



# Eureka Public Schools

## STAFF HANDBOOK

### 2021-22

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## INTRODUCTION

The goal of this document is to provide guidelines that, if followed, will naturally result in compliance with governing policies and laws. The material covered within this staff handbook is intended as a method of communicating to employees regarding general district information, rules, and regulations and is not intended to either enlarge or diminish any Board policy, administrative regulation, or negotiated agreement. Whenever a discrepancy exists between this handbook and a Board policy, administrative regulation, negotiated agreement, or law, those other directives take precedence and the Superintendent will delegate revision of this handbook to be consistent with those directives.

### **Revisions:**

It is the Superintendent's responsibility to revise or to delegate revision and updating of this Handbook annually, and to inform staff of any/all pertinent changes to policies and expectations.

### **Using this Handbook:**

1. "Staff" in this document includes all employees of Eureka Public Schools, but this document is mainly for non-administrative and non-supervisory staff members. "Teacher" generally refers to instructional staff, including education support professionals.
2. "The Board" in this document is the Board of Trustees of Eureka Public Schools. "The District" refers to Eureka Public Schools as a whole, which is directed by the Board, by the Superintendent, by the Principals, and by other supervisory staff.
3. The word "should" in this document means that the District expects and recommends and expects that staff follow the course of action following "should," but the District also recognizes that some reasonable exceptions exist to these guidelines.
4. The words "shall" and "will" in this document mean that the District does not foresee any exceptions to the course of action following "shall" or "will," and the District would likely consider a deviation from such a direction to be a violation of policy.
5. Again, this is a handbook to share District expectations with staff in a reader-friendly manner; this handbook is *not* the actual District policy language nor a substitute for Montana Code Annotated (MCA) or other local, state, or federal laws. Again, whenever a conflict exists between this handbook and District policies or applicable laws, the District policies or applicable laws shall take precedence and the Superintendent shall ensure this handbook is updated. The District shall also consider compliance with this handbook as a mitigating factor in any disciplinary action related to the specific language of District policies and/or applicable laws.

**Equal Employment** (See Board Policy 5010, 5325)

The District practices equal employment opportunity and treatment regardless of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, marital status, and/or disability, if the employee, with or without reasonable accommodation, is able to perform the essential functions of the position.

The District has designated Building Principals and the Activities Director to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements, including Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, and other civil rights or discrimination issues, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and may be contacted at the district office for additional information and/or compliance issues.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **ASSOCIATIONS**

The Tobacco Valley Education Association is the bargaining unit for all certified staff. The Eureka Public Schools Classified Employees Association is the bargaining unit for all classified staff.

### **BOARD MEMBERS**

The Legislature of the State of Montana delegates to the Board of Trustees responsibility for the conduct and governance of district schools.

### **BOARD MEETINGS/COMMUNICATIONS**

Regular Board meetings occur as scheduled upon resolution of the Board. The Superintendent shall provide notice to staff members who will be discussed at Board meetings. Regardless of the content of a Board meeting, all Staff are welcome to attend and speak at Board meetings and to communicate with Board members, just as members of the general public may do. Anyone who would like to be on the agenda of a Board meeting needs to contact the Superintendent.

### **COMMUNITY USE OF BUILDING**

School facilities are available to the community for education, civic, cultural, and other uses consistent with the public interest, when such use does not interfere with a school program or school-sponsored activities. Use of school facilities for school purposes has precedence over all other uses. Persons on school premises must abide by the district's conduct rules at all times. Contact the District office for more information.

## **STAFF OPERATIONS**

### **ABSENCES**

#### **Sick Leave**

Certified and Classified employees shall be granted sick leave according to the terms of the current collective bargaining agreement.

Employees not covered by negotiated contracts will be granted leave in accordance with MCA (Montana Code Annotated) 2-18-618.

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

##### Eligibility

Employees are eligible if they have worked for the District for at least one (1) year, and for one thousand two hundred fifty (1,250) hours over the previous twelve (12) months, and if there have been at least fifty (50) District employees within seventy-five (75) miles for each working day during twenty (20) or more workweeks in the current or preceding calendar year.

##### Length/Purpose of Leave

In accordance with provisions of the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA), a leave of absence of up to twelve (12) weeks during a twelve-(12)-month period may be granted to an eligible employee for the following reasons: 1) birth of a child; 2) placement of a child for adoption or foster care; 3) a serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform functions of the job; 4) to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition; 5) because of a qualifying exigency (as the Secretary shall, by regulation, determine) arising out of the fact that the spouse or a son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation.

##### Service member Family Leave

Subject to Section 103 of the FMLA of 1993, as amended, an eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered service member shall be entitled to a total of twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave during a twelve- (12)-month period to care for the service member. The leave described in this paragraph shall only be available during a single twelve-(12)-month period.

##### Vacation

The classified and 12-month administrative employees shall accrue annual vacation leave benefits in accordance with their negotiated contracts and/or MCA 2-18-611, 2-18- 612, 2-18-614 through 2-18-617 and 2-18-621.

##### Personal and Emergency Leave



Teachers may be granted personal and other types of leave according to the terms of the current collective bargaining agreement. Upon recommendation of the Superintendent, classified staff may be granted personal leave. For more information, contact the Superintendent.

### **ADMISSION TO DISTRICT EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

Any staff member wanting to attend High School activities should secure a family pass from the High School Principal. This pass allows you and your immediate family to attend regular-season events, but excludes postseason competitions.

### **BREAKS**

All classified staff members who work four or more consecutive hours are entitled to one 15-minute break. Those working eight-hour days are entitled to two 15-minute breaks.

Classified employees should adhere to the break schedule established by their supervisor.

### **CARE/USE OF DISTRICT PROPERTY**

All staff members are encouraged to exercise continuous and vigilant care of all district-owned property under their supervision. Staff should immediately report incidents of theft or willful destruction of district property.

The District may issue certain district-owned equipment to staff, who may use this equipment for personal use that does not conflict with professional duties and does not lead to personal financial gain. In the event of loss or damage, the district will assess a fee according to the repair or replacement costs.

### **CASH IN DISTRICT BUILDINGS**

Staff members who collect money as a result of fundraisers or other school-related purposes shall deposit said money daily in the office. At no time shall staff keep substantial amounts of money overnight, during holidays, or for long periods of time in classrooms. Staff members must emphasize to students the importance of promptly depositing money collected with appropriate school officials.

### **CHECKOUT**

Certified staff have a duty free lunch according to negotiated agreement. Both certified and classified staff are free to leave campus during their designated lunch time.

Teachers should generally inform their principal and/or the front office if they will be off campus during their preparation period, mainly so that no one wastes unnecessary time searching for an absent staff member during a potential emergency. The district generally assumes that teachers

are professional, responsible adults who know best how to use their preparation time to support the educational programs of the district.

### **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING** (See Board Policy 5232)

All school employees are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect, or human trafficking, according to MCA 41-3-201, and are protected from liability when making good faith reports of suspected abuse, neglect, or trafficking. Each individual staff member who suspects abuse or neglect of a child must make their own report to Montana Child Protective Services AND inform the applicable building principal as soon as possible (i.e. within 24 hours of reasonably suspecting child abuse or neglect).

Failure to report a suspected child abuse is a violation punishable by law and by district disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

The CPS Hotline is 866-820-5437.

### **CLASSROOM SECURITY**

When leaving classrooms and other work areas between classes or at the end of the day, staff should generally turn out the lights and secure the door(s) and window(s).

The district asks all staff to avoid keeping personal items of value in or around their desks or workspaces. The district will not be responsible for the loss of, or damage to, personal property due to such causes as fire, theft, accident, or vandalism.

### **COMMUNICABLE DISEASE/BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS/INFECTION CONTROL PROCEDURES**

As an employer, the district shall provide all staff with reasonable protection against the risk of exposure to communicable diseases, while engaged in the performance of their duties.

Staff who reasonably foresee contact with others' infectious body substances in their work shall receive training and personal protective equipment (PPE) for managing these situations. If you have not received training and/or PPE, avoid such situations and abide by the principle of, "If it's wet, sticky, and not yours, don't touch it."

Staff members infected with a communicable disease have a responsibility to report this to the district unless otherwise stated by law. The district also expects staff to make use of sick leave to avoid coming to work when sick.

### **COMPLAINTS** (See Board Policies 4310, 5240, 1700)

### Student/Parent Complaints

The district recognizes that complaints regarding staff performance, discipline, grades, student progress, and homework assignments will be made by students and parents from time to time. Every effort will be made to ensure that such complaints are handled and resolved informally and as close to their origin as possible. District leadership will encourage students, parents, and others with complaints to discuss the complaint directly with the staff member as the first step in any complaints.

If the complaint is not informally resolved, staff should advise the complainant that they may submit the matter directly to the building principal or immediate supervisor as appropriate. The principal/supervisor will provide the complainant with necessary formal complaint procedure guidelines.

When a complaint is made directly to the Board as a whole or to an individual Board member, the Board or Board Member shall refer the complaint to the Superintendent for appropriate building administrator follow-up.

### Staff Complaints

Staff members need to attempt to informally discuss and resolve any complaints with their direct supervisor contending a violation, misinterpretation, or inappropriate application of district personnel policies and/or administrative regulations.

If the complaint is not resolved informally, and/or if the complaint is against the staff member's direct supervisor, the staff member should follow formal complaint procedures in accordance with Board policy and administrative regulations.

This complaint procedure may not be used to resolve disputes and disagreements related to the provisions of any negotiated agreement or collective bargaining agreement.

## **CONTRACTS AND COMPENSATION**

Salaries, including compensation for extracurricular assignments over and above the duties associated with a staff member's regularly assigned duties, will be determined in accordance with salary schedules and salary placement guidelines established by the Board and/or policies adopted by the Board which are consistent with salary schedules and salary placement provisions of negotiated agreements.

In Early Spring, the District will survey the staff to see who will have qualifications to increase their salary in the upcoming school year. It is the staff member's responsibility to provide all information necessary for placement on the salary schedule to the office in accordance with timelines established by the district and negotiated agreements.

**COPYRIGHT** (See Board Policy 2312 and 2312P)

The district provides staff with a variety of machines and equipment for reproducing materials to assist in carrying out the educational program. That said, while copyright violation is probably rampant within education, the district does not condone such behavior. Infringement on copyrighted material is a serious offense against federal law, a violation of Board policy, and contrary to ethical standards required of staff and students. “It’s for school” is neither an excuse nor a legal defense for violating copyrights, except under “Fair Use” standards, which are more stringent than most people realize.

As such, the district encourages teachers to create their own materials when necessary to supplement materials that were legally purchased by the district. When doing so, refer to the section titled “Research/Copyrights and Patents.” Additionally, in the age of the internet, a wide variety of materials are available freely in the public domain and under creative commons license.

A wide variety of materials are freely available on the internet in violation of copyrights, and while staff and students are certain to encounter and use such materials, knowingly and unknowingly, as is unavoidable online, the district and its affiliates shall not be perpetrators nor purveyors of such illegitimate materials.

Staff with questions should consult with building and/or subject-area leadership. Further, a wide variety of resources are available online to assist staff in navigating this world of copyrights within education.

**CONFERENCES** (See Board Policy 4301)

Each building holds “parent-teacher conferences” annually. The district treats these conferences as an opportunity for constructive, mutual exchange of information and ideas for the welfare and continued academic growth of each student.

Occasionally, teachers or parents may arrange for conferences outside regularly scheduled conference dates, to meet more immediate student needs. Teachers should be prepared to provide after-school or pre-school time, within contracted hours, to meet with students as necessary.

**CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS/FINGERPRINTING** (See Board Policy 5122)

In accordance and compliance with Federal laws, the District conducts name-based and fingerprint background checks on all employees and all regular volunteers, and the results of these background checks may result in rescinding an offer of employment or volunteer status.

## **CURRICULUM** (See Board Policy serie 2000, particularly 2120)

The District hires professionally trained and licensed teachers, and as such aims to provide these teachers with great autonomy in delivery of appropriate and applicable standards-based curriculum within pedagogically justifiable bounds for given subject areas and age levels. If teachers have questions or concerns about specific materials or lessons, they should contact their building principal. Teachers should proactively involve the building principal with any curriculum decisions that have the foreseeable potential to be controversial within the community. It is ultimately each building principal's responsibility to be aware of the educational programs and curricula being delivered within the school.

The District is a member of the Northwest Montana Educational Cooperative, which serves as the District's curriculum leadership and can provide more specific guidance to teachers as needed.

Though teaching methodology will vary, classroom instruction is expected to reflect "best practices" consistent with research on effective instruction.

## **DISCIPLINE AND DISCHARGE**

Discipline and dismissal of staff will follow due process, administrative regulation, relevant provisions of negotiated agreements, and applicable law.

## **DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE** (See Board Policy 5226)

This should go without saying, but if you're doing any work at all related to school, even from the comfort of your couch (i.e. grading papers or sending emails), do not do so while intoxicated by any illicit/illegal drugs or alcohol. Also, don't bring those products to school or any place directly related to school. Also, don't be a drug dealer and don't furnish alcohol or tobacco to minors. There are serious laws about all of this stuff.

Each staff member must notify their supervisor of their conviction of any criminal drug statute based on conduct occurring in the workplace no later than five days after such conviction.

## **EMERGENCY CLOSURES**

In the event of hazardous or emergency conditions, all district schools or selected schools or grade levels may be closed or schedules altered to provide delayed openings of school and/or early dismissal of students as appropriate.

Notification of school closures will happen via school social media, school email, school-sanctioned apps, and/or individual phone calls as necessary.

## **EVALUATION OF STAFF**

Formal “evaluation” provides a tool for administrators who are responsible for making decisions about promotion, retention, dismissal, and discipline. Formal evaluation of staff is a documented process. Evaluation of all staff will be conducted in accordance with established Board policy and applicable district evaluation procedures, negotiated agreements, and Montana Code Annotated.

Outside of formal evaluation as such, the District uses many methods of “supervision.” Supervision is more of an informal coaching process, whereby administrators and fellow staff all help to improve each other’s practices. Most interactions between supervisors and staff should fall under this realm of supervision, where feedback on opportunities for growth and improvement can flow freely in all directions. Supervision can also have a documentation component, such as note-taking during a lesson to help review after the lesson.

### **FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT**

Regular working hours for all classified staff will be set by their supervisor. Classified staff should not work before, beyond, or outside their established working hours and should not intentionally work overtime without prior authorization from their supervisor. Overtime is defined as time worked greater than 40 hours in one week. A week is defined as seven consecutive days covering Sunday through Saturday.

That said, all time sheets must be a true reflection of all time worked, whether it is more or less than regularly scheduled work hours. Falsifying time sheets will result in disciplinary action and is much worse than some unintentional overtime.

### **FUND RAISING**

All fund-raising activities must be conducted under the direct supervision of staff or other authorized individuals and approved by the building principal prior to the activity being initiated. Fund-raising requests must include an explanation or justification for the proposal that is consistent with building and/or district goals.

Fundraising must not interfere with or disrupt school. All money raised must be receipted and deposited with the district. Staff and students should take all reasonable precautions to provide for the security of any items/materials/products being sold. Staff members shall follow established building procedures for the depositing of funds collected.

### **GIFTS AND SOLICITATIONS (See Board Policy 5223)**

Staff members shall avoid accepting anything of value offered by another for the purpose of influencing their professional judgment (i.e. “Don’t take bribes.”).

No organization may solicit funds from staff members within the schools, nor may anyone distribute flyers or other materials related to fund drives through the school without building principal approval.

Salespeople, other staff, or agents shall not solicit staff during on-duty hours without building principal approval. Any such solicitation should be reported immediately to the building principal.

**GUEST SPEAKERS/CONTROVERSIAL SPEAKERS** (See Board Policy 4320)

Teachers may invite guest speakers when such use is consistent with educational goals and with a demonstrable relation to the curricular or co-curricular activity in which the participating students are involved. In advance, teachers need to inform the building principal of the date, time, and nature of the presentation. If a guest speaker may reasonably be considered controversial, teachers must have prior building principal approval and may need written parent permission based on the principal's decision.

**HARASSMENT/BULLYING/INTIMIDATION** (See Board Policy 5012, 5015)

All staff have the right to a work environment free from harassment. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, marital status, disability, as well as sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

1. The staff member's submission to the conduct or communication is made a term or condition of employment;
2. The staff member's submission to, or rejection of, the conduct or communication is the basis for decisions affecting employment and assignment;
3. The conduct or communication has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's work performance; AND/OR
4. The conduct or communication has the effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

A staff member whose behavior is found to be in violation of related Board policy may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal. A student whose behavior is found to be in violation of related Board policy may be subject to discipline up to and including expulsion.

Any staff member who is subject to, or knows of, such harassment, shall notify the building principal or superintendent immediately. If the complaint is not satisfactorily settled, the staff member may file a complaint directly with the Montana Human Rights Commission or with the U.S. Department of Labor, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Staff may also file

complaints with the appropriate enforcement agency in lieu of the district's complaint process at any time, as provided by law.

The district and its agents shall not retaliate against any person who, in good faith, reports harassment.

## **KEYS**

Keys and key fobs are issued to staff on behalf of the building principal (usually by the head of maintenance/security). Staff shall NOT:

1. Duplicate or arrange for the duplication of keys/fobs.
2. Leave keys/fobs unattended. Avoid having keys on desks, tables, in mailboxes, unattended coat pockets, etc.
3. Loan keys/fobs to students or to individuals not employed by the district. Staff should NOT provide keys to students to "run errands," "unlock/lock" doors, etc.

Staff must report lost or stolen keys to the building principal within 24 hours of discovery of the loss or theft so that measures may be taken to protect district property. Three days will be allowed for the finding or recovery of keys before any charges are assessed. Staff may be assessed a fee for lost or stolen keys

Classified staff who do not have summer duties need to return their keys for the summer. Certified staff who will not be returning the following year need to return their keys upon final check-out.

## **LESSON PLANS**

Teachers should prepare lesson plans at least on a weekly basis. The specific processes for this will be determined by individual building principals.

In the event of a planned absence, teachers should leave lesson plans that allow a substitute teacher to carry on the course of study. Teachers should also keep "emergency plans" ready in the event of an unplanned absence. Also for substitutes, teachers should keep an up-to-date seating chart, class schedules, and information identifying any classroom student aides or other special student needs.

Teachers should always be prepared to share their general plans for the length of the course of study, and any specific materials/content recently used/delivered, with the building principal, students, parents, and community members. This is, after all, PUBLIC education.

## **MATERIALS DISTRIBUTION (Approximately Board Policy 7332)**



If external individuals or groups request a staff member to distribute pamphlets, booklets, flyers, brochures, and/or other similar materials to students for classroom use or to take home, those requests need to be referred to the building principal. The principal will review the materials and proposed method of distribution and make a decision based on the educational concerns and interests of the district.

### **MEETINGS**

The building principal and other supervisors will schedule staff meetings for the purpose of organization and communication of business that cannot typically be handled through email. The district expects all staff to attend their applicable staff meetings unless they make prior arrangements with their building principal or supervisor.

Meetings sponsored or called by recognized collective bargaining units during contract hours are subject to prior approval of the building principal. Attendance at such meetings is left to the discretion of each employee.

### **PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES (See Board Policy 5224)**

Staff members may exercise their right to participate fully in affairs of public interest on a local, county, state, and national level, on the same basis as any citizen in public or private employment and within the law.

Staff members may, within the limitations imposed by state and federal laws and regulations, choose any side of a particular issue and support their viewpoints as they desire, by vote, discussion, or persuading others. Such discussion and persuasion, however, may not be carried out during the performance of district duties. On all controversial issues, and probably all issues in general, staff members shall make clear that the viewpoints they represent are personal and are not to be interpreted as the district's official viewpoint. If you don't specifically know that you've been designated a district spokesperson, then you are not one.

### **PERSONNEL RECORDS (See Board Policy 5231)**

An official personnel file is established for each person employed by the district. A staff member's personnel file may contain such information as applications for employment, references, records relative to compensation, payroll deductions, evaluations, complaints, and written disciplinary actions.

All records containing medical-condition information, such as workers' compensation reports and release/permission to return to work forms, will be kept confidential, in a separate file from personnel records.

All personnel records are considered confidential and not open to public inspection. Access to personnel files is limited to use and inspection only by the following or as otherwise required by law:

1. The individual employee. An employee or designee may arrange with the District office to inspect the contents of their personnel file on any day the District office is open for business;
2. Others designated in writing by the employee;
3. The comptroller or auditor, when such inspection is pertinent to carrying out their respective duties, or as otherwise specifically authorized by the Board. Information so obtained will be kept confidential. No files will be removed from their central location for personal inspection;
4. A Board member, when specifically authorized by the Board as a whole. Information will be kept confidential. No files will be removed from their central location for personal inspection;
5. The superintendent and members of the central administrative staff;
6. District administrators and supervisors who currently or prospectively supervise the employee;
7. Employees of the District office;
8. Attorneys for the district or the district's designated representative on matters of district business.

The superintendent may permit persons other than those specified above, to use and to inspect employee records when, in the Superintendent's opinion, the person requesting access has a legitimate official purpose. The superintendent will determine, in each case, the appropriateness and extent of such access.

In accordance with federal law, the district is required to release information regarding the professional qualifications and degrees of teachers and the qualifications of aides/paraprofessionals to parents upon request, for any teacher or aide/paraprofessional who is employed by a school receiving Title I funds, and who provides instruction to their child.

Release of personnel records to parties other than those authorized to inspect them will be only upon receipt of a court order.

### **PROGRESS REPORTS**

The district expects teachers to report their students' progress to the students and their parents. To this end, teachers should keep their electronic gradebooks updated as frequently as reasonably possible.

Teachers need to be able to justify all grades issued, and in particular, teachers should not issue a grade of “D” or “F” on a report card without providing a personalized explanation for such a grade.

### **PURCHASE ORDERS**

The district discourages staff from buying school supplies with their own money, and will work with staff to find funding for staff requests. That said, there is a certain amount of “red tape” in this process. Staff shall not make purchases on behalf of the District without following proper procedures. By law, the Board needs to approve all expenditures, so staff must follow Board-accepted policies and procedures.

All purchases including purchases from student body funds must have an approved purchase order. Forms are available in applicable building offices. If staff spend money and then retroactively seek reimbursement, there is a strong likelihood that request will be denied.

### **RESEARCH/COPYRIGHTS AND PATENTS**

Staff members engaged in a research project during the work day or who use district resources (including students) may do so only with the prior approval of the building principal. Staff must maintain the privacy rights of all involved in such research.

Publications, instructional materials, articles, models, and other devices prepared by staff members for district use with district time, money, and facilities, as part of the employee’s job responsibilities, remain the property of the district.

In the event that a staff member produces items described above partly on their own time and partly on district time, the district reserves the right to claim full ownership. The employee may petition the district for assignment of copyright or patent rights. Employees may not attempt to copyright or patent such items without the knowledge and consent of the district.

### **RETIREMENT/RESIGNATION OF STAFF (See Board Policy 5251)**

The district generally expects staff to fulfill the terms of their contract(s) unless there are compelling, mitigating circumstances to the contrary. In general, it is not the district’s wish to retain staff beyond the time they desire to work for the district.

The Board has authorized the Superintendent to accept on its behalf resignations from any school district employee. The Superintendent shall provide written acceptance of the resignation, including the date of acceptance, to the employee, setting forth the effective date of the resignation.

Once the Superintendent has accepted the resignation, it may not be withdrawn by the employee. The resignation and its acceptance should be reported as information to the Board at the next regular or special meeting.

The district desires that retiring/resigning staff members notify the district as early as possible, preferably at the beginning of the school year in which the retirement/resignation will take place.

#### **SAFETY COMMITTEE** (See Board Policy 8301)

A building safety committee has been established to help implement the district's safety program and as a part of an ongoing effort to help ensure the safety and health of students, staff, and others while on district property. Staff should promptly (i.e. immediately) report all potential hazards to the applicable office.

#### **SPECIAL INTEREST MATERIALS**

Supplementary materials from any outside special interest groups require building principal approval prior to their use in school.

#### **STAFF CONDUCT** (See Generally Board Policy Series 5000)

Employees are expected to maintain high standards of honesty, integrity and (to the extent humanly possible) impartiality in the conduct of district business.

In a nutshell, staff should avoid conflicts of interest, maintain confidentiality, not be gossips, and not profit off of being a sleazy individual. Stricter, less understandable language is below.

In accordance with state law, an employee should not dispense or utilize any information gained from employment with the district, accept gifts or benefits, or participate in business enterprises or employment which create a conflict of interest with the faithful and impartial discharge of the employee's district duties. A district employee may, prior to acting in a manner which may impinge on any fiduciary duty, disclose the nature of the private interest which creates a conflict. Care should be taken to avoid using, or avoid the appearance of using, official positions and confidential information for personal advantage or gain.

Further, employees should hold confidential all information deemed to be not for public consumption as determined by state law and Board policy. Employees shall also respect the confidentiality of people served in the course of the employee's duties and use information gained in a responsible manner. Discretion should be employed even within the school system's own network of communication.

#### **STAFF DEVELOPMENT** (Approximately Board Policy 6420, for admin)

The Board encourages continued education. Some of this costs money. All requests for district payment of college coursework require prior administrative approval. Professional growth application forms are available in the central district office.

The building principal will decide on all requests for release time from regular work duties for attendance at meetings or conferences, based on such factors as availability of funds, consistency with district and building goals and job assignment. These requests require prior building principal approval. Forms are available in the office.

Meetings and conferences devoted primarily or exclusively to political action and/or collective bargaining and similar activities will not be considered as appropriate activities for the expenditure of district funds.

### **STAFF DRESS AND GROOMING**

The district expects all staff to be neat, clean, and to wear appropriate dress for work that is professional and suitable for the job at hand (what is appropriate in the welding shop may not be appropriate for teaching PE, and vice versa).

Teaching demands setting a good example for students in every possible way. As professionals, teachers should guide their grooming habits by what is most generally acceptable in the business and professional world. Staff with questions about appropriate dress/hygiene should consult their supervisor. Clothing which advertises alcohol or tobacco products is inappropriate. Also refer to sections "Participation in Political Activities" and "Teaching About Religion."

### **STAFF HEALTH AND SAFETY (See Board Policy 8301)**

The district provides training and information as necessary to assure the safety of staff and students. No matter how much training an employer provides, some people will continue to insist on trying to make work more dangerous than it should be. Making work more dangerous than it should be is bad. More specific language follows.

All staff members shall conduct their work in compliance with first aid and infection control procedures established by the district, and the following safety rules of the district:

1. Report injuries as soon as possible to the person in charge or other responsible representative of the district;
2. Make full use of safeguards provided for their protection and abide by/perform the following requirements:
  - a. Don't operate machines with malfunctioning safeguards;
  - b. Don't stick appendages into moving mechanisms;
  - c. Don't deliberately bypass safeguards;

- d. Report to their supervisor any safeguard that is not accomplishing its intended function;
  - e. Don't work under unsteady objects that could fall and crush a person;
  - f. Don't use defective tools or equipment.
  - g. Use the right tool for the job, within its rated safety specifications.
3. Keep in place all warning/danger signs, barricades and other forms of accident prevention;
  4. Report hazardous conditions or practices as soon as possible to the person in charge or some other responsible district representative;
  5. Warn others who are engaging in unsafe practices;
  6. Rectify, or arrange to give warning of, any condition which might result in injury to others unfamiliar with existing conditions (i.e. put up warning signs/tape/secure unsafe areas before leaving);
  7. Keep working and storage areas free of unnecessary obstructions;
  8. Work to mitigate slip/trip/stab hazards.

### **STAFF/PARENT RELATIONS; PARENT CUSTODY**

The district encourages parents to be involved in their student's school experience.

Unless otherwise ordered by the courts, an order of sole custody on the part of one parent does not deprive the other parent of certain rights. It is the responsibility of the parent with sole custody to provide to the district any court order that curtails the rights of the non-custodial parent.

A non-custodial parent may receive and inspect the school records pertaining to their student and to consult with teachers concerning their student's welfare and education. Non-custodial parents will not be granted visitation or telephone access to their student during the school day. Students may not be released to the non-custodial parent without the written permission of the parent having sole custody.

In the case of joint custody, it is the responsibility of the parents to provide the district, in writing, any special requests or clarifications in areas concerning the student and the district's relationship and responsibilities. Such information will be maintained on file in the office and provided to staff as appropriate.

Staff members with questions regarding custodial and/or noncustodial parent rights with respect to particular students should contact the applicable building office.

### **STAFF ROOM**

A staff room is provided for staff use during break, lunch, and preparation periods as may be appropriate. These are “self cleaning” areas; in other words, clean up after yourself, and maybe someone else, too. While students are not permitted in the staff room, keep in mind that the staff room is not a “secure” area; don’t leave your personal belongings lying around.

## **SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS**

The district has a “duty to supervise” the students in its care. Thus, staff members are responsible for the supervision of all students while in school or engaged in school-sponsored activities.

Teachers should be in their classrooms prior to the arrival of students and should not leave their students unattended. Teachers who may need to temporarily leave the classroom or their assigned duties while students are present should contact a fellow staff member or the office to arrange for temporary coverage.

During school hours or while engaged in school-sponsored activities, students may be released only into the care of persons having legal custody.

## **TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION (See Board Policy 2332, 2333)**

No part of public education can support any particular religion over another religion, nor support religion over non-religion, nor support non-religion over religion. Religious indoctrination is the responsibility of the home and religious institutions. Public schools and public school employees shall maintain neutrality in such matters.

However, religion does influence many areas of education and society in general, and teachers may educate students about religion’s role in human civilizations when consistent with curriculum and teaching assignment. In such instances, teachers may provide information and opportunity for students to study the forms of various religions.

Teachers may not advocate – openly, covertly or subtly – for a particular religion or religious belief. The Supreme Court of the USA has determined that students’ right to freedom from religious indoctrination in public schools supersedes the free speech rights of teachers to promote their own religious beliefs. Staff with questions should contact the building principal and/or consult Supreme Court interpretations of the First Amendment to the US Constitution.

All of this said, outward visible evidence that reveals a staff member’s particular religious affiliation is not, in itself, a violation of this section.

## **TELEPHONES**

Telephones are available throughout the building for school-related use. Cell phones for personal use should not be used during working time.

### **TOBACCO-FREE ENVIRONMENT (See Board Policy 8225)**

The District maintains tobacco-free buildings and grounds. Buildings and grounds means literally all school-owned/leased properties and vehicles. “Tobacco products” broadly encompasses e-cigarettes, including nicotine-free e-cigarettes. Translation: don’t smoke anything at all or chew tobacco on school property.

Possession and use of tobacco products in a public school building or on public school property is prohibited, except for certain educational purposes that the building principal approves in advance.

### **USE OF PRIVATE VEHICLES FOR DISTRICT BUSINESS**

The district discourages the use of private vehicles for district business. Staff members should use district-owned vehicles whenever possible, scheduling activities and other transportation far enough in advance to minimize use of private vehicles. Scheduling is done through the District office. Reimbursement for vehicle expenses will only be made if no school vehicle is available.

### **VACANCIES/TRANSFERS**

The district generally announces vacancies to the public and within the district simultaneously. Announced vacancies for certified and classified positions are posted on the District’s web site and in the local newspaper prior to closing the application period.

Voluntary and involuntary transfer of staff members may be authorized by the Superintendent based on district personnel needs and in accordance with district procedures and negotiated agreements.

## **STUDENT OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES**

### **ADMINISTERING MEDICINES TO STUDENTS**

Ideally the school nurse(s) will administer or coordinate the administration of all medications that students need to take during the school day. Certain staff will have specific training to care for certain students. Due to confidentiality, all student medical information is on a “need to know” basis. Generally staff will have information about the students of concern within their building(s) of responsibility.

If students are purporting to take medication during the school day and a staff member is suspicious of the legitimacy of this explanation, that staff member should contact the school nurse and/or front office for clarification.



## **CLASS INTERRUPTIONS**

The district is committed to protecting instructional time and directs that interruptions to instructional time be kept to a minimum.

## **COMMUNICABLE DISEASES/STUDENTS WITH HIV, HBV, AIDS (See Board Policy 3417)**

Protection from communicable disease is generally provided through immunization, exclusion, or other measures provided for in Montana Code Annotated and rules of the County Health Department.

Services generally will not be provided to students excluded on the grounds of communicable disease concerns unless otherwise required by law. In those cases where a student has a diagnosed/confirmed communicable disease and the student is not excluded from school, the district will inform/train the appropriate staff member(s) to protect against the risk of exposure.

## **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT (See Board Policy 3310)**

The district strictly prohibits the use of corporal punishment (i.e. extrinsically inflicting physical pain on a student) in any form. Nutshell: don't hit kids!

Staff may use physical force when such force is necessary to prevent another person from harming themselves, others, and/or doing harm to district property.

## **DISMISSAL OF CLASSES**

Teachers should dismiss class at the designated time, not early and not late. If it is necessary to detain students after class, that teacher should provide for an explanation to the next teacher.

## **DISASTER/EMERGENCY DRILLS; EVACUATIONS (See Board Policy 8301)**

Teachers should review their classroom-specific emergency/disaster procedures with all students at least annually. Teachers should ensure that a map/diagram of the fire escape route is posted near their classroom doorway(s), and that HARD COPIED class rosters are readily accessible in the event of an emergency/disaster.

Each building is supposed to conduct at least eight (8) disaster/emergency drills per year, four (4) of which are supposed to be fire drills.

The fire alarm needs to be taken seriously until proven otherwise, but it's also important to remember that the last time a significant school fire killed someone in USA was in 1958. A school with a functioning sprinkler system can also pour up to 1,000 gallons of water per minute into a classroom. Schools are quite safe buildings with respect to fire, but as of 2021, only the

high school has a sprinkler system, so building-specific consideration is necessary. As such, the following guidelines apply to fire alarm activations:

1. Remain aware. Someone with nefarious intent may have set off the alarm to lure a crowd of people. Check outside the classroom for possible threats before directing students to evacuate. If evacuation appears safe:
2. Direct all students to orderly and quietly exit the building using the evacuation route posted. Students may not stop at lockers, drinking fountains, restrooms, etc., along the way;
3. Close classroom windows, turn off lights, and close the door (do not worry about locking/unlocking);
4. Bring class roster;
5. Escort class to the designated location (and at least 50 feet from the building) and take attendance. Report any unaccounted students to the principal and/or secretary as applicable;
6. Once the principal and/or secretary announce it is safe to return to the building, return to class, retake attendance, and resume the instructional activities.

#### **FEATURE FILMS/VIDEOS (See Board Policy 2311)**

The District generally trusts teachers' judgement with the selection of video-based media as part of the instructional program and curriculum. Education-specific films within the content area generally do not need prior approval. Short videos and/or clips of videos/movies generally do not need prior approval as long as they relate to the lesson plan and will enhance instruction.

Teachers need prior approval from their building principal if they will take class time to show a full-length, "Hollywood" style entertainment "movie" and the principal will only grant such approval with justification of the educational value.

Teachers shall ensure that all video materials are appropriate for the lesson and age and/or maturity of the given class. G rated and similar material is generally acceptable for grades preK-3. PG rated and similar material is generally acceptable for grades 4-8. PG-13 rated and similar material is generally acceptable for grades 8-12. Materials more "mature" than those ranges need prior approval from the principal before showing to students. The principal may require the teacher to obtain written permission from parents prior to showing certain materials.

#### **FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS (See Board Policy 2320)**

Field trips and other student activities involving travel may be authorized by the building principal. Teachers should submit requests to the building principal well in advance of the proposed activity.

Written parental permission must be obtained for each approved trip, and teachers will need to fill out the applicable transportation/substitute forms.

Out-of-state travel must be approved by the Board; again, plan in advance.

### **GRADING** (See Board Policy 2420)

Teachers should use a variety of communication methods, including telephone and personal conferences as well as the online grading system to keep parents well-informed.

The District provides the following guidance for letter grades:

- A — Superior/excellent, near-perfect
- B — Strong, competent, high quality though with room for improvement
- C — Mediocre, demonstrates basic competence and understanding
- D — Minimally competent but enough to earn credit
- F — Failing
- P — Pass - credit granted, non-graded course
- NP — No Pass - credit denied, non-graded course
- I — Incomplete
- W — Withdrawal

Teachers should keep their web-based gradebooks updated regularly. This is especially important at the high school level for activities eligibility.

### **HOMEWORK**

The District expects that any homework be designed to improve learning, to aid in the mastery of skills and/or to stimulate interest on the part of the student. Homework should not be “busy work.”

### **MAKE-UP WORK**

With excused absences, teachers must provide students an opportunity to make up those assignments that they have missed, in accordance with the student handbook, building principal direction, and class policies.

With unexcused absences, teachers do not need to provide an opportunity to make up assignments.

With suspensions, teachers should permit students to make up school work that reflects achievement over a greater period of time than the length of the suspension. For example, the student should be allowed to take a final, midterm, and/or unit test without a penalty. However,

teachers do not need to allow students to make up smaller daily assignments, laboratory experiments, class discussions and/or presentations missed while under suspension.

### **MEDIA ACCESS TO STUDENTS (See Board Policy 3600F1)**

The media may interview and photograph students involved in instructional programs and school activities, including athletic events. Such media access may not be unduly disruptive and must comply with Board policies and district goals.

If certain students have opted out of media releases, the principal and/or front office will notify applicable other staff as necessary.

### **MOVING CLASS/HOLDING CLASSES OUTDOORS**

Teachers who wish to hold class in an alternative location – which is only to be done for the purposes of better meeting learning goals – need to coordinate with potentially impacted staff members to avoid scheduling conflicts.

The District supports teachers holding classes outdoors when the lessons and learning goals can reasonably sustain the additional distraction of the outdoor environment. Sometimes a lesson can specifically only take place outdoors. If a class is going to move farther outdoors than the immediate surroundings of the building (i.e. the grass just outside the classroom), the teacher should notify the front office about the location of the class.

### **RELEASE TIME FOR RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION (See Board Policy 2332)**

Religious absences are excused absences.

### **RESUSCITATION (See Board Policy 3431)**

In a life-threatening situation, staff members should provide for activation of the 9-1-1 system and inform the front office, which will work to contact parents and coordinate with emergency services. The district expects staff, to the level of their training, to provide life-sustaining emergency care to any student/staff/visitor requiring it until relieved by emergency medical services or other appropriate medical personnel.

No staff member may comply with any directive from parents or others, written or verbal, that life-sustaining emergency care be withheld from a student in need of such care while under the control and supervision of district staff.

### **RETENTION OF STUDENTS (See Board Policy 2421)**

Students will normally progress annually from grade to grade. Exceptions may be made when, in the judgment of the professional staff, such exceptions are in the best educational interest of the students involved.

The principal will make the final decision on retention/promotion.

### **STUDENT ACTIVITY FUNDS**

All money raised or collected by and/or for school-approved student groups must be accounted for and deposited into a checking account administered by the business office. All student activity fund expenditures must be approved by the building principal and entity in charge of the student activities program (typically student council).

### **STUDENT CONDUCT**

Rules governing student conduct apply on district property, at any district-sponsored activity regardless of location, and/or when traveling to or from district-sponsored activities.

Teachers should be familiar with the student handbook. Teachers should remind students of the existence of this handbook and review applicable sections with students at the beginning of the year and as necessary.

The district expects that teachers will adopt class-specific rules for student conduct. All such rules must be consistent with district policy and building principal regulations/expectations.

### **STUDENT DETENTION**

Teachers may detain a student after school hours for disciplinary reasons, provided the parent has been notified of the detention and, in the case of bus students, prior arrangements have been made for the student's transportation home. If the parent cannot or will not provide transportation, an alternative disciplinary procedure must be substituted. Teachers must supervise any students they hold for detention.

### **STUDENT/PARENT HANDBOOK**

A student/parent handbook is posted on the school website. Staff should be familiar with this handbook.

### **STUDENT TRANSPORTATION IN PRIVATE VEHICLES**

Transportation of students to and from school and to curricular and extracurricular activities sponsored by the district should be provided by the district's transportation system in accordance with district policy. With prior building principal approval, parents, employees, and other designated adults may use private vehicles to transport students other than their own on field trips or other school activities.

### **STUDENT WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL**

Upon notification by the office of a student withdrawal from school, teachers should complete the student withdrawal form, including grade earned to date, and make a complete accounting of any unreturned or damaged books, locks, materials, supplies, equipment, or other district property, including replacement costs, if known.

**VISITORS** (See Board Policy 4301)

Students are not permitted to bring visitors to school without prior approval of the building principal. Staff members should immediately report any unauthorized person on school property to the building principal.