

Escambia County Schools



Employee Handbook

2024-2025

NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

The Escambia County Board of Education is an equal opportunity employer committed to nondiscrimination in recruitment, selection, hiring, pay, promotion, retention, or other personnel actions affecting employees or candidates for employment. Therefore, discrimination in employment against any person based on race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, political affiliation, gender, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical condition, age, marital status, disability, or status as a special disabled veteran is prohibited. Personnel decisions shall be based on merit and the ability to perform the job's essential functions, with or without reasonable accommodation, when necessary. Employment related to injuries or grievances should be directed to the Human Resources Supervisor at 301 Belleville Avenue, Brewton, Alabama, 36426, or call (251) 867-6251. Student-related inquiries and/or grievances should be directed to the Assistant Superintendent of Student Services at (251) 867-6251.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Escambia County Schools is to provide a safe, rigorous, and engaging learning environment that promotes healthy, respectful, resourceful, and responsible life-long learners who will collaborate, lead by example, set goals to strive for excellence, and graduate as college or career-ready.

CORE PURPOSE

The purpose of the Escambia County School System is to provide students with excellent educational experiences to succeed.

PROCEDURAL GUIDE POLICY STATEMENT

The provisions and information in this handbook are intended to be informational and not contractual. Thus, this handbook is not intended, and shall not be construed, to constitute a contract between the school system and any employee, prospective employee, agency of the local, state, or federal government, or any other person or legal entity of any and every nature whatsoever. The school system hereby reserves and retains the right to amend, alter, change, delete, or modify any of the provisions of this handbook at any time and from time to time, without notice, in any manner that the Administration of the school system deems to be in the best interest of the school system. The contents of this handbook apply to all regular employees (certified and classified) and to all part-time, temporary, and seasonal personnel in the school system and do not amend, abridge, or replace Board policies, administrative regulations, rules, procedures, or employment contract conditions established by the school system.

ESCAMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

P. O. Box 307

Brewton, Alabama 36426

(251) 867-6251

<https://www.escambiak12.net>

Employee Handbook for Human Resources – Revised 2024

This Handbook is only a guide. It does not constitute any part of any employment contract nor supersede any law, policy, or procedure.

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Mrs. Cindy A. Jackson, Vice President – District 4

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Mr. Danny Benjamin – District 2
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ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. George Brown

HUMAN RESOURCES

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BUSINESS OFFICE

Avery Ford, Chief School Financial Officer
Ashley Fore, Payroll Supervisor
Allison Murphy, Payroll and Insurance Bookkeeper
Kara Bradley, Accountant
Kelli Stuckey, Accountant

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Escambia County Board of Education Employee Handbook

This handbook is designed to serve as a reference for the Escambia County Board of Education (ECBOE) employees. It provides answers to frequently asked questions and general information that is helpful to employees regarding employment guidelines within the Escambia County Schools.

The information within this handbook is divided by topic. Employees may contact the appropriate supervisor and/or department for more comprehensive information. A hard copy of the School Board Policy is located at each school or department. The policy is also accessible on the website (<https://www.escambia12.net>)

We desire that all ECBOE employees find their employment personally and professionally rewarding. As such, our objective is to create a work environment conducive to these goals, creating an atmosphere of excellence in supporting our educational mission. We ask that all employees be dedicated to providing the best educational experience for the students of Escambia County.

Through its personnel policies, the ECBOE endeavors to establish conditions that attract and hold the highest quality employees willing to devote themselves to the education and welfare of the students. The Board is committed to hiring and retaining capable, interested, and motivated employees to accomplish the school system's desired goals.

The Board does not believe that it should employ or retain employees who are either incapable of satisfactory job performance or those who are capable of satisfactory work but continually perform at an unacceptable level.

Please note that the employee handbook does not fully explain all policies and procedures. The handbook is intended to summarize the most common policies impacting employees. It does not supersede or re-interpret policy. School Board Policy is the primary document of reference. We hope that you find this helpful information. Please contact your supervisor, school/department office, or the Human Resources Department for additional information. If you have suggestions for improving subsequent editions of this handbook, contact the Human Resources Department at 251-867-6251.

EMPLOYEES ARE INFORMED:

The Escambia County Board of Education utilizes video surveillance equipment to ensure the safety and security of its facilities. Therefore, Escambia County Board of Education employees are notified that surveillance equipment may record their actions at work. These recordings from the surveillance equipment may then be utilized to review employee conduct and appropriate work behavior.

Employees receive a copy of the Escambia County Board of Education Employee Handbook upon hire and attendance during orientation. It is the employee's responsibility to read and comply with all policies contained therein and any revisions made to it. A hard copy of the most updated version can be found in the office of each school location as well as on the ECBOE website at the following link: <http://www.escambia12.net>

Rights and Responsibilities

As an employee of the Escambia County Public School System, you are due specific treatment:

- You deserve fair, equitable, professional, and courteous treatment from your supervisors and coworkers.
- You deserve freedom from discrimination, prejudice, and ill will.
- You deserve not to be singled out of a group and treated differently because of personality conflicts.
- You deserve to have your performance evaluated honestly.
- You may have the right, as a tenured or non-probationary employee, to due process concerning certain instances of a transfer or termination from your position.

As an employee of the Escambia County Public School System, you have specific responsibilities:

- You are responsible for treating your supervisors and co-workers fairly, equitably, professionally, and courteously.
- You have the responsibility to refrain from discriminatory actions, prejudice, or ill will toward any other employee.
- You are responsible for satisfactorily performing the duties assigned to you in exchange for your wages.
- You have the responsibility to obey the lawful directives of your supervisors.
- You have the responsibility not to engage in or encourage others to engage in rude, disruptive or insubordinate behavior.

BENEFITS FOR FULL-TIME EMPLOYEES

All full-time Escambia County Board of Education employees will receive annual benefits.

Health Insurance: Employees may choose between the following health insurance plans:

- PEEHIP
 1. Blue Cross/Blue Shield
- HMO
 1. Viva Health Plan HMO
- Supplemental plans are available through Southland National Insurance Company
 1. Dental
 2. Hospital Indemnity
 3. Cancer
 4. Vision
- Prescription plans are available through Express Scripts with BC/BS Hospital/Medical.

Life Insurance: \$15,000 Free Life Insurance from the Teachers' Retirement Systems of Alabama

Retirement: All employees of the ECBOE will have a percentage of their wages deducted each month and deposited into the Teachers' Retirement System:

Benefits: Member is vested after 10 years of service

Tier 1 Member (Member before January 1, 2013)

Retirement at age 60 with 10-24 years of service

Retirement at any age after 25 years of service

Additional retirement service credit will be given by the Teachers'

Tier 1 & Tier 2 Retirement System (TRS) is based on the number of accumulated sick days the employee has at the time of retirement or termination from the system.

Tier 2 Member (Member on or after January 1, 2013)

Retirement at age 62 with 10 years of service

Credit for Military Service: An employee has one year from the date he/she enrolled in the TRS to make a lump sum payment to gain credit for up to four years of eligible military service. Weekend and summer camp services with the National Guard and the Reserves are not eligible for creditable service.

Payroll Deductions: (Voluntary) Partial listing: Direct Deposit Required Credit Union or Bank of your choice

Cafeteria Plan	Tax Sheltered
Annuities 457's	Life Insurance
Critical Care Insurance	Long Term Care Insurance
Accidental death and dismemberment (AD&D)	Disability Insurance
Cancer Insurance	United Fund Contributions

Personal Leave: Full-time employees will receive two personal leave days per year. Employees have the option to purchase two additional personal days annually. New employees starting work after December 31st will receive only one personal leave day for that year. Employees starting work after March 31st will receive no personal leave days for that year.

Accumulated Sick Days: Full-time employees receive one sick day each month worked.

Sick Leave Bank: Employees are eligible to join the Sick Leave Bank, which enables them to borrow up to fifteen sick days for illnesses. These borrowed days are repaid from future accumulated days earned each month. Employees may also receive or donate accumulated sick days from or to other employees of a SLB in Alabama. These days, they are not repaid.

Vacation: All full-time twelve-month employees will receive 10 vacation days.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITY

Certified employees shall meet minimum requirements such as a degree and professional certification, and demonstrate efficient performance skills in the area of assignment along with satisfactory accomplishment of their job requirements.

Classified employees (support employees) shall meet the minimum qualifications of their job description and demonstrate satisfactory performance of their job duties.

All employees are hired to perform specific tasks in exchange for their salary. These duties are determined by the job description and the supervisor's direction. If you are unable or unwilling to perform the assigned tasks satisfactorily in the allotted time, then the system feels no obligation to retain you as an employee.

Requirements of each employee:

1. Child Abuse Reporting

Suppose personnel know or have reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect. In that case, a report shall be filed immediately with the Department of Children's Services, local law enforcement, and the school's Child Abuse Coordinator. When alleged abuse involves someone employed by, previously employed by, or otherwise affiliated with the school, the report may be made directly to the DHR and law enforcement before notifying the Coordinator. The report shall include, to the extent known by the reporter:

1. The name, address, telephone number, and age of the child;
2. The name, telephone number, and address of the parents or persons having custody of the child;
3. The nature and extent of the abuse or neglect; and
4. Any evidence of the cause or any other information that may relate to the cause or extent of the abuse or neglect.

The identity of the person reporting shall remain confidential except when the juvenile court determines otherwise.

2. Personnel Data Changes is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify Escambia County Board of Education of any changes in personnel data. Employee mailing addresses, telephone numbers, numbers and names of dependents, individuals to be contacted in an emergency, educational accomplishments, and other such status reports should always be accurate and current. If any personnel data has changed, notify the Human Resources Department immediately so your file remains current and information may be handled correctly.
3. Perform satisfactory work.
 - a. Carry out and complete your job duties in an acceptable manner and in a timely fashion.
4. Behavior - Act in a professional manner and be courteous to children, parents, supervisors, and all other employees.
 - a. Rude Behavior is unacceptable.
 - b. Employees are expected to be professional and courteous.
 - c. Open disrespect or unprofessional conduct may lead to termination.
5. Drug and Alcohol - Report to work both drug and alcohol-free.
 - a. All employees who drive school system vehicles are subject to random drug tests. Results that are positive will lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
 - b. All employees are subject to drug and alcohol testing for reasonable suspicion of impairment. Results that are positive for either drugs or alcohol will lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
6. Attendance, Absences, Punctuality - Work the days you are scheduled to work.

To maintain a safe and productive work environment, the Escambia County Board of Education expects employees to be reliable and punctual in reporting for scheduled work. Absenteeism and tardiness burden other employees and the Escambia County Board of Education. In the rare instances when employees cannot avoid being late or unable to work as scheduled, they should notify their supervisor as soon as possible in advance of the anticipated tardiness or absence.

Poor attendance and excessive tardiness are disruptive. Either may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

- a. Continual unpaid absences are unacceptable and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.
 - b. Constant absences on Mondays/Fridays or before/after holidays are suspected of abuse and may be subject to disciplinary actions.
 - c. You must also notify your supervisor of any absences.
7. Tardiness - Be at work when scheduled and on time, without tardiness.
 - a. Excessive late arrivals may lead to termination.
 - b. Notify your supervisor of any absences or any extreme tardiness.
 8. Schedule - Work the hours of your schedule.
 - a. Report to work on time.
 - b. Do not leave work early unless authorized by your supervisor.
 - c. Do not clock in early or out late unless authorized by your supervisor.
 - d. Classified employees must clock out when leaving campus during scheduled work hours.
 - e. Certified employees must sign out when leaving campus during scheduled work hours.

9. Time Reporting/Missed punches and time worked. Fill out all forms relating to time worked accurately and honestly. If you do not work a full day, do not indicate that you did.
10. Computer and Internet access is provided for ECBOE operations only. However, should there be an urgent need, minimal (no more than ten minutes a day) personal use is allowed.
 - a. Surfing the internet is strictly prohibited for non-educational purposes.
 - b. Audio/Video streaming is strictly prohibited for non-educational purposes.
 - c. Posting to personal web pages, bulletin boards, blogs, or other similar personal message sites is strictly prohibited.
 - d. Accessing a racist, sexist, pornographic, or other questionable site is strictly prohibited.
 - e. Employees will be provided a copy of the ECBOE acceptable use guidelines and sign a statement that they agree to the terms.
 - f. Internet usage will be monitored, and violators will be subject to disciplinary action, including termination.
11. Social Media - Although social media sites such as Facebook are personal in nature, they (along with personal texts and emails brought to the administration's attention) can be considered public discourse or public comments.
 - a. The posting, texting, or emailing of comments or images about students, parents, employees, supervisors, departments, schools, the system or your job that are of extremely poor taste, unprofessional, demeaning, derogatory, racist, offensive, insulting, inflammatory, hateful, insubordinate or celebrating immoral, improper or illegal actions is unacceptable and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination as those postings may cause a disruption in the workplace.
12. Newspaper/Radio/Media Correspondence (i.e., letters to the editor, comments, blogs, etc.)
 - a. The posting, letters, or emailing of comments about students, parents, employees, supervisors, departments, schools, the system, or your job that are of extremely poor taste, unprofessional, demeaning, derogatory, racist, offensive, insulting, inflammatory, hateful, insubordinate or celebrating immoral, improper or illegal actions is unacceptable and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination as those postings may cause a disruption in the workplace.
13. Personal calls - Keep personal calls to an absolute minimum during work time.
 - a. At some point, almost everyone needs to make a personal call from work. However, these calls need to be kept to a minimum, as they not only adversely affect your work but also adversely affect the work of the other employees around you.
14. Cell Phone use - The use of personal cell phones is prohibited unless it is a true emergency.
 - a. Leave your cell phones in your car or turn them off during work hours.
 - b. Advise your family and friends that you cannot receive personal calls on your cell phone during the work day unless a true emergency has occurred. Employees should advise families to call the front office for emergencies.
15. Personal conversations - Keep personal conversations during work hours to a minimum.
 - a. Even if your work is caught up enough to allow you some time to talk, the person you are talking to is probably neglecting his/her work by talking to you.
 - b. If you travel between sites, being friendly is expected, but to keep other employees from his/her work by engaging them in personal conversations is not acceptable.
 - c. We encourage camaraderie, but not at the expense of your work or other employees' work.
16. Compliance with directives - Obey the orders of your supervisor.

- a. If you disagree, do not argue with the supervisor; simply state your objections concisely and professionally and then carry out your supervisor's directions so long as it complies with the law.
17. Insubordination to your supervisor or any other administrator is prohibited.
- a. Insubordination may include:
 - i. Refusal or failure to obey and comply with a job assignment given by a supervisor or any authorized employee or system representative;
 - ii. Disrespect, publicly displayed on system premises, toward a supervisor or the system;
 - iii. Threatening, intimidating, coercing, or interfering with a supervisor;
 - iv. Abusive language to any supervisor;
 - v. Openly making or publishing false, vicious, or malicious statements concerning supervisors and Countermanding a supervisor's order.
 - b. Insubordination does not include a refusal to comply with:
 - i. Orders that endanger the health, welfare, or safety of the employee, other employees, students, or anyone else;
 - ii. Orders requiring the performance of an illegal, improper, or immoral act;
 - iii. Orders that require action that is beyond the employee's capability; and
 - iv. Orders that have a nature of unlawful harassment, for example, orders accompanied by a racial, religious, or sexist slur.

Firearms and weapons prohibition.

- a. The possession of a firearm by an individual, employee, visitor, or student inside or on any property owned, leased, or operated by the Escambia County Board of Education is strictly prohibited except for those individuals who lease undeveloped system property for hunting or sporting activities. Otherwise, possession of a firearm is strictly prohibited whether or not those individuals, employees, visitors, or students possess a legal permit to carry said firearm or if the firearm is licensed by the state of Alabama or any other state. Duly sworn and trained peace officers in performing their duties are excluded from this prohibition.
- b. Possession and/or use of weapons shall be prohibited on school property, including buses and school-sponsored activities. Possession and/or use of firearms shall also be prohibited in any vehicle brought onto school property or to a school-sponsored activity. Violating this prohibition shall be considered a severe act of misconduct and subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

If you cannot comply with these general expectations, the system will be compelled to terminate your employment.

Abandonment of Job:

Any employee will be considered to have abandoned his/her job and will be terminated as a voluntary resignation who does any of the following:

- leaves work and does not report back to work;
- who says he/she quits;
- who says he/she will not return to work or;
- for whatever reason, fails to return to work without notification.

Any employee who has been absent for more than five (5) consecutive work days and who has not obtained an approved leave of absence or otherwise accounted for the absences will be considered to have abandoned his/her job; the employee may be recommended for termination.

Other Requirements:

In-service education participation is encouraged for all employees, promoting personal and professional growth. Upon identification and recommendation by the immediate supervisor, employees shall be allowed to participate in professional development designed for improvement in specific areas.

Additionally, employees are expected to develop and grow in job performance beyond minimum requirements. Schedules for professional and support employees are formulated and disseminated by principals and supervisors. All employees shall observe and conform to time schedules furnished by his/her principal or supervisor.

For professional employees, the school day shall be defined as when classes are in session, faculty and in-service meetings are being held, and student activities are being conducted.

Teachers must attend faculty meetings and parent-teacher conferences by the principal when necessary. Also, teachers shall be provided a thirty-minute unencumbered time period during the day.

All professional faculty employees are required to be at his/her station of duty no later than fifteen (15) minutes before school begins and to leave no earlier than fifteen (15) minutes after the school day ends. All teachers are to hold parent-student conferences as needed during planning and conference periods and/or after school as necessary by the principal. These conferences are to be scheduled within the time needed to keep parents apprised of students' academic performance before the student's achievement has reached the point of failure in a given grading period.

Teachers and staff's primary responsibility and workload shall be planning and implementing the instructional program. Teachers and staff shall share non-teaching responsibilities that are considered necessary or desirable for the proper functioning of the total school program. Teachers are expected to share in the responsibility for supervising co-curricular activities. The assigning of extra duty shall be done equitably.

Teacher workdays are designed to provide days for teachers to prepare grades, complete reports, and perform other tasks essential to teaching. No faculty meeting should be held on a teacher workday unless appropriate and timely. Should it be necessary to call a faculty meeting on a teacher workday, the meeting should not last more than 45 minutes during morning hours, and no more than one meeting should be held. No in-service should be scheduled on teacher workdays.

Family members and children of an employee do not have a right to visit the employee at work during work hours. Visiting by family members or bringing children to work can be a severe distraction to both the employee being visited and other employees at the same location. This is similar to an employee having excessive telephone or personal conversations at work. Before any employee asks a family member to visit his/her work location, he/she must clear the visit with the principal or supervisor. If the visits become excessive and are a distraction, then the family members may be banned from system properties.

Ownership and Transfer of Donated Funds, Grants, Materials, Supplies and Equipment:

Ownership of Donations and Grants

Donations/grants are considered to be the property of the Board of School Commissioners of Escambia County, the local school, the classroom, or the program/project. Donations/grants are never considered to be the personal property of a teacher or other individual. In the case of a teacher or other individual receiving a donation/grant, the donation/grants are considered to be the property of the classroom or program/project where the teacher or other individual was assigned when the donation/grant was requested/awarded.

Transfer of Donations and Grants

Any Donations/grants received by a school, a classroom of that school, a program/project of that school, or a teacher or other individual of that school shall remain with that school. Ownership of donations/grants will never transfer to a teacher or other individual. However, a transferring teacher or other individual will be allowed to transfer with him or her any donations/grants received by them to another school, classroom, or program/project if all of the following criteria are met:

1. The teacher or other individual will continue to teach in the Escambia County Public School System.
2. The teacher or other individual will continue to use the donation in a manner consistent with the original eligibility requirements of the original donor.

Staff System-Provided Cell Phone Use

System-provided cellular telephones and plans will be assigned based on the Superintendent's job requirements. Using system-provided cellular phones violating School Board policies, administrative regulations, and/or state and federal laws will result in loss of system-provided cell phone privileges with possible disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Usage

- System-provided cellular telephones are provided to carry out Board business. They should not be used when other means of communication are readily available unless necessary for safety, an emergency, or an urgent situation.
- Personal use of system-provided cellular telephones should be limited, and such calls should be made or received by alternative means.
- System-provided cellular telephones are not to be given or loaned to others.
- Employees issued system-provided cellular telephones are always responsible for their safekeeping. Defective, lost, damaged, or stolen cellular phones must be reported immediately to the Telecommunications Department.
- Employees, Divisions, and/or Departments are responsible for any cell phone accessories.
- All cellular telephones issued to employees must be reset and returned to the IT Department after employment.

Cellular telephones are not to be used while driving, either an owned or personal vehicle.

Monitoring

The Superintendent or Designee will review the plan's monthly usage for unusual charges. Any indications of unusual usage or abuse can result in the employee's losing the use of the phone, with possible disciplinary action up to and including termination. To determine reimbursement and/or abuse, the following are just some of the guidelines that may be used:

1. Any charges incurred for excessive personal use shall be the employee's financial responsibility.
2. Any charges incurred for international roaming without prior approval shall be the employee's financial responsibility.
3. Damage incurred by phone misuse shall be the employee's financial responsibility.

ALABAMA EDUCATOR CODE OF ETHICS

Introduction

The primary goal of every educator in Alabama must always be to provide an environment in which all students can learn. To accomplish that goal, educators must value the worth and dignity of every person, have a devotion to excellence in all matters, actively support the pursuit of knowledge, and fully participate in the nurturance of a democratic citizenry. To do so requires an adherence to a high ethical standard.

The Alabama Educator Code of Ethics defines the professional behavior of educators in Alabama and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The code protects the health, safety, and general welfare of students and educators, outlines objective standards of conduct for professional educators, and clearly defines actions of an unethical nature for which disciplinary sanctions are justified.

CODE OF ETHICS STANDARDS

Standard 1: Professional Conduct

An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Encouraging and supporting colleagues in the development and maintenance of high standards.
- Respect fellow educators and participate in developing a professional and supportive teaching environment.
- Engaging in various individual and collaborative learning experiences is essential to developing professionally to promote student learning.

Unethical conduct is any conduct that impairs the certificate holder's ability to function in his or her employment position or a pattern of behavior that is detrimental to students' health, welfare, discipline, or morals.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Harassment of colleagues.
- Misuse or mismanagement of tests or test materials.
- Inappropriate language on school grounds.
- Physical altercations.
- Failure to provide appropriate supervision of students.

Standard 2: Trustworthiness

An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Properly representing facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.
- Advocating for fair and equitable opportunities for all children.
- Embodying for students the characteristics of intellectual honesty, diplomacy, tact, and fairness.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting professional qualifications, criminal record, or employment history when applying for employment or certification.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information submitted to federal, state, and/or other governmental agencies.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information regarding evaluating students and/or personnel.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting reasons for absences or leaves.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information submitted during an official inquiry or investigation.

Standard 3: Unlawful Acts

Educators should abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the commission or conviction of a felony or any crime involving moral turpitude. As used herein, conviction consists of a finding or verdict of guilty or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought or a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted.

Standard 4: Teacher/Student Relationship

An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Fulfilling the roles of trusted confidante, mentor, and advocate for students' growth.
- Nurturing all students' intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential.
- Providing an environment that does not needlessly expose students to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
- Creating, supporting, and maintaining a challenging learning environment for all students.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Committing any act of child abuse, including physical or verbal abuse.
- Committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment.
- Committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act.
- Engaging in harassing behavior based on race, gender, national origin, religion, or disability.
- Soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, or physical relationship with a student.
- Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

Standard 5: Alcohol, Drug, and Tobacco Use or Possession

An educator should refrain from the use of alcohol and/or tobacco during the course of professional practice and should never use illegal or unauthorized drugs.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Factually representing the dangers of alcohol, tobacco, and illegal drug use and abuse to students during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Being under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs.
- Being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while documented as being under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages or using tobacco. A school-related activity includes, but is not limited to, any activity sponsored by a school or a school system or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum, such as club trips, etc., where students are involved.

Standard 6: Public Funds and Property

An educator entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with high honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Maximizing the positive effect of school funds through judicious use.
- Modeling for students and colleagues the responsible use of public property.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Misusing public or school-related funds.
- Failing to account for funds collected from students or parents.
- Submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or pay.
- Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts.
- Using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing body.

Standard 7: Remunerative Conduct

An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Ensure that institutional privileges are not used for personal gain.
- Ensure that school policies or procedures are not impacted by gifts or gratuities from any person or organization.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local governing body.
- Accept gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there appears to be a conflict of interest.
- Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education.

Standard 8: Maintenance of Confidentiality

An educator should comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material, and other information covered by confidentiality agreements.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Keeping in confidence information about students that has been obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
- Maintaining diligently the security of standardized test supplies and resources.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Sharing confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status/income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law.
- Violating confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, and violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items.
- Violating other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

Standard 9: Abandonment of Contract

An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or educational agency for the duration of the contract.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Abandoning the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the employer;
- Refusing to perform services required by the contract.

Reporting

Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics as soon as possible, but no later than sixty (60) days from the date the educator became aware of the

alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. When reporting unethical conduct, educators should be mindful of their local school board policies, procedures, and/or chain of command. Complaints filed with the local or state school boards or with the State Department of Education Teacher Certification Section must be filed in writing and include the complainant's original signature.

Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2-.05

(1)-5-c Each Superintendent shall submit to the State Superintendent of Education within ten calendar days of the decision, the name and social security number of each employee holding an Alabama certificate or license who is terminated, or non-renewed, resigns or is placed on administrative leave for cause, and shall indicate the reason for such action.

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action shall be defined as issuing a reprimand or warning or the suspension, revocation, or denial of certificates. "Certificate" refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate issued by the authority of the Alabama State Department of Education.

Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2-.05

(1) Authority of the State Superintendent of Education

(a) The Superintendent shall have the authority under existing legal standards to:

1. Revoke any certificate held by a person who has been proven guilty of immoral conduct or unbecoming or indecent behavior in Alabama or any other state or nation in accordance with Ala. Code §16-23-5 (1975).
2. Refuse to issue a certificate to an applicant whose certificate has been subject to adverse action by another state until after the adverse action has been resolved by that state.
3. Suspend or revoke an individual's certificate issued by the Superintendent when a certificate or license issued by another state is subject to adverse action.
4. Refuse to issue, suspend, or recall a certificate for just cause.

Any of the following grounds shall also be considered cause for disciplinary action:

- Unethical conduct as outlined in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics, Standards 1-9.
- Order from a court of competent jurisdiction.
- Violation of any other laws or rules applicable to the profession.
- Any other good and sufficient cause.

An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, or substitute teacher during his or her revocation, suspension, or denial.

OFFICIAL PERSONNEL FILE

Each employee's official personnel file is maintained in the Business Office. This file will generally contain a record of the employee's history with the system, such as documents concerning the employee's hiring, status, work history, and performance.

All information or material placed in the employee's personnel file in Human Resources shall be available to the employee for inspection upon request with a twenty-four (24) hour notice. This does not include former employees. If former employees wish to view their file, they must request it to the Assistant Superintendent or Human Resources Supervisor in writing.

DRESS CODE

The school system has a dress code that all employees must follow. All employees (professional, administrative, and support personnel) should be professionally and appropriately attired when conducting school system business.

In departments where uniforms or uniformity in dress is prescribed by the Board, all affected employees must abide by direction and procedure. However, schools or departments may adopt a voluntary dress code for uniforms.

This policy covering employee dress code and appearance is established to uplift, enhance, and promote the professional image of the school system. Supervisors and staff members should review these guidelines each year before the school opens.

In departments where uniforms or uniformity in dress is prescribed by the Board of School Commissioners, all affected personnel must abide by direction and procedure.

All employees (professional, administrative, and support personnel) should be professionally and appropriately attired when representing or conducting school system business.

Immediate or site supervisors may approve exceptions on this code for special or occasional activities.

Reasonable accommodation should be made for religious beliefs if such accommodation would not unduly interfere with the effective functioning of the school or department.

Restrictions: An employee's dress may not be so unusual, inappropriate, or lacking in cleanliness that it disrupts classroom or learning activities. Examples of attire considered inappropriate for school employees include but are not limited to:

- Jeans (except for custodian and bus drivers and as allowed for special occasions or particular work as approved by the immediate or site supervisor)
- Overalls
- Shorts (except for P.E. teachers and bus drivers)
- Athletic type shoes (except as allowed for special occasions or particular work as approved by the immediate or site supervisor)
- Spandex or bicycling-type attire as outerwear
- Visible piercing except to ears
- Clothing that is provocative, revealing, indecent, vulgar or obscene
- Blouses or shirts with low necklines, bare midriffs, and excessively tight clothing
- Visibly torn or ragged attire
- Sweat suit-type attire (except for P.E. teachers, bus drivers, and custodians)
- Footwear that is considered beachwear (flip flops), soft plastic (Crocs), bedroom shoes or slippers (Any footwear that may cause injury to the wearer or others must not be worn)
- Clothing which promotes alcoholic beverages, tobacco, or the use of controlled substances by words or symbols
- Clothing that contains profanity or nudity depicts violence or is sexual in nature by words or symbols
- Undergarments are worn as an outer garment or any see-through clothing
- Any item of clothing or jewelry that creates a disruption of the school environment/learning activities or that poses a threat to the safety and well-being of students or staff.
- Tattoos that are indecent, vulgar, or obscene (Such tattoos must be covered by clothing)
- Clothing promoting or including logos of K-12 schools outside the Escambia County Public School System.

Fridays are considered as casual Fridays. Blue jeans and school spirit shirts must be worn ONLY on Fridays (no holes, rips, tears, frays, etc.). Casual Friday will not be observed on dates that require professional dress.

Please note: Professional dress is to be adhered to when attending teacher institute, any professional development training (on and off campus), field trips, parent-teacher conferences, or any other off-campus function. Casual Friday will not be observed on dates that require professional dress. Exceptions will be made for summer workshops and field trips to the zoo, Turtle Point, etc.

Employees shall promptly disclose to the Board any fact that would disqualify them from employment or render them unable to perform their essential job functions.

Each department/school will evaluate this policy at the end of the school year. The superintendent or his/her designee will review the results of these evaluations and present proposed changes to the board as appropriate.

WAGE & HOUR ISSUES

Non-exempt employees should clock in and out at their scheduled times. Overtime or compensatory time is not authorized unless approved by your Superintendent. Continually accumulating overtime or compensatory time without your supervisor's approval may lead to disciplinary action.

You must accurately enter both your work day's starting and ending times on your time card. If the supervisor asks you to work overtime but not to enter the extra time on your time card, then you must contact Human Resources so that we may correct the situation. If you finish something for the day and it runs over ten minutes, that ten minutes will be added to your time card. You will either be given time off during that week, or you will be paid for the overtime or given compensatory time off within the next thirty days.

You must accurately account for any lunchtime (unpaid) taken in TES or on your time card during the work day. If the supervisor asks you to work through lunch but not to enter the extra time on your time card, then you must contact Human Resources so that we may correct the situation.

Lunch and break periods are required for any group of employees; either certified or support personnel must have a duty-free clock 30-minute lunch. The following guides will be followed if the job responsibilities allow a lunch and/or a break time.

Lunch period:

Non-Exempt employees

- Lunch periods are 30 minutes
- Lunch periods are duty-free
- Lunch periods are not compensated
 - ✦ However, if the job responsibilities of Non-Exempt employees require them to work through their lunch period, then they will be compensated for those 30 minutes.

Break Period:

Non-Exempt employees

- Break periods are 15 minutes
- Break periods are compensated
- Maximum of 2 per day

Mileage for business use of your vehicle will be reimbursed at the prevailing rate set by the state of Alabama. In general, if your job duties require it or a supervisor requests or requires you to use your vehicle for school or system-related business (except travel to and from your home to the work site), you are to be reimbursed for this expense.

There are no exceptions; if you are required to use your vehicle for system business, you are due to be reimbursed. Some examples are as follows:

- Travel to required meetings. However, if you are taking time off during the day to attend a meeting or conference that is not job-related, then mileage is not to be reimbursed.
- Travel to make bank deposits. If the deposit is made after leaving school and the bank is not on the route home, then only the mileage for the distance deviated from your regular route to the bank will be reimbursed.
- Travel to the central office. However, if it is to take care of your personal business and not related to your job duties, then mileage is not to be reimbursed.

- Travel to different work sites. However, mileage will not be reimbursed if system transportation is offered but refused.
- Travel to purchase system supplies.

PAYROLL

All Board employees shall be paid in accordance with the salary schedule adopted for the particular budget year. All regular employees of the Board will be paid monthly. Employees are paid monthly and paid on the last day of the month.

With the exceptions of deductions for absences not covered by paid leave and those required by law, all categories of deductions from salary shall be subject to Board approval and/or voluntary on the part of the individual employee.

Pay increases mandated by state law shall be implemented on the date dictated by said law. No mandated pay raises shall be implemented retroactively unless the Board takes affirmative steps to do so.

Full-time employees work a set number of days during the year for which he/she is compensated. Different groups of employees have different employment lengths based on what they do. The length of the employment year can range from 185 days to 240 days, depending on the type of employee and whether he/she works in the central office, elementary school, middle school, high school, or with support services.

Twelve-month employees will work 240 days a year, depending on their hire date. Unless covered by Annual Leave, Personal Days, or Accumulated Sick Days for illnesses, employees will not be paid for days not worked.

School-based employees, who are not twelve-month employees, do not work during parts of the summer months; however, full-time employees are paid on a twelve-month basis. For each pay period, a certain number of days are set aside to pay for the months during the summer when the employees do not work. These summer payout checks are for time worked during the year but withheld to pay employees during the summer months.

Those employees hired for less than twelve months and hired at the beginning of the contract year should receive their full pay each month worked. However, employees who start work after the start of their contract year will receive a lower salary for the months worked during the first year because they will not work their total contracted number of days. All employees who do not work their entire contract period will receive a prorated salary. Teacher contracts begin with the first pay period being September 30 for new hires.

This same type of calculation will also occur if the employee is on **an unpaid leave of absence** for an extended period of time. A significant amount of unpaid leave will change the total of your monthly pay for the remainder of the contract period.

After the employee **returns to work from the unpaid leave of absence, the payroll department will recalculate the monthly pay rate depending on how many days are left in the contract year.** Contact the payroll department if you have concerns about your pay after an extended unpaid leave of absence.

INSURANCE

The following are general guidelines from the Public Education Employees' Health Insurance Plan (PEEHIP) in their handbook. If there are any questions regarding coverage, call or write the PEEHIP office in Montgomery at 201 South Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36104. The address is P. O. Box 302150, Montgomery, AL 36130-2150. They may be reached by phone at (334) 517-7000 or Toll Free at (877) 517-0020.

Full-time employees and permanent part-time employees are eligible for coverage with PEEHIP. A permanent part-time employee is eligible for PEEHIP if he/she agrees to payroll deduction for a pro-rata portion of the

premium cost for a full-time employee. The deduction amount is based on the percentage of time the permanent part-time worker is employed.

The Open Enrollment period usually begins on July 1st and ends on August 31st for the changes to be effective October 1. All open enrollment forms and written requests must be postmarked before August 31st for the PEEHIP office to accept the request. Members can add new types of coverage, such as dependent coverage, or change coverage types during this open enrollment period.

Summary of Coverage is available on the web at <http://www.rsa-al.gov/PEEHIP/peehip.html>

Insurance Premiums and Enrollments

PEEHIP determines and manages the premium deductions; therefore, active and retired members must make all insurance changes with PEEHIP. Members will no longer go to their employers to change their insurance. Before the payroll cutoff date, PEEHIP will send an electronic file to each employer authorizing the payroll deductions for each employer. The payroll deduction amount will be based on the insurance plan(s) each member selects. If the payroll deduction is incorrect, members must contact PEEHIP instead of their employer. PEEHIP must have the correct home mailing address so all members can receive important PEEHIP information.

Non-tobacco User Discount

Beginning October 1, 2006, all PEEHIP members who are tobacco users enrolled in the hospital medical or HMO plans will be charged a surcharge. However, non-tobacco users can have the surcharge removed from their monthly premium by certifying that they (and their spouse, if the spouse is covered as a dependent) have not used tobacco products within the last 12 months.

Supplemental Coverage Plan

PEEHIP members may elect the PEEHIP Supplemental Plan as their primary coverage instead of the PEEHIP hospital medical plan. The PEEHIP Supplemental Plan cannot supplement Medicare, the PEEHIP hospital medical plan, or the State or Local Governmental Plans administered by the State Employees Insurance Board (SEIB).

Federal Poverty Level Assistance Program (FPL)

PEEHIP members with a combined family income of 200% or less of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) may qualify for a reduced hospital medical or HMO premium. To be eligible for the FPL assistance, PEEHIP members must furnish acceptable proof of total income based on their most recently filed Federal Income Tax Return and copies of pertinent W-2s and 1099's. The premium discount will only be effective for the plan year, and re-certification will be required annually during open enrollment. The most recent Federal Poverty guidelines are listed on the back of the FPL APPLICATION form and are on the PEEHIP website at www.rsa-al.gov.

Public Education Employees' Flexible Benefits Program (Flex)

The new Flexible benefits plan is available to active members of PEEHIP. Three programs will be offered:

1. **Premium Conversion Plan (PCP)** requires all active members to pay PEEHIP premiums using pre-tax dollars.
2. **Dependent Care Reimbursement Account Plan (DCRA)** allows eligible active members to pay dependent care expenses using pretax dollars.
3. **The Health Care Reimbursement Account Plan (HCRA)** allows eligible active employees to set aside tax-free money to pay themselves back for eligible healthcare expenses not covered by the insurance plan.

Non-Duplication of Benefits

All PEEHIP members and covered dependents that use their PEEHIP hospital medical plan as their secondary plan will still be required to pay any co-pays or deductibles imposed by the PEEHIP plan. PEEHIP will cover other health plan deductibles and co-pays that exceed the PEEHIP co-pays.

New Employees

New employees may enroll on their date of employment, the first day of the month following employment, or October 1. Enrollment should be completed within 30 days of the employee's employment date. If not enrolled within 30 days, the employee will only be allowed to enroll in single hospital medical coverage effective the date of enrollment, not the date of employment.

New employees may add family coverage on their date of employment or within 30 days of employment. Also, new employees employed during the Open Enrollment period cannot enroll in the optional plans on their date of employment and cancel the plans on October 1 of that same year.

Employees Hired After October 1

These employees may enroll only on their date of employment or the first day of the month following their date of employment. New employees enrolled in the optional plans outside the Open Enrollment period must retain the coverage(s) for at least one year or until the next Open Enrollment period.

Current Employees

Open Enrollment for all current employees occurs in July, August, and September for coverage effective October 1. Employees may add or change types of coverage, including dependent coverage, during this Open Enrollment period. **PEEHIP will not accept Open Enrollment forms completed on or after August 31st.**

Transfers

Employees who transfer from another system are considered current and must keep existing insurance coverage until the Open Enrollment period. Changes will be effective October 1.

Loss of Coverage

Employees whose spouse or other dependent has an involuntary loss of hospital medical coverage will be allowed to add family coverage to the existing Hospital Medical plan within 45 days of the loss of coverage. If PEEHIP is not notified within 45 days, the employee and/or the dependent(s) must wait until the Open Enrollment period.

Examples of involuntary loss situations:

- Layoffs,
- System discontinuing insurance coverage altogether (this would not be just a change in insurance carriers),
- Spouse being terminated,
- Divorce.

Eligible dependents

- 1) The employee's lawful spouse;
- 2) Dependent child under the age of 26, only if the child is:
 - (a) The employee's biological son or daughter;
 - (b) The employee's legally adopted child (including any probationary period during which the child is required to live with the employee);
 - (c) The employee's stepchild or foster child is entirely dependent upon the employee for support and permanently residing in the employee's household in a regular parent-child relationship with no foreseeable or expected termination. PEEHIP will require documentation before the child will be enrolled.
 - (d) A child related to the employee by blood or marriage that is entirely dependent upon the employee for support and permanently residing in the employee's household in a regular parent-child relationship, where neither the child's natural mother nor natural father lives in the employee's household, and the employee and child's relationship does not have a foreseeable or expected termination. PEEHIP will require documentation before the child will be enrolled.

- 3) Dependent child of any age incapable of self-sustaining employment because of a physical or mental handicap and is chiefly dependent on the employee for support. Also, the child had to be covered as a dependent on the employee's PEEHIP policy before reaching the limiting age. Proof of the child's condition and dependence must be submitted to PEEHIP within 31 days after the date the child would otherwise cease to be covered because of age.

Ineligible Dependents

- 1) Once an "eligible" dependent has "aged out," that person is ineligible to participate in PEEHIP again as a dependent except subsequently as the spouse of an eligible employee.
- 2) Ex-spouses are not eligible dependents even if an employee continues to pay for family coverage. The ex-spouse must be deleted from coverage effective the first day of the month following the date of divorce.
- 3) Step-children who do not live in the employee's household.
- 4) Adult child eligible for other employer-sponsored hospital medical coverage.

Marriage

An employee with single coverage who marries and wishes to acquire family coverage must submit written notification to PEEHIP within 45 days of the marriage date. The effective date of coverage may be the date of marriage or the first day of the following month. Suppose PEEHIP does not receive written notification within 45 days of the date of marriage. In that case, the eligible dependent will be added as of the date of notification or the first of the month following notification.

Newborn

An employee with single coverage who desires family coverage due to the birth of a child must submit written notification to PEEHIP within 45 days of the date of birth. The effective date of coverage may be the date of birth or the first day of the following month. If a newborn is not covered on the date of birth, claims for the newborn at the time of birth will not be paid. An employee who is only enrolled in the four optional plans cannot enroll in the Hospital Medical Plan due to the birth of a child.

Other Dependent Children

When adding a dependent child other than the employee's biological child or stepchild, the employee must submit custody or guardianship documentation and provide information on the relationship to the employee. The dependent must be related to the employee by blood or marriage and entirely dependent upon the employee for support and permanently residing in the employee's household in a regular parent-child relationship.

In addition, PEEHIP requires appropriate documentation as to the whereabouts of the natural mother and father, such as custody or guardianship papers, notarized statements, etc. If custody is temporary, the dependent child must have resided in the employee's household for at least one year before the dependent can be considered for coverage.

Dependents with Different Last Names

If a husband and wife have different last names, the employee must submit a copy of the marriage certificate. If biological children have different last names, the employee must submit a copy of the birth certificate. PEEHIP is not bound by a court order to insure dependents who do not meet PEEHIP guidelines.

Allocations

An employee receives the State insurance allocation for each month employed as long as that employee is in pay status for at least one-half of the working days of that month. If an employee works October 1 through November 8, he/she will earn the October but not the November allocation.

An employee may get paid for a portion of a month but may not earn the allocation for that month if he/she is not in pay status at least one-half of the workdays of that month. Permanent part-time employees who meet the qualifications will be entitled to a pro-rata allocation.

Full-time professional employees, such as teachers, counselors, librarians, and administrative employees, are eligible for a full allocation. Support workers, such as Custodians, Maintenance workers, Child Nutrition Assistants, or teacher Aides/Paraprofessionals, must be employed at least twenty (20) hours per week to receive a full allocation.

By law, bus drivers are full-time employees regardless of the hours worked.

Employees who work at least fifteen (15) hours but not more than twenty (20) hours per week are entitled to a ¾ insurance allocation.

Employees who work at least ten (10) hours but less than fifteen (15) hours per week are entitled to a ½ insurance allocation.

Employees who work less than ten (10) hours per week are entitled to a ¼ insurance allocation.

Allocation Entitlement

If you are enrolled in the Hospital/Medical or HMO Plan, the following gives you the State allocation entitlement based on the amount of time worked. Each additional optional plan can also be purchased for \$38.00 a month.

Allocation Entitlement if Enrolled in Hosp/Med or HMO Plan	Allocation Entitlement if Enrolled in Optional Plans
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Professional/Administrative Employee

Less than ¼ time	0	0
At least ¼ time but < ½ time	¼ insurance allocation	1 Plan
At least ½ time but < ¾ time	½ insurance allocation	2 Plans
At least ¾ time but < Full-time	¾ insurance allocation	3 Plans
Full-time	Full allocation	4 Plans

Support Worker

0 to 4.9 hours/week	0	0
to 9.9 hours/week	¼ insurance allocation	1 Plan
10.0 to 14.9 hours/week	½ insurance allocation	2 Plans
15.0 to 19.9 hours/week	¾ insurance allocation	3 Plans
20 or more hours/week	Full allocation	4 Plans

Leave

An employee can use his or her accrued or donated sick leave to be in pay status to receive the State allocation. Sick, annual, or catastrophic leave cannot be manipulated so that an employee gets the allocation inappropriately. An employee must use his or her accrued sick, annual, or catastrophic leave **continuously and consecutively** when not actively employed.

COBRA

Under COBRA, the employee, ex-spouse, or dependent is responsible for informing PEEHIP within 45 days of a divorce, legal separation, or a child losing dependent status under the Plan. PEEHIP may be notified by phone

or in writing. A dependent's coverage ends on the last day of the month, in which the dependent becomes ineligible by turning 19 or 26 if a full-time student or by marriage.

When PEEHIP is notified of a qualifying event, PEEHIP will notify the eligible employee that he/she has the right to choose continuation of coverage. The eligible employee has 45 days from the date he/she would lose coverage because of one of the qualifying events to inform PEEHIP that he/she wants continuation of coverage.

If the eligible employee does not choose continuation of coverage, his or her PEEHIP group health insurance coverage will end on the last day of the month when the employee becomes ineligible. If an employee and/or dependent becomes entitled to Medicare after electing COBRA coverage, he/she is no longer eligible to continue the COBRA coverage.

Termination for Gross Misconduct

If an employee is terminated for gross misconduct, then ECBOE is not required to provide continuation of coverage under the provisions of COBRA.

Continuation of Coverage

Suppose the eligible employee or dependent chooses continuation of coverage. In that case, PEEHIP is required to give coverage which, as of the time coverage is being provided, is identical to the coverage provided under the Plan to similarly situated employees or dependents and is the same coverage he/she had before the qualifying event.

COBRA requires the eligible employee to continue coverage for 36 months unless he/she loses group health coverage because of a termination of employment or reduced hours. In that case, the required continuation of coverage period is 18 months. COBRA also provides that an employee's continuation of coverage may be cut short for any of the following five reasons:

- 1) PEEHIP no longer provides group health coverage to ECBOE employees.
- 2) The premium for the continuation of coverage is not paid by the employee when payment is due, or the premium payment is insufficient.
- 3) The employee becomes covered under another group health plan, which excludes exclusions or limitations for any pre-existing condition.
- 4) The employee or dependent becomes entitled to Medicare after COBRA benefits begin.
- 5) The employee becomes divorced from a covered employee and subsequently remarries and is covered under the new spouse's group health plan, which does not contain any exclusions or limitations for pre-existing conditions.

Dependent Coverage

A spouse of an employee covered by PEEHIP has the right to choose continuation of coverage if the spouse loses group health coverage under the Plan for any of the following reasons:

- Death of the employee.
- Divorce or legal separation.
- Termination of the employee's employment (for reasons other than gross misconduct) or reduction in the employee's hours of employment.
- Employee's eligibility for Medicare.

In the case of a dependent child of an employee, he/she has the right to continuation of coverage if group health coverage under the Plan is lost for any of the following reasons:

- Death of a parent.
- Parents' divorce or legal separation.
- Dependent ceases to be a dependent child under the Plan.
- Termination of a parent's employment (for reasons other than gross misconduct) or reduction in a parent's hours of employment.

- Parent becomes eligible for Medicare.

SICK LEAVE BANK

The Sick Leave Bank (SLB) was established according to Alabama Code, Section 16-22-9 and 16-1-18.1 to help employees during the financial pinch of lost work due to illness or injury. Any full-time or part-time employee who receives five (5) Accumulated Sick Days as a benefit is eligible to join the SLB. Membership is optional and requires only two days to be deposited in the bank. These days will be returned once the employee resigns from the bank.

Open enrollment is July 1 – September 15. New employees may join the SLB within the first four (4) weeks following their employment date. To join the SLB, the employee shall complete and sign the authorization form to contribute five (5) Accumulated Sick Days or to commit five (5) Accumulated Sick Days for deposit in the SLB. Pledged days shall be deposited from the first five (5) Accumulated Sick Days earned by the employee.

An employee shall be allowed to borrow (owe) no more than 15 days from the bank. However, at their discretion, employees may donate their days to a specific employee suffering a catastrophic illness. To receive or donate days, both employees (beneficiary and donating) must be members of the Sick Leave Bank. State law provides that no employee may donate more than 30 days to any employee.

Sick leave days owed to the SLB shall be paid back at one per month, beginning with the next available earned sick leave day and continuing until the debt has been repaid.

To be eligible for a loan from the SLB, a participating member must have exhausted all accumulated sick leave in his/her personal account along with any personal leave, including vacation. Also, the applicant must have missed at least three (3) days due to the same illness (not a recurring illness such as a headache or sinus infection) before applying for a loan from the SLB.

Any sick leave drawn from the SLB by a participating employee shall be used in accordance with the definition of sick leave as outlined in state statutes and Board policies/procedures.

A participating member must borrow and utilize days from the SLB up to the maximum number of days allowed by the SLB. Any donated days may be used to repay the loan days borrowed.

No limit is established on the number of days a beneficiary employee may receive from donors. Donated days will be at the donor's discretion. Donated days not used by the beneficiary employee shall revert to employees who donated the days on a prorated basis.

By state law, before Accumulated Sick Days for a catastrophic illness may be donated, the employee to receive such days shall have no Accumulated Sick Days or personal leave remaining in his/her account, including vacation.

Catastrophic Illness is "any illness or injury so certified by a licensed physician which causes the employee to be absent from work for an extended period." The "extended period" will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the SLB Committee.

The SLB Committee is required to forward Accumulated Sick Days donated by participants to another SLB for use by a particular employee suffering from a catastrophic illness.

If an individual leaves the school system, any outstanding SLB debt must be repaid, and his/her final paycheck shall be reduced in an amount equal to the number of days of debt times the employee's current daily rate of pay.

Any member who is retiring from the school system may withdraw his/her contributed days to be applied toward

the person's retirement credits.

JOB ABANDONMENT

Any employee who has been absent for more than five (5) consecutive work days and has not obtained approved leave will be considered to have abandoned his/her job. The superintendent may recommend termination of an employee absent from work without approval for more than five (5) consecutive days.

PERSONAL LEAVE

All full-time employees, teachers, and support personnel are granted annual two days of personal leave. New employees starting work after December 31st will receive only one personal leave day for that year. Employees starting work after March 31st will receive no personal leave days for that year.

At teachers' discretion only, unused personal leave may be reimbursed to the teacher at the end of the school year at the highest daily rate paid to substitute teachers for each day of personal leave not taken by the teacher.

Support personnel are not eligible for reimbursement of unused personal leave. All unused personal leave is converted to sick leave at the end of the year (not an option). This conversion will take place after the June 30 payroll.

To receive personal leave, no teacher or support employee shall be required to divulge his or her reasons for requesting such leave. However, this does not mean that personal leave can be taken at any time the employee chooses.

Personal leave may be denied to ensure proper staffing and support of the departments or schools. This means that if there is a valid business need for the person to be at work, then employees may not be allowed to take their leave at that particular time.

PERSONAL/BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

We offer two (2) personal days and one (1) bereavement day for purchase. For details, contact the Escambia County Schools Business Office.

ACCUMULATED SICK DAYS

Accumulated Sick Days for full-time employees shall accumulate at one day per month for each month of the regular employees' contract year. Sick Days provide a day's pay when employees cannot work because of illness or injury for themselves or an immediate family member.

Accumulated Sick Days are not to be used as vacation or personal leave. Using Accumulated Sick Days for anything other than your sickness or that of a family member violates state law and Board policy and may be considered fraud.

Accumulated Sick Days are available **only** for the following situations:

1. Personal illness or doctor's quarantine.
2. Incapacitating personal injury.
3. Attendance upon an ill member of the employee's immediate family (parent, spouse, child, sibling) or an individual with a close personal tie.
4. Death in the family of the employee.
5. Death, injury, or sickness of another person with personal ties to the employee, such as someone who stood in loco parentis.

Should circumstances warrant it due to excessive absences, a supervisor should be able to require a doctor's due to excessive absences.

Accumulated Sick Days Build Retirement Credit

The Teachers Retirement System will grant additional retirement service based on the number of Accumulated Sick Days the employee has at the time of retirement or termination from the system. Refer to the section in this Handbook on retirement for further information regarding using Accumulated Sick Days to increase the amount of retirement credit, which will increase the amount of the retirement check. Per RSA guidance, no more than one year's worth of sick days can be added to retirement credit.

VACATION / ANNUAL LEAVE

All full-time twelve-month employees will receive ten (10) Annual Leave (vacation) days.

Accrual and Accumulation of Vacation Time – Except for eligible employees with less than one year of consecutive service as of July 1st in any year, vacation time fully accrues at the beginning of the school year. Vacation time must be used by June 30th.

Vacation days may not be bought, sold, or donated. No payment will be made for any vacation leave that is unused as of the employee's resignation, termination, or death.

Vacation Leave Days may be taken at intervals during the year so long as arrangements are pre-approved by the supervising administrator and the vacation taken does not exceed the accumulated vacation earned. Annual Leave and Vacation Leave may be denied depending on the system's needs to ensure proper staffing and support of the departments or schools.

New 12-month employees receive vacation days based on the number of months employed up to a maximum of ten (10) days.

The Superintendent may desire to have certain offices/departments/divisions of the system open and adequately staffed for the public on certain non-holidays. Division heads and supervisors may be required to ensure staffing and supervision during these times, impacting an employee's ability to take a vacation or personal day.

HOLIDAYS

The system will be closed for Board approved holidays. Holidays may be paid or unpaid, depending on the salary schedule the employee works under. The Superintendent or Board, at its discretion, may change the holidays from year to year; therefore, the number of holidays may vary.

School calendars are approved yearly by the Board and the state of Alabama, which gives both the student attendance calendar and the twelve-month employee work calendar. All approved holidays are listed on this calendar and distributed to all schools and departments for the benefit of the employees.

LEAVES OF ABSENCE

The Board complies with all state and federal laws regarding granting leaves of absence for all employees. It also believes that providing leaves of absence for professional employees helps attract and retain employees who will continue to grow professionally by providing them the opportunity for professional growth.

It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that Human Resources has up-to-date medical documentation for the entire time of his/her leave of absence.

All employees on leave must keep their supervisors and Human Resources apprised of the length of their absence. Each employee must also provide medical documentation from his/her provider that he/she is physically qualified to return to work before showing up for work.

KEEP YOUR SUPERVISOR ADVISED OF YOUR STATUS AND PROJECTED RETURN TO WORK.
If a leave of absence is not requested for an extended unpaid absence, the employee may face disciplinary action up to termination.

Not all leaves of absence apply to all employees. Some leaves of absence require tenured or non-probationary status.

The Family Medical Leave Act requires the employee to be employed for at least one year and must have worked at least 1250 hours during the year before taking the leave.

If there are any questions about whether the FMLA would be available for an employee, contact the Personnel Administrator for Human Resources.

For complete information on leaves of absence, contact the Payroll Supervisor.

The leaves of absence available are:

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1) Personal Leave | (two personal days granted each contract year)
(1 granted for employees starting work after Dec. 31 st)
(0 granted for employees beginning work after Mar 31 st) |
| 2) Accumulated Sick Days | (accumulate 1 day for each month worked) |
| 3) Family Medical Leave | (up to 12 weeks, illness or maternity/adoption) |
| 4) Extended Sick Leave | (up to one year) |
| 5) Annual (Vacation) | (12-month employees only) |
| 6) Military | (governed by state law and federal law) |
| 7) Professional | (organization meetings or professional study) |
| 8) Bereavement | (up to one paid/purchased day with the use of available sick days) |
| 9) Legal | (short-term absence only, i.e., jury duty or subpoena) |

The administration of leaves of absence shall conform with Board policies.

For tenured and non-probationary employees, granting a leave of absence does not affect their job location or job status. Upon returning from a leave of absence, an employee will be returned to essentially the same job from which he/she left.

- For a teacher, it means going back to the same school and the same grade (unless circumstances require assignment change during the first 20 days of school).
- For a support employee, it means returning to the same school or department.

During his/her absence, job duties may have changed based on the system's needs, but there can be no loss of status.

This means that tenured and non-probationary employees may not be transferred. It also means that a permanent, full-time employee may not be hired in their place.

Family Medical Leave

Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to "eligible" employees for specific family and medical reasons. Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year and worked 1250 hours over the previous twelve (12) months.

Eligible employees, as determined under the FMLA, will be granted a period of leave, up to 12 weeks, for either a personal illness, an illness of an immediate family member, the birth of a child, or the adoption of a child. This period of leave will conform with the FMLA rules and regulations.

After proper documentation has been received and the leave approved, it will begin after any period of Accumulated Sick Days and before any extended sick leave.

Under the Family Medical Leave Act, an immediate family member is defined as:

1. Spouse;
2. Son;
3. Daughter;
4. Child of a person standing in loco parentis;
5. Father;
6. Mother;
7. Person who stood in loco parentis to the employee;
8. Does not include "in-laws".

Extended Sick Leave

Extended Sick Leave is available to tenured and non-probationary employees who are medically unable to perform their job duties or who have immediate family members who, due to illness or injury, require continuing care from the employee.

Upon Human Resources' approval, eligible employees may be allowed to take Extended Sick Leave for up to one year. Approval of Extended Sick Leave will be based on medical necessity and disability after submission of proper medical documentation.

A physician's statement verifying the employee's physical inability to perform his/her job functions will be provided by the employee for each period covered by Accumulated Sick Days (when required), FMLA, Extended Sick Leave, and the period of Maternity/Paternity Leave which covers disability from pregnancy, delivery, and postpartum recovery. Failure to provide proper medical documentation may result in denial of Accumulated Sick Days, FMLA, and/or Extended Sick Leave (failure to report to work without proper documentation could be considered abandonment of the job).

For 12-month and support employees, the Extended Sick Leave will not extend beyond 12 months after the commencement of the leave.

Extended Sick Leave is available for eligible employees who have circumstances as defined below:

1. Personal illness or doctor's quarantine.
2. Incapacitating personal injury.
3. Attendance upon an ill member of the employee's immediate family (parent, spouse, child, sibling) or an individual with a close personal tie.
4. Death in the employee's family (parent, spouse, child, sibling, parent-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, grandchild, grandparent, uncle, or aunt).
5. Death, injury, or sickness of another person with personal ties to the employee, such as someone who stood in loco parentis.

Maternity/Paternity Leave

Maternity or Paternity Leave is available for tenured and non-probationary employees for the birth or adoption of a child. It will be unpaid and may extend up to one year from the date of the birth or adoption of the child. Those employees who are not tenured or are probationary may take a limited maternity leave of twelve weeks if eligible under the Family Medical Leave Act as outlined below.

Accumulated Sick Days may only be used for periods of disability related to the pregnancy, delivery, or postpartum recovery.

The portion of the leave used for the parental care of the child will be without proof of a qualifying medical condition of the parent or child.

Employees requesting Maternity/Paternity Leave following postpartum recovery will only be cleared to return to work at the expiration of the requested leave.

All Medical Leaves

The total period an employee is allowed to take off work will be limited to 12 months. Any employee remaining off beyond that time will have to resign, retire (if eligible), or be recommended for termination. If there is a question, contact the Human Resources Supervisor.

An employee who fails to return to work after the expiration of any leave period (without the approval of a valid leave of absence) shall be considered to have abandoned his/her job and may be recommended for termination.

An employee who fails to apply for FMLA or Extended Leave of Absence (LOA)/Sick Leave or Maternity/Paternity Leave as outlined in this policy may be considered to have abandoned his/her job and may be recommended for termination.

Employees will retain tenure and employment status while on approved leaves. **Retirement and local experience credit will not be earned during leaves of absence. Service and tenure credit will not be awarded during the leave of absence.**

Employees are not allowed to work during any leave of absence in which a physician or mental health provider certifies disability.

Continuation of Health Benefits

The system's contribution to the employee's health benefits will be maintained while the employee is covered by any period of Accumulated Sick Days or FMLA Leave. The employee is responsible for his/her share of the premiums during this time. Contact the Insurance Department to determine when to start paying the insurance premiums.

Once the Accumulated Sick Days and/or FMLA leave has ended, the employee will be responsible for the entire premium, both the system's and employee's premiums during this period.

Based on guidelines set out by the state and/or PEEHIP, the employee may or may not accrue insurance allocations while on a leave of absence.

Military Leave

An employee who is to be on military leave will inform his/her administrative supervisor as soon as possible. A copy of the employee's military orders is to be attached to the request for leave. While on military leave, employees are eligible to receive up to 21 paid days per calendar year.

SUBSTITUTE TEACHERS

Substitute teachers must be certified by the State Department of Education as a substitute teacher. The Human Resources Supervisor or his/her designee is responsible for administering the procedures for persons to become substitute teachers.

An employee/principal or his/her designee is responsible for securing substitutes from the approved list in case of absence of a regular teacher via the most current substitute list.

Individual school guidelines on calling substitutes will be outlined in writing and given to each teacher at each school. Substitute teachers are expected to carry out instructions provided by the principal and regular teachers and to prepare such daily reports as are ordinarily required of the regular teacher.

Principals should ensure that substitute teachers are reported to payroll and paid only according to board-approved substitute pay rates. Regular teachers are prohibited from making their arrangements to pay substitutes. The principal and the regular teacher should see that the substitute teacher has the necessary instructions, practical teaching materials, lesson plans, textbooks, class rolls, seating charts, and an outline of local school procedures.

In emergencies, such as the inability to secure a substitute for a regular teacher who must leave school unexpectedly because of an emergency, the principal may utilize regular teachers to cover the classes.

Substitute's Responsibilities

1. All substitutes must complete the mandatory Human Resources training before the job assignment. This training is provided online when the substitute completes the hiring process.
2. After the substitute has completed the Human Resources requirements to work, a substitute badge will be issued, and their name will be sent out countywide.
3. Keep your phone number and email address with the Payroll Department.

Job Postings

All positions that become vacant will be posted by Human Resources as an advertised vacancy for a minimum of seven (7) or fourteen (14) days, depending on when the vacancy occurs. The vacancy will also be posted on the ECBOE website. Any employee may apply for any of the posted vacancies for which he/she is qualified.

Classified

Any Classified/Support employee who desires to transfer to another school/department in the same position or transfer to a new type of position must use the online Internal Employee Application for transfers during the advertised vacancy posting. He/she must also follow the same procedure as a new applicant. No verbal requests will be accepted.

The transfer cannot place a hardship on the district.

The transfer procedure will be as follows:

- 1) When a position is advertised, the employee must use the online Internal Employee Application for transfers.
- 2) If the transfer is approved by the Superintendent and/or Human Resources, the applicant recommended by the interviewing supervisor will be submitted to the Board for approval.
- 3) Upon Board approval, the transfer request will be granted.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYEES

Extra persons employed to work on a regular full-time basis for a limited period of time are considered temporary and, as such, are not eligible for those benefits and privileges available to permanent, full-time employees.

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

While on the clock, employees are prohibited from engaging in political activities in support of or in opposition to specific candidates while officially discharging their responsibilities during contracted work hours.

RESIGNATIONS

Alabama law states that teachers may not resign, unless Board approved, during the school year and within thirty (30) days before the start of the new school term. If a teacher leaves employment during that time frame without the Board's approval and if the state finds cause, there could be a loss of the individual's teaching certificate. Any teacher who needs to resign during the contract period or within thirty (30) days before the start of the new school term will need to contact Human Resources to see if he/she will be released from his/her contract.

All resignations in the school system must be submitted to the Board for approval. Since the Board's regular meetings are usually once a month, a resignation list is only submitted monthly. After the Board approves the names submitted, a letter notifies each individual that the Board has accepted his/her resignation. Process to Follow for Resignation or Retirement

1. Employees are asked to fill out an Intent to Resign form. The employee may write a Letter of Resignation to his/her immediate supervisor and send a copy to the Human Resources Supervisor and the Payroll Department.
2. A COBRA form is sent to the insurance office for each employee who resigns or is deceased. COBRA forms are not required for employees who retire.
3. If the employee will not return to state service and the employee is not vested (over ten years of service in the Teachers Retirement System), he/she may request withdrawal of his/her retirement contributions.

ON-THE-JOB INJURY

Reimbursement Program

All medical expenses related to the injury are the responsibility of the employee and his/her insurance carrier. The school system does not pay for medical expenses for on-the-job injuries. As explained later, some out-of-pocket costs may be reimbursed by the Alabama State Board of Adjustment.

The employee is responsible for ensuring that the required documents are provided to the Payroll Department.

Required documentation includes:

1. The Accident Report is completed and signed by the principal or supervisor within 24 hours.
2. Medical documentation for all periods of disability resulting from the accident. If the disability goes beyond the dates the doctor initially gave, then no pay will be authorized until medical documentation is received that verifies the continued disability.
3. Documentation from the school or department timekeeper to show which days the employee claims to be absent due to the injury.
4. Any other documentation deemed necessary by Human Resources and the Payroll Department to substantiate a continued inability of the employee to perform the functions of his/her job.

Report job-related injuries to the supervisor immediately (within 24 hours of occurrence). The employee's supervisor shall investigate the circumstances of the accident, question any witnesses, and complete an accident report. The accident report and any investigative report will be forwarded to the Human Resources Supervisor and the Payroll Department.

Alabama State Board of Adjustment

Out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed by the State Board of Adjustment in Montgomery. Code of Ala. 1975, § 41-9-60 provides that an employee may apply to the State Board of Adjustment for any expenses not covered by insurance or any days of work missed exceeding the ninety days continuation of pay.

The statute requires that a claim be filed within one year of the date of injury. No exceptions will be granted by the Board of Adjustment for this time requirement.

The Board of Adjustment will require documentation of all expenses claimed and proof that the employee did not receive reimbursement from his/her insurance carrier. It usually takes a while for the state to approve the claim, so the sooner all documents are filed with the Board of Adjustment, the quicker reimbursement will be forthcoming.

Critical Points to Remember:

All job-related incidents must be reported to the immediate supervisor within twenty-four (24) hours of the incident. A completed Report of Injury/Accident form must be sent to the Employee Relations and Health Services Nurse.

The employee must use his/her insurance for any medical expenses. The system does not pay for medical treatment of job-related injuries.

Suppose the employee requires medical attention for a job-related injury. In that case, he/she must submit the Job-Related Injury Program Physician Statement form or physician's statement of disability before reimbursement will be considered.

The local board of education may require medical certification from the employee's physician that the employee was injured and cannot return to work due to the injury. The local superintendent of education may require a second opinion from another physician at the expense of the local board of education. The employee must be cleared by a physician before returning to work.

The local board of education may require a statement from the physician that there is a reasonable expectation that the employee will be able to return to work.

The employee can submit a claim to the Board of Adjustments for out-of-pocket expenses.

- A claim form is posted on the ECBOE website (www.escambiak12.net) in the Documents section of Human Resources under the Employee Relations header.

- **Forward the claim form with supporting documents to:**

Alabama State Board of Adjustment
600 Dexter Avenue, Suite E-302
Montgomery, AL 36130-1435

FORMS MAY BE DELIVERED TO:

Alabama State Board of Adjustment
State Capitol Building, Suite E-302
Montgomery, Alabama

Telephone Numbers: (334) 242-7175 Fax: (334) 242-2008

PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS

Performance evaluations are not as stressful a process as many employees think.

Certified employees use the process as prescribed by the State Department of Education. Also, the system may use a yearly summative evaluation.

Classified employees are evaluated once a year with a possible midterm counseling session. The evaluations can be more often if the principal/supervisor or superintendent directs. The final evaluation will be done on a form submitted to Human Resources and placed in the employee's personnel file.

Any areas scored with "NEEDS IMPROVEMENT" or "UNSATISFACTORY" will be discussed with the employee, and recommendations for improvement will be made. A midyear counseling session should be conducted to see if progress is being made in these areas. Any direct supervisor may provide input to the evaluation.

The annual performance evaluations should not be stressful if expectations are clear and feedback is given throughout the year. The following steps may help implement the evaluation process effectively.

Ask your supervisor for clear, objective expectations for the job. This will determine what behaviors or outcomes the supervisor expects, thus affecting your decisions on where to expend your greatest efforts. The job description is where to start when setting objectives, giving a general idea of what is expected.

To make sure that everyone concerned can tell whether expectations have been met, performance standards should:

1. Be precise yet brief;
2. Be in writing;
3. Be realistic;
4. Help meet system objectives;
5. Be mutually agreed on; and
6. Be re-evaluated regularly.

If you are confused about your job duties, ask your supervisor to explain what you do not understand, as your performance will be evaluated. You will be more likely to perform satisfactorily and accept criticism if you fully comprehend what is expected of you.

Expect constant feedback on whether you are meeting the expectations. If the supervisor is following the evaluation process, there is nothing that would be in the employee's annual review that should be a surprise. Feedback is critical, positive, and negative and should continue throughout the year. This approach helps you focus on tasks and behaviors that the supervisor finds worthwhile.

Employee's Responsibility in Performance Evaluations

1. Employees should expect the overall evaluation to be based on the typical performance of the employee during the entire period.
2. Employees should expect their evaluations to be based on accurate data from records whenever possible or from careful observation when this is impossible.
3. Employees should expect that the evaluation of one factor should not influence the evaluation of other factors unless they are interrelated.
4. Employees should expect that their grade of job or length of service should not affect the evaluation; however, the length of the employee's service can affect areas such as 'job knowledge' and 'expertise'.
5. Employees should expect personal feelings to not bias the observations or evaluation.
6. Employees should expect that they are not to be rated sympathetically.
7. Employees should expect that a previous evaluation will not sway the evaluator.
8. Employees should expect that the evaluation of performance factors should not fall into a routine pattern, such as consistently rating as 'highly effective.'
 - a. The supervisor should take a realistic look at actual job performance.
9. Employees should expect evaluators not to evaluate vague impressions or rumors.
10. Employees should expect that they will not be evaluated too quickly.
11. Employees should expect to be asked to sign their evaluation.
 - a. Their signature on the evaluation does not signify agreement with the contents; only the employee can review it.
 - b. The employee may submit a rebuttal to the evaluation and have it placed in his/her personnel file along with the evaluation.

DISCRIMINATION

The Board and its employees or agents shall not discriminate based on race, sex, religion, national origin, age, or handicap. There are no exceptions. Employment decisions based substantially or solely on these protected factors are against the law and will not be tolerated.

Any employee should bring to the administration's attention any incidence of what he/she believes to be any form of discrimination.

If discrimination is observed or believed to have occurred, the employee should immediately report the circumstances of the alleged incident to any one of the following supervisors or administrators:

- Principal or immediate supervisor;
- Assistant Superintendent

An investigation of the allegations will be conducted by the Human Resources Supervisor or a designee of the Superintendent.

Employees against whom charges are made shall have full opportunity to understand the charges made against them and to present pertinent facts bearing on the charges before official action is taken. Before taking any action, persons making serious charges must submit written complaints or sign prepared statements summarizing the charges.

Federal equal employment laws require equal treatment for all employees regardless of their protected status. Providing more favorable treatment to protected group members is just as discriminatory as harsher treatment. The law also prohibits discrimination in any aspect of employment, including discipline and discharge. It is not illegal to discipline or fire an employee who is a protected group member. It is only unlawful when the motive is based on one of the protected factors.

Employee's Role: Discrimination

Employees should be constantly vigilant regarding any form of discrimination, sexual harassment, or the creation of a hostile workplace.

Discrimination and sexual harassment violate the system's policy. Employees are responsible not only for avoiding discriminating and harassing behavior but also for reacting to it when they see or hear it in the workplace.

The system takes all complaints of discrimination and sexual harassment seriously. If an employee sees behavior that could be discrimination or harassment, a supervisor should be advised. Once an allegation of discrimination or harassment is raised, the system must investigate the allegation.

If the investigation reveals that discrimination or sexual harassment did occur, the discipline's severity will depend on the nature of the conduct and the harasser's previous record. Verbal counseling may be appropriate for first-time occurrences of relatively mild discriminatory remarks, actions, or harassment. Written warnings, suspensions, transfers, and termination may be appropriate in more severe or pervasive situations. Along with our stated goal of not discriminating against any employee, the school system will also maintain diversity in employment. This means that no employment decision will be made based solely or predominately on race, sex, color, or one of the other protected statuses. However, if qualified individuals apply for a position, the system may consider diversity as a factor in the employment decision.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a disturbing form of sex discrimination and is prohibited, as well as any other forms of racial or age discrimination. District guidelines are designed to support nondiscrimination and comply with all state and federal laws.

Employees should avoid creating an unduly familiar relationship with supervisors or subordinates. Also, employees should never ask subordinates or supervisors on a date, to dinner, to a movie, or to any other function.

Everyone is responsible for treating all coworkers with respect and to help prevent discrimination, including sexual harassment. If you see it, report it. All employees are required to complete annual training on sexual harassment.

SYSTEM RULES:

The school system has identified a partial list of general rules of conduct that will bring disciplinary action against the employee if violated. This is not a comprehensive list, only a sample of unacceptable behavior or performance. The actions listed below will result in disciplinary action ranging from verbal or written warnings to suspension or immediate discharge, depending on the circumstances.

1. Excessive absences or tardiness.
2. Insubordination.
3. Failure to follow established work procedures.
4. Using inappropriate, abusive, or threatening language.
5. Discrimination or harassment (sexual or otherwise).
6. Criminal offense on system property or conviction of crimes involving immorality.
7. Absence without notification. Any employee absent from work for more than ten (10) consecutive days and who has not obtained an approved leave or otherwise accounted for the absences will be considered to have abandoned his/her job. The employee will be recommended for termination.
8. Restricting work or interfering with the work of other employees.
9. Unauthorized possession of system property.
10. Failing to return from a leave of absence as scheduled.
11. Loafing, loitering, or sleeping on the job.
12. Conducting personal business on system time.
13. Gambling on system premises.
14. Using or being under the influence of intoxicants or narcotics on system premises or while performing your duties off system property.
15. Fighting, assault, disorderly, offensive, or immoral conduct.
16. Falsifying any system records or employment application.
17. Possessing firearms, weapons, explosives, etc., on system premises.
18. Violating safety regulations.
19. Horseplay or use of machinery, equipment, or tools in a hazardous manner.
20. Creating or contributing to any unsanitary condition.
21. Damage to or improper use of system property either willfully or through negligence.
22. Intentional waste of system property.
23. Unauthorized solicitations or distributions during working time.
24. Disclosure of confidential system information to outsiders without proper authorization.
25. Leaving system premises during working hours without permission (other than the lunch period if job duties allow).
26. Other good and just cause.

DRUG-AND ALCOHOL-FREE WORKPLACE

This system has zero tolerance for substance abuse and alcohol use on the job. This is an offense that requires a recommendation for termination without progressive discipline. Supervisors are trained in recognizing potential impairment from drugs or alcohol. With reasonable suspicion of impairment, the supervisor will bring an employee to a testing facility.

The board will require drug or alcohol testing under the following conditions in addition to randomly testing those employees who are required to have a commercial driver's license (CDL):

- All prospective employees who have been offered employment contingent on negative test results for the presence of alcohol or illegal drugs;
- All employees who operate school system vehicles or motorized equipment who are not required to have CDL are subject to random testing and
- All employees as to whom there is a reasonable suspicion of the influence of alcohol or illegal drug use while on duty.

- All employees are subject to testing for alcohol and any illegal drugs, including but not limited to amphetamines, cannabinoids, cocaine, opiates, and phencyclidine.

For Positions/Personnel Requiring a Commercial Driver's License:

The Department of Human Resources, in conjunction with the Transportation Department, will develop and distribute to all personnel or persons in positions requiring a CDL who have been given an offer of employment for positions requiring a CDL and a copy of the board's Drug and Alcohol CDL Testing Guidelines and Procedures. These guidelines will include this policy and address the specific information required under Part 382 of Title 49 of the Code of Federal Regulations. Applicable personnel and persons receiving the guidelines shall sign a statement certifying that they have received the materials.

For All Other Personnel:

Prospective Employees

Pre-employment substance screening by a school system-approved drug testing agency may be required for prospective employees after being offered employment contingent on a negative result.

Prospective employees will be required to sign a consent/release form before submitting it for screening. Prospective employees will be disqualified for hire if they test positive, refuse to submit to a test, or refuse to execute the required consent/release form. The cost of the drug test is the responsibility of the prospective employees.

Current Employees

1. Reasonable Suspicion

All employees may be required to submit to screening whenever a supervisor observes circumstances that provide reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol use. The supervisor's determination that reasonable suspicion exists should be based on specific, contemporaneous, articulable observations concerning the employee's appearance, behavior, speech, or odors.

Refusal to submit a reasonable suspicion test request will be grounds for dismissal. The assistant superintendent or Human Resources supervisor should be notified whenever possible or feasible before referring the employee for reasonable suspicion testing.

The supervisor will make arrangements for reasonable suspicion drug and/or alcohol testing and drive the employee for testing.

If an employee is required to take a reasonable suspicion drug and/or alcohol test, transportation to and from the testing site will be arranged by a supervisor.

2. Random Testing

Random, unannounced drug screening of all employees who drive school system vehicles or motorized equipment will be conducted.

A random selection for testing of the above employees will adhere to the same guidelines as those followed for employees with a CDL.

3. Post-Accident Testing

Alcohol and controlled substance tests shall be conducted as soon after an accident as practicable on any driver or equipment operator:

1. Property damage of a substantial nature.
2. Physical injury to any person.

Drivers or motorized equipment operators must make themselves readily available for testing, absent the need for immediate medical attention.

Prescription Drugs

The proper use of medication prescribed by a physician is not prohibited; however, the misuse or abuse of prescribed (or over-the-counter) medications is not permitted.

Smoking / Tobacco Products

Smoking and the use of tobacco products are prohibited on school system grounds, as they are tobacco-free by Board policy. This also includes electronic tobacco-less substitutes such as “e-cigs.” Should job responsibilities, job location, and the supervisor allow an employee to leave the premises during a lunch or break period for a smoke or tobacco product break, then the employee must limit the absence from work to the 30-minute lunch period and/or the 15-minute break time. There will only be two breaks a day allowed; they cannot be broken down into shorter periods to allow more than two breaks a day.

Substance Abuse / Alcohol Use

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits employers from discharging employees solely because the employee may have been an alcoholic. However, there is no protection for practicing alcoholics and drug abusers. If you are caught at work under the influence of alcohol or drugs, you may expect to be recommended for termination.

Theft

Unethical behavior such as theft will not be tolerated. An employee who steals must expect severe punishment up to and including termination. Every adult knows stealing is wrong, and the expectation is that those caught will be terminated.

Falsified Documents

Lying on the system’s job application is grounds for termination. Once the falsehood is discovered, termination should follow. Falsification also includes time card fraud. This will also include other employees who cover for absent employees, such as fraudulently punching or filling out a card for someone else.

Insubordination

Insubordination is among the most serious employee infractions, subject to severe discipline, up to and including termination. Lesser penalties may be given depending on the situation, the employee's record, past working relationship with the supervisor, and his/her value to the system.

Insubordination can take many forms. Much depends on the personalities involved, whether the incident occurred in private or in front of other employees or the public, and the intent. Insubordination damages the efficient management of the system, lowers morale, and undermines the supervisor’s authority.

Although insubordination is often defined as a refusal to obey a supervisor's orders, other employee actions may fall under insubordination:

- Refusal or failure to obey orders or perform a job assignment given by a supervisor or any authorized representative;
- Disrespect, publicly displayed on system premises, toward a supervisor or the system;
- Threatening, intimidating, or coercing a supervisor;

- Abusive language to any supervisor;
- Openly making or publishing false, vicious, or malicious statements concerning supervisors;
- Countermanding the order of a supervisor.

However, legitimate reasons exist for refusing to follow a supervisor's order. Generally, orders such as these need not be followed:

- Orders that endanger the health, welfare, or safety of the employee or any other person;
- Orders requiring the performance of an illegal, improper, or immoral act;
- Orders that require action that is beyond the employee's capability;
- Orders like unlawful harassment, for example, orders accompanied by a racial, religious, or sexist slur.

Fighting / Assault

Assault and fighting are behaviors that will bypass the progressive disciplinary procedure and proceed directly to a recommendation for termination. A thorough investigation of the facts of the incident will be conducted to determine who is at fault and who began the aggression. The facts will determine if either will be subject to termination.

Sub-standard Performance

Poor performance can lead to discharge. If you have been advised you are not performing as expected, you should consider taking the following actions:

1. Meet with the supervisor so that he/she can give you guidance on where you are not meeting expectations;
2. Provide the supervisor with a plan to improve your performance;
3. Request remedial instruction if necessary;
4. Periodically ask the supervisor how you are doing.

The system cannot afford to hire or retain individuals who cannot or will not perform in the manner expected for the position. Supervisors should constantly evaluate their employees' job and be prepared to address disciplinary action against anyone with substandard performance. As progressive discipline is followed in correcting poor performance, the employee will have a chance to improve his/her quality of work and retain his/her position. Otherwise, termination will eventually result from poor performance.

Excessive Absences

Be sure you understand the attendance policy at your school or department. Excessive absences create severe problems for the system. Because of the staffing of the schools and other departments, when one person is out, it usually means that the work is not done or that different employees have to stop what they are doing to catch up on your work.

Repeated unpaid absences of two days or more per month can be suspected of employee abuse. That means the employee is not at work one day almost every week. Repeated absences on Mondays, Fridays, or the days immediately before or after holidays are also suspect.

Excessive absences are a matter of corrective discipline. The employee will be allowed to improve attendance, but if the behavior continues, it will lead to termination. In extreme circumstances, the employee may be recommended for termination before the progressive discipline process.

Tardiness

Employees are expected to be present and prompt for their work day. Make a point of talking to your supervisor if you know you may be late. When appropriate, you will be docked when late or absent without a valid excuse. The system does not permit attendance problems, and excessive tardiness at work is grounds for termination.

GRIEVANCES

Any employee who feels that he/she has been treated unprofessionally or adversely affected by a policy violation may file a grievance with his/her immediate supervisor. The Human Resources Supervisor shall carefully investigate whether it is valid and if there is a way to resolve the situation.

Formal grievances have two essential criteria that must be met before they can proceed under the grievance policy:

1. An action must be taken that affects the employee.
2. That action must substantially affect the employee's working conditions or employment rights.

An action is defined as:

1. Violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of existing board policy, administrative rule, or procedure.
2. Unprofessional conduct directed towards the grievant or impugning his/her good name or professional reputation.
3. A change in a recognized administrative practice that has been consistently followed for at least one calendar year imposes hardship on the grievant.

Grievances will not include matters dealing with:

1. Promotions or voluntary transfers (unless a board policy or procedure has been violated or misinterpreted)
2. Involuntary transfers or matters covered under the applicable state law.
3. Alleged violations of state or federal law or existing court orders.

Before taking grievances to a higher level, employees must discuss them with their immediate supervisor. Employees should exhaust all means of remedying their grievances before contacting the Human Resources Supervisor or the Assistant Superintendent. Furthermore, the Board has no obligation and believes it unwise to study and analyze the problems of aggrieved persons until they have been first brought to the attention of administrators and the Superintendent.

This assumes that administrators at all levels will be patient, careful, and understanding in considering problems, complaints, and grievances experienced by employees under their supervision. The Board intends for its employees to receive fair and humane treatment. It also desires faithful and efficient service and a demonstrated spirit of teamwork on the part of all its employees.

Because personalities and "chemistries" between people differ, supervisors' interactions with each of their employees are bound to be different. Do not become upset should a supervisor seem friendlier to another employee. What is required is that every supervisor should treat every employee in the same job classification in the same way.

Typically, what is done for one should be done for all, as long as they have the same or similar circumstances. However, different circumstances will usually dictate different responses by the supervisor. An example is that just because one employee was allowed to leave early, it does not mean you should be allowed to leave early. Your circumstances may differ; the other employee may have had a sick child, and you may have an appointment to get your haircut.

TITLE IX GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE

Any employee, individual, or student who feels that, based on sex, there was exclusion from participation in, denial of benefits, or discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance may file a grievance with the Title IX coordinator. The grievance procedures are on the system website (<https://www.escambiak12.net>) under District Forms and Documents.

DISCIPLINARY ISSUES

We desire that all employees of ECBOE be treated consistently and reasonably should disciplinary action be considered. Our objective is to create a workable disciplinary procedure for all employees. This, in turn, will allow all employees to expect the results of their actions. This should help create an atmosphere of trust in supporting our educational mission.

The school board needs the highest quality employees willing to devote themselves to the education and welfare of the students. The Board is committed to attracting and retaining capable, interested, and motivated employees to accomplish the school system's desired goals.

The Board does not believe it should employ or retain employees who feel they are forced or pressured to do acceptable work or incapable of satisfactory job performance. It is with these goals in mind that this disciplinary process is utilized.

Progressive Discipline

ECBOE generally uses a system of progressive discipline, which provides a tool to help ensure consistent and fair treatment of employees who exhibit behavior or performance problems. In general, it works because the employee gets warned and has a chance to change the offending behavior or performance.

The progressive discipline program may consist of the following:

1. Verbal warning(s);
2. Written warning(s);
3. Final warning;
4. Suspension;
5. Termination.

Based on the incident, a supervisor may skip to the appropriate step.

This provides several chances for the employee to improve their behavior or performance. However, the degree of seriousness of the infraction will determine where, in the process, the employee will fall. Serious misconduct will get no warnings.

Poor performance is handled with progressive discipline. A failing employee should be given a chance to improve by being provided with training and instruction to help improve performance. An employee doing poor work will be dealt with fairly but firmly. The employee's performance will be documented to show improvement or failure to improve under progressive discipline. A termination recommendation will follow if the employee does not make the necessary changes to improve performance.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCESS

The following process may be followed in disciplinary actions for all employees. This applies to tenured and nontenured teachers and probationary and non-probationary support personnel. Steps may be omitted depending on the circumstances of the incident.

1) Verbal warning:

- a. For minor infractions, there may be multiple verbal warnings.
- b. For severe infractions, there may be possibly only one verbal warning.
- c. For significant infractions, there may be no verbal warning; it may be an immediate written warning and/or referral to Human Resources for review for a possible conference.
- d. There may be no verbal or written warning for willful misconduct; there should be an immediate referral to Human Resources for review for suspension or termination.

2) Written warning:

- a. For minor infractions, there may be several written warnings.
- b. For severe infractions, there may be only one written warning and/or referral to Human Resources for review for a possible conference.
- c. For significant infractions, there may be a referral to Human Resources for review for a written warning or a final written warning.
- d. For willful misconduct, there will be no written warning; there will be an immediate referral to Human Resources for review for suspension or termination.

3) Final warning:

- a. For minor, serious, and significant infractions, there will be a referral to Human Resources for review for a written final warning and possible conference.
- b. For willful misconduct, there will be an immediate referral to Human Resources for review for suspension or termination.

4) Suspension/Administrative Leave with or Without Pay:

- a. For minor, serious, major, or willful infractions, suspension or termination may be reviewed.

1. Suspensions are for a period that is:

- a. Up to twenty (20) days
- b. Greater than twenty (20) days.

5) Termination:

- a. In all instances where there is a recommendation for termination, there is a referral to the Assistant Superintendent and the Human Resources Supervisor for review for possible termination.

STUDENTS FIRST ACT

All school system personnel are deemed “certified” or “classified” employees and are generally defined as whether they are directly involved in teaching children or supporting the system's general operations.

The certified employees are teachers or those who require state teacher certification. These are usually individuals such as teachers, principals, and administrators who deal directly with the educational context of the system.

The classified employees support the system's educational endeavor and occupy jobs that do not require state teacher certification. These employees are not involved in teaching or school administration and hold jobs such as cafeteria workers, bus drivers, maintenance personnel, clerks, and other jobs that do not require a teaching certification.

Certified Employees

Certified employees, except for contract principals, are either tenured or non-tenured. Educators obtain tenure when they work as teachers for three complete, consecutive years of full-time employment unless the governing board approves and issues written notice of non-renewal to the teacher on or before the last day of the third complete, consecutive year of employment. A full year is deemed to include employment only begun before October 1.

A non-tenured employee may be terminated during the first three years of employment. The employee will not be given a reason for the termination.

A tenured employee may be terminated only for good and cause. A proposed termination gives the employee a right to a hearing before the Board to determine if the system may terminate or transfer the tenured employee.

Classified Employees

Classified employees are either non-probationary or probationary. Classified employees obtain non-probationary status when they have worked for three complete, consecutive years of full-time employment unless the governing board approves and issues written notice of termination to the employee on or before the fifteenth day of June immediately following the third complete, consecutive year of employment. A complete year is deemed to include employment only begun before October 1.

A probationary support employee may be terminated during the first three years. The employee will not be given a reason for the termination.

A non-probationary employee may be terminated only for good and cause. A proposed termination gives the employee a right to a hearing before the Board to determine if the system may terminate the non-probationary employee.

**SHOULD YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INFORMATION
CONTAINED IN THIS HANDBOOK, DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL HUMAN
RESOURCES FOR CLARIFICATION.**

Employee's Printed Name: _____

School Assignment: _____

I received a copy of the Escambia County Schools 2024-2025 Employment Handbook, and I am responsible for its content.

Employee's Signature: _____

Date: _____