

# Hardin Independent School District

## *Employee Handbook*

### 2018-2019



[www.hardinisd.net](http://www.hardinisd.net)

#### Hardin High School

936-298-2118  
Fax 936-298-3612

#### Hardin Junior High School

936-298-2054  
Fax 936-298-3264

#### Hardin Intermediate School

936-298-2834  
Fax 936-298-3782

#### Hardin Elementary School

936-298-2114  
Fax 936-298-9153

#### Hardin ISD

936-298-2112 Fax 936-298-9161

If you have difficulty accessing the information in this document because of a disability,  
please contact the Director of Technology: Todd English at [tenglish@hardinisd.net](mailto:tenglish@hardinisd.net)

# Table of Contents

---

<b>Confidentiality and Employee Handbook Acknowledgement</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>Introduction</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>District Information</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Description of the District .....	6
District Map.....	6
Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives .....	6
Board of Trustees.....	7
Board Meeting Schedule for 2018-2019 (subject to change based on circumstances that may arise).....	7
Central Administration .....	8
Campus Administration.....	8
School Calendar.....	8
Helpful Contacts .....	8
School Directory.....	8
<b>Employment</b> .....	<b>9</b>
Equal Employment Opportunity.....	9
Job Vacancy Announcements.....	9
Employment after Retirement.....	9
Contract and Noncontract Employment .....	10
Certification and Licenses .....	10
Recertification of Employment Authorization .....	11
Searches and Alcohol and Drug Testing .....	11
Health Safety Training.....	12
Reassignments and Transfers .....	12
Workload and Work Schedules .....	12
Breaks for Expression of Breast Milk .....	13
Notification to Parents Regarding Qualifications.....	13
Outside Employment and Tutoring .....	13
Performance Evaluation.....	14
Employee Involvement.....	14
Staff Development.....	14
<b>Compensation and Benefits</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Salaries, Wages, and Stipends .....	15
Paychecks .....	15
Automatic Payroll Deposit .....	16
Payroll Deductions.....	16
Overtime Compensation .....	16
Travel Expense Reimbursement.....	17
Health, Dental, and Life Insurance .....	17
Supplemental Insurance Benefits .....	17
Cafeteria Plan Benefits (Section 125).....	17
Workers' Compensation Insurance.....	18
Unemployment Compensation Insurance.....	18
Teacher Retirement.....	18
Other Benefit Programs.....	18

**Leaves and Absences ..... 19**

- Personal Leave..... 20
- State Sick Leave ..... 21
- Local Leave ..... 22
- Sick Leave Bank (or Pool)..... 22
- Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)—General Provisions ..... 22
- Local Family and Medical Leave Provisions ..... 24
- Temporary Disability Leave ..... 25
- Workers’ Compensation Benefits..... 25
- Assault Leave..... 25
- Bereavement Leave ..... 26
- Jury Duty ..... 26
- Compliance with a Subpoena ..... 26
- Truancy Court Appearances ..... 26
- Religious Observance ..... 26
- Military Leave ..... 26

**Employee Relations and Communications..... 27**

- Employee Recognition and Appreciation..... 27
- District Communications ..... 27

**Complaints and Grievances..... 28**

**Employee Conduct and Welfare ..... 29**

- Standards of Conduct..... 29
- Attire and Grooming..... 32
- Guidelines for Men ..... 32
- Guidelines for Women..... 32
- Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation ..... 32
- Harassment of Students ..... 33
- Reporting Suspected Child Abuse..... 33
- Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment of Children..... 34
- Reporting Crime ..... 34
- Technology Resources..... 35
- Hardin ISD Employee Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) ..... 35
- Personal Use of Electronic Communications ..... 38
- Electronic Communications between Employees and Students ..... 39
- Criminal History Background Checks..... 41
- Employee Arrests and Convictions ..... 41
- Alcohol and Drug-Abuse Prevention..... 41
- Tobacco Products and E-Cigarette Use ..... 42
- Fraud and Financial Impropriety ..... 42
- Conflict of Interest..... 42
- Gifts and Favors..... 43
- Copyrighted Materials ..... 43
- Associations and Political Activities ..... 43
- Charitable Contributions..... 43
- Safety ..... 43
- Possession of Firearms and Weapons..... 44
- Visitors in the Workplace ..... 44
- Asbestos Management Plan..... 45

Pest Control Treatment .....	45
Other Topics .....	45
<b>General Procedures.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Bad Weather Closing.....	46
Emergencies.....	46
Purchasing Procedures.....	46
Name and Address Changes .....	46
Personnel Records .....	46
Building Use/Care .....	47
<b>Termination of Employment.....</b>	<b>49</b>
Resignations.....	49
Dismissal or Nonrenewal of Contract Employees.....	49
Dismissal of Noncontract Employees.....	49
Exit Interviews and Procedures .....	50
Reports to Texas Education Agency.....	50
Reports Concerning Court-Ordered Withholding .....	50
<b>Student Issues .....</b>	<b>51</b>
Equal Educational Opportunities.....	51
Student Records.....	51
Parent and Student Complaints.....	51
Administering Medication to Students .....	52
Dietary Supplements.....	52
Psychotropic Drugs.....	52
Student Conduct and Discipline .....	53
Student Attendance.....	53
Bullying .....	53
Hazing.....	53
<b>Appendix A – Social Media Policy and Guidelines .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Appendix B – Child Sexual Abuse Reporting Plan .....</b>	<b>60</b>

# Confidentiality and Employee Handbook Acknowledgement

---

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Campus/Department \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

indicate your choice by checking the appropriate box below:

- I choose to receive the employee handbook in electronic format and accept responsibility for accessing it on Google Drive. I must log into Google Drive using my district credentials to access this document.
- I choose to receive a hard copy of the employee handbook.

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

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

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

## Confidentiality

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and school district policy require that all student records shall be developed, maintained, utilized, and disseminated in such a manner as to protect the privacy rights of students.

All school district personnel must maintain the confidentiality of personally identifiable information pertaining to any district student. This includes any student name; educational records and test results; any verbal/written anecdotal information; any placement data; any information relating to counseling services rendered to any student or parent; or any information relating to a student's handicapping condition, or Discussion between any school personnel concerning any student should occur only between school personnel who have a direct interest in the education of the student.

Such discussions are frequently necessary and advisable but must occur in a private place with no other personnel in attendance. Personnel shall refrain from such confidential discussions in the teachers' lounge, office, hallways, cafeteria, etc. I have read and understand the above information relating to confidentiality.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

***Please sign and date this receipt and forward it to your supervisor.***

# Introduction

---

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

This handbook is neither a contract nor a substitute for the official district policy manual. Nor is it intended to alter the at-will status of noncontract employees in any way. Rather, it is a guide to and a brief explanation of district policies and procedures related to employment. These policies and procedures can change at any time; these changes shall supersede any handbook provisions that are not compatible with the change. For more information, employees may refer to the policy codes that are associated with handbook topics, confer with their supervisor, or call the appropriate district office. District policies can be accessed online at [www.hardinisd.net](http://www.hardinisd.net).

## District Information

---

### Description of the District

The Hardin Independent School District has experienced a rich history since its inception in 1941. It was then that five smaller schools combined to create Hardin ISD. From that point, Hardin ISD has proudly maintained a family atmosphere that is dedicated to bringing together its students who live in such a geographically large district. The district's boundaries run from the city limits of Liberty north to the Polk County line, a distance of approximately 30 miles. East to West, the district's attendance lines run from Hardin County to the Trinity River, a distance of about 15 miles.

### District Map

A copy of the Hardin ISD district map has been made available by the Liberty County Central Appraisal District. It can be found at [www.hardinisd.net](http://www.hardinisd.net).

### Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives

*Policy AE*

## Board of Trustees

*Policies BA, BB series, BD series, and BE series*

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. Board members are elected and serve three-year terms. Board members serve without compensation, must be qualified voters, and must reside in the district.

Current board members include:

Trustee	Office and Position	Term Expires
Cody Parrish	President, 1	2021
James "Bubba" Campbell	Vice President, 3	2019
Jerry Ursprung	Secretary, 7	2020
Angie Amyx	Member, 2	2021
Dana Holst	Member, 4	2019
Charles Bolds	Member, 5	2019
Elaine Tidwell	Member, 6	2020

The board usually meets the third Monday of the month at the Administration Annex Building at 6:00 pm. In the event that large attendance is anticipated, the board may meet at the Hardin High School Library.

Special meetings may be called when necessary. A written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted on the district website and at the Hardin ISD Administration building at least 72 hours before the scheduled meeting time. The written notice will show the date, time, place, and subjects of each meeting. In emergencies, a meeting may be held with a two-hour notice. (see [www.hardinisd.net](http://www.hardinisd.net) for a list of meeting dates).

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-property acquisition, certain personnel matters including employee complaints, security matters, student discipline, or consulting with attorneys regarding pending litigation.

### **Board Meeting Schedule for 2018-2019 (subject to change based on circumstances that may arise)**

July 2018	July 20, 2018
August 2018	August 20, 2018
September 2018	September 17, 2018
October 2018	October 15, 2018
November 2018	November 12, 2018(one week early due to Thanksgiving week)
December 2018	December 17, 2018
January 2019	January 22, 2019 (Tuesday due to a Monday holiday)
February 2019	February 18, 2019
March 2019	March 25, 2019 (one week later due to Spring Break)
April 2019	April 15, 2019
May 2019	May 20, 2019
June 2019	June 20, 2019

## Central Administration

Gerald Nixon	Superintendent	gnixon@hardinisd.net
Chris Contreras	Assistant to the Superintendent	ccontreras@hardinisd.net
Michelle Lee	Chief Financial Officer	mlee@hardinisd.net
Cami Jones	District Curriculum Coordinator	cjones@hardinisd.net
Todd English	Technology Director	tenglish@hardinisd.net
Larry Haynes	Athletic Director	lhaynes@hardinisd.net
Keith Carpenter	Maintenance Director	kcarpenter@hardinisd.net
Robert Peek	Transportation Director	rpeek@hardinisd.net

## Campus Administration

High School	Dr. Bryan Taulton	Principal	btaulton@hardinisd.net
High School	Cindy Moss	Assistant Principal	cmoss@hardinisd.net
High School	Melissa Waller	Counselor	mwaller@hardinisd.net
Junior High School	Jennifer Stein	Principal	jstein@hardinisd.net
Junior High School	Ronald Scott	Associate Principal	rscott@hardinisd.net
Junior High School	Betsy Henry	Counselor	bhenry@hardinisd.net
Elementary School	Paula Jackson	Principal	pjackson@hardinisd.net
Elementary School	Raymond Dumas	Assistant Principal	rdumas@hardinisd.net
Elementary School	Kera Firmin	Assistant Principal	kfirmin@hardinisd.net
Elementary School	Venus Booker	Counselor	vbooker@hardinisd.net

## School Calendar

The school calendar can be found at [www.hardinisd.net](http://www.hardinisd.net). The following link will take you directly to the calendar:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1cAkP7kWJ39gFRYqt5e14FJxxbdxOaBqw/view>

## Helpful Contacts

From time to time, employees have questions or concerns. If those questions or concerns cannot be answered by supervisors or at the campus or department level, the employee is encouraged to contact Hardin ISD Administration at (936) 298-2112.

## School Directory

Please visit the school website and your family access account in Skyward for more information.



# Employment

---

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

*Policies DAA, DIA*

Hardin 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 Gerald Nixon, the district Title IX coordinator. Employees with questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of a disability should contact Cami Jones, 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 posted on a regular basis to the district's website.

## **Employment after Retirement**

*Policy DC*

Individuals receiving retirement benefits from the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) may be employed under certain circumstances on a full- or part-time basis without affecting their benefits, according to TRS rules and state law. 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](http://www.trs.texas.gov)).

## **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 a two-year lapse in district employment or employees who move to a position requiring a new class of certification may also 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 professional and administrative positions that do not require SBEC certification (such as non-instructional administrators) are not employed by contract. Employment is not for any specified term and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the district.

**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 DBA, 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 superintendent's secretary 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 Gerald Nixon 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 Michelle Lee if you have any questions regarding reverification of employment authorization.

## **Searches and Alcohol and Drug Testing**

*Policy CQ, DHE*

Non- investigatory 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 Robert Peek.

## **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 their supervisor by the first week of the current school year.

## **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. 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 by May 1<sup>st</sup>. Requests for transfer during the school year will be considered only when the change will not adversely affect students and after a replacement has been found. All transfer requests will be coordinated by the superintendent's office and must be approved by the receiving supervisor.

## **Workload and Work Schedules**

*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 and Auxiliary Employees.** Support 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 and auxiliary employees must be compensated for overtime and are not authorized to work in excess of their assigned schedule without prior approval from their supervisor. See *Overtime Compensation* on page 17 for additional information.

## **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. Employees 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 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. This notice is not required if parental notice under ESSA is sent. 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 contact Gerald Nixon at 936 298-2112.

## **Outside Employment and Tutoring**

*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.

## **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. Written evaluations will be completed on forms approved by the district. Reports, correspondence, and memoranda also can be used to document performance information. All employees will receive a copy of their written evaluation, participate in a performance conference with their supervisor, and have the opportunity to respond to the evaluation.

## **Employee Involvement**

*Policies BQA, BQB*

At both the campus and district levels, Hardin 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 superintendent's office.

## **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 DEA, 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 *Overtime Compensation*, page 17.)

All employees will receive written 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 Chris Contreras or Michelle Lee for more information about the district's pay schedules or their own pay.

## Paychecks

All professional and salaried employees are paid monthly. Hourly employees are paid every two weeks on the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup>. Paychecks will not be released to any person other than the district employee named on the check without the employee's written authorization. See schedule of pay dates for the 2018-2019 school year in the chart below.

The schedule of professional and salaried pay dates for the 2018-2019 school year are as

8/20/18	12/20/18	4/18/19
9/20/18	1/18/19	5/20/19
10/19/18	2/20/19	6/20/19
11/20/18	3/20/19	7/19/19

All hourly employees will be paid twice monthly on the following pay dates:

8/3/18	10/5/18	12/5/18	2/5/19	4/5/19	6/5/19
8/20/18	10/19/18	12/20/18	2/20/19	4/18/19	6/20/19
9/5/18	11/5/18	1/4/19	3/5/19	5/3/19	7/5/19
9/20/18	11/20/18	1/18/19	3/20/19	5/20/19	7/19/19

## **Automatic Payroll Deposit**

Employees must have their paychecks electronically deposited into a designated account. A notification period of two weeks is necessary to activate this service. Contact Michelle Lee for more information about the automatic payroll deposit service.

## **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 full-time employees
- Medicare tax (applicable only to employees hired after March 31, 1986)
- Child support and spousal 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 nonexempt 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 AM on Sunday and ends at 11:59 PM on Saturday of each week. Nonexempt employees that are paid on a salary basis are paid for a 40-hour workweek and do not earn additional pay unless they work more than 40 hours.

Employees may be compensated for overtime (i.e., hours beyond 40 in a workweek) 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 60 hours of comp time.
- 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, personal, vacation).
- 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 superintendent 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 provided through TRS-ActiveCare, the statewide public school employee health insurance program. The district's contribution to employee insurance premiums is determined annually by the board of trustees. Employees eligible for health insurance coverage include the following:

- Employees who are active, contributing TRS members
- Employees who are not contributing TRS members and who are employed for 10 or more regularly scheduled hours per week

TRS retirees who are enrolled in TRS-Care (retiree health insurance program) are not eligible to participate in TRS-ActiveCare.

The insurance plan year is from September 1 through August 31. Current employees can make changes in their insurance coverage during open enrollment each year or when they experience a qualifying event (e.g., marriage, divorce, birth). Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, employee cost, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees in a separate booklet. Employees should contact Michelle Lee for more information.

## **Supplemental Insurance Benefits**

*Policy CRD*

At their own expense, employees may enroll in supplemental insurance programs for dental, vision, supplemental life, catastrophic illness, and disability. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deduction. Employees should contact Melinda James 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 Workers' Compensation Solutions, effective annually.

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 employee's supervisor. 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 27 for 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 Michelle Lee.

## **Teacher Retirement**

### *Policy DEG*

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). Substitutes not receiving TRS service retirement benefits who work at least 90 days a year are eligible 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 Carol Tomlinson 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](http://www.trs.texas.gov)). See page 10 for information on restrictions of employment of retirees in Texas public schools.

## **Other Benefit Programs**

Hardin ISD offers free athletic passes to all employees for home games.

Hardin ISD offers a district paid life insurance policy for all employees.

# 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 superintendent's office for information about applicable leave benefits, payment of insurance premiums, and requirements for communicating with the district.

Paid leave must be used in half 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:

- Personal Leave
- State 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 a 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. Under TRS-Active Care rules, an employee is no longer eligible for insurance through the district after six months of unpaid leave other than FML. If an employee's unpaid leave extends for more than six months, 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 available for use at the beginning of the year. A day of personal leave is equivalent to the number of hours per day in an employee's usual assignment, whether full-time or part-time. State personal leave accumulates without limit, is transferable to other Texas school districts, and generally transfers to education service centers.

Personal leave may be used for two general purposes: 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 may be used 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 5 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 state personal leave the employee used beyond his or her pro rata entitlement for the school year.

**Exchange Days.** Exchange Days are intended to provide staff members with flexible options for pursuing meaningful individualized professional development outside of their contracted hours/instructional time.

Examples include summer professional development, and after school workshops. A total of 6 clock hours must be accumulated for each exchange day.

The exchange day timeline begins after the employee's last contractual day, or as otherwise specified by the Superintendent or designee. Hours earned during one contractual period may not be carried over to the next contractual period.

Teachers that attend the New Teacher Orientation will be given credit for exchange day(s). Criteria for

### Exchange Time

- ✓ Staff Development activities must follow TEA rules and guidelines.
- ✓ Staff Development goals and activities are best practice, research based and data driven.
- ✓ Employees leaving Hardin ISD after completing an exchange day requirement but before obtaining the day off will not be compensated by the district.
- ✓ If the staff development requirement is not met prior to the exchange day, staff members will receive notifications that the equivalent of one day's salary per exchange day may be deducted if the requirement is not met prior to November 18, 2016.
- ✓ If a staff member has not completed the number of hours necessary for the exchange day prior to the deadline, the equivalent of one day's salary per exchange day may be deducted. The principal is responsible for submitting the appropriate paperwork to the Central Office.
- ✓ If a teacher does not receive the required staff development hours by attending workshops/conferences outside of the workday or by attending district staff development, it must be documented on their summative appraisal.
- ✓ Proof of attendance must be submitted through eduphoria Workshop following the session. Documentation must be submitted in eduphoria Workshop by November 18, 2016.

### Non-allowable Activities for Exchange Time

- ✘ Any workshop, training or professional learning event for which the staff member receives a stipend, extra duty pay or an honorarium will not count toward exchange day credit.
- ✘ Professional learning activities completed during contract hours do not apply to exchange day credit.
- ✘ Informational meetings, planning meetings, faculty meetings or committee meetings will not be counted as exchange days.
- ✘ Exchange day credit will not be awarded for coaching school, bus certification, activities involving students, or travel time to and from staff development.
- ✘ Exchange day credit cannot include extra duties such as extracurricular or co-curricular duties, supervision of students, etc. nor can these hours be “traded” for exchange hours while on duty hours.
- ✘ Time that is spent working in the classroom, extra office work, and other nonprofessional development activities will not be counted toward exchange time.

### 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 ½ 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

Hardin ISD provides five additional days of local leave to employees on an annual basis. Local leave can be used for personal or medical purposes. All categories of employees are eligible for local leave. Local leave may be used prior to being earned by days worked, however, if an employee leaves employment with the district without earning the leave days taken, the unearned local leave days will be deducted from the final paycheck. Local leave can be used following birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child or other permission as granted by the employee's supervisor. Local leave accumulates from year to year to a maximum of 15 days accumulated. Local leave is deducted before state leave is used each year.

## Sick Leave Bank (or Pool)

*Policy DEC(Local)*

## 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;
- 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 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.

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.

## 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.

\*Special hours of service eligibility 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:

1-866-4US-WAGE (1-866-487-9243) TTY: 1-877-889-5627  
[www.wagehour.dol.gov](http://www.wagehour.dol.gov)

## **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, 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 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 care provider. If certification of the employee's ability to perform essential job function 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 to 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 a 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 the superintendent's office 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, the superintendent's office 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 accumulated sick leave or any other paid leave benefits. An employee choosing to use paid leave will not receive workers' compensation weekly income benefits until all paid leave is exhausted or to the extent that paid leave does not equal the pre-illness or -injury wage. If the use of paid leave is not elected, then the employee will only receive workers' compensation wage benefits for any absence resulting from a work-related illness or injury, which may not equal his or her pre-illness or -injury wage.

## **Assault Leave**

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

## **Bereavement Leave**

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

## **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.

## **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. Employees 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, reserve component of the United States Armed Forces, or a member of a state or federally authorized Urban Search and Rescue Team is entitled to paid leave when engaged in authorized training or duty ordered by proper authority. Paid military leave is limited to 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.

**Reemployment after Military Leave.** Employees who leave the district to enter into the United States uniformed services or who are ordered to active duty as a member of the military force of any state (e.g., National or 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 time specified by law to the superintendent's office. In most cases, the length of federal 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 the superintendent's office for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

# Employee Relations and Communications

---

## Employee Recognition and Appreciation

Continuous efforts are made throughout the year to recognize employees who make an extra effort to contribute to the success of the district. Employees are recognized at board meetings, in the district newsletter, and through special events and activities. Recognition and appreciation activities also include employee banquets, teacher of the year awards, retirement awards, and service award incentives.

## District Communications

Throughout the school year, the superintendent's 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:

[www.hardinisd.net](http://www.hardinisd.net) Local

Newspapers

The Student Newspaper Campus

Newsletters School Messenger

Family Access

Hardin ISD Facebook Hardin ISD

Twitter

# 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 accessed through the local website on the policy link at <http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/816?filter=DGBA>.

# 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 coworkers.
- 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 knew of the incident. See *Reports to the Texas Education Agency*, page 53 for additional information.

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 a 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.

## Attire and Grooming

Teachers, volunteers, and support personnel (paraprofessionals) are expected to project a professional image that sets positive dress and grooming examples for students and shall adhere to standards of dress and appearance that are compatible with an effective learning environment. Hardin ISD employees serve as role models for the students and as representatives of Hardin Schools. Consistent with these roles, all employees, volunteers, and substitutes shall dress professionally and appropriately at all times.

- ✓ Dress Professionally: preferably casual/business casual attire
- ✓ School spirit shirts and jeans may only be worn on Fridays or days designated by the principal.
- ✓ Ladies be mindful of low necklines.
- ✓ Tattoos should be covered and may not be visible.

## Guidelines for Men

Male employees should wear collared shirts, such as polo style, oxford style or dress shirts, and these may be long or short sleeved. Turtlenecks are also acceptable, but these would preferably be worn with a sport coat or jacket. Facial hair for men is allowed, but is expected to be neatly trimmed and should be established. The clean shaven appearance is expected otherwise.

Jeans are only acceptable on days designated by the principal and are expected to be worn with spirit shirts. Be sure that jeans worn to work fit appropriately, are not torn or overly faded and do not show signs of excessive wear.

## Guidelines for Women

For female employees, clothing should convey a professional image by being coordinated, modest and appropriate for a business setting.

Jeans are only acceptable on days designated by the principal. Be sure that jeans worn to work fit appropriately, are not torn or overly faded and do not show signs of excessive wear. Low-rise jeans that prevent modesty are not acceptable.

## 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.

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 superintendent. 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 can be accessed on the local website at the following policy link:

<http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/816?filter=DIA>.



## **Harassment of Students**

*Policies DH, DHB, FFG, FFH, FFI*

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*, page 37 and *Bullying*, page 57 for additional information.

The district's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating harassment of students can be accessed on the local website using the following link: <http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/816?filter=DHB> and <http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/816?filter=FFH>.

## **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

*Policies DG, DH, DHB, 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 person with a disability.

Reports to Child Protective Services can be made to a campus counselor or administrator or to the Texas Abuse Hotline (800-252-5400). State law specifies that an employee may not delegate to or rely on another person or administrator 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 suspected child abuse may result in disciplinary procedures by SBEC for a violation of the Texas Educators' 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.

## **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 in the appendix B and at [www.hardinisd.net](http://www.hardinisd.net). 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 computer or network 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 and legal action. Employees with questions about computer use and data management can contact Todd English, Director of Technology 936-298-2112 extension 753.

## Reporting Technology/Software/Internet Issues

For all needs relating to computer/software/printers/etc. a Technology Request MUST be submitted through the link on the district website. This includes, but is not limited to:

- All technology equipment, laptops, desktops, printers, projectors, etc.
- Teacher Software including Skyward
- Student Software
- Access needs

In the event you are unable to access your machine or you have a connectivity issue, please contact the campus designated secretary to submit a request. The campus designated secretary will contact the technology department for directions.

## Hardin ISD Employee Acceptable Use Policy (AUP)

Hardin ISD provides a rich information technology environment to support its activities and administrative functions. The following policy and administrative guidelines govern the use of the districts equipment. All users are expected to be familiar with, and to abide to this policy and these guidelines. Hardin ISD reserves the right to monitor all technology resources and telecommunications to protect the integrity of the network and to ensure compliance with all acceptable use and related policies and procedures. The use of personal computers is not allowed. In deciding what is and is not an acceptable use, there are two overriding principals:

1. Any and all Hardin ISD equipment exists to support learning and administrative duties of Hardin ISD employees.
2. Hardin ISD is committed to ensuring a positive learning environment for all members of its community and its users are obligated to demonstrate professionalism in any and all exchanges and postings.

This policy applies to all HISD computer networks, the resources available on those networks, and all devices connected to those networks.

- ★ The purpose of a HISD user account is to access the HISD network. District students and staff use this network to support communication and collaboration. We use technology to extend research and information fluency, to collect and analyze data, and to solve problems.
- ★ Access is a privilege, not a right. Access entails responsibility, and inappropriate use may result in cancellation of those privileges.

- ★ HISD user accounts are owned by HISD; consequently they are subject to the Open Records Act. HISD reserves the right to monitor and access all accounts at any time without notice in order to maintain system integrity and to ensure responsible use.
- ★ Users should have no expectation of personal privacy in any matters stored, created, received, or sent through the HISD network. These are subject to review by HISD any time, with or without notice, with or without cause, and without the permission of the user.
- ★ As required by federal law, a content filtering program is in place in order to prevent access to certain sites that may contain inappropriate material, such as pornography, weapons, illegal drugs, gambling, and any other topics deemed to be of non--educational value by HISD. Any attempt to circumvent the filter will result in loss of privilege to the network.
- ★ HISD is not responsible for the content accessed by users who connect via their own wireless service (cellphones, air-cards, etc.).

### Responsible Use and Digital Citizenship

Technology is to be utilized in conformity with laws of the United States and the State of Texas. Accounts and devices are for educational opportunities and should avoid all illegal and offensive material. Offensive material includes, but is not limited to, pornographic, obscene, or sexually explicit material, sexual comments, jokes, or images that would violate school policies.

### **USERS OF DISTRICT TECHNOLOGY WILL:**

Exhibit good digital citizenship by conducting themselves appropriately and following these six principles of being a Digital Citizen:

- 1) Respect Yourself. I will show respect for myself through my actions. I will select online names that are appropriate. I will use caution with the information, images, and other media that I post online. I will carefully consider what personal information about my life, experiences, or relationships I post. I will not be obscene. I will act with integrity.
- 2) Protect Yourself. I will ensure that the information, images, and materials I post online will not put me at risk. I will not publish my personal details, contact details, or a schedule of my activities. I will report any attacks or inappropriate behavior directed at me while online. I will protect passwords, accounts, and resources.
- 3) Respect Others. I will show respect to others. I will not use electronic mediums to antagonize, bully, harass, or stalk people. I will show respect for other people in my choice of websites: I will not visit sites that are degrading to others, pornographic, racist, or inappropriate. I will not enter other people's private spaces or areas.
- 4) Protect Others. I will protect others by reporting abuse and not forwarding inappropriate materials or communications. I will avoid unacceptable materials and conversations.
- 5) Respect Intellectual property. I will request permission to use copyrighted or otherwise protected materials. I will suitably cite all use of websites, books, media, etc. I will acknowledge all primary sources. I will validate information. I will use and abide by the fair use rules.
- 6) Protect Intellectual Property. I will request to use the software and media others produce. I will purchase, license, and register all software or use available free and open source alternatives rather than pirating software. I will purchase my music and media and refrain from distributing these in a manner that violates their licenses.

## **Consequences**

The user will abide by this Responsible Use Policy. If the user breaches this agreement, the consequences could include suspension of the user's accounts and network access. In addition, the user could face disciplinary/legal action including, but not limited to, criminal prosecution and/or penalty under appropriate state and federal laws. The Director of Technology and the campus principal will deem what is considered to be inappropriate use of the HISD computer network. They may suspend an account or network access at any time. Additionally, the administration, faculty, and staff of HISD may request that a user's account be suspended or denied at any time.

## **Acceptable Use**

1. Gathering and providing research material and data.
2. Preparing course materials.
3. Completing class and homework assignments for certification, staff development and college courses.
4. Enhancing educational approaches and teaching methods.
5. Entering grades, lesson plans and carrying out all other school related duties.
6. Minimal incidental personal use is an accepted benefit of being associated with Hardin ISD.

However, this type of personal use must still adhere to the AUP, and must never have an adverse impact on technology and information resources of the District.

## **Unacceptable Use**

1. Allowing any person who is not a school employee to use the computer; this includes, but is not limited to your spouse and children.
2. Installing software (exception being HISD purchased software).
3. Attempting to or successfully bypassing any virus protection or security software that has been installed by Hardin ISD or its representatives.
4. Altering system software or registry.
5. Using the computer for personal gain or to further a personally owned business.

Failure to adhere to the above policies and guidelines will result in appropriate action including but not limited to removal of computer privileges.

6. Violations of the district Social Media Policy and Guidelines.

## Personal Use of Electronic Communications

*Policies CQ, DH*

Electronic communications 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 websites (e.g., YouTube), editorial comments posted on the Internet, and social network sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram). Electronic communications 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 communications as they are for any other public conduct. If an employee's use of electronic communications 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 communications 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 Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, 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 *Electronic Communications between Employees and Students*, below, for regulations on employee communication with students through electronic media.

## Electronic Communications between Employees and Students

### Policy DH

A certified or licensed employee, or any other employee designated in writing by the superintendent or a campus principal, may use electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the district. The employee must comply with the provisions outlined below. Electronic communications between all other employees and students who are enrolled in the district are prohibited. Employees are not required to provide students with their personal phone number or e-mail address.

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 student's parent. The written consent shall include an acknowledgement 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 communications 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 communications* means any communication facilitated by the use of any electronic device, including a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager. The term includes e-mail, text messages, instant messages, and any communications made through an Internet website, including a social media website or a social networking website.
- *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 communicates electronically with students shall observe the following:

- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students using any form of electronic communications, including mobile and web applications, that are not provided or accessible by the district unless a specific exception is noted below.
- 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 between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m. An employee may, however, make public posts to a social network site, blog, or similar application at any time.
- 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 Educators' 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 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.
- An employee shall notify his or her supervisor in writing within one business day if a student engages in an improper electronic communication with the employee. The employee should describe the form and content of the electronic communication.



## **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 on 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*

Hardin 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 can be accessed on the website at the following links:

<http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/816?filter=DH>

<http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/816?filter=DI>.

## **Tobacco Products and E-Cigarette Use**

*Policies DH, FNCD GKA*

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

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

Employees should contact their supervisor for additional information.

## **Gifts and Favors**

### *Policy DBD*

Employees may not accept gifts or favors that could influence, or be construed to influence, the employee's discharge of assigned duties. The acceptance of a gift, favor, or service by an administrator or teacher that might reasonably tend to influence the selection of textbooks, 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 are to be used in the classroom for educational 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.

While driving on district business, employees are required to abide by all state and local traffic laws. Employees driving on district business are prohibited from texting and using other electronic devices that require both visual and manual attention while the vehicle is in motion. Employees will exercise care and sound judgment on whether to use hands-free technology while the vehicle is in motion.

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

## **Possession of Firearms and Weapons**

*Policies DH, FNCG, GKA*

Employees, visitors, and students, including those with a license to carry a 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. A person, including an employee, who holds a license to carry a handgun may transport or store a handgun or other firearm or ammunition in a locked vehicle in a parking lot, garage, or other district provided parking area, provided the handgun or firearm or ammunition is properly stored, unloaded, and not in plain view. 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 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 each campus 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 at the entrances of each building. 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.

## **Other Topics**

### **Management of Activity Funds**

*Policy CFD*

### **Use of District Property**

*Policies GKD, GKDA*

### **Employee Use of District Mail Service**

*Policy CPAB*

# General Procedures

---

## Bad 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 website and social media pages (Facebook, Twitter), as well as notify the following radio and television stations:

**TV Stations:** KPRC Houston  
Houston

**Radio Stations (FM):** KSHN 99.9 Liberty KHOU

## Emergencies

*Policies CKC, CKD*

All employees should be familiar with the safety procedures for responding to emergencies, including 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 principal or supervisor 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 business office 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 superintendent's office 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 Forms link under Staff tab on the district website. Completed forms can be emailed to Carol Tomlinson.

## Personnel Records

*Policy DBA, GBA*

Most district records, including personnel records, are public information and must be released upon request. In most cases, an employee's personal e-mail is confidential and may not be released without the employee's permission. Employees may choose to have the following personal information withheld:

- Address
- Phone number, including personal cell phone number
- Emergency contact information
- 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 superintendent's office. New or terminated employees have 14 days after hire or termination to submit a request. Otherwise, personal information will be released to the public until a request to withhold the information is submitted.

## **Building Use/Care**

### *Policies DGA, GKD*

Employees who wish to use district facilities after school hours must follow established procedures. The superintendent's office is responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Contact the business office to request to use school facilities and to obtain information on the fees charged.

#### **After Hour Use**

Employees who wish to use district facilities after school hours must follow established procedures. The superintendent's office is responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Please call 936-298-2112 to request to use school facilities and to obtain information on the fees charged. Once fees are determined an invoice will be created and will be mailed/emailed to the user for payment.

School facilities are not for private use but may be used to support local organizations or events that support student and community growth. There is a fee for use of the buildings along with fees for the appropriate staff to allow access, assist with needs, and routine cleaning.

#### **Use/Care/Guidelines**

Facilities should be cared for respectfully and with long term maintainability in mind. The following should be considered when setting up/decorating classrooms:

- Wires/cords/etc. must NOT pose a trip or fire hazard. Rugs should not be laid over cords as it can cause damage to the cords and become a safety hazard.
- Rugs should only be used in areas where students will be sitting on the floor, such as center areas, circle time, etc. Rugs at the Elementary campus are vacuumed as part of the daily maintenance schedule due to the age of the students and time spent in these areas. Rugs at all other campuses are not vacuumed by housekeeping staff. Teachers will maintain any rug that cannot be rolled up and moved at these campuses. Rugs cause a discoloration of the wax increasing the maintenance efforts for these rooms and affect how well the staff is able to clean areas with the dust mops and solutions used.
- Deodorizers can be requested through maintenance at any time.
- Furniture should not be slid across the floors, if you need help, please put in a request to move heavy items or request assistance from a neighbor.
- Items that adhere to the walls should not leave long term marks or damage to the walls.

The following items are not permitted in classrooms:

- Microwaves
- Refrigerators
- Appliances
- Aerosol Spray
- Scentsy Pots or other types of warmers or candles

You may put in a maintenance request for deodorizers, sanitizing wipes, hand sanitizer, etc. If you are having an event in your room that may require extra attention, please put in a maintenance notification through the request system to assure everyone is aware of the increased need.

General maintenance needs, lights, air, extra desk, moving a heavy object to avoid scratching the floor, etc., you may put in a maintenance request. Making major changes in furniture needs requires that your administrator put in the request. This assures that your administrator has been consulted and has approved it before it going to maintenance. For all other needs:

Go to the Hardin ISD website  
Maintenance Requests  
Follow the steps/provide all information Submittal  
password is "hornet"

### **Reporting Technology/Software/Internet Issues**

For all needs relating to computer/software/printers/etc. a Technology Request MUST be submitted through the link on the district website. This includes, but is not limited to:

- All technology equipment, laptops, desktops, printers, projectors, etc.
- Teacher Software including Skyward
- Student Software
- Access needs

In the event you are unable to access your machine or you have a connectivity issue, please contact the campus designated secretary to submit a request. The campus designated secretary will contact the technology department for directions.



# 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 supervisor. 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 principal is required to notify the superintendent of an educator's resignation following an alleged incident of misconduct for any of the acts listed in Reports to Texas Education Agency on page 53. The superintendent will notify SBEC when an employee resigns and reasonable evidence exists to indicate that the employee has engaged in any of the same acts.

**Noncontract Employees.** Noncontract employees may resign their position at any time. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the supervisor 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

### *Policy DF Series*

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 non-renewed 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's 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 line.

## 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 *Complaints and Grievances*, page 31.)

## **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 resignation or termination of a certified employee must be reported to the Division of Investigations at TEA if there is evidence 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 or school 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 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 Clearinghouse 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. Notice of the following must be sent to the support recipient and the court or, in the case of child support, the Texas Attorney General Child Support Division:

- 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*

Hardin 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 Gerald Nixon, the district Title IX coordinator. Questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of a disability should be directed to Cami Jones, the district ADA/Section 504 coordinator. All other questions or concerns relating to discrimination based on any other reasons should be directed to Gerald Nixon, 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 campus secretary 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 may 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 any other 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 bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for the absence. These requirements are addressed in campus training and in the student handbook. Contact the campus principal for additional information.

## **Bullying**

*Policy FFI*

Bullying is defined by TEC §37.0832. All employees are required to report student complaints of bullying, including cyber bullying, to campus administration. The district's policy includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating bullying of students and can be accessed on the district website at the following link:

<http://pol.tasb.org/Policy/Code/816?filter=FFI>.

## **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.

# Appendix A – Social Media Policy and Guidelines

---

Hardin ISD supports the use of online social media to facilitate District programs, departments and school sites in building a more successful parent, community, student and employee network.

At this time, this includes a District Facebook page (Hardin ISD) and Twitter account (@HardinISD), but other social media accounts may be considered as needed in the future. The District Twitter and Facebook accounts will be managed by the Hardin ISD Administration Office. Each campus also has a Facebook page that is administered by the Principal.

This document contains Hardin ISD’s policies and guidelines regarding the use of online social media.

## A. PURPOSE

The purpose of social media as used by the District is to:

- Promote District-wide or school specific programs, school/staff/student achievements, initiatives, news, information pertinent to District community, etc.
- Direct traffic to the District’s website for more information, encouraging involvement and awareness
- Provide accurate, relevant and up-to-date information
- Serve as an authenticated source of District news and information for parents, students, staff and community members

## B. DEFINITIONS

“**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.

“**Technology**” includes computers, notebooks, the Internet, telephones, cellular telephones, personal digital assistants, pagers, MP3 players, such as iPods, 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.

## C. OFFICIAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

These guidelines are tailored primarily to social networking sites. Currently, HISD has official pages/accounts on Facebook and Twitter, but these guidelines apply to any social media platform the district may choose to use in the future.

## D. REQUISITE AUTHORIZATION

### 1. 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 District school must be authorized by the Superintendent.

Any sites, accounts, or pages existing absent prior authorization will be subject to review, editing, and removal. As appropriate, a recommendation for disciplinary action may result. To request permission for a District-related site, please utilize the following form and identify a “content owner,” or individual responsible for performing regular monitoring and maintenance of the website or account, and a responsible administrator assigned to the specific site.

Please note that for emergency purposes only, each district-affiliated site or social media account must name a District administrator. However, the site, specifically, the content owner and responsible administrator shall be responsible for monitoring and maintaining these sites and accounts.

## **2. Professional Responsibility**

All communications through social media should remain professional in nature and be in accordance with District guidelines, policies and procedures.

The below guidelines have been developed for employees who may operate social media sites for marketing and communicating about District programs, services and events. These tools include, but are not limited to:

- Multimedia and social networking websites
- Blogs and wikis, such as Wikipedia and any other site where text can be posted.

## **3. Internet/Social Media Postings**

Any postings on social media sites operated by designated District staff **should not:**

- Reveal confidential information about the District, its staff or students, including but not limited to aspects of District emails, customers, procedures, policy or details of internal discussions.
- Include harassing, vulgar, defamatory, threatening or embarrassing remarks to any person or entity.
- Include jokes or comments based on an individual’s gender, race, ethnicity, age, religion or opinion.
- Include information for political purposes (pro/anti), private consulting or commercial practices.

- 

## **4. Communications**

All District social media presences will have a consistent look and feel, including use of the District’s logo.

If a member of the news media or a blogger contacts you about an Internet posting that concerns the business of the District, one of its schools or any District/school staff, administration, board members or students, please refer that person to the superintendent’s office.

Negative or incorrect postings detected by any District employee about a District department, program, or campus, contact the superintendent’s office.

## **5. Foundation and PTO Sites**

Authorized school websites shall maintain a clear separation from the website of their school foundation or parent-teacher group.

However, a link to the school foundation or parent-teacher group website is permissible. Principals direct certain aspects of foundation and PTO websites, including, but not limited to, directing that District policies regarding fundraisers and fees be properly reflected on the website.

## **6. District Logo**

The use of the District's logo on a social media site must be approved by the superintendent's office. The office has a customizable electronic logo which can be provided to the site upon request.

## **7. Student Photographs**

Photographs or any other personally identifiable student information should not be posted by a District social media site administrator without ensuring that the student has a parent permission media consent/FERPA form verifying permissible use of such photos or information on file at the school. Settings on social media sites should be set so that outside posters to any District social media site are unable to upload photos directly to the District's social media site(s).

## **8. General District Sites and Accounts**

The District's general social media sites, including the district's Facebook and Twitter accounts, will be managed by the District administration. Duplicate, unofficial sites shall be reported, and investigated.

## **9. Sponsors and Advertising**

Sponsor logos are permissible on District-related websites, with the prior approval of the site administrator. The page must also include or link to contact information for an individual who can provide information about sponsorship. Advertising for third-party events or activities unassociated with official district business is strictly prohibited.

## **10. Content Disclaimer**

Any approved official presence on social media sites outside of those created and monitored by the Public Relations/Communications Office shall include the following text:

"The views expressed on this site do not reflect the views of the Hardin ISD. This site contains user-created content which is not endorsed by the District. The purpose of this site is" ... (then specify the purpose).



## **F. Maintenance and Monitoring Responsibilities**

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

1. Content must conform to all applicable state and federal laws, as well as all District and board policies and administrative procedures.
2. Content must be kept current and accurate, refreshed at least weekly.
3. 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.

We recommend 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.

4. All postings and comments by users are monitored and responded to as necessary on a regular basis. Account settings regarding postings must be approved by the District. Postings and comments of an inappropriate nature or containing information unrelated to official or District business should be deleted promptly or not approved, depending on the account settings. Such postings shall be reported, investigated, and authors will be disciplined as appropriate.

**G. Off-Campus versus On-Campus Social Media and Internet Use Guidelines** Although staff members enjoy free speech rights guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution, certain types of communication, typically by virtue of their subject-matter connection to campus, may relate enough to school to have ramifications for the author or subject at the District site.

When using District technology, electronic communication is governed by the District acceptable use policy, which will be enforced accordingly. Students and staff 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, on-line 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. Off-campus internet usage is largely unrelated to school; however, in certain circumstances courts have held that the off-campus online communications may be connected enough to campus to result in either student or staff-member discipline.

This section of the guidelines is intended to present to District staff members examples of such situations, and guidelines for responsible, ethical internet use.

## H. STAFF USE OF PERSONAL TECHNOLOGY

### 1. Limit On-Duty Use

Staff members are encouraged to limit their personal technology use during duty hours. Use of Personal Technology for non-District business should be limited to off-duty time and designated breaks.

### 2. Work/Personal Distinction

Staff members are encouraged to maintain a clear distinction between their personal social media use and any District-related social media sites.

### 3. Student Photographs

Absent parent permission for the particular purpose, staff members may not send, share, or post pictures, text messages, e-mails or other material that personally-identifies district students in electronic or any other form of personal technology. Staff members may not use images of students, e-mails, or other personally identifiable student information for personal gain or profit.

### 4. Professional Effectiveness

District employees must be mindful that any Internet information is ultimately accessible to the world. To avoid jeopardizing their professional effectiveness, employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the privacy policies, settings, and protections on any social networking websites to which they choose to subscribe and be aware that information posted online, despite privacy protections, is easily and often reported to administrators or exposed to District students.

### 5. Personal Social Networking & Media Accounts

Before employees create or join an online social network, they should ask themselves whether they would be comfortable if a 'friend' decided to send the information to their students, the students' parents, or their supervisor. Educators must give serious thought to the implications of joining an online social network.

### 6. Responsible Online Identity Monitoring

Employees are encouraged to monitor their 'online identity,' by performing search engine research on a routine basis in order to prevent their online profiles from being fraudulently compromised or simply to track information posted about them online. Often, if there is unwanted information posted about the employee online, that employee can contact the site administrator in order to request its removal.

## **7. Friending District Students**

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 and personal blogs 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.

## **8. Contacting Students Off-Hours**

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.

# Appendix B – Child Sexual Abuse Reporting Plan

---

## What is Sexual Abuse of a Child?

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.

## Methods for Increasing Awareness Regarding Sexual Abuse of Children

**Teachers:** Teachers will be trained annually in all content areas addressed in the Hardin ISD Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Children. Training may be provided through campus staff, district staff, on-line or outside agencies as appropriate at the discretion of the campus administration. Training will include contents of the adopted board policy FFG (LEGAL) and pertinent FFG exhibits.

**Students:** District counseling staff will address issues to increase awareness regarding sexual abuse of children and anti-victimization programs with age appropriate conversation and materials.

**Parents:** Information concerning the district Plan for Addressing Sexual Abuse of Children will be posted in school newsletters, on the HISD website, and in the student handbook. The student handbook (which is available both in printed format and online at the district website) will include the following information:

- The plan for addressing child sexual abuse, which may be accessed at the district website. As a parent, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused.
- A child who has experienced sexual abuse should be encouraged to seek out a trusted adult. Be aware as a parent or other trusted adult that disclosures of sexual abuse may be more indirect than disclosures of physical abuse, and it is important to be calm and comforting if your child, or another child, confides in you. Reassure the child that he or she did the right thing by telling you.
- If you permit your child to be in a situation where he or she may be injured, then you may be prosecuted for child abuse. The fact that the abuser is a parent or other family member does not remove your obligation to protect the child. If you are frightened for your own safety or that of your child, call 911.
- You are legally responsible for the care of your child. You must provide your child with safe and adequate food, clothing, shelter, protection, medical care and supervision, or else you must arrange for someone else to provide these things. Failure to do so may be considered neglect.

- As a parent, if your child is a victim of sexual abuse, the campus counselor will provide information regarding counseling options for you and your child available in your area. The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services also manage early intervention counseling programs. The Liberty County location may be contacted at (936) 336- 7283, Polk County location at (936) 327-5715, and the Harris County location at (281) 328-6613.
- 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). Reports may be made by contacting one of the following:
  - ◆ Texas Abuse Hotline, 1-800-252-5400, <http://www.txabusehotline.org>
  - ◆ Call 911 for emergency situations

The following websites might help you become more aware of child sexual abuse:

- ◆ Prevent Child Abuse America: [www.preventchildabuse.org](http://www.preventchildabuse.org)
- ◆ Prevent Child Abuse Texas: [www.preventchildabusetexas.org](http://www.preventchildabusetexas.org)
- ◆ Texas Association Against Sexual Assault: [www.taasa.org](http://www.taasa.org)
- ◆ Child Welfare Information Gateway: [www.childwelfare.gov](http://www.childwelfare.gov)
- ◆ Texas Department of Family and Protective Services: [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)

### **Warning Signs in Children and Adolescents of Possible Child Abuse**

There are four major types of child maltreatment: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse.

**Physical Abuse** is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

#### **Suspect Physical Abuse When You See:**

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanations
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
- Passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
- Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs

**Neglect** is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.

**Suspect Neglect When You See:**

- ◆ Obvious malnourishment
- ◆ Lack of personal cleanliness
- ◆ Torn or dirty clothing
- ◆ Stealing or begging for food
- ◆ Child unattended for long periods of time
- ◆ Need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- ◆ Frequent tardiness or absence from school

**Sexual Abuse** includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or producing pornographic materials.

**Suspect Sexual Abuse When You See:**

- ◆ Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- ◆ Evidence of injury to the genital area
- ◆ Pregnancy in a young girl
- ◆ Difficulty in sitting or walking
- ◆ Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- ◆ Sexual comments, behaviors or play
- ◆ Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- ◆ Sexual victimization of other children

**Emotional Abuse** is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It includes extreme forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scapegoating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.

**Suspect Emotional Abuse When You See:**

- ◆ Over compliance
- ◆ Low self-esteem
- ◆ Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- ◆ Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
- ◆ Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
- ◆ Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems

### **Signs More Typical in Adolescents**

- ◆ Self-injury (cutting, burning)
- ◆ Inadequate personal hygiene
- ◆ Drug and alcohol abuse
- ◆ Sexual promiscuity
- ◆ Running away from home
- ◆ Depression, anxiety
- ◆ Suicide attempts
- ◆ Fear of intimacy or closeness
- ◆ Compulsive eating or dieting

### **Suspect Neglect When You See . . .**

- ◆ Obvious malnourishment
- ◆ Lack of personal cleanliness
- ◆ Torn and/or dirty clothes
- ◆ Obvious fatigue and listlessness
- ◆ A child unattended for long periods of time
- ◆ Need for glasses, dental care or other medical attention
- ◆ Stealing or begging for food
- ◆ Frequent absence or tardiness from school

### **Available Counseling Options and Other Resources**

**Children's Advocacy Centers** provide comprehensive services which protect, promote healing and enhance the quality of life for abused and neglected children in Central Texas. The Center is a centralized clearing house for investigation of suspected sexual and physical abuse and provides a safe nurturing place for children to tell their stories. An appointment is required to visit the Bridgehaven Children's Advocacy Center in Dayton, TX. The contact number is (936) 258-0400.

Sexual Assault Legal Hotline: 1-888-296-SAFE (Statewide) Family

Violence Legal Line: 1-800-374-HOPE (Statewide)

Stop It Now! provides a national helpline for supportive guidance, information, and resources. The Helpline is staffed by professionals who can provide assistance in how to deal with suspected child abuse situations. Additional resources are available on their website.

Helpline 1-888-PREVENT Email  
helpline@stopitnow.org Website  
www.stopitnow.org