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Introduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information that will help answer employee questions and pave the way for a successful year. Not all district policies and procedures are included. Those that are included have been summarized. Suggestions for additions and improvements to this handbook are welcome and may be sent to the Department of Human Resources in writing or an e-mail may be sent to: humanresources@sisd.net.

Please Note: This Handbook is not a contract, an amendment of any written employment contract, or a substitute for the official district policy nor is it intended to alter the at-will status of non-contract employees in any way. Rather, it is a guide to, and a brief explanation of district policies, regulations, and procedures related to employment. These policies, regulations, and procedures can change at any time; these changes shall supersede any handbook provisions that are not compatible with the change. In case of any inconsistency, the official district policy takes precedence over any information given in this handbook. 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. The district policies can be accessed on the district website at http://www.sisd.net.

School Calendar

The approved instructional school calendar and employee calendars are published annually and can be obtained on the district website.

District Information

The Socorro Independent School District is located in the southeastern portion of El Paso County, Texas. It serves Socorro, Horizon City, and the eastern portion of the City of El Paso. The District covers 136 square miles of El Paso County. The District’s northern boundary is the Texas/New Mexico line its southern boundary is the Rio Grande River. SISD is in the Texas Education Agency Region XIX.

SISD is one of the fastest growing school districts in the State of Texas. The District has twenty-two (22) elementary schools, six (6) PK-8 schools, nine (9) middle schools, eight (8) high schools, two (2) specialty campuses and a community education program. SISD also has a Student Activities Complex that includes an 11,000-seat stadium, and an adjacent aquatic center, with indoor and outdoor pools that are open throughout the year.

Policy AE

Vision

Tomorrow’s Leaders Learning Today

Mission

The mission of the Socorro Independent School District is to optimize our student’s academic, artistic, athletic and interpersonal skills.

Strategic Directions

Direction One: Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

Direction Two: College and Career Readiness

Direction Three: Highly Qualified, Effective Faculty and Staff

Direction Four: Home, School, Community Partnerships

Direction Five: Accountability For All
To access the District’s Interactive Maps, please click the link below:

http://www.sisd.net/maps
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, and facilities. The board has complete and final control over school matters within limits established by state and federal laws 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 to serve 4-year terms. Trustees serve without compensation, must be registered voters, and must reside in the district.

Current board members include:

Cynthia Ann Najera  
President

Angelica Rodriguez  
Vice-President

Antonio “Tony” Ayub  
Secretary

Hector F. Gonzalez  
Trustee

Michael Anthony Najera  
Trustee

Gary Gandara  
Trustee

Paul Guerra  
Trustee

The board usually meets the third Tuesday of the month at 6 p.m. Special meetings may be called when necessary. A written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted on the district Web site and at the District Service Center 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. In certain circumstances, Texas law permits the board to go into a closed session from which the public and others are excluded. Closed session may occur for such things as discussing prospective gifts or donations, real estate-property acquisition, certain personnel matters including employee complaints, security matters, student discipline, or consulting with attorneys regarding pending litigation.

**Board Meeting Schedule for 2017-2018 School Year**

To access the Board meeting schedule, please click the link below:

Board Meeting Calendar

**Administration**

To access the Administration and Departments, please click the link below:

Department Directory

**School Calendar**

To access the School Calendar, please click the link below:

School Calendars
Employment

Equal Employment Opportunity
Policies DAA, DIA

Socorro ISD does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, gender, sex (including pregnancy), national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, or on any other basis prohibited by law. Additionally, the district does not discriminate against an employee or applicant who acts to oppose such discrimination or participates in the investigation of a complaint related to a discriminatory employment practice. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant’s job qualifications, experience, and abilities.

Employees with questions or concerns about discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment should contact the Chief Human Resources Officer, the district Title IX coordinator. Employees with questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of a disability should contact the Chief Academic Officer, the district ADA/Section 504 coordinator. Questions or concerns relating to discrimination for any other reason should be directed to the Superintendent.

Job Vacancy Announcements
Policy DC

Announcements of job vacancies by position and location are distributed on a regular basis and posted on the district’s website, the Department of Human Resources Twitter handle @SISD_HR and the Department of Human Resources Facebook page: facebook.com/HR Socorro ISD.

Employment After Retirement
Policy DC

Individuals receiving retirement benefits from the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) may be employed under certain circumstances on a substitute, full-time or half-time basis without affecting their benefits, according to the TRS rules and state law. Please note that it is the individual responsibility to be aware of the TRS rules and regulations for employment after retirement with a school district and how their TRS benefits may be affected. Detailed information about employment after retirement is available in the TRS publication “Employment after Retirement”. Employees can contact TRS for additional information by calling 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. Information is also available on the TRS website (www.trs.texas.gov). For employment after retirement with the Socorro ISD please refer to Policy DC.

Contract and Noncontract Employment
Policy DC series

State law requires the district to employ all full-time professional employees in positions requiring a certificate from the State Board for 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 nonrenewal 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 a probationary contract during their first year of employment. Former employees who are hired after at least a two-year lapse in district employment or employees who move to a position requiring a new class of certification also may be employed by probationary contract. Probationary contracts are one-year contracts. The probationary period for those who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district may not exceed one 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 or continuing contract should be given.

Term 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. The terms and conditions of employment are detailed in the contract and employment policies. All employees will receive a copy of their contract. Employment policies can be accessed online or copies will be provided upon request.
Noncertified Professional and Administrative Employees. Employees in some professional and administrative positions level 107 and above that do not require SBEC certification (such as noninstructional administrators) are employed by a one-year contract that is not subject to the provisions for nonrenewal or termination under the Texas Education Code Chapter 21. Employees in Administrative positions level 06 and below that do not require SBEC certification are employed at-will and not by contract.

Paraprofessional and Auxiliary Employees. All paraprofessional and auxiliary employees, 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.

Certification and Licenses
Policies DDBA, DF

Professional employees whose positions require SBEC certification or professional license are responsible for taking actions to ensure their credentials do not lapse. Employees must submit documentation that they have passed the required certification exam and/or obtained or renewed their credentials to the Department of Human Resources in a timely manner.

A certified employee’s contract may be voided without due process and employment terminated if the individual does not hold a valid certificate or fails to fulfill the requirements necessary to renew or extend a temporary certificate, emergency certificate, probationary certificate, or permit. A contract may also be voided if SBEC suspends or revokes certification because of an individual’s failure to comply with criminal history background checks. Contact the Department of Human Resources if you have any questions regarding certification or licensure requirements.

Recertification of Employment Authorization
Policy DC

At the time of hire all employees must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (Form I-9) and present documents to verify identity and employment authorization.

Employees whose immigration status, employment authorization, or employment authorization documents have expired must present new documents that show current employment authorization. Employees should file the necessary application or petition sufficiently in advance to ensure that they maintain continuous employment. Authorization or valid employment authorization documents. Contact SBEC certification if you have questions regarding reverification of employment authorization.

Searches and Alcohol and Drug Testing
Policy CQ, 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 investigatory 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, and work areas including district-owned technology resources, lockers, and private vehicles parked on district premises or work sites or used in district business.

Employees Required to Have a Commercial Driver’s License. Any employee whose duties require 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 if their duties include driving a commercial motor vehicle.

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 if an employee who has violated the prohibited alcohol conduct standards or tested positive for alcohol or drugs is allowed to return to duty.

All employees required to have a CDL or who otherwise are 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 the Director of Transportation at 915.937.0601.

**Health Safety Training**

Policies [DBA](#), [DMA](#)

Certain employees who are involved in physical activities for students must maintain and submit to the district proof of current certification or training in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), concussion and extracurricular athletic activity safety. Certification or documentation of training must be issued by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, University Interscholastic League, or another organization that provides equivalent training and certification. Employees subject to this requirement must submit their certification or documentation to Health Services Coordinator at 915.937.4344.

**Reassignments and Transfers**

Policy [DK](#)

All personnel are subject to assignment and reassignment by the superintendent or designee when the superintendent or designee determines that the assignment or reassignment is in the best interest of the district. Reassignment is a transfer to another position, department, or facility that does not necessitate a change in the employment contract or employment status. Campus reassignments must be approved by the principal at the receiving campus except when reassignments are due to enrollment shifts or program changes. Extracurricular or supplemental duty assignments may be reassigned at any time unless an extracurricular or supplemental duty assignment is part of a dual-assignment contract. Employees who object to a reassignment may follow the district process for employee complaints as outlined in this handbook and district policy [DGBA](#) [Local].

An employee 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. A teacher requesting a transfer to another campus before the school year begins must submit his or her request prior to March 1st. 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 Department of Human Resources and must be approved by the receiving supervisor.

**Workload and Work Schedules**

Policies [DEAB](#), [DK](#), [DL](#)

**Professional Employees.** Professional employees 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 start and end dates and scheduled holidays will be distributed each school year.

Classroom teachers will have planning periods for instructional preparation including 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 within the instructional day. 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.

**Paraprofessional, Auxiliary, and Non-Contract Professional Employees.** Paraprofessional, auxiliary, and some professional employees are employed at-will and receive notification of the required duty days, holidays, and hours of work for their position on an annual basis. Paraprofessional, auxiliary, and some professional employees are not exempt from overtime and are not authorized to work in excess of their assigned schedule without prior approval from their supervisor.
Breaks for Expression of Breast Milk
Policies DEAB, DG

The district supports the practice of expressing breast milk and makes reasonable accommodations for the needs of employees who express breast milk. A place, other than a multiple user bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from other employees and the public where the employee can express breast milk will be provided.

A reasonable amount of break time will be provided when the employee has a need to express milk. For nonexempt employees, these breaks are unpaid and are not counted as hours worked. Employee should meet with their supervisor to discuss their needs and arrange break times.

Notification to Parents Regarding Qualifications
Policies DK, DBA

In schools receiving Title I funds, the district is required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to notify parents at the beginning of each school year that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child’s teacher. ESSA 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 does not meet applicable State Certification or licensure requirements.

Texas law requires that parents be notified if their child is assigned for more than 30 consecutive instructional days to a teacher who does not hold an appropriate teaching certificate. Inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers include individuals on an emergency permit (including individuals waiting to take a certification exam) and individuals who do not hold any certificate or permit. Information relating to teacher certification will be made available to the public upon request. Employees who have questions about their certification status can call Certification Coordinators at 915.937.0204 or 915.937.0236.

Outside Employment
Policy DBD

Employees are required to disclose in writing to their immediate supervisor any outside employment that may create a potential conflict of interest with their assigned duties and responsibilities or the best interest of the district. Supervisors will consider outside employment on a case-by-case basis and determine whether it should be prohibited because of a conflict of interest. To access the non school employment form, please click on this link:

Non School Employment

Performance Evaluation
Policy DN series

Evaluation of an employee’s job performance is a continuous 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. Electronic 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 an electronic copy of their written evaluation, participate in a performance conference with their supervisor, and have the opportunity to respond to the evaluation in accordance with district policy and state law.

Employee Involvement
Policies BQA, BQB

At both the campus and district levels, Socorro ISD offers opportunities for input in matters that affect employees and influence the instructional effectiveness of the district. As part of the district’s planning and decision-making process, employees are 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 the Office of Curriculum and Instruction or Administrative Services.
**Staff Development**

Policy DMA

Staff development activities are organized to meet the needs of employees and the district. Staff development for 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**

Policies DEAB, DEAA, DEAB

Employees are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and an established pay structure. 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 non-exempt and are paid an hourly wage or salary and receive compensatory time or overtime pay for each hour worked beyond 40 in a workweek. (See Regulation DEA) All employees will receive notice of their pay and work schedules before the start of each school year. Classroom teachers, full-time librarians, full-time nurses, and full-time counselors will be paid no less than the minimum state salary schedule. Contract employees who perform extracurricular or supplemental duties may be paid a stipend in addition to their salary according to the district’s extra-duty pay schedule. Employees should contact the Compensation Division of Human Resources for more information about the district’s pay schedules or their own pay at 915.937.0222, 915.937.0228, or 915.937.0215.

**Paychecks**

All professional and salaried employees are paid monthly. Hourly employees are paid semi-monthly. Paychecks will not be released to any person other than the district employee named on the check without the employee’s written authorization.

The schedule of pay dates for the 2017-2018 school year follows:

To access the payroll schedule, please click the following link: Financial Services

**Automatic Payroll Deposit**

Employees can have their paychecks electronically deposited into a designated account. A notification period of 15 days is necessary to activate this service. Contact Payroll for more information about the automatic payroll deposit service at 915.937.0144, 915.937.0145, 915.937.4336, 915.937.0140, or 915.937.0142.

To access the payroll calendar, please click the following link: Payroll Calendar
Payroll Deductions
Policy CFEA

The district is required to make the following automatic payroll deductions:

• Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) or Social Security employee contributions
• Federal income tax required for all employees
• Medicare tax (applicable only to employees hired after March 31, 1986)
• Child support and spouse maintenance, if applicable
• Delinquent federal education loan payments, if applicable

Other payroll deductions employees may elect include deductions for the employee’s share of premiums for health, dental, life, and vision insurance; annuities; and higher education savings plans or prepaid tuition programs. Employees also may request payroll deduction for payment of membership dues to professional organizations and certain charitable contributions approved by the board. Salary deductions are automatically made for unauthorized or unpaid leave.

Overtime Compensation
Policy DEAB

The district compensates overtime for nonexempt employees in accordance with federal wage and hour laws. Only nonexempt employees (hourly employees and 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. A non exempt employee who works overtime without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action.

Overtime is legally defined as all hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a work week and is not measured by the day or by the employee’s regular work schedule. For the purpose of calculating overtime a work week begins at 12:00 a.m. Sunday and ends at 11:59 p.m. Saturday. Nonexempt employees that are paid on a salary basis are paid for the hours set by the normal work schedule. Hours worked beyond the normal schedule up to 40 hours will be paid at a regular rate of pay.

Employees may be compensated for overtime (i.e. hours beyond 40 in a work week) at time-and-a-half rate with compensatory time off (comp time) or direct pay. The following applies to all nonexempt employees:

• Employees can accumulate up to 30 hours of comp time at anytime during the school year. Comp time must be used in the duty year that it is earned.
• Use of comp time may be at the employee’s request with supervisor approval, as workload permits, or at the supervisor’s direction.
• An employee may be required to use comp time before using available paid leave (e.g., sick or personal leave).
• Weekly time records 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 director must give approval. For approved travel, employees will be reimbursed for mileage and other travel expenditures according to the current rate schedule established by the district. Employees must submit receipts, to the extent possible, to be reimbursed for allowable expenses other than mileage.

Health, Dental and Life Insurance
Policy CRD

Group health insurance coverage is available to employees who qualify. The district’s contribution to employee insurance premiums is determined annually by the board of trustees. Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, prices, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees in a separate booklet.

The health insurance plan year is from July 1 through June 30. New employees must complete enrollment forms within the first 30 days of employment. Current employees can make changes in their insurance coverage during open enrollment. Employees should contact Employee Benefits for more information.
Supplemental Insurance Benefits
Policy CRD

At their own expense, employees may enroll in supplemental insurance programs for employee and dependents. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deduction. Employees should contact employee benefits for more information.

Cafeteria Plan Benefits (Section 125)

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., disability, accidental death and dismemberment, cancer and dread disease, dental, and additional term life insurance). A third-party administrator handles employee claims made on these accounts.

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.

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 Claims Administrative Services (CAS).

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 district’s claims officer. Employees who are unable to work because of a work-related injury will be notified of their rights and responsibilities under the Texas Labor Code. See Workers’ Compensation Benefits page for more information on use of paid leave for such absences.

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. 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 claims officer in the Department of Human Resources at (915) 937-0000.

Teacher Retirement

All personnel employed on a regular basis for at least four and one-half months are members of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). Substitute Teachers 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 in TRS. 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 payroll department as soon as possible. Information on the application procedures for TRS benefits is available from TRS at Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 1000 Red River Street, Austin, TX 78701-2698, or call 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. TRS information is also available on the web (www.trs.texas.gov). See page for information on restrictions of employment of retirees in Texas public schools.

Other Benefit Programs

For other benefits please contact the Employee Benefits Department at (915) 937-0000 or by visiting the Department of Human Resources at the District Service Center.
Leaves and Absences
Policies 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 expect to be absent for an extended period of more than five days should call the Benefits Department for information about applicable leave benefits, payment of insurance premiums, and requirements for communicating with the district.

The district requires medical certification due to a questionable pattern of absences or when deemed necessary by the Supervisor or Superintendent.

Documentation may be required for any absence at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee.

Use of Leave. Leave is available for the employee’s use. However, state personal and local leave is earned in half (.5) day increments. 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.

Paid leave must be used in half (.5) or full day increments. However, if an employee is taking intermittent family and medical leave, leave shall be recorded in half or full day increments. Earned comp time must be used before any available paid state and local leave. Unless an employee requests a different order, available paid state and local leave will be used in the following order:

- Local personal leave
- State sick leave accumulated
- State personal leave

Employees must follow district and department or campus procedures to report or request any leave of absence and complete the appropriate form or certification.

Immediate Family. For purposes of leave other than family and medical leave, immediate family is defined as the following:

- Spouse
- Son or daughter, including biological, adopted, or foster child, a son-or daughter-in-law, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee stands in loco parentis.
- Parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, or other individual who stands in loco parentis to the employee.
- Sibling, stepsibling, and sibling-in-law.
- Grandparent and grandchild
- Any person residing in the employee’s household at the time of illness or death

For purposes of family and medical leave, the definition of family is limited to spouse, parent, son or daughter, and next of kin. The definition of these are found in policy DECA (LEGAL).

Medical Certification. Any employee who is absent more than 5 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.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits covered employers from requesting or requiring genetic information of an individual or family member of the individual, except as specifically allowed by this law. To comply with this law, we ask that employees and health care providers do not provide any genetic information in any medical certification. ‘Genetic information,’ as defined by GINA, includes an individual’s family medical history, the results of an individual’s or family member’s genetic tests, the fact that an individual or an individual’s family member sought or received genetic services, and genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or an individual’s family member or an embryo lawfully held by an individual or family member receiving assistive reproductive services.

Continuation of Health Insurance. Employees on an approved leave of absence other than family and medical leave may continue their insurance benefits at their own expense. Health insurance benefits for employees on paid leave and leave designated under the Family and Medical Leave Act will be paid by the district as they were prior to the leave. Otherwise, the district does not pay any portion of insurance premiums for employees who are on unpaid leave. If an employee’s leave extends after family and medical leave, the district will provide the employee with notice of COBRA rights.
Personal Leave

State law entitles all employees to five days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave is earned at a rate of half (.5) day for every 18 days employed. Personal leave is available for use at the beginning of the year. A day of earned personal leave is equivalent to an assigned workday. State personal leave accumulates without limit, is transferable to other Texas school districts, and generally transfers to education service centers. There are two types of personal leave: nondiscretionary and discretionary.

**Nondiscretionary.** Leave taken for personal or family illness, family emergency, a death in the family, or active military service is considered nondiscretionary leave. Reasons for this type of leave allow very little, if any, advance planning. Nondiscretionary leave will be granted to employees in the same manner as state sick leave.

**Discretionary.** Leave taken at an employee’s discretion that can be scheduled in advance is considered discretionary leave. An employee wishing to take discretionary personal leave must submit a request to his or her principal or supervisor 3 days in advance of the anticipated absence. The effect of the employee’s absence on the educational program or department operations, as well as the availability of substitutes, will be considered by the principal or supervisor.

**Leave Proration.** If an employee separates from employment with the district before his or her last duty day of the year, or begins employment after the first duty day, state personal leave will be prorated based on the actual time employed. When an employee separates from employment before the last duty day of the school year, the employee’s final paycheck will be reduced by the amount of the state personal leave the employee used beyond his or her pro rata entitlement for the school year.

State Sick Leave

State sick leave accumulated before 1995 is available for use and may be transferred to other school districts in Texas. State sick leave can be used only in 1/2 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.

State sick leave 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 five, six, or seven workdays of paid local leave per school year in accordance with administrative regulations.

Catastrophic Sick Leave Bank

The District shall establish a sick leave bank that employees may join through contribution of local leave. Leave contributed to the bank shall be solely for the use of participating employees. An employee who is a member of the bank may request leave from the bank if the employee or a member of the employee’s immediate family experiences a catastrophic illness or injury and the employee has exhausted all paid leave. If the employee is unable to request leave from the sick leave bank, a member of the employee’s family or the employee’s supervisor may submit the request. The Superintendent or designee shall develop regulations for the operation of the sick leave bank that address the following:

1. Membership in the sick leave bank, including the number of days an employee must donate to become a member;
2. Procedures to request leave from the sick leave bank;
3. The maximum number of days per school year a member employee may receive from the sick leave bank;
4. The committee or administrator authorized to consider requests for leave from the sick leave bank and criteria for granting requests; and

5. Other procedures deemed necessary for the operation of the sick leave bank. (See Regulation DEC)

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)-General Provisions

The following text is from the federal notice, Employee Rights and Responsibilities Under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Specific information that the district has adopted to implement the FMLA follows this general notice.

**Leave Entitlements.** Eligible employees who work for a covered employer can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period for the following reasons:

- The birth of a child or placement of a child for adoption or foster care;
- To bond with a child (leave must be taken within 1 year of the child’s birth or placement);
- To care for the employee’s spouse, child, or parent who has a qualifying serious health condition;
- For the employee’s own qualifying serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee’s job;

An eligible employee who is a covered service member’s spouse, child, parent, or next of kin may also take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave in a single 12-month period to care for the service member with a serious injury or illness.

An employee does not need to use leave in one block. When it is medically necessary or otherwise permitted, employees may take leave intermittently or on a reduced schedule.

Employees may choose, or an employer may require, use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. If an employee substitutes accrued paid leave for FMLA leave, the employee must comply with the employer’s normal paid leave policies.

**Benefits and Protections.** While employees are on FMLA leave, employers must continue health insurance coverage as if the employees were not on leave.

Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to the same job or one nearly identical to it with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions.

**Eligibility Requirements.** An employee who works for a covered employer must meet three criteria in order to be eligible for FMLA leave. The employee must:

- Have worked for the employer for at least 12 months;
- Have at least 1,250 hours of service in the 12 months before taking leave; and
- Work at a location where the employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles of the employee’s worksite.

**Requesting Leave.** Generally, employees must give 30-days’ notice of the need for FMLA leave. If it is not possible to give 30-days’ notice, an employee must notify the employer as soon as possible and, generally, follow the employer’s usual procedures.

Employees do not have to share a medical diagnosis, but must provide enough information to the employer so it can determine if the leave qualifies for FMLA protection.

Sufficient information could include informing an employer that the employee is or will be unable to perform his or her job functions, that a family member cannot perform daily activities, or that hospitalization or continuing medical treatment is necessary. Employees must inform the employer if the need for leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified.

Employers can require a certification or periodic recertification supporting the need for leave. If the employer determines that the certification is incomplete, it must provide a written notice indicating what additional information is required.

**Employer Responsibilities.** Once an employer becomes aware that an employee’s need for leave is for a reason that may qualify under the FMLA, the employer must notify the employee if he or she is eligible for FMLA leave and, if eligible, must also provide a notice of rights and responsibilities under the FMLA. If the employee is not eligible, the employer must provide a reason for ineligibility.

Employers must notify its employees if leave will be designated as FMLA leave, and if so, how much leave will be designated as FMLA leave.
**Enforcement.** Employees may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer.

The FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement that provides greater family or medical leave rights.

For additional information:


[www.wagehour.dol.gov](http://www.wagehour.dol.gov)
EMPLOYEE RIGHTS
UNDER THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT
THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR WAGE AND HOUR DIVISION

LEAVE ENTITLEMENTS
Eligible employees who work for a covered employer can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period for the following reasons:

- The birth of a child or placement of a child for adoption or foster care;
- To bond with a child (leave must be taken within 1 year of the child’s birth or placement);
- To care for the employee’s spouse, child, or parent who has a qualifying serious health condition;
- For the employee’s own qualifying serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee’s job;
- For qualifying exigencies related to the foreign deployment of a military member who is the employee’s spouse, child, or parent.

An eligible employee who is a covered servicemember’s spouse, child, parent, or next of kin may also take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave in a single 12-month period to care for the servicemember with a serious injury or illness.

An employee does not need to use leave in one block. When it is medically necessary or otherwise permitted, employees may take leave intermittently or on a reduced schedule.

Employees may choose, or an employer may require, use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. If an employee substitutes accrued paid leave for FMLA leave, the employee must comply with the employer’s normal paid leave policies.

While employees are on FMLA leave, employers must continue health insurance coverage as if the employees were not on leave.

Employees may choose, or an employer may require, use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. If an employee substitutes accrued paid leave for FMLA leave, the employee must comply with the employer’s normal paid leave policies.

Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to the same job or one nearly identical to it with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions.

An employer may not interfere with an individual’s FMLA rights or retaliate against someone for using or trying to use FMLA leave, opposing any practice made unlawful by the FMLA, or being involved in any proceeding under or related to the FMLA.

An employee who works for a covered employer must meet three criteria in order to be eligible for FMLA leave. The employee must:

- Have worked for the employer for at least 12 months;
- Have at least 1,250 hours of service in the 12 months before taking leave;* and
- Work at a location where the employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles of the employee’s worksite.

*Special “hours of service” requirements apply to airline flight crew employees.

REQUESTING LEAVE
Generally, employees must give 30-days’ advance notice of the need for FMLA leave. If it is not possible to give 30-days’ notice, an employee must notify the employer as soon as possible and, generally, follow the employer’s usual procedures.

Employees do not have to share a medical diagnosis, but must provide enough information to the employer so it can determine if the leave qualifies for FMLA protection. Sufficient information could include informing an employer that the employee is or will be unable to perform his or her job functions, that a family member cannot perform daily activities, or that hospitalization or continuing medical treatment is necessary. Employees must inform the employer if the need for leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified.

Employers can require a certification or periodic recertification supporting the need for leave. If the employer determines that the certification is incomplete, it must provide a written notice indicating what additional information is required.

EMPLOYER RESPONSIBILITIES
Once an employer becomes aware that an employee’s need for leave is for a reason that may qualify under the FMLA, the employer must notify the employee if he or she is eligible for FMLA leave and, if eligible, must also provide a notice of rights and responsibilities under the FMLA. If the employee is not eligible, the employer must provide a reason for ineligibility.

Employers must notify its employees if leave will be designated as FMLA leave, and if so, how much leave will be designated as FMLA leave.

ENFORCEMENT
Employees may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer.

The FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement that provides greater family or medical leave rights.

For additional information or to file a complaint:
1-866-4-USWAGE
(1-866-487-9243) TTY: 1-877-889-5627
www.dol.gov/whd
U.S. Department of Labor | Wage and Hour Division

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Local Family and Medical Leave Provisions

Eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in the 12-month period.

- Measured backward from the date an employee uses FML

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

Combined Leave for Spouses. Spouses who are both employed by the district are limited to a combined total of 12 weeks of FML 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 not 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.

Fitness for Duty. An employee that takes FML due to the employee’s own serious health condition shall provide, before resuming work, a fitness-for-duty certification from the health provider. If certification of the employee’s ability to perform essential job functions is required, the district shall provide a list of essential job functions (e.g., job description) to the employee with the FML designation notice to share with the health care provider.

Reinstatement. An employee returning to work at the end of FML will be returned to the same position held when the leave began or to an equivalent position with equivalent employment benefits, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment. In certain cases, instructional employees desiring to return to work at or near the conclusion of a semester may be required to continue on family and medical leave until the end of the semester. The additional time off is not counted against the employee’s FML entitlement, and the district will maintain the employees group health insurance and reinstate the employee at the end of the leave according the procedures outlined in policy (see DECA [LEGAL]).

Failure to Return. If at the expiration of FML, the employee is able to return to work but chooses not to do so, the district may require the employee to reimburse the district’s share of insurance premiums paid during any portion of FML when the employee was on unpaid leave. If the employee fails to return to work for a reason beyond the employee’s control, such as continuing personal or family serious health condition or a spouse being unexpectedly transferred more than 75 miles from the district, the district may not require the employee to reimburse the district’s share of premiums paid.

District Contact. Employees that require FML or have questions should contact Employee Benefits for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

Temporary Disability Leave

Certified Employees. Any full-time employee whose position requires certification from the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) is eligible for temporary disability leave. 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. 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 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, Employee Benefits 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 resume regular duties. Certified employees returning from leave will be reinstated to the school to which they were previously assigned if an appropriate position is available. If an appropriate position is not available, the employee may be assigned to another
campus, subject to the approval of the campus principal. If a position is not available before the end of the school year, the employee will be reinstated to a position at the original campus at the beginning of the following school year.

**Workers' Compensation Benefits**

An employee absent from duty because of 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 available, partial-day increments of sick leave or any other paid leave benefits to make up the difference between wage benefits and pre-injury or illness wages. While an employee is receiving workers' compensation wage benefits, the district will charge available leave proportionally so that the employee receives an amount equal to the employee's regular salary.

**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 nonresponsible 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.

**Jury Duty**

The district provides paid leave to employees who are summoned to jury duty. Employees who report to the court for jury duty may keep any compensation the court provides. An employee should report a summons for jury duty to his or her supervisor as soon as it is received and may be required to provide the district a copy of the summons to document the need for leave. An employee may be required to report back to work as soon as they are released from jury duty. The supervisor may consider the travel time required and the nature of the individual’s position when determining the need to report to work. A copy of the release from jury duty or of documentation of time spent at the court may be required.

**Compliance with a Subpoena**

Employees will be paid while on leave to comply with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative proceeding and will not be required to use personal leave. Employees may be required to submit documentation of their need for leave for court appearances. A court subpoena must be District related or if the employee is a witness for a non-personal court case. All other court subpoena ‘swill be treated as personal leave and charged to the employee’s paid leave bank.

**Truancy Court Appearances**

An employee who is a parent or guardian of a child and any court-appointed guardian ad litem of a child who is required to miss work to attend a truancy court hearing may use personal leave or compensatory time for the absence. Employees who do not have paid leave available will be docked for any absence required because of the court appearance.

**Religious Observance**

The district will reasonably accommodate an employee’s request for absence for a religious holiday or observance. Accommodations such as changes to work schedules or approving a day of absence will be made unless they pose an undue hardship to the district. The employee may use any accumulated personal leave for this purpose. Employee who have exhausted applicable paid leave may be granted an unpaid day of absence.
Military Leave

Paid Leave for Military Service. Any employee who is a member of the Texas National Guard, Texas State Guard, or reserve component of the United States Armed Forces, or a member of a state or federally authorized Urban Search Rescue team is entitled to a paid leave when engaged in authorized training or duty orders by proper authority. Paid military leave will not exceed 15 days each fiscal year. In addition, an employee is entitled to use available state and local personal or sick leave during a time of active military service.

Re-employment after Military Leave. Employees who leave the district to enter into the United States uniformed services or who are ordered to active 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 provided they can be 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 within the period specified by the law. Employee benefits, in most cases, the length of military service cannot exceed five years.

Continuation of Health Insurance. 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 24 months. Employees should contact Employee Benefits for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

Bereavement/Funeral Leave

Employees may request to use accrued personal leave and/or compensatory time for the death of an immediate family member. A maximum of five (5) days is allowed per occurrence. (See Regulation DEC)

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. Recognition and appreciation activities also include Public Relations Department.

District Communications

Throughout the school year, the Public Relations office publishes newsletters, brochures, fliers, calendars, news releases, and other communication materials. These publications offer employees and the community information pertaining to school activities and achievements. They include the following: District emails, Newsletters and Twitter posts.

Complaints and Grievances

Policy DGBA

In an effort to hear and resolve employee concerns or complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted an orderly grievance process. Employees are encouraged to discuss their concerns or complaints with their supervisors or an appropriate administrator at any time.

The formal 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 procedures are exhausted, employees can bring concerns or complaints to the Board of Trustees. For ease of reference, the district’s policy concerning the process of bringing concerns and complaints can be found on the link below:

Click here for DGBA (Local) online.
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 of students, parents, other employees, and members of the community.
- Maintain confidentiality in all matters relating to students and co-workers.
- Report to work according to the assigned schedule.
- Notify their immediate supervisor in advance or as early as possible in the event that they must be absent or late. Unauthorized absences, chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and failure to follow procedures for reporting an absence may be cause for disciplinary action.
- Know and comply with department and district policies and procedures.
- Express concerns, complaints, or criticism through appropriate channels.
- 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 district employees should perform their duties in accordance with state and federal law, district policies and procedures, and ethical standards. Violation of policies, regulations, or guidelines may result in disciplinary action, including termination. Alleged incidents of certain misconduct by educators, including having a criminal record, must be reported to SBEC not later than the seventh day after the Superintendent first learns of the incident.

The Educators’ Code of Ethics, adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification, which all district employees must adhere to, is reprinted below:

Texas Educators’ Code of Ethics

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 and good moral character. 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. (19 TAC 247.1 (b))

Professional Standards

1. Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices, and Performance

   **Standard 1.1** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district, educational institution, educator preparation program, the Texas Education Agency, or the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and its certification process.

   **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 of students, 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 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.

Standard 1.9 The educator shall not make threats of violence against school district employees, school board members, students, or parents of students.

Standard 1.10 The educator shall be of good moral character and be worthy to instruct or supervise the youth of this state.

Standard 1.11 The educator shall not intentionally or knowingly misrepresent his or her employment history, criminal history, and/or disciplinary record when applying for subsequent employment.

Standard 1.12 The educator shall refrain from the illegal use or distribution of controlled substances and/or abuse of prescription drugs and toxic inhalants.

Standard 1.13 The educator shall not be under the influence of alcohol or consume alcoholic beverages on school property or during school activities when students are present.

Standard 1.14 The educator shall not assist another educator, school employee, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new job as an educator or in school, apart from the routine transmission of administrative and personnel files, if the educator knows or has probable cause to believe that such person engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law.

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, or 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, gender, disability, family status, or sexual orientation.

Standard 2.6 The educator shall not use coercive means or promise of 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 or provides information for a disciplinary investigation or proceeding 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 intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly treat a student or minor in a manner that adversely affects or endangers the learning, physical health, mental health, or safety of the student or minor.
Standard 3.3 The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly 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, gender, disability, national origin, religion, family status, or sexual orientation.

Standard 3.5 The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in physical mistreatment, neglect, or abuse of a student or minor.

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

Standard 3.7 The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child or knowingly allow any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.

Standard 3.8 The educator shall maintain appropriate professional educator-student relationships and boundaries based on a reasonably prudent educator standard.

Standard 3.9 The educator shall refrain from inappropriate communication with a student or minor, including, but not limited to, electronic communication such as cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, or other social network communication. Factors that may be considered in assessing whether the communication is inappropriate include, but are not limited to:

i. the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;

ii. the subject matter of the communication;

iii. whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;

iv. whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;

v. whether the communication was sexually explicit; and

vi. whether the communication involved discussion (s) of the physical or sexual attractiveness or the sexual history, activities, preferences, or fantasies of either the educator or the student.

**Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**

**Policies DH, DIA**

Employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment, including sexual harassment of other employees, unpaid interns, student teachers, 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 including termination of employment.

Individuals who believe they have been discriminated or retaliated against or harassed are encouraged to promptly report such incidents to the campus principal, supervisor, or appropriate district official. If the campus principal, supervisor, or district official is the subject of a complaint, the complaint should be made directly to the Title IX coordinator Rudy Campoya, Chief Human Resources Officer. A complaint against the superintendent may be made directly to the board.

The district’s policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating discrimination, harassment, and retaliation is reprinted below: Click here for [DIA (Local)] online

**Harassment of Students**

**Policies DF, DH, FFG, FFH, FF**

Sexual and other harassment of students by employees are forms of discrimination and are prohibited by law. Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and district employees are prohibited. Employees who suspect a student
may have experienced prohibited harassment are obligated to report their concerns to the campus principal or other appropriate district official. All allegations of prohibited harassment of a student by an employee or adult will be reported to the student’s parents and promptly investigated. An employee who knows of or suspects child abuse must also report his or her knowledge or suspicion to the appropriate authorities, as required by law. See Reporting Suspected Child Abuse below.

The district’s policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating harassment of students is reprinted below:

**Solicitation of a romantic relationship** is located in [DF (Legal)](link) and [FFH (Local)](link) online.

**Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

**Policies** [DG], [DH], [FFG], [GRA]

All employees are required by state law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect as defined by Texas Family Code § 26.001, to a law enforcement agency, Child Protective Services, or appropriate state agency (e.g., state agency operating, licensing, certifying, or registering a facility) within 48 hours of the event that led to the suspicion.

Employees are also required to make a report if they have cause to believe that an adult was a victim of abuse or neglect as a child and they determine in good faith that the disclosure of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of another child or disabled person.

Reports to Child Protective Services must be made to the Texas Abuse Hotline (800-252-5400). State law specifies that an employee may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.

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. In addition, the district is prohibited from retaliating against an employee who, in good faith, reports child abuse or neglect or who participates in an investigation regarding an allegation of child abuse or neglect.

An employee’s failure to report suspected child abuse may result in prosecution as a Class A misdemeanor. In addition, a certified employee’s failure to report may result in disciplinary procedures by SBEC for a violation of the Code of Ethics and Texas Educator’s Code of Ethics.

Employees who suspect that a student has been or may be abused or neglected should also report their concerns to the campus principal. This includes students with disabilities who are no longer minors. Employees are not required to report their concern to the principal before making a report to the appropriate agency.

Reporting the concern to the principal does not relieve the employee of the requirement to report it to the appropriate state agency. In addition, employees must cooperate with investigators of child abuse and neglect. 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 duly authorized investigator is prohibited.

**Child Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment of Children**

The district has established a plan for addressing sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children, which may be accessed at the Districts Counseling Department. As an employee, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused or maltreated. Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child’s mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Maltreatment is defined as abuse or neglect. Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility under state law for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to Child Protective Services (CPS). Employees are required to follow the procedures described above in Reporting Suspected Child Abuse.

**Reporting Crime**

**Policy** [DG]

The Texas Whistleblower Act protects district employees who make good faith reports of violations of law by the district to an appropriate law enforcement authority. The district is prohibited from suspending, terminating the employment of, or taking
other adverse personnel action against, an employee who makes a report under the Act. State law also provides employees with the right to report a crime witnessed at the school to any peace officer with authority to investigate the crime.

**Technology Resources**

Policy [CQ]

The district’s technology resources, including its networks, computer systems, e-mail accounts, devices connected to its networks, and all district-owned devices used on or off school property, are primarily for administrative and instructional purposes. Limited personal use is permitted if the use:

- Imposes no tangible cost to the district.
- Does not unduly burden the district's technology resources
- Has no adverse effect on job performance or on a student’s academic performance

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the technology resources are not confidential and can be monitored at any time to ensure appropriate use.

Employees are required to abide by the provisions of the acceptable use agreement and administrative procedures. Failure to do so can result in suspension of access or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary action. Employees with questions about computer use and data management can contact the Chief Technology Officer at 915.937.0088.

**Personal Use of Electronic Media**

Policy [DH, CQ]

Electronic media includes all forms of social media, such as text messaging, instant messaging, electronic mail (e-mail), Web logs (blogs), wikis, electronic forums (chat rooms), video-sharing Web sites (e.g., YouTube), editorial comments posted on the Internet, and social network sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram). Electronic media also includes all forms of telecommunication such as landlines, cell phones, and Web-based applications.

As role models for the district’s students, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not acting as district employees. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of electronic media as they are for any other public conduct. If an employee’s use of electronic media interferes with the employee’s ability to effectively perform his or her job duties, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If an employee wishes to use a social network site or similar media for personal purposes, the employee is responsible for the content on the employee’s page, including content added by the employee, the employee’s friends, or members of the public who can access the employee’s page, and for Web links on the employee’s page. The employee is also responsible for maintaining privacy settings appropriate to the content.

An employee who uses electronic media for personal purposes shall observe the following:

- The employee may not set up or update the employee’s personal social network page(s) using the district’s computers, network, or equipment.
- The employee shall limit use of personal electronic communication devices to send or receive calls, text messages, pictures, and videos to breaks, meal times, and before and after scheduled work hours, unless there is an emergency or the use is authorized by a supervisor to conduct district business.
- The employee shall not use the district’s logo or other copyrighted material of the district without express, written consent.
- An employee may not share or post, in any format, information, videos, or pictures obtained while on duty or on district business unless the employee first obtains written approval from the employee’s immediate supervisor. Employees should be cognizant that they have access to information and images that, if transmitted to the public, could violate privacy concerns.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, even when communicating regarding personal and private matters, regardless of whether the employee is using private or public equipment, on or off campus.
These restrictions include:

° Confidentiality of student records. (See Policy FL)
° Confidentiality of health or personnel information concerning colleagues, unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law. (See Policy DH (EXHIBIT))
° Confidentiality of district records, including educator evaluations and private e-mail addresses. (See Policy GBA)
° Copyright law (See Policy CY)
° Prohibition against harming others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system. (See Policy DH (EXHIBIT))

See Use of Electronic Media with Students, below, for regulations on employee communication with students through electronic media.

Use of Electronic Media with Students
Policy DH

A certified or licensed employee, or any other employee designated in writing by the Superintendent or a campus principal, may communicate through electronic media with students who are currently enrolled in the district. The employee must comply with the provisions outlined below. All other employees are prohibited from communicating with students who are enrolled in the district through electronic media.

An employee is not subject to these provisions to the extent the employee has a social or family relationship with a student. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee’s child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, or religious organization. An employee who claims an exception based on a social relationship shall provide written consent from the students parent. The written consent shall include an acknowledgment by the parent that:

• The employee has provided the parent with a copy of this protocol;
• The employee and the student have a social relationship outside of school;
• The parent understands that the employee’s communication with the student are excepted from district regulation; and
• The parent is solely responsible for monitoring electronic communications between the employee and the student.

The following definitions apply for the use of electronic media with students:

• Electronic media includes all forms of social media, such as text messaging, instant messaging, electronic mail (e-mail), Web logs (blogs), wikis, electronic forums (chat rooms), video-sharing Web sites (e.g., YouTube), editorial comments posted on the Internet, and social network sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram). Electronic media also includes all forms of telecommunication such as landlines, cell phones, and Web-based applications.
• Communicate means to convey information and includes a one-way communication as well as a dialogue between two or more people. A public communication by an employee that is not targeted at students (e.g., a posting on the employee’s personal social network page or a blog) is not a communication: however, the employee may be subject to district regulations on personal electronic communications. See Personal Use of Electronic Media, above. Unsolicited contact from a student through electronic means is not a communication.
• Certified or licensed employee means a person employed in a position requiring SBEC certification or a professional license, and whose job duties may require the employee to communicate electronically with students. The term includes classroom teachers, counselors, principals, librarians, paraprofessionals, nurses, educational diagnosticians, licensed therapists, and athletic trainers.

An employee who uses electronic media to communicate with students shall observe the following:

• The employee may use any form of electronic media except text messaging. Only a teacher, trainer, or other employee who has an extracurricular duty may use text messaging, and then only to communicate with students
who participate in the extracurricular activity over which the employee has responsibility. An employee who communicates with a student using text messaging shall comply with the following protocol:

° The employee shall include at least one of the student’s parents or guardians as a recipient on each text message to the student so that the student and parent receive the same message;
° The employee shall include his or her immediate supervisor as a recipient on each text message to the student so that the student and supervisor receive the same message; or
° For each text message addressed to one or more students, the employee shall send a copy of the text message to the employee’s district e-mail address.

• The employee shall limit communications to matters within the scope of the employee’s professional responsibilities (e.g., for classroom teachers, matters relating to class work, homework, and tests; for an employee with an extracurricular duty, matters relating to the extracurricular activity).

• The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students through a personal social network page; the employee must create a separate social network page (“professional page”) for the purpose of communicating with students. The employee must enable administration and parents to access the employee’s professional page.

• The employee shall not communicate directly with any student after the school day ending time, unless approved by campus principal.

• The employee does not have a right to privacy with respect to communications with students and parents. The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educator Code of Ethics, including:
  ° Compliance with the Public Information Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including retention and confidentiality of student records. (See Policies CPC and FL)
  ° Copyright law (Policy CY)

• Prohibitions against soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student. (See Policy DH)

• Upon request from administration, an employee will provide the phone number(s), social network site(s), or other information regarding the method(s) of electronic media the employee uses to communicate with any one or more currently-enrolled students.

• Upon written request from a parent or student, the employee shall discontinue communicating with the student through e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, or any other form of one-to-one communication.

• An employee may request an exception from one or more of the limitations above by submitting a written request to his or her immediate supervisor.

Use of Social Media Guidelines

Purpose

In January 2015, Socorro ISD committed to the Future Ready District Pledge, which sets out a roadmap to achieve successful personalized digital learning for every student. Part of engaging Team SISD in 21st century learning is adapting to the changing methods of communication. To this aim, SISD has adapted the following guidelines to provide direction regarding the use of online social media.

Whether or not an employee chooses to participate in any form of online publishing or discussion is his or her own decision. Free speech protects individuals who want to participate in social media, but the laws and courts have ruled that school districts can discipline employees if their speech, including personal online postings, disrupts school operations.

These guidelines have been created as a resource for employees. When utilizing social media, it is important to create an atmosphere of trust and individual accountability. Keep in mind that information produced by SISD employees is a reflection on the entire district and is subject to the district’s acceptable use policy. Personal postings, even if marked private, may also be subject to relevant SISD policies and procedures, as well as to relevant local, state and federal laws.
By accessing, creating or contributing to any social media for classroom or district use, you agree to abide by these guidelines. Please read them carefully before participating in any social media application.

Definitions/What is Social Media?

“Social Media” includes the various online technology tools that enable people to communicate easily over the internet to share information and resources. Social media can include text, audio, video, images, podcasts, and other multimedia communications. These websites not only provide information, but allows for interaction during this informational exchange through user-generated content.

Tools include, but are not limited to:

- Social Networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Google+, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Photo and Video Sharing sites (YouTube, Vimeo, Instagram, Flickr, etc.)
- Social Bookmarking (Pinterest, Reddit, StumbleUpon, Fork, Delicious, etc.)
- Podcasting and Vodcasting
- Blogs (Blogger, WordPress, etc.)
- Wikis (Wikispaces, Google Sites, etc.)

“Technology” includes computers, notebooks, the Internet, telephones, cellular telephones, personal digital assistants, pagers, MP3 players, such as iPod’s, USB drives, wireless access points (routers), or any wireless communication device.

“District Technology” is that which is owned or provided by the district.

“Personal Technology” is non-district technology.

Creating an Account

Authorization: District presence on any social media site, including school-related accounts, such as clubs, teams, field trips, course, or other sites associated with the district or a school/department must be authorized by the campus/department principal/director. Any sites, accounts, or pages existing absent prior authorization will be subject to review, editing, and removal.

General District Sites and Accounts: The district’s general social media sites, including the district’s Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and SmugMug accounts, will be managed by the Public Relations Department. Duplicate, unofficial sites shall be reported, and investigated.

Advertising: Advertising for third-party events or activities unassociated with official district business is strictly prohibited.

Maintenance and Monitoring Responsibilities

Content Owners are responsible for monitoring and maintaining official presences on social media sites as follows:

- Content must conform to all applicable state and federal laws, as well as all district and board policies and administrative procedures.
- Content must be kept current and accurate, refreshed at least weekly.
- Content must not violate copyright or intellectual property laws and the content owner must secure the expressed consent of all involved parties for the right to distribute or publish recordings, photos, images, video, text, slideshow presentations, artwork or any other materials.
- Before posting any photographs of students, content owners shall review the list of students whose parents have not consented to having their child’s photograph taken or published. No student photographs should be published for personal, promotional use or any other non-school related purpose. It is recommended that content owners request that a second person review all photographs prior to publication. One person may catch issues that the first set of eyes overlooked.
- All postings and comments by users are monitored and responded to as necessary on a regular basis. Postings and comments of an inappropriate nature or containing information unrelated to official or district business should be deleted promptly.
Personal Responsibilities

- When using district technology, electronic communication is governed by the district acceptable use policy, which will be enforced accordingly. Users should not expect privacy in the contents of their personal files on the district’s Internet system or other district technology, including email. District technology may only be used for educational purposes. Use for entertainment purposes, such as personal blogging, instant messaging, online shopping or gaming is not allowed. The use of district technology is a privilege, not a right.
- Use of personal technology/devices may violate the district’s acceptable use policy if the district reasonably believes the conduct or speech will cause actual, material disruption of school activities or a staff member’s ability to perform his or her job duties. While social media can be a powerful communication tool and an educational tool for students and parents, SISD employees are personally responsible for the content they publish online. Although staff members enjoy free speech rights guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, certain types of communication may relate enough to school to have ramifications for the author or subject at the district site. The lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred in the digital world. By virtue of identifying yourself as a SISD employee online, you are now connected to colleagues, students, parents and the school community. Use these connections wisely and well. You should also ensure that content associated with you is consistent with your work at SISD and your role as a public school/state employee.
- Staff members are encouraged to maintain a clear distinction between their personal social media use and any district-related social media sites. Use an SISD provided e-mail as your e-mail contact for official or school-related pages. Do not use your SISD provided e-mail as a username or e-mail contact for personal pages.
- Socorro ISD encourages district employees with a personal online presence to be mindful of the information they post. Employees’ online behavior should reflect the same professional and personal standards of honesty, respect and consideration that they use face-to-face and in work-related settings. Material that employees post on social networks that is publicly available to those in the school community must reflect the professional image applicable to the employee’s position and not impair the employee’s capacity to maintain the respect of students and parents/guardians or impair the employee’s ability to serve as a role model for children.
- Please note that even if you delete personal information, it still may be stored on the website’s server for a longer period of time. Information that is marked “private” rarely is private on the Internet. It is very easy for “friends” to copy and paste information about you and send it or forward it to others, for example. There is no realistic expectation of privacy on the World Wide Web.
- It is your responsibility to familiarize yourself with the appropriate security settings for any social media (personal or professional) that you may use. Be sure that the settings are such that any personal content may only be viewed by your intended audience. Be aware that, even if your privacy settings are set properly, it is still possible for anyone who you’ve allowed to see your profile to copy and paste text and send it to someone else. It is also easy for others to “tag” or identify you in photos that they publish with or without your knowledge and permission. Similarly, if you enable settings such as Facebook’s ability to allow “friends of friends” to view your content, it is extremely likely that unintended viewers will have access to pictures and other personal content.
Please remember that all SISD policies and procedures, as well as relevant local, state and federal laws (copyright, fair use, Family Education Right to Privacy Act, personnel statutes, criminal statutes, etc.) apply to social media communications. Because online content can be spread in mere seconds to a mass audience, the district encourages employees to ask themselves before posting any information online whether they would be comfortable having this information printed in the newspaper alongside their photo. If you would not bring it into the classroom, do not post it online!

**Staff-Student/Parent Relations**

- Teachers who use social networking to interact with students and/or parents in an educational manner or as a communication tool must find ways to interact without giving students and parents access to their personal information and posts. Many social network sites allow you to create “groups” or “pages” where you can interact with students without giving them access to your personal account. When contributing online do not post confidential student information. Do not post pictures of any students on your personal sites.

- It is inappropriate to use e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging or social networking sites to discuss with a student a matter that does not pertain to school-related activities. Appropriate discussions would include the student’s homework, class activity, school sport or club or other school-sponsored activity. Electronic communications with students are to be sent simultaneously to multiple recipients, not to just one student, except where the communication is clearly school-related and inappropriate for persons other than the individual student to receive (for example, e-mailing a message about a student’s grades).

- Employees should not have online interactions with students on social networking sites outside of those forums dedicated to academic use. District employees’ social networking profiles should not be linked to district students’ online profiles. Additionally, district employees should use appropriate discretion when using social networks for personal communications and should limit this activity to off-duty hours and the use of their own electronic communication devices.

- When in doubt about contacting a district student during off-duty hours using either district-owned communication devices, network services, and internet access route or those of the employee, begin by contacting the student’s parent(s) or legal guardian through their district registered phone number. District employees should only contact district students for educational purposes and must never disclose confidential information possessed by the employee by virtue of his or her district employment.

- Engaging in personal social-networking friendships on Twitter, Facebook or other social networking sites is prohibited with students, and strongly discouraged with parents or guardians of students. The district recognizes that because of the tight-knit community of SISD, many staff members may have students or parents of students that are family members or close personal friends. However, the district cautions staff members against engaging in such social networking friendships with these individuals. Use your official, school- or work-related page’s instead. A recommendation for staff to respond to “friend” requests on their personal pages is:

    *If you are a student or parent requesting to be my “friend,” please do not be surprised or offended if I ignore your request. As an employee of The Socorro Independent School District, district procedures and practices discourage me from “friending” students or parents on my personal pages. I would encourage you to friend our school’s (and/or classroom’s, department’s, the Socorro Independent School District Facebook pages, etc.)

To be clear: Employees are prohibited from establishing personal relationships with students that are unprofessional and thereby inappropriate. Examples of unprofessional relationships include, but are not limited to: employees fraternizing or communicating with students as if employees and students were peers such as writing personal letters or e-mails; personally texting or calling students, or allowing students to make personal calls to them unrelated to homework, class work, or other school-related business; sending inappropriate pictures to students; discussing or revealing to students personal matters about their private lives or inviting students to do the same (other than professional counseling by a school counselor); and engaging in sexualized dialogue, whether in person, by phone, via the Internet or in writing.

Employees who post information on Facebook, Twitter or similar websites that include inappropriate personal information such as, but not limited to: provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, abuse of alcohol, drugs or anything students
are prohibited from doing must understand that if students, parents or other employees obtain access to such information and report this to the district, their report will be investigated by school and district officials.

**Overall Guidelines for Using Social Media**

The following are general guidelines for using social media whether personally or professionally.

**Be Transparent:** How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else’s identity or misrepresenting your identity. Be honest about who you are, where you work and what you do.

**Always a School Employee:** Although the lines between public and private, personal and professional, can become blurred in the digital world, you will always be considered to be a SISD employee. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, you will be identified as an employee of the district in what you do and say online. If you don’t want it on the 10 p.m. news or in the daily newspaper- don’t share it online.

**School Values:** Represent SISD district values. Express ideas and opinions in a respectful manner. All communications should be done in good taste. Build trust and responsibility in your relationships. Do not denigrate or insult others including students, staff, administrators, parents or other districts. Any online contributions must be in accordance with the appropriate policies, guidelines and relevant laws. Consider carefully what you post through comments and photos. A violation of these policies, guidelines and/or relevant laws could be regarded as a form of professional misconduct and may result in disciplinary action.

**Build Community/Positively Represent School:** Represent SISD, the students and parents you serve in the best light. Respect the privacy and the feelings of others. Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about students or colleagues (including administrators) nor the district in general. Negative comments about people may amount to cyber bullying and could be deemed a disciplinary offense. Your posts and comments should help build and support the school community. Do not comment on nor forward unsupported information, e.g. rumors. You are responsible for what you and others post, even if on a personal page, so be certain it is accurate and supports your organization. It is a good idea to monitor your profile page to ensure that all material posted by others doesn’t violate these guidelines. Once posted you can’t take it back.

**Other Online Activities:** Part of the Internet’s popularity is its many online diversions. Be careful of gimmicks or games that many websites use to increase web traffic. Examples can include risqué surveys or quizzes. Often comments or information thought to be shared in private are capable of being shared publicly. Also, employees may be disciplined for using their online access for non-work-related purposes.

**Share your Expertise:** Write what you know and be accurate. Add value to the discussion. Post something useful. Provide worthwhile information and perspective. A district’s most valuable asset is its staff represented by its people and what you publish may reflect on the school. Speak in the first person with your own voice and perspective.

**Responsible and Responsible:** Employees, parents, and students reflect a diverse set of customs, values and points of view. Be respectful of others’ opinions in your posts or comments. You are responsible for the content you post. Do your tags, descriptions and your image portray you and the district in a professional manner?

**Own and Correct Mistakes:** If you make a mistake, admit the mistake and correct it quickly. Share your error with your principal/director so they can help address the issue effectively. Clearly state if you’ve corrected a previous post. Even though damage may be done, it is best to admit your mistake and correct it. Apologize if appropriate.

**Confidential Information:** Online postings and conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information whether it is internal school discussions or specific information about students or other staff. What you post will be seen by others and will be online for a long time. It can be forwarded or shared in just a few clicks. Do not write about colleagues or students without their expressed permission.

**Posting Photos or Movies without Permission:** Do not post or tag photos or movies of others without their permission. Do not use photos or movies taken at school without permission. Do not post photos or movies that contain students without parent consent.

**Responding to Negative Comments and Criticism:** How you respond to negative comments or criticism will say more about you and your character than what you post. When in doubt, it’s best not to give it credibility by acknowledging it with a response publicly; perhaps a private response would be more appropriate.
Respond and Post Regularly: To encourage readership, post regularly. Don’t post to your blog page and then not post for three weeks. Readers won’t have a reason to follow you if they cannot expect new content regularly. Respond to other’s posts. Answer questions; thank people even if it’s just a few words. Make it a two-way conversation.

Spell Check and Abbreviations: Any online contribution should be well written. What you post will be online for the world to read. Follow writing conventions including proper grammar, capitalization and punctuation. Be cautious about using common abbreviations. While your circle of friends may understand what you are saying, you may have readers from across the world who won’t understand. When in doubt, define the abbreviation at least once in a post or include a definitions page on your site.

Copyright and Fair Use: Respect copyright and fair use guidelines. Share what others have said by linking to the source and using embedded content. Be sure to cite your source when quoting. When using a hyperlink, confirm that link goes where it should and that the content is appropriate. Keep in mind that copyright and fair use also applies to music. Do not post presentations or videos using popular music, or any music or art that you have not obtained the appropriate permissions for use. For example, just because you’ve purchased something for personal use doesn’t mean you’ve purchased the right to broadcast it to others online.

Personal Information: Be careful about sharing too much personal information. People often share personal information such as their pet names, their parents and children’s names, where they grew up, and more. This information may help a hacker guess your passwords. If you share that you will be out of town, a criminal may use this to target your home for a burglary. Do not share with a student your personal problems that would normally be discussed with adults. Be smart and don’t share too much information.

Video: The Internet is becoming an increasingly popular educational tool and place to share personally created movies. You are responsible for all you do, say, and post online, including video. Anything you post online should represent you in a professional manner as others will see you as connected to the district. Anything you show in your classroom should be previewed by you in its entirety, prior to any student seeing it. Consult a supervisor if you feel the content may be questionable.

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, 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 or 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 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
- Crimes involving any felony possession or conspiracy to possess, or any misdemeanor or felony transfer, sale, distribution,
or conspiracy to transfer, sell, or distribute any controlled substance
• Felonies involving driving while intoxicated (DWI)
• Acts constituting abuse or neglect under the SBEC rules.

If an educator is arrested or criminally charged, the superintendent is also required to report the educators’ criminal history to
the Division of Investigations at TEA.

Alcohol and Drug-Abuse Prevention
Policies DH, DI

Socorro ISD is committed to maintaining an alcohol and drug-free environment and will not tolerate the use of alcohol and
illegal drugs in the workplace and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities on or off school property. 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 regarding employee drug use follows:

Information on alcohol and drug abuse available in
DH (Local), DI (Local) and DI (Exhibit) Policy Online.

Tobacco Use and E-Cigarette Use
Policies DH, FNCD, GKA

State law prohibits smoking or using tobacco products including e-cigarettes on all district-owned property and at school
related or school-sanctioned activities, on or off campus 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,
using tobacco products, or e-cigarettes 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.

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 include 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, except as otherwise permitted by law or district policy
• Inappropriately destroying, removing, or using records, furniture, fixtures, or equipment
• Failing to provide financial records required by federal, state or local entities
• Failure to disclose conflicts of interest as required by law or district policy
• Any other dishonest act regarding the finances of the district
• Failure to comply with requirements imposed by law, the awarding agency, or a pass through entity for state and
federal awards

Conflict of Interest
Policy CB, DDB

Employees are required to disclose in writing to the district 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
• Non-school employment

Gifts and Favors
Policy DRD

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, electronic textbooks, instructional materials or technological equipment 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.

Copyrighted Materials
Policy CY

Employees are expected to comply with the provisions of federal 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.). Electronic media, including motion pictures and other audiovisual works, are to be used in the classroom for instructional purposes only. Duplication or backup of computer programs and data must be made within the provisions of the purchase agreement.

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.

Charitable Contributions
Policy DG

The Board or any employee may not directly or indirectly require or coerce an employee to make a contribution to a charitable organization or in response to a fund-raiser. Employees cannot be required to attend a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions. In addition, the Board or any employee may not directly or indirectly require or coerce an employee to refrain from making a contribution to a charitable organization or in response to a fund-raiser or attending a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions.

Safety
Policy CK series

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 Risk Management Department.
Possession of Firearms and Weapons
Policies FNCG, GKA, DH

Employees, visitors, and students, including those with a license to carry a concealed handgun, are prohibited from bringing firearms, knives, clubs or other prohibited weapons onto school premises (i.e., building or portion of a building) 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 supervisor or call 915.937.HELP 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.

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 school. A copy of the district’s management plan is kept in the District Operations office and is available for inspection during normal business hours.

Pest Control Treatment
Policies CLB, DI

Employees are prohibited from applying any pesticide or herbicide without appropriate training and prior approval of the integrated pest management (IPM) coordinator. Any application of pesticide or herbicide must be done in a manner prescribed by law and the district’s integrated pest management program.

Notices of planned pest control treatment will be posted in a district building 48 hours before the treatment begins. Notices are generally located in campuses or facilities. In addition, individual employees may request in writing to be notified of pesticide applications. An employee who requests individualized notice will be notified by telephone, written or electric means. Pest control information sheets are available from campus principals or facility managers upon request.

General Procedures

Inclement Weather Closing

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, to release students early, or to cancel school, district officials will post a notice on the district’s Web site and notify the El Paso area radio and television stations.

To access inclement weather information, please click the following link: Inclement Weather

Emergencies
Policies CKC, CKD

All employees should be familiar with the safety procedures for responding to a medical emergency and the evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas. Emergency drills will be conducted to familiarize employees and students with safety and evacuation procedures. Each campus is equipped with an automatic external defibrillator. Fire extinguishers are located throughout all district buildings. Employees should know the location of these devices and procedures for their use.
Purchasing Procedures
Policy CH

All requests for purchases must be submitted to the Purchasing Department 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 Purchasing for additional information on purchasing procedures.

Name and Address Changes

It is important that employment records be kept up to date. Employees must notify the Human Resources Department if there are any changes or corrections to their name, home address, contact telephone number, marital status, emergency contact, or beneficiary. The form to process a change in personal information can be obtained from the Human Resources Department.

Personnel Records
Policy DBA, GBA

Most district records, including personnel records, are public information and must be released upon request. Employees may choose to have the following personal information withheld:

- Address,
- Phone number, including personal cell phone number
- Emergency contact information
- Personal e-mail address
- Information that reveals whether they have family members

The choice to not allow public access to this information may be made at any time by submitting a written request to the Human Resources Department. New or terminated employees have 14 days after hire or termination to submit a request. Otherwise, personal information will be released to the public.

Building Use
Policies DGA, GKD

Employees who wish to use district facilities after school hours must follow established procedures. Maintenance and Operations is responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Contact the Department of Maintenance and Operations 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 at least 45 days before the first day of instruction of the following school year. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the Human Resources Department. Contract employees may resign at any other time only with the approval of the Superintendent or the Board of Trustees. Resignation without consent 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 in Reports to the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

Noncontract Employees. Noncontract employees may resign their position at any time. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the Human Resources Department 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 DCAA, DFBB, DFFA, DFFB

Employees on probationary, term, and continuing contracts can be dismissed during the school year according to the procedures outlined in district policies. Employees on probationary or term contracts can be nonrenewed at the end of the contract term. 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 timelines and procedures to be followed when a suspension, termination, or nonrenewal occurs will be provided when a written notice is given to an employee. Advance notification requirements do not apply when a contract employee is dismissed for failing to obtain or maintain appropriate certification or when the employee certification is revoked for misconduct. Information on the timelines and procedures can be found in the DF series policies that are provided to employees or are available on the District website.

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, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, 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 policy DGBA)

Subsequently, at-will employees may be recommended for termination by a Supervisor for any of the following reasons as stated in Policy DFBB (Local)

• Deficiencies pointed out in evaluations, supplemental memoranda, or other communications.
• Failure to fulfill duties or responsibilities.
• Incompetency or inefficiency in the performance of duties. Insubordination or failure to comply with official directives.
• Failure to comply with Board policies or administrative regulations.
• Excessive absences.
• Conducting personal business during school hours when it results in neglect of duties.
• Reduction in force because of financial exigency or a program change. (See DFF)
• Drunkenness or excessive use of alcoholic beverages; or possession, use, or being under the influence of alcohol or alcoholic beverages while on school property, while working in the scope of the employee’s duties, or while attending any school- or District-sponsored activity.
• The illegal possession, use, manufacture, or distribution of a controlled substance, a drug, a dangerous drug, hallucinogens, or other substances regulated by state statutes.
• Failure to meet the District’s standards of professional conduct.
• Failure to report any arrest, indictment, conviction, no contest or guilty plea, or other adjudication for any felony, any crime involving moral turpitude, or other offense listed at DH (Local).
• Conviction of or deferred adjudication for any felony, any crime involving moral turpitude, or other offense listed at DH (Local); or conviction of lesser included offense pursuant to a plea when the original charged offense is a felony. (See DH)
• Disability, not otherwise protected by law that prevents the employee from performing the essential functions of the job.
• Any activity, school-connected or otherwise, that, because of publicity given it, or knowledge of it among students, faculty, and community, impairs or diminishes the employee’s effectiveness in the District.
• Failure to maintain an effective working relationship, or maintain good rapport, with parents, the community, or colleagues.
• Behavior that presents a danger of physical harm to a student or to other individuals.
• Assault on a person on school property or at a school-related function, or on an employee, student, or student’s parent regardless of time or place.
• Use of profanity in the course of performing any duties of employment, whether on or off school premises, in the presence of students, staff, or members of the public, if reasonably characterized as unprofessional.
• Falsification of records or other documents related to the District’s activities.
• Falsification or omission of required information on an employment application.
• Misrepresentation of facts to a supervisor or other District official in the conduct of District business.
• Failure to fulfill requirements for certification, including passing certification examinations required by state law for the employee’s assignment.
• Any attempt to encourage or coerce a child to withhold information from the child’s parent or from other District personnel.
• Any reason that makes the employment relationship void or voidable, such as a violation of federal, state, or local law.

Exit Interviews and Procedures
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 including intellectual property, and equipment must be returned upon separation from employment.

Reports to Texas Education Agency
Policy DF, DHB
The dismissal of a certified employee must be reported to the Division of Investigations at TEA whenever the termination is based on a determination that the employee was involved in any of the following:

• Any form of sexual or physical abuse of a minor or any other unlawful conduct with a student or a minor
• Soliciting or engaging in sexual contact or a romantic relationship with a student or minor
• The possession, transfer, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance
• The illegal transfer, appropriation, or expenditure of district property or funds
• An attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit for the purpose of promotion or additional compensation
• Committing a criminal offense or any part of a criminal offense on district property or at a school-sponsored event
The superintendent is also required to notify TEA when a certified employee resigns and there is reasonable evidence that the
educator engaged in the conduct listed above.

The reporting requirements above are in addition to the superintendent’s ongoing duty to notify TEA when a certified
employee has a reported criminal history. “Reported criminal history” means any formal criminal justice system charges
and dispositions including arrests, detentions, indictments, criminal information, convictions, deferred adjudications, and
probations in any state or federal jurisdiction that is obtained by a means other than the Fingerprint-based Applicant
Clearing house of Texas (FACT).

**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 the employee’s new employer, if known

**Student Issues**

**Equal Educational Opportunities**

Policies **FB, FFH**

Socorro ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, 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 against students based on sex, including sexual harassment should be directed
to Rudy Campoya, the district Title IX Coordinator. Questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of a disability
should be directed to Alisa Zapata Farmer, the district ADA/Section 504 coordinator. All other questions or concerns relating
to discrimination based on any other reasons should be directed to the Superintendent.

**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: Married, separated, or divorced unless parental rights have been legally terminated and the school has
been given a copy of the court order terminating parental rights
- The student: The rights of parents transfer to a student who turns 18 or is enrolled in an institution of post-secondary
education. A district is not prohibited from granting the student access to the student’s records before this time.
- School officials with legitimate educational 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 appropriate campus 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 handling 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 teacher or the appropriate administrator at any time. Parents and students with complaints that cannot be resolved to their satisfaction 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.

Administering Medication to Students  
Policy FFAC

Only designated employees can administer prescription medication, nonprescription medication, and herbal or dietary supplements to students. Exceptions apply to the self-administration of asthma medication, medication for anaphylaxis (e.g., EpiPen), and medication for diabetes management, if the medication is self-administered in accordance with district policy and procedures. A student who must take medication 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  
Policies 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 Conduct and Discipline  
Policies in the FN series and FO series

Students are expected to follow the classroom rules, campus rules, and rules listed in the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct. Teachers and administrators are responsible for taking disciplinary action based on a range of discipline management strategies 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.
Student Attendance
Policy FEB

Teachers and staff should be familiar with the district’s policies 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 follow the procedures in policy FEB and regulation FEC in the Student Handbook and Code of Conduct.

Bullying
Policy FFI

All employees are required to report student complaints of bullying to their immediate supervisor, school counselor, or the Department of Administrative Services. The district’s policy includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating bullying of students and is reprinted below:  

FFI (Local) Link to online Policy.

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. While most initiation rites are permissible, engaging in or permitting “hazing” is a criminal offense. Any teacher, administrator, or employee who observes a student engaged in any form of hazing, who 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 administrator.
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