay or equivalent time off. Employees must work more than 40 total hours in a week to earn overtime compensation.

For the purpose of calculating overtime, a workweek begins at 12:01 a.m. Sunday and ends at midnight Saturday. Employees may be compensated for overtime with compensatory time off or direct pay at time-and-a-half rates. The following applies to all nonexempt employees:

- Employees cannot accumulate more than 120 hours of compensatory time.
- Compensatory time earned must be used according to a schedule that is mutually agreeable to the employee and supervisor.
- An employee shall be required to use comp time before using any other available paid leave (e.g., sick, personal, vacation)
- Weekly time sheets will be maintained on all nonexempt employees for the purpose of wage and salary administration.

### **Travel expense reimbursement**

#### *Policy DEE*

Before any travel expenses are incurred by an employee, the employee's supervisor and the superintendent or designee must give approval. For approved travel, employees will be reimbursed for mileage and other travel expenditures according to the current rate schedule authorized by the board of trustees and subject to Internal Revenue Service regulations. Employees must submit receipts to be reimbursed for expenses other than mileage.

### **Health, dental, and life insurance**

#### *Policy CRD*

Group health insurance coverage is provided through TRS-ActiveCare, the statewide public school health insurance program. The district's contribution to employee insurance premiums is determined annually by the board of trustees. Employees eligible for health insurance coverage include the following:

- Employees who are active, contributing TRS members
- Employees who are not contributing TRS members and who are regularly scheduled to work at least 10 hours per week

TRS retirees and employees who are not contributing TRS members that are regularly scheduled to work less than 10 hours per week are not eligible to participate in TRS-ActiveCare.

The insurance plan year is from September 1 through August 31. Current employees can make changes in their insurance coverage during open enrollment each spring. Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, employee cost, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees in a separate booklet. Employees should contact the Director of Finance for more information.

## **Supplemental insurance benefits**

### *Policy CRG*

At their own expense, employees may enroll in supplemental insurance programs for cancer, supplemental, disability or other such insurance policies. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deduction. Employees should contact the bookkeeper for more information.

## **Cafeteria plan benefits (Section 125) and 403(b) plans**

Employees may be eligible to participate in the Cafeteria Plan (Section 125) and, under IRS regulations, must either accept or reject this benefit. This plan enables eligible employees to pay certain insurance premiums on a pretax basis (i.e., accidental death and dismemberment, cancer and dread disease, dental, health, and additional term life insurance). A third-party administrator handles employee claims made on these accounts.

Enrollment in a 403(b) plan requires that a hold harmless agreement and maximum exclusion allowance worksheet be on file prior to payroll deduction.

New employees must accept or reject this benefit during their first month of employment. All employees must accept or reject this benefit on an annual basis and during the specified time period. Contact the bookkeeper for more information.

## **Workers' compensation insurance**

### *Policy CRE*

The district, in accordance with state law, provides workers' compensation benefits to employees who suffer a work-related illness or are injured on the job. The district has workers' compensation coverage from CAS, effective at the beginning of each fiscal year. Benefits help pay for medical treatment and make up for part of the income lost while recovering. Specific benefits are prescribed by law depending on the circumstances of each case. All work-related accidents or injuries should be reported immediately to the Director of Finance. Employees who are unable to work due to a work-related injury will be notified of their rights and responsibilities under the Texas Labor Code.

## **Unemployment compensation insurance**

### *Policy CRF*

Employees who have been laid off or terminated through no fault of their own may be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits under the Texas Unemployment Compensation Act. Employees are not eligible to collect unemployment benefits during regularly scheduled breaks in the school year or the summer months if they have employment contracts or reasonable assurance of returning to service. Employees with questions about unemployment benefits should contact the Director of Finance.

## **Teacher retirement**

### *Policy DEG*

All personnel employed on a regular basis for at least one-half of the normal work schedule are members of the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS). Substitutes not receiving TRS service retirement benefits who work at least 90 days a year are also eligible for TRS membership and to purchase a year of creditable service. TRS provides members with an annual statement of their account showing all deposits and the total account balance for the year ending August 31, as well as an estimate of their retirement benefits.

Employees who plan to retire under TRS should notify the Director of Finance as soon as possible. Information on the application procedures for TRS benefits is available at the central administration office. Additional inquiries should be addressed to: Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 1000 Red River Street, Austin, TX 78701-2698, or call 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. See page 8 for information on restrictions of employment of retirees in Texas Public Schools.

## **Other benefit programs**

### *Policy DEB*

District employees shall be admitted free to home athletic events.

Employees who have accumulated the maximum 30 days of local leave shall not be eligible for days beyond the maximum. However, if accumulated local leave remains at 30 days, an employee may be compensated for days of local leave he or she would have earned during any new school year at the substitute teacher daily rate. Such employees shall be compensated for their local leave at the end of the school year.

Employees who have perfect attendance during a semester shall be paid \$100 at the end of the semester.

## **Leaves and absences**

### *Policy DEC, DECA, DECB*

The district offers employees paid and unpaid leaves of absence in times of personal need. This handbook describes the basic types of leave available and restrictions on leaves of absence. Employees who have personal needs that will require long leaves of absence should call the Director of Finance for counseling about leave options, continuation of benefits, and communicating with the district.

Employees who take an unpaid leave of absence may continue their insurance benefits at their own expense. Health care benefits for employees on leave authorized under the Family and Medical Leave Act will be paid by the district as they were when they were working. The district does not make benefit contributions for employees who are not on active payroll status.

Employees must follow district and department or campus procedures to report or request any leave of absence and complete the appropriate leave request form. Any employee who is absent more than five consecutive days because of a personal or family illness must submit a medical certification from a qualified health care provider confirming the specific dates of the illness, the reason for the illness, and in the case of personal illness – the employee’s fitness to return to work.

Personal and local sick leave is earned on an annual basis. Leave is available for the employee’s use upon employment. If an employee leaves the district before the end of the work year, the cost of any unearned leave days taken shall be deducted from the employee’s final paycheck.

## **Personal leave**

State law requires that all employees receive up to five days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave is earned at a rate of ½ day per 18 workdays. A day of earned personal leave is equivalent to an assigned workday. There is no limit on the accumulation of state personal leave, and it can be transferred to other Texas school districts and is generally transferable to education service centers. There are two types of personal leave: non-discretionary and discretionary.

**Non-discretionary.** Leave that is taken for personal or family illness, family emergency, death in the family, or military leave is considered non-discretionary leave. This type of leave allows very little, if any advance planning and will be granted to employees in the same manner as sick leave.

**Discretionary.** Leave that is taken at an employee’s discretion and that can be scheduled in advance is considered discretionary leave. An employee wishing to take discretionary personal leave must submit a request three days in advance of the anticipated absence to his or her principal or supervisor. Discretionary personal leave will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis and will be subject to the following limitations:

- A maximum of one campus employee in each job category will be permitted to take discretionary personal leave at a time.
- Discretionary leave may not last more than two consecutive workdays.
- Discretionary leave shall not be allowed on the day before a school holiday, the day after a school holiday, days scheduled for end-of-semester or end-of-year exams, days scheduled for TAKS testing, or professional or staff development days, except in extenuating circumstances as determined by the superintendent.
- Unapproved discretionary leave will result in a dock in pay at the regular daily rate.

## **Sick leave**

State sick leave accumulated **prior to 1995-96** is available for use and may be transferred to other school districts in Texas. Sick leave can be used only in half-day increments except when coordinated with family and medical leave taken on an intermittent or reduced-schedule basis or when coordinated with workers’ compensation benefits.

Sick leave accumulated prior to 1995-96 may be used for the following reasons only:

- Employee illness
- Illness in the employee's immediate family
- Family emergency (i.e., natural disasters or life-threatening situations)
- Death in the immediate family
- Active military service

### **Local leave**

All employees shall earn an additional 5 equivalent workdays of local sick leave per school year, concurrently with state leave.

Local sick leave shall accumulate to a maximum of 30 equivalent workdays and shall be taken with no loss of pay.

Local sick leave must be used in the same manner as state sick leave.

All employees called to active military service may use available state and local sick and personal leave.

### **Temporary disability**

**Certified employees.** The purpose of temporary disability leave is to provide job protection to full-time educators who cannot work for an extended period of time because of a mental or physical disability of a temporary nature. Any full-time employee whose position requires certification by SBEC or by the district is eligible for temporary disability leave. Temporary disability leave must be taken as a continuous block of time. It may not be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule. Pregnancy and conditions related to pregnancy are treated the same as any other temporary disability.

Employees must request approval for temporary disability leave. An employee's notification of need for extended absence due to the employee's own medical condition shall be accepted as a request for temporary disability leave. The request must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming the employee's inability to work and estimating a probable date of return. If disability leave is approved, the length of leave is no longer than 180 calendar days. If disability leave is not approved, the employee must return to work or be subject to termination procedures.

If an employee is placed on temporary disability leave involuntarily, he or she has the right to request a hearing before the board of trustees. The employee may protest the action and present additional evidence of fitness to work.

When an employee is ready to return to work, the Director of Finance should be notified at least 30 days in advance. The return-to-work notice must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming that the employee is able to do the job. Professional employees returning from leave will be reinstated to the school to which they were previously assigned as soon as an appropriate position is available. If a position is not available before the end of the school year, professional employees will be reinstated at

the beginning of the following school year.

## **Family and medical leave (FMLA) – general provisions**

### **Basic leave entitlement**

FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for the following reasons:

- For incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care of child birth;
- To care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care;
- To care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition; or
- For a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job.

### **Military family leave entitlements**

Eligible employees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty or call to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings.

FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered service member during a single 12 month period. A covered service member is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform his or her duties for which the service member is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; or is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list.

### **Benefits and protections**

During FMLA leave, the employer must maintain the employee's health coverage under any "group health plan" on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work. Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms.

Use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave.

### **Eligibility requirements**

Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if at least 50 employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles.

## **Definition of serious health condition**

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job, or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school or other daily activities.

Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than 3 consecutive calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regimen of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.

## **Use of leave**

An employee does not need to use this leave entitlement in one block. Leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary. Employees must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the employer's operations. Leave due to qualifying exigencies may also be taken on an intermittent basis.

## **Substitution of paid leave for unpaid leave**

Employees may choose or employers may require use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. In order to use paid leave for FMLA leave, employees must comply with the employer's normal paid leave policies.

## **Employee responsibilities**

Employees must provide 30 days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When 30 days notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable and generally must comply with an employer's normal call-in procedures.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the employer to determine if the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Sufficient information may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions; the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. Employees also must inform the employer if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified. Employees also may be required to provide a certification and periodic recertification supporting the need for leave.

## **Employer responsibilities**

Covered employers must inform employees requesting leave whether they are eligible under FMLA. If they are, the notice must specify any additional information required as

well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If they are not eligible, the employer must prove a reason for the ineligibility.

Covered employers must inform employees if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employee's leave entitlement. If the employer determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the employer must notify the employee.

### **Unlawful acts by employers**

FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer to

- Interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right protected under FMLA;
- Discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to FMLA.

### **Enforcement**

An employee may file a complaint with the U S Department of Labor or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer.

FMLA does not affect any Federal or State law prohibiting discrimination, or supersede any State or local law or collective bargaining agreement which provides greater family or medical leave rights.

*FMLA section 109 (29 U.S.C § 2619)required FMLA covered employers to post the text of this notice.*

*Regulations 29 C.F.R § 825.300 (a) may require additional disclosures.*

For additional information:

1-866-4US-WAGE (1-866-487-9243) TTY: 1-877-889-5627

[www.wagehour.dol.gov](http://www.wagehour.dol.gov)

### **Local FMLA provisions**

Eligible employee can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in the 12-month period measured forward from the date an individual employee's first FMLA leave begins.

### **Use of paid leave**

Family and medical leave runs concurrently with accrued sick and personal leave, temporary disability leave, compensatory time, assault leave and absences due to a work-related illness or injury. The district will designate the leave as family and medical leave, if applicable, and notify the employee that accumulated leave will run concurrently.

### **Combined leave for spouses**

A husband and wife who are both employed by the district are limited to a combined total of 12 weeks of FMLA leave to care for a parent with a serious health condition; or for the

birth, adoption or foster placement of a child. Military caregiver leave for spouses is limited to a combined total of 26 weeks.

### **Intermittent leave**

When medically necessary or in the case of a qualifying exigency, an employee may take leave intermittently or on a reduced schedule. The district does permit the use of intermittent or reduced-schedule leave for the care of a newborn child or for adoption or placement of a child with the employee.

Employees requiring family and medical leave should contact the Director of Finance for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

### **Catastrophic Sick Leave Bank**

#### *Policy DEC*

The purpose of the catastrophic sick leave bank is to provide paid leave to a full-time District employee in the event of a personal catastrophic illness or injury or that of an immediate family member. Catastrophic illness or injury shall be defined as an illness, injury, or disability that is life-threatening and requires major medical treatment such as surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, and the like.

A District employee who has accumulated the maximum 30 days of local leave may donate to the catastrophic sick leave bank any local leave days earned over the 30 days, up to a maximum of five days per school year. The donation shall be voluntary and not solicited. When days are donated to the bank, they become the property of the District and are not returned to the employee.

In order to receive days from the catastrophic sick leave bank, an employee suffering from a catastrophic illness or injury shall have exhausted all available paid leave. An employee does not have to contribute days to the bank in order to request catastrophic sick leave bank days. An employee may receive up to 50 days from the bank per school year.

Requests for catastrophic sick leave bank days shall be submitted to the Superintendent. The Superintendent shall determine if the employee's illness or disability, or that of an immediate family member, qualifies for use of days from the bank and the number of days the employee may use. Any decision made by the Superintendent may be appealed in accordance with DGBA (Local).

### **Workers' compensation benefits**

An employee receiving workers' compensation wage benefits for a job-related illness or injury may be eligible for workers' compensation weekly income benefits if the absence exceeds seven calendar days.

An employee receiving workers' compensation wage benefits for a job-related illness or injury may choose to use accumulated sick leave or any other paid leave benefits. An employee choosing to use paid leave will not receive workers' compensation weekly

income benefits until all paid leave is exhausted or to the extent that paid leave does not equal the pre-illness or –injury wage. If the use of paid leave is not elected, then the employee will only receive worker’s compensation wage benefits for any absence resulting from a work related illness or injury, which may not equal his or her pre-illness or injury wage.

### **Assault leave**

Assault leave provides extended job income and benefits protection to an employee who is injured as the result of a physical assault suffered during the performance of his or her job. An injury is treated as an assault if the person causing the injury could be prosecuted for assault or could not be prosecuted only because that person's age or mental capacity renders the person non-responsible for purposes of criminal liability.

An employee who is physically assaulted at work may take all the leave time medically necessary (up to two years) to recover from the physical injuries he or she sustained. At the request of an employee, the district will immediately assign the employee to assault leave. Days of leave granted under the assault leave provision will not be deducted from accrued personal leave and must be coordinated with workers' compensation benefits. Upon investigation, the district may change the assault leave status and charge leave used against the employee's accrued paid leave. The employee's pay will be deducted if accrued paid leave is not available.

### **Bereavement leave**

Use of state leave and/or local sick leave for death in the immediate family shall not exceed five workdays per occurrence, subject to approval of the district.

### **Jury duty**

Employees will receive leave with pay and without loss of accumulated leave for jury duty. Employees must present documentation of the service and shall retain any compensation they receive.

### **Other court appearances**

Employees will be granted paid leave to comply with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative proceeding. Absences for court appearances related to an employee’s personal business must be taken as personal leave or leave without pay (if no personal leave is available). Employees may be required to submit documentation of their need for leave for court appearances.

### **Military leave**

**Paid leave for military service.** Any employee who is a member of the Texas National Guard, Texas State Guard, or reserves component of the armed forces will be granted a paid leave of absence without loss of any accumulated leave for authorized training or duty orders. Paid military leave will not exceed 15 days per year. In addition, an employee is entitled to use available state and local sick and personal leave during

active military service.

**Reemployment after military leave.** Employees who leave the district to enter into the United States uniformed services or state military duty (Texas National Guard or Texas State Guard) may return to employment if they are honorably discharged. Employees who wish to return to the district will be reemployed in the position they would have held if employment had not been interrupted or reassigned to an equivalent or similar position provided they are still qualified to perform the required duties. To be eligible for reemployment, employees must provide notice of their obligation or intent to perform

military service, provide evidence of honorable discharge or release, and submit an application for reemployment to the Director of Finance.

Employees who perform service in the uniformed services may elect to continue their health plan coverage at their own cost for a period not to exceed 18 months. Employees should contact the Director of Finance for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

## **Employee relations and communications**

### **Employee recognition and appreciation**

Continuous efforts are made throughout the year to recognize employees who make an extra effort to contribute to the success of the district. Employees are recognized at board meetings, in the district newsletter, and through special events and activities.

### **District communications**

Throughout the school year, the central administration office publishes brochures, fliers, calendars, news releases, and other communication materials. These publications offer employees and the community information pertaining to school activities and achievements.

## **Complaints and grievances**

### *Policy DGBA*

In an effort to hear and resolve employee complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted an orderly process that all employees must follow when bringing formal complaints and grievances. Employees are encouraged to discuss problems or complaints with their supervisors or an appropriate administrator at any time.

The formal grievance process provides all employees with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with an administrative response. Once all administrative grievance procedures are exhausted, employees can bring grievances to the board of trustees. For ease of reference, the district's policy concerning the process of bringing complaints and grievances is reprinted as follows:

See the text of DGBA (local) in the district policy manual available in each principal's office and the central administration office.

## **Employee conduct and welfare**

### **Standards of Conduct**

#### *Policy DH*

All employees are expected to work together in a cooperative spirit to serve the best interests of the district and to be courteous to students, one another, and the public. Employees are expected to observe the following standards of conduct:

- Recognize and respect the rights and property of students and coworkers and maintain confidentiality in all matters relating to students and coworkers.
- Report to work according to the assigned schedule.
- Notify their immediate supervisor in advance or as early as possible (preferably in advance) in the event that they must be absent or late. Unauthorized absences, chronic absenteeism, and tardiness and failure to follow procedures for reporting an absence may be cause for disciplinary action.
- Know and comply with department and district procedures and policies.
- Observe all safety rules and regulations and report injuries or unsafe conditions to a supervisor immediately.
- Use district time, funds, and property for authorized district business and activities only.

All employees, as public servants, must follow the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, which is reprinted below:

### **Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators**

#### **Statement of Purpose**

The Texas educator shall comply with standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community and shall safeguard academic freedom. The Texas educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession, shall respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty. The Texas educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, shall extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession. The Texas educator, in accepting a position of public trust, shall measure success by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as an effective citizen. The Texas educator, in fulfilling responsibilities in the community, shall cooperate with parents and others to improve the public schools of the community.

#### **Professional Standards**

##### **1. Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices, and Performance**

**Standard 1.1** The educator shall not knowingly engage in deceptive practices

regarding official policies of the school district or educational institution.

**Standard 1.2** The educator shall not knowingly misappropriate, divert, or use monies, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.

**Standard 1.3** The educator shall not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.

**Standard 1.4** The educator shall not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.

**Standard 1.5** The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or to obtain special advantage. This standard shall not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.

**Standard 1.6** The educator shall not falsify records, or direct or coerce others to do so.

**Standard 1.7** The educator shall comply with state regulations, written local school board policies, and other applicable state and federal laws.

**Standard 1.8** The educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications.

## **2. Ethical Conduct toward Professional Colleagues**

**Standard 2.1** The educator shall not reveal confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

**Standard 2.2** The educator shall not harm others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system.

**Standard 2.3** The educator shall adhere to written local school board policies and state and federal laws regarding the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of personnel.

**Standard 2.4** The educator shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, and citizenship rights and responsibilities.

**Standard 2.5** The educator shall not discriminate against or coerce a colleague on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, or family status.

**Standard 2.6** The educator shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.

**Standard 2.7** The educator shall not retaliate against any individual who has filed a complaint with the SBEC under this chapter.

### **3. Ethical Conduct toward Students**

**Standard 3.1** The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

**Standard 3.2** The educator shall not knowingly treat a student in a manner that adversely affects the student's learning, physical health, mental health, or safety.

**Standard 3.3** The educator shall not deliberately or knowingly misrepresent facts regarding a student.

**Standard 3.4** The educator shall not exclude a student from participation in a program, deny benefits to a student, or grant an advantage to a student on the basis of race, color, sex, disability, national origin, religion, or family status.

**Standard 3.5** The educator shall not engage in physical mistreatment of a student.

**Standard 3.6** The educator shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student.

**Standard 3.7** The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or knowingly allow any student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.

### **Harassment**

*Policies DH, DIA*

Employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment, including sexual harassment, of other employees or students. While acting in the course of their employment, employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment of other persons, including board members, vendors, contractors, volunteers, or parents. A substantiated charge of harassment will result in disciplinary action.

Employees who believe they have been harassed are encouraged to promptly report such incidents to the campus principal, supervisor, or appropriate district official. If the campus principal or supervisor is the subject of a complaint, the employee shall report the complaint directly to the superintendent.

Any allegation of harassment of students or employees shall be investigated and addressed. An employee may appeal the decision of the principal or supervisor regarding the investigation into the allegations in accordance with the employee complaint and grievance policy and procedures (See *Complaints and grievances*, page 25). To the greatest extent possible, complaints shall be treated as confidential. Limited disclosure may be necessary to complete a thorough investigation. The district will not retaliate against an employee who in good faith reports perceived harassment.

## **Sexual harassment**

*Policies DHC, FNCJ, FFG*

**Employee-to-employee.** Sexual harassment of a coworker is a form of discrimination and is prohibited by law. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct under the following conditions:

- Submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions.
- The conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or otherwise offensive work environment.

Employees who believe that they have been subject to sexual harassment are encouraged to come forward with complaints and should inform their principal, supervisor, or the superintendent. Employees must follow the procedures outlined in this handbook for filing a complaint except when it would require presenting a complaint to the alleged harasser. (See Complaints and grievances, page 24.) The district will promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment and take appropriate disciplinary action.

**Employee-to-student.** Sexual harassment of students by employees is a form of discrimination and is prohibited by law. Sexual harassment of students includes any welcome or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other oral, written, physical, or visual conduct of a sexual nature. Romantic relationships between district employees and students are strictly prohibited. Other prohibited conduct includes the following:

- Engaging in sexually oriented conversations for the purpose of personal sexual gratification
- Telephoning students at home or elsewhere and engaging in inappropriate social relationships
- Engaging in physical contact that would reasonably be construed as sexual in nature
- Enticing or threatening students to get them to engage in sexual behavior in exchange for grades or other school-related benefits

In most instances, sexual abuse of a student by an employee violates the student's constitutional right to bodily integrity. Sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to, fondling, sexual assault, or sexual intercourse.

Employees who suspect a student is being sexually harassed or abused by another employee are obligated to report their concerns to the campus principal. All allegations of sexual harassment or sexual abuse of a student will be reported to the student's parents and promptly investigated. Conduct that may be characterized as known or suspected child abuse also will be reported to the appropriate authorities, as required by law. Employees with questions or concerns relating to the alleged sexual harassment of a student should contact the curriculum director.

## **Drug-abuse prevention**

*Policies DH, DI*

Spring Hill ISD is committed to maintaining a drug-free environment and will not tolerate the use of illegal drugs in the workplace. Employees who use or are under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs as defined by the Texas Controlled Substances Act during working hours may be dismissed. The district's policy on drug abuse and drug-free schools is available from each campus principal or the central administration building.

## **Reporting suspected child abuse**

*Policy DF, DG, DH, FFG, GRA*

All employees are required by state law to immediately report any suspected child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services, or appropriate state agency (i.e.: state agency operating, licensing, certifying, or registering a facility) within 48 hours of the event that led to the suspicion. Reports to Child Protective Services can be made to a local office or to The Texas Abuse Hotline (800-252-5400). Under state law, any person reporting or assisting in the investigation of reported child abuse or neglect is immune from liability unless the report is made in bad faith or with malicious intent.

An employee's failure to report suspected child abuse may result in prosecution for the commission of a Class B misdemeanor. In addition, a certified employee's failure to report child abuse may result in disciplinary procedures by SBEC for a violation of the Educators Code of Ethics and prosecution for the commission of a Class B misdemeanor.

Employees who suspect that a student has been or may be abused or neglected should also report their concerns to the campus principal. Employees are not required to report their concern to the principal before making a report to the appropriate agencies. In addition, employees must cooperate with child abuse and neglect investigators. Reporting the concern to the principal does not relieve the employee of the requirement to report to the appropriate state agency. Interference with a child abuse investigation by denying an interviewer's request to interview a student at school or requiring the presence of a parent or school administrator against the desires of the investigator is prohibited.

## **Fraud and financial impropriety**

*Policy CAA*

All employees should act with integrity and diligence in duties involving the District's financial resources. The District prohibits fraud and financial impropriety, as defined below. Fraud and financial impropriety includes but is not limited to, the following:

- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of any document or account belonging to the District
- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of a check, bank draft, or any other financial document
- Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, or other District assets including employee time

- Impropriety in the handling of money or reporting of district financial transactions
- Profiteering as a result of insider knowledge of district information or activities
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential or proprietary information to outside parties
- Unauthorized disclosure of investment activities engaged in or contemplated by the District
- Accepting or seeking anything of material value from contractors, vendors, or other persons providing services or materials to the District
- Destroying, removing, or inappropriately using records, furniture, fixtures, or equipment
- Failing to provide financial records required by state or local entities
- Failing to disclose conflicts of interest as required by policy
- Any other dishonest act regarding the finances of the District

### **Conflict of interest**

*Policy BBFA, DBD*

Employees are required to disclose to their supervisor any situation that creates a potential conflict of interest with proper discharge of assigned duties and responsibilities or creates a potential conflict of interest with the best interests of the District. This includes the following:

- A personal financial interest
- A business interest
- Any other obligation or relationship

An employee with a substantial interest in a business entity or interest in real property must disclose the interest to the district prior to the award of a contract or authorization of payment. This is done by filing an affidavit with the Director of Finance. An employee is also considered to have substantial interest if a close family member (e.g. spouse, parent, child, or spouse's parent or child) has a substantial interest.

### **Associations and political activities**

*Policy DGA*

The district will not directly or indirectly discourage employees from participating in political affairs or require any employee to join any group, club, committee, organization, or association. Employees may join or refuse to join any professional association or organization.

An individual's employment will not be affected by membership or a decision not to be a member of any employee organization that exists for the purpose of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work.

Use of District resources, including work time, for political activities is prohibited.

## **Safety**

### *Policy CK*

The district has developed and promotes a comprehensive program to ensure the safety of its employees, students, and visitors. The safety program includes guidelines and procedures for responding to emergencies and activities to help reduce the frequency of accidents and injuries. To prevent or minimize injuries to employees, coworkers, and students and to protect and conserve district equipment, employees must comply with the following requirements:

- Observe all safety rules
- Keep work areas clean and orderly at all times
- Immediately report all accidents to their supervisor
- Operate only equipment or machines for which they have training and authorization

Employees with questions or concerns relating to safety programs and issues can contact the superintendent.

## **Tobacco use**

### *Policies DH, GKA, FNCD*

Smoking or using tobacco products is prohibited by law on all district-owned property. This includes all buildings, playground areas, parking facilities, and facilities used for athletics and other activities. Drivers of district-owned vehicles are prohibited from smoking while inside the vehicle. Notices stating that smoking is prohibited by law and punishable by a fine are displayed in prominent places in all school buildings.

## **Criminal history background checks**

### *Policy DBAA*

Employees may be subject to a review of their criminal history record information at any time during employment. National criminal history checks based on an individual's fingerprints, photo, and other identification will be conducted on certain employees and entered into the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Clearinghouse. This database provides the district and SBEC with access to an employee's current national criminal history and updates to the employee's subsequent criminal history.

## **Employee arrests and convictions**

### *Policy DH*

An employee must notify his or her principal or immediate supervisor within three calendar days of any arrest, indictment, conviction, no contest or guilty plea, or other adjudication of any felony, any offense involving moral turpitude, and any of the other offenses listed below:

- Crimes involving school property or funds
- Crimes involving attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate of permit that would entitle any person to hold or obtain

- a position as an educator
- Crimes that occur wholly or in part of school property or at a school-sponsored activity
- Crimes involving moral turpitude

Moral turpitude includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Dishonesty
- Fraud
- Deceit
- Theft
- Misrepresentation
- Deliberate violence
- Base, vile, or depraved acts that are intended to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of the actor
- Drug- or alcohol-related offenses
- Acts constituting abuse under the Texas Family Code

### **Possession of firearms and weapons**

*Policies FNCG, GKA*

Employees, visitors, and students are prohibited from bringing firearms, illegal knives, or other weapons onto school premises or any grounds or building where a school-sponsored activity takes place. To ensure the safety of all persons, employees who observe or suspect a violation of the district's weapons policy should report it to their supervisors or call the superintendent immediately.

### **Visitors in the workplace**

*Policy GKC*

All visitors are expected to enter any district facility through the main entrance and sign in or report to the building's main office. Authorized visitors will receive directions or be escorted to their destination. Employees who observe an unauthorized individual on the district premises should immediately direct him or her to the building office or contact the administrator in charge.

### **Copyrighted materials**

*Policy EFE*

Employees are expected to comply with the provisions of copyright law relating to the unauthorized use, reproduction, distribution, performance, or display of copyrighted materials (i.e., printed material, videos, computer data and programs, etc.). Rented videotapes are to be used in the classroom for educational purposes only. Duplication or backups of computer programs and data must be made within the provisions of the purchase agreement.

## **Computer use and data management**

### *Policy CQ*

The district's electronic communications systems, including its network access to the Internet, are to be used for administrative and instructional purposes only. Limited personal use of the system is permitted if the use imposes no tangible cost to the district, does not unduly burden the district's computer or network resources, and has no adverse effect on job performance or on a student's academic performance. Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the electronic communications systems are not confidential and can be monitored at any time to ensure appropriate use.

Employees and students who are authorized to use the systems are required to abide by the provisions of the district's communications systems policy and administrative procedures. Failure to do so can result in suspension or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary action. Employees with questions about computer use and data management can contact the technology director.

## **Gifts and favors**

### *Policy DBD*

Employees may not accept gifts or favors that could influence, or be construed to influence, the employee's discharge of assigned duties. The acceptance of a gift, favor, or service by an administrator or teacher that might reasonably tend to influence the selection of textbooks may result in prosecution of a class B misdemeanor offense. This does not include staff development, teacher training, or instructional materials, such as maps or worksheets that convey information to students or contribute to the learning process.

## **Asbestos management plan**

### *Policy CKA*

The district is committed to providing a safe environment for employees. An accredited management planner has developed an asbestos management plan for each piece of district property. A copy of the district's management plan is kept in the central administration office and is available for inspection during normal business hours.

## **Pest control treatment**

### *Policy DI, CLB*

Notices of planned pest control treatment will be posted in a district building 48 hours before the treatment begins. Notices are generally located in campus offices. Pest control information sheets are available from campus principals or facility managers upon request.

# General procedures

## Bad weather closing

*Policy CKC*

The district may close schools because of bad weather or emergency conditions. When such conditions exist, the superintendent will make the official decision concerning the closing of the district's facilities. When it becomes necessary to open late or to release students early, the following radio and television stations will be notified by school officials:

KYKX-FM 105.7  
KETK-TV (Region 56 or Channel 9)  
KLTV-TV (Channel 7)

## Emergencies

*Policy CKC*

All employees should be familiar with the evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas. Fire, tornado, and other emergency drills will be conducted to familiarize employees and students with evacuation procedures. Fire extinguishers are located throughout all district buildings. Employees should know the location of the extinguishers nearest their place of work and how to use them.

## Purchasing procedures

*Policy CH*

All requests for purchases must be submitted to the Business Office on an official district purchase order (PO) form with the appropriate approval signatures. No purchases, charges, or commitments to buy goods or services for the district can be made without a PO number. The district will not reimburse employees or assume responsibility for purchases made without authorization. Employees are not permitted to purchase supplies or equipment for personal use through the district's business office. Contact the Director of Finance for additional information on purchasing procedures.

## Name and address changes

It is important that employment records be kept up to date. Employees should notify the central administration office if there are any changes or corrections to their name, home address, home telephone number, marital status, emergency contact, or beneficiary. Forms to process a change in personal information can be obtained from the bookkeeper.

## Personnel records

*Policy GBA*

Most district records, including personnel records, are public information and must be released upon request. A limited amount of personal information may be withheld. Employees may choose not to allow public access to or have the following information

included in a staff directory by submitting a written request to the superintendent's secretary:

- Home address or post office box number
- Home phone number or personal cell phone number
- Personal email address
- Social Security number
- Information that reveals whether they have family members

The choice to not allow public access to this information may be done at anytime by submitting a written request to the superintendent's secretary. New or terminating employees have 14 days after hire or termination to submit a request. Otherwise, personal information will be released to the public.

### **Building use**

*Policy DGA, GKD*

Campus principals are responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Contact the superintendent to request to use school facilities and to obtain information on the fees charged.

## **Termination of employment**

### **Resignations**

*Policy DFE*

**Contract employees.** Contract employees may resign their position without penalty at the end of any school year if written notice is received 45 days before the first day of instruction of the following school year. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the board president. Contract employees may resign at any other time only with the approval of the board of trustees. Resignation without the consent of the board may result in disciplinary action by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC.)

The superintendent will notify SBEC when an employee resigns and reasonable evidence exists to indicate that the employee has engaged in any of the acts listed below. (See Reports to the State Board for Educator Certification, page 39.)

**Noncontract employees.** Noncontract employees may resign their positions at any time. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the superintendent at least two weeks prior to the effective date. Employees are encouraged to include the reasons for leaving in the letter of resignation but are not required to do so.

### **Dismissal or nonrenewal of contract employees**

*Policies DFAA, DFAB, DFBA, DFBB, DFCA, DFD, DFF*

Employees on probationary, term, and continuing contracts can be dismissed during the school year or nonrenewed at the end of the year according to the procedures outlined in district policies. Contract employees dismissed during the school year, suspended without pay, or subject to a reduction in force are entitled to receive notice of the

recommended action, an explanation of the charges against them, and an opportunity for a hearing. The time lines and procedures to be followed when a suspension, termination, or nonrenewal occurs will be provided when a written notice is given to an employee. Information on the time lines and procedures can be found in the DF policies that are provided to employees or in the policy manuals located in the campus principal's office and the central administration office.

### **Dismissal of noncontract employees**

#### *Policy DCD*

Noncontract employees are employed at will and may be dismissed without notice, a description of the reasons for dismissal, or a hearing. It is unlawful for the district to dismiss any employee for reasons of race, religion, sex, national origin, disability, military status, any other basis protected by law, or in retaliation for the exercise of certain protected legal rights. Noncontract employees who are dismissed have the right to grieve the termination. The dismissed employee must follow the district process outlined in this handbook when pursuing the grievance. (See Complaints and grievances, page 24.)

### **Exit interviews and procedures**

#### *Policy DC*

Exit interviews will be scheduled for all employees leaving the district. Information on the continuation of benefits, release of information, and procedures for requesting references will be provided at this time. Separating employees are asked to provide the district with a forwarding address and phone number and complete a questionnaire that provides the district with feedback on his or her employment experience.

All district keys, books, property, and equipment must be returned upon separation from employment. The district may withhold the cost of any unreturned items from the final paycheck.

### **Reports to the State Board of Educator Certification**

#### *Policy DF*

The dismissal or resignation of a certified employee will be reported to State Board for Educator Certification if there is reasonable evidence that the employee's conduct involves the following:

- Any form of sexual or physical abuse of a minor or any other illegal conduct with a minor
- The possession, transfer, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance
- The illegal transfer, appropriation, or expenditure of school property or funds
- An attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle the individual to a professional position or to receive additional compensation associated with a position
- Committing a crime on school property or at a school-sponsored event
- Violating assessment instrument security procedures

## **Reports concerning court-ordered withholding**

The district is required to report the termination of employees that are under court order or writ of withholding for child support or spousal maintenance to the court and the individual receiving the support (Texas Family Code §8.210, 158.211). Notice of the following must be sent to the court and support recipient:

- Termination of employment not later than the seventh day after the date of termination
- Employee's last known address
- Name and address of employee's new employer, if known

## **Student issues**

### **Equal educational opportunities**

*Policy FB, FFH*

The Spring Hill Independent School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, gender, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Questions or concerns about discrimination of students on any of the bases listed above should be directed to curriculum director.

### **Student records**

*Policy FL*

Student records are confidential and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use. Employees should take precautions to maintain the confidentiality of all student records.

The following people are the only people who have general access to a student's records:

- Parents of a minor or of a student who is a dependent for tax purposes
- The student (if 18 or older) or attending an institute of post-secondary education
- School officials with legitimate education interests

The student handbook provides parents and students with detailed information on student records. Parents or students who want to review student records should be directed to the campus principal for assistance.

### **Parent and student complaints**

*Policy FNG*

In an effort to hear and resolve parent and student complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted orderly processes for handing complaints on different issues. Any campus office or the superintendent's office

can provide parents and students with information on filing a complaint.

Parents are encouraged to discuss problems or complaints with the teachers or the appropriate administrator at any time. Parents and students with complaints that cannot be resolved should be directed to the campus principal. The formal complaint process provides parents and students with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with a principal's response. Once all administrative complaint procedures are exhausted, parents and students can bring complaints to the board of trustees.

### **Administering medication to students**

*Policy FFAC*

Only designated employees can administer medication to students. A student who must take medicine during the school day must bring a written request from his or her parent and the medicine, in its original, properly labeled container. Contact the principal or school nurse for information on procedures that must be followed when administering medication to students.

### **Dietary supplements**

*Policy DH, FFAC*

District employees are prohibited by state law from knowingly selling, marketing, or distributing a dietary supplement that contains performance-enhancing compounds to a student with whom the employee has contact as part of his or her school district duties. In addition, employees may not knowingly endorse or suggest the ingestion, intranasal application, or inhalation of a performance-enhancing dietary supplement to any student.

### **Psychotropic drugs**

*Policy FFAC*

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood or behavior altering substance.

District employees are prohibited by state law from doing the following:

- Recommending that a student use a psychotropic drug
- Suggesting a particular diagnosis
- Excluding from class or school-related activity a student whose parent refuses to consent to a psychiatric evaluation or to authorize the administration of a psychotropic drug to a student

### **Student discipline**

*Policies in the FN series and FO series*

Students are expected to follow the campus rules, classroom rules, and rules listed in the Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook. Teachers and administrators are

responsible for taking disciplinary action based on a range of discipline management procedures that have been adopted by the district. Other employees that have concerns about a particular student's conduct should contact the classroom teacher or campus principal.

Teachers must file a written report with the principal or another appropriate administrator when they have knowledge that a student has violated the Student Code of Conduct. A copy of this report will be sent by the principal or administrator to the student's parents within 24 hours.

### **Student attendance**

*Policy FDD, FEB*

Teachers and staff should be familiar with the district's policy and procedures for attendance accounting. These procedures require minor students to have parental consent before they are allowed to leave campus. When absent from school, the student, upon returning to school, must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. These requirements are addressed in campus training and in the student handbook. Contact the campus principal for additional information.

### **Bullying**

*Policy FFI*

All employees are required to report student complaints of bullying to the campus principal. The district policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating bullying of students and can be accessed on the Spring Hill web site, [www.springhill.esc7.net](http://www.springhill.esc7.net) on Policy Manual Online in the School Board section.

### **Hazing**

*Policy FNCC*

Students must have prior approval from the principal or designee for any type of "initiation rites" of a school club or organization. Any teacher, administrator, or employee who observes a student engaged in any form of hazing, which has reason to know or suspect that a student intends to engage in hazing, or has engaged in hazing must report that fact or suspicion to the designated campus discipline person.

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