

The School District of Hernando County Florida



2025-2026 Staff Handbook

Vision: To inspire and support the pursuit of individual greatness.

Mission: The Hernando County School District collaborates with students, parents, and other community stakeholders to effectively prepare all students for a successful transition into a diverse and changing world.

SUPERINTENDENT
Ray Pinder

SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS
Shannon Rodriguez, Chairperson
Mark Johnson, Vice Chairperson
Michelle Bonczek, Board Member
Susan Duval, Board Member
Kayce Hawkins, Board Member

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Staff Handbook

Section 1: Opening

Welcome

Hernando School District Strategic Plan

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Important Numbers

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Welcome to the School District of Hernando County

It is our pleasure to welcome you to the Hernando County School District. We believe we are successful every day we can offer our students the fullest opportunities to learn and experience greatness. This includes everything from appropriate and rigorous curriculum to clean and sanitary facilities, to timely, efficient, and safe transportation.

We value every member of our team for the vital roles they play in this process and recognize that a collective effort is essential to our success. You will experience from those around you the team attitude and hard work that motivate us toward better educational opportunities for our students. It is our hope that your efforts as a member of this team will effectively and efficiently contribute to the mission.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

We believe:

- Education is the foundation for a better future.
- Family and community involvement are critical to a high-quality educational system.
- Diverse individuals, ideas, talents, and learning styles strengthen our communities.
- All stakeholders share in the responsibility and decision-making as part of supporting student success and school improvement.
- Individuals and organizations are accountable for their behaviors and actions.
- Commitment to teaching methodologies that foster student engagement, critical thinking, and content mastery will prepare all students to graduate ready for work and postsecondary education.
- Shared purpose, collaboration, commitment to continuous improvement, and an innovative spirit are essential in effective teaching cultures.
- Safe, caring environments are essential for learning and the well-being of all students.
- High expectations and recognition empower individuals and lead to improved performance.
- Aligned expectations and policies that reflect best business practices are essential for success.

This handbook is intended as an overview of the District's policies and procedures. It is not a contract and is not intended to be. As a school board employee, it is important that you become acquainted with the policies, procedures and benefits contained within this manual that will contribute to your success. Please read through it. You are expected to know and adhere to the information and regulations it contains. Administrative efficiency and effective public relations require that all staff members conform to the information and regulations. If any policy or regulation needs clarification, please consult your supervisor at once.

Answers to many questions are in this handbook, as well as information which will make your work easier. All departments should create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to direct the work associated with the information outlined in the Staff Handbook and School Board Policies.

This Staff Handbook shall be deemed amended to comply with all laws, all lawful rules of the State Board of Education, all lawful rules and actions of the School Board, and all terms of any applicable ratified collective bargaining agreement. In the event an actual or perceived conflict arises between the language contained in it and the terms and conditions of employment set forth in the respective collective bargaining agreement(s), the language in the bargaining agreement shall prevail. All policies, collective bargaining agreements, board member and board meeting information for the Hernando County School District is available for review at www.hernandoschools.org. Again we wish you much success in Hernando County.

HERNANDO COUNTY SCHOOLS Strategic Plan: 2023 – 2028
To inspire and support the pursuit of individual greatness.

Key Priorities 2023 - 2028

Priority 1 – Student Success

GOAL: Provide standards-based instruction in all classes, in all content areas to ensure all students are college or career ready to be contributing members of society.

Strategy 1

Ensure teachers, visited during administrative walk-throughs, deliver grade- level, benchmark-based instruction to engage all learners.

- Meet or exceed the state average of students scoring proficient.
- Meet or exceed the state average of students making learning gains.
- Meet or exceed the state average of students in the lowest quartile making learning gains on Florida Assessment of Student Thinking in English Language Arts and Math

Strategy 2

Ensure schools engage in evidence-based strategies and interventions to support subgroups and close achievement gaps.

- Close the achievement gaps as measured by state metrics.
- Increase the percentage of English Language Learners becoming proficient in language acquisition on Assessing Communication and Comprehension in English-State to State for English Language Learners.
- Increase percentage of students with individual Education Plans being served in the regular class 80% of the day.
- Decrease the drop-out rate for students with disabilities.
- Meet or exceed the state graduation rate of all Every Student Succeeds Act subgroups.

Strategy 3

Prepare K-12 students for post-secondary education, employment, or military service.

- Increase middle school acceleration through advanced courses and career & technical opportunities.
- Increase the number of high school credits earned by students in grades 6-8.
- Increase the number of K-5 students participating in Career & Professional Education.
- Increase district average of Advanced Placement and Advanced International Certificate of Excellence exam pass rates for all courses.
- Increase the number of students receiving an Advanced Placement Capstone Certificate or diploma or Advanced International Certificate of Excellence diploma.
- Meet or exceed the state average for high school district acceleration rate.
- Increase student participation in dual enrollment courses.
- Meet or exceed the state average for Scholastic Aptitude Test total and American College Test composite score.
- Increase Students with Disabilities' access to post-secondary education.
- Increase Florida Application for Federal Student Aid completion rate to meet or exceed average state rate.
- Increase the number of industry certifications earned by students.
- Decrease truancy for students in grades 6-12.
- Continue to exceed the state's rate for graduation.
- Increase the number of students who take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.

Priority 2 – Talent Management

GOAL: Create a culture that attracts, develops, and retains quality employees passionate about supporting student success.

Strategy 1

Create opportunities and pipelines for our community to become employees of Hernando County Schools.

- Increase annually the number of Associate Teachers.
- Reduce annually the number of classroom vacancies for the first day of school and beginning of the second semester.

Strategy 2

Provide opportunities for continued professional growth.

- Increase the number of Associate Teachers achieving professional certification.
- Increase participation in apprenticeship programs.
- Increase participation in Learn It University.
- Decrease the number of teachers identified as out of field for English for Speakers of Other Languages/Gifted.
- Increase satisfaction for professional development by providing a variety of meaningful activities to be measured for effectiveness by yearly staff survey results.

Strategy 3

Retain our workforce to reduce turnover of high-quality employees.

- Increase percentage annually of alternative certified teachers achieving professional certification.
- Reduce resignations due to a lack of job satisfaction.
- Increase the number of first year teachers retained for a second year.

Priority 3 – Safe and Healthy Learning Environment

GOAL: Enhance and strengthen a safe and healthy learning environment.

Strategy 1

Ensure students have access to and receive high quality, nutritious meals provided by the Food & Nutrition Department.

- Annually increase the number of students participating in National School Lunch program.
- Annually increase the number of students participating in the Seamless Summer program by increasing the number of mobile feeding sites.

Strategy 2

Increase the preparedness of staff and students to respond to critical incidents on campus or at school-sponsored events by providing ongoing training activities.

- Through student surveys, annually increase the percentage of students reporting their schools are safe.
- Through staff surveys, annually increase the percentage of staff reporting their schools are safe.

Strategy 3

Improve student resiliency and life skills by providing school-based mental health supports.

- Annually reduce the number of students who are referred to the pre-expulsion hearing process for drug offenses.
- Increase parent and student participation in tobacco/drug awareness training.
- All students in grades 6-12 will receive resiliency and life skills training.

Strategy 4

Improve the student-to-school connection by monitoring early warning data to determine student needs and provide additional support.

- Annually increase the number of students who have 90% or better average daily attendance.
- Reduce the number of students with two or more early warning indicators.
- Maintain 80% compliance with Youth Mental Health First Aid certification with all required staff.

Strategy 5

Provide safe, on-time transportation to and from school for all students.

- Reduce the number of accidents that receive point penalties as measured by the annual Safe Driver Committee review process.
- Improve on-time arrival to schools.

Strategy 6

Provide students and staff with a clean campus environment.

- Increase the number of Environmental Services Technicians participating in training opportunities.
- Improve the annual ratings as determined by school cleanliness reports.

Priority 4 – Community Connection

GOAL: Create opportunities to engage the greater community for the purpose of fostering trust and advancing student excellence.

Strategy 1

Improve student learning opportunities by strengthening community and business partnerships.

- Increase sponsorship contributions to enhance school and district student learning outcomes.
- Increase participation rate for family and community engagement events.

Strategy 2

Enhance two-way district communication and engagement with families and the community.

- Increase the number of respondents to the feedback structures.
- Improve overall satisfaction ratings from feedback structures.

Strategy 3

Elevate the quality of internal communications and ensure staff receive timely and constructive information.

- Increase the number of staff responding to feedback structures.
- Improve overall satisfaction ratings from feedback structures.

Strategy 4

Develop authentic ways to celebrate the contributions and achievements of all employees.

- Open pathways to partner with other HCSD departments, schools and teams to develop recognition opportunities.
- Monitor and update feedback systems to determine areas of improvement.

Priority 5 – Financial Transparency and Capital Planning

GOAL: Ensure public funds are used efficiently to maintain quality educational needs and facilities for our students.

Strategy 1

Maximize all district resources to enhance the learning environment and ensure financial sustainability.

- Increase purchasing card participation & annual rebates.
- Strive to increase revenue from local revenue sources.
- Increase interest earning strategy by expanding investment portfolio.
- Maintain an assigned and unassigned fund balance of 5%.
- Maintain the current bond rating as reported by designated agencies.

Strategy 2

Improve and maintain district facilities by utilizing appropriate funding effectively to provide the best quality education and services to our students, staff and community.

- Improve existing district facilities by utilizing planned life cycle replacement.
- Decrease the average age of the bus fleet.
- Increase the number of sites with upgraded bandwidth.

Strategy 3

Monitor the projected growth of Hernando County over the next several years, and plan accordingly to ensure student growth does not outgrow student stations.

- Study and analyze growth population in county.
- Plan for new construction for additional student stations so Florida Inventory of School Houses capacity meets or exceeds student enrollment.

Hernando County Schools
919 North Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601
Phone: (352) 797-7000
Website: www.hernandoschools.org

Education Standards Commission

The Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida and the Principles of Professional Conduct of the Education Profession in Florida

The State of Florida has established the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida which are found in State Board Rule 6A-10.081. As professionals, all employees must be aware of and adhere to these rules at all times. These rules are established by the State of Florida and govern the teaching certificates of instructional personnel. In the event the language conflicts with Board policy (i.e. self-reporting of arrests), employees are required to abide by the rules outlined in Board policy. Employees may be disciplined for unprofessional conduct.

All employees are required to adhere to School Board Policies and Florida Statutes regarding ethics. Employees are expected to abide by policy and act in a professional manner at all times. Employees may be disciplined for unethical or unprofessional conduct.

See School Board Policy 1129, 3129, 4129, 1210, 3210, 4210, 1139, 3139, 3139.01 and 4139.01. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

6A-10.081 Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida

- (1) Florida educators shall be guided by the following ethical principles:
 - (a) The educator values the worth and dignity of every person, the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, acquisition of knowledge, and the nurture of democratic citizenship. Essential to the achievement of these standards are the freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal opportunity for all.
 - (b) The educator's primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student's potential. The educator will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity.
 - (c) Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of other members of the community, the educator strives to achieve and sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct.
- (2) Florida educators shall comply with the following disciplinary principles. Violation of any of these principles shall subject the individual to revocation or suspension of the individual educator's certificate, or the other penalties as provided by law.
 - (a) Obligation to the student requires that the individual:
 1. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning and/or to the student's mental and/or physical health and/or safety.
 2. Shall not unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning.
 3. Shall not unreasonably deny a student access to diverse points of view.
 4. Shall not intentionally suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.
 5. Shall not intentionally expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
 6. Shall not intentionally provide classroom instruction to students in prekindergarten through grade 8 on sexual orientation or gender identity, except when required by Sections 1003.42(2)(n)3. and 1003.46, F.S.
 7. Shall not intentionally provide classroom instruction to students in grades 9 through 12 on sexual orientation or gender identity unless such instruction is required by state academic standards as adopted in Rule 6A-1.09401, F.A.C., or is part of a reproductive health course or health lesson for

which a student's parent has the option to have his or her student not attend.

8. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights.

9. Shall not discourage or prohibit parental notification of and involvement in critical decisions affecting a student's mental, emotional, or physical health or well-being unless the individual reasonably believes that disclosure would result in abuse, abandonment, or neglect as defined in Section 39.01, F.S.

10. Shall not harass or discriminate against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition, sexual orientation, or social and family background and shall make reasonable effort to assure that each student is protected from harassment or discrimination. Discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or sex includes subjecting any student to training or instruction that espouses, promotes, advances, inculcates, or compels such student to believe any of the concepts listed in Section 1000.05(4)(a), F.S.

11. Shall not exploit a relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage.

12. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.

13. Shall not violate s. 553.865(9)(b), F.S., which relates to entering restrooms and changing facilities designated for the opposite sex on the premises of an educational institution.

14. Shall not violate s. 1000.071, F.S., which relates to the use of personal titles and pronouns in educational institutions.

(b) Obligation to the public requires that the individual:

1. Shall take reasonable precautions to distinguish between personal views and those of any educational institution or organization with which the individual is affiliated.

2. Shall not intentionally distort or misrepresent facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.

3. Shall not use institutional privileges for personal gain or advantage.

4. Shall accept no gratuity, gift, or favor that might influence professional judgment.

5. Shall offer no gratuity, gift, or favor to obtain special advantages.

(c) Obligation to the profession of education requires that the individual:

1. Shall maintain honesty in all professional dealings.

2. Shall not on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition if otherwise qualified, or social and family background deny to a colleague professional benefits or advantages or participation in any professional organization.

3. Shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political or civil rights and responsibilities.

4. Shall not engage in harassment or discriminatory conduct which unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance of professional or work responsibilities or with the orderly processes of education or which creates a hostile, intimidating, abusive, offensive, or oppressive environment; and, further, shall make reasonable effort to assure that each individual is protected from such harassment or discrimination.

5. Shall not make malicious or intentionally false statements about a colleague.

6. Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment to influence professional judgments of colleagues.

7. Shall not misrepresent one's own professional qualifications.

8. Shall not submit fraudulent information on any document in connection with professional activities.

9. Shall not make any fraudulent statement or fail to disclose a material fact in one's own or another's application for a professional position.

10. Shall not withhold information regarding a position from an applicant or misrepresent an assignment or conditions of employment.

11. Shall provide upon the request of the certificated individual a written statement of specific reason for recommendations that lead to the denial of increments, significant changes in employment, or termination of employment.

12. Shall not assist entry into or continuance in the profession of any person known to be unqualified in accordance with these Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida and other applicable Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules.
13. Shall self-report within forty-eight (48) hours to appropriate authorities (as determined by district) any arrests/charges involving the abuse of a child or the sale and/or possession of a controlled substance. Such notice shall not be considered an admission of guilt nor shall such notice be admissible for any purpose in any proceeding, civil or criminal, administrative or judicial, investigatory or adjudicatory. In addition, shall self-report any conviction, finding of guilt, withholding of adjudication, commitment to a pretrial diversion program, or entering of a plea of guilty or Nolo Contendere for any criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation within forty-eight (48) hours after the final judgment. When handling sealed and expunged records disclosed under this rule, school districts shall comply with the confidentiality provisions of Sections 943.0585(4)(c) and 943.059(4)(c), F.S.
14. Shall report to appropriate authorities any known allegation of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 1012.795(1), F.S.
15. Shall seek no reprisal against any individual who has reported any allegation of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 1012.795(1), F.S.
16. Shall comply with the conditions of an order of the Education Practices Commission imposing probation, imposing a fine, or restricting the authorized scope of practice.
17. Shall, as the supervising administrator, cooperate with the Education Practices Commission in monitoring the probation of a subordinate.

Rulemaking Authority 1001.02, 1012.795(1)(j) FS. Law Implemented 1012.795 FS. History—New 7-6-82, Amended 12-20-83, Formerly 6B-1.06, Amended 8-10-92, 12-29-98, Formerly 6B-1.006, Amended 3-23-16, 11-22-22, 2-21-23, 5-23-23, 8-22-23.

THE POLICY OF NONDISCRIMINATION OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF HERNANDO COUNTY

GENERAL: It is the policy of the School Board of Hernando County, Florida, not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, or handicap in its educational programs or employment practices. By operating in this manner, the School Board adheres to the provisions of Federal Law and other applicable laws. Specifically, Hernando District Policy states, “It is the policy of the Hernando County School Board not to illegally discriminate or to allow its employees to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, pregnancy, military status, ancestry, or Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) in its educational programs or employment practice.” The District also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts and other identified Title 36 patriotic youth groups, as required with 34 C.F.R. 108.9. In accordance with Florida Administrative Code, national origin minority or Limited English Proficient (LEP) students shall not be subjected to any disciplinary action because of their appropriate use of a language other than English. The lack of English skills will not be a barrier to admission into any Career and Technical Education Programs offered at any of our schools, Sun Tech Education Center, or adult education programs.

EMPLOYMENT: Neither the Hernando County School District nor its employees shall illegally discriminate in its employment policies and practices on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, marital status, disability, age or any other legally protected status as defined by applicable law.

STUDENTS: The Hernando County School Board prohibits exclusion of any student from participation in or the denial of the benefits of any educational program or activity as well as any and all forms of illegal discrimination against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability or other legally protected status as provided by applicable law.

PRECEDENCE: This policy shall take precedence over any other statement in the policies, procedures, rules, and regulations of the Hernando County School Board wherever such may appear unless in conflict with any collective bargaining agreement.

To file concerns, please follow the complaint procedures found in School Board Policies 1122, 3122 and 4122.

The compliance officer for Employee related issues is Matthew Goldrick, Director of Labor Relations & Professional Standards, 352-797-7005.

Compliance officers for student related issues are Jill Kolasa, Director of Student Services 352-797-7008, and Anna Jensen, Director of ESE 352-797-7022.

See School Board Policy 1122, 3122 and 4122. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

WORKPLACE HARASSMENT OF EMPLOYEES

The School District of Hernando County forbids the discrimination against any employee, applicant for employment, or student on the basis of sex or race. The District will not tolerate any type of bullying or harassment activity by any of its employees, including but not limited to sexual, racial, religious, national origin, disability, or pregnancy. This policy also applies to non-employee volunteers who work subject to the control of school authorities. Members of the School District community and third parties, which includes all staff, are encouraged to promptly report incidents of unlawful harassing conduct to an administrator, supervisor, or other School District official so that the Superintendent or designee may address the conduct before it becomes severe, pervasive, or persistent.

Sexual harassment is defined in school board policy to include:

- Unwelcome sexual conduct conditioned for something or quid pro quo harassment.
- Unwelcome sexual conduct determined by a reasonable person to be severe, pervasive, and objectionably offensive.
- Sexual assault: rape, sodomy, sexual assault with object, fondling, incest, statutory rape.
- Domestic Violence
- Dating Violence
- Stalking

Sexual harassment may involve the behavior of a person of either gender against a person of the same or opposite gender. Any teacher, administrator, coach, or other school authority who engages in sexual conduct with a student may also be guilty of a crime.

Racial harassment consists of verbal, nonverbal, graphic, written, or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward any employee based upon race when such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; or when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or employment opportunities.

Racial harassment as defined above may include but is not limited to the following conduct which is based upon race:

- epithets and slurs;
- written or graphic material that shows hostility or aversion toward an individual group;
- negative stereotyping;
- threatening, intimidating or hostile acts.

Disability harassment is oral, written, graphic or physical conduct or any act as relating to an individual's disability that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so as to limit or interfere with the ability of the individual to participate in or benefit from district programs or activities; harassment that has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working or school environment.

Examples of disability harassment include, but are not limited to conduct directed at the characteristics of a person's disabling condition such as:

- imitating manner of speech;
- interfering with necessary equipment;
- negative stereotyping;

- threatening, intimidating or hostile acts;
- written or graphic material that shows aversion or hostility towards an individual or group with disabling attitudes.

SPECIFIC PROHIBITIONS

It is sexual harassment for a school district employee or non-employee volunteer to use his or her authority to solicit sexual favors or attention from subordinates or students, including but not limited to incidents when the subordinate's or student's failure to submit will result in adverse treatment, or when the subordinate's or student's acquiescence will result in preferential treatment. It is racial harassment for a school board employee or non-employee volunteer to create or be responsible for a racially hostile environment i.e., harassing conduct that is sufficiently severe, pervasive, or persistent so far as to interfere with or limit the ability of an employee or student to participate in or benefit from services, activities, or privileges provided by the District. It is disability harassment when a school district employee, non-employee volunteer or student seeks to involve a student or employee with a disability in antisocial, dangerous, or criminal activity where the student or employee because of a disability, is unable to comprehend fully or consent to the behavior.

PROCEDURES

Any person who alleges harassment by any staff member may report directly to his/her administrator or supervisor. If the direct administrator or supervisor is the offending person, the report should be made to the next higher level of administration or supervision. Filing of a complaint or otherwise reporting harassment will not affect the individual's status, future employment, future promotion, extracurricular activities, or work assignments. It is unlawful to retaliate against a person who has made a report or filed a complaint alleging unlawful harassment, or who has participated as a witness in a harassment investigation.

The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the accused, will be respected, consistent with the District's legal obligations, and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and take corrective action when this conduct has occurred.

In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes harassment, the totality of the circumstances, the nature of the conduct and the context in which the alleged conduct occurred will be investigated. The Superintendent or designee has the responsibility of investigating and resolving complaints of harassment.

A substantiated charge against a school district employee shall subject such employee to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Any employee, applicant for employment, student, or applicant for admission who believes he/she has been discriminated against or harassed is encouraged to use the District's established complaint procedures or directly contact his/her administrator or supervisor.

See School Board Policy 1362, 2266, 3362, 4362, 5517, 5517.01 and 5517.03. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE POLICY

In compliance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of alcohol, illicit drugs or any controlled substances is prohibited. Only prescribed medications are permitted on School Board premises or during any official School District related activity, and it is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that any prescribed medication is properly secured. To facilitate enforcement of this Policy, following an offer of employment by the Hernando County School Board, all job applicants will be required to take and pass a drug test. Current employees will be tested for drugs and/or alcohol for any of the following:

1. reasonable suspicion/cause;
2. post-accident/injury as required for DOT reporting;
3. random testing as per Department of Transportation regulations;
4. follow-up after an employee returns from a drug treatment or counseling program;
5. as required as part of any medical examination required by the HCSB.

Refusal to submit to testing upon request, for any of the reasons authorized, shall subject the employee to the same disciplinary consequences as would result from a positive test result including termination for cause, denial of Unemployment Benefits, denial of Workers' Compensation, and medical and indemnity benefits.

Any employee violating this policy shall be immediately suspended by the Superintendent and a report shall be made to the School Board for further action, which could result in termination of employment.

Failure by any employee to report a known violation of this policy will constitute an act of insubordination and willful neglect of duty. The Employee Assistance Program is available, and information can be found on the District website under Risk, Benefits and Compliance. For additional information, see School Board Policy and Human Resources Standard Operating Procedures.

See School Board Policy 1124, 3124, 4124, and 4162. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

DISTRICT OFFICE

919 N. Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601 – Phone: (352) 797-7000

Central Printing Services.....	797-7023
Communications & Government Relations.....	797-7009
Department of Teaching and Learning.....	797-7051
Exceptional Student Support Services (ESSS).....	797-7008
Facilities Department.....	797-7050
Equity.....	797-7019
Facility Rental.....	Call Site
Finance Department.....	797-7004
Food and Nutrition Department.....	797-7028
Hearing Impaired Telephone Line – County Office.....	544-6404
Hernando County Adult Ed.....	797-7018
Hernando Instructional Television (HITV) – Communications/Public Relations.....	797-7009
Human Resources Department.....	797-7005
Maintenance Department.....	797-7071
Parent Academy.....	797-7315
Payroll.....	797-7012
Purchasing Department.....	797-7060
Risk, Benefits and Wellness.....	797-7007
Safe Schools.....	797-7233
Safety and Security Department.....	797-7054
School Choice.....	797-7000
Student Services Department.....	797-7008
Substance Abuse (ESSS Department).....	797-7008
Technology and Information Services Department (TIS).....	797-7006
Teen Parenting Program (ESSS Department).....	797-7051
Transportation Department.....	797-7003
Volunteers in Education Program.....	797-7054
Warehouse and Property Inventory.....	797-7061

CONTACT THE TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT FOR SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ZONES AND BUS ROUTES

(352) 797-7003 or www.hernandoschools.org

SCHOOL BOARD MEETINGS

Meetings are held on Tuesdays at 6 p.m. Refer to District website for meeting dates and streaming options.

ADDITIONAL DISTRICT INFORMATION

In addition to this Staff Handbook, please review the following documents/resources:

School Board Policies

School/Department Procedural Handbooks

www.hernandoschools.org

Collective Bargaining Agreements

School Board Policies

Information about our district and school board policies can be accessed from our website at: [Hernando County School Board Policies](http://HernandoCountySchoolBoardPolicies)

School/Department Procedural Handbooks

Many district departments produce informative handbooks pertaining to the services and procedures applicable to their departments. Schools produce handbooks/handouts specific to the campus and population of the individual school. These handbooks are a source for specific policies and procedures, available instructional material, and campus “whereabouts.” It is important to note that all policies and procedures in school/department handbooks must align with applicable statutory requirements, school board policy and collective bargaining agreements. Please visit our school district website at hernandoschools.org.

Collective Bargaining Agreements

For information specific to your own position, refer to your respective Collective Bargaining Agreement. A copy of each Agreement is available for your review on our website at hernandoschools.org. The Agreements are very detailed regarding procedures and provision applicable to your position with the District. Two Agreements exist with the Hernando County School District:

HCTA – Hernando Classroom Teachers’ Association – Represents teachers and instructional personnel excluding paraprofessionals.

HUSW – Hernando United School Workers – Represents non-instructional support personnel including paraprofessionals.

Staff Handbook

Section 2: Policies and Procedures

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AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Hernando County School District will reasonably accommodate qualified individuals who have a disability so that they can perform the essential functions of their position. In order to make a determination about the nature of the employee's medical condition and whether the employee might be considered a qualified individual with a disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act Amendment Act (ADAAA), a Request for Accommodation Form must be completed and submitted to the Human Resources Department. This information is treated confidentially, is not maintained in the employee's main personnel file, and will be used only by authorized individuals. The Request for Accommodation Form can be found on the district website under "Employment".

See School Board Policy 1122.01, 3122.01 and 4122.01. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

ANTI-FRAUD

Fraud and fraudulent activity is strictly prohibited. This applies to any fraud, or suspected fraud, involving elected officials, employees, consultants, vendors, contractors, outside agencies and employees of such agencies, and any other parties with a business relationship with the District.

See School Board Policy 8700. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

ARRESTS/SELF-REPORTING ARRESTS

As per School Board Policy, employees **shall self-report** any and all arrests and convictions (including misdemeanor citations), regardless of the level of the charges, within forty-eight (48) hours. Please note this includes arrest citations – these will register as arrests in the state database.

Employees shall report to their supervisor.

Failure to report arrests and/or convictions as required by policy shall be grounds for termination of employment.

See School Board Policy 1121.01, 3121.01, and 4121.01. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

ATHLETICS/ACADEMICS

Staff will not be permitted to conduct supplemental activities before the end of the contractual workday without the approval of the principal and/or designee. Prior to beginning coaching activities, the individual must be either cleared by Human Resources or must be a registered volunteer through Safety and Security. No one will receive compensation for any coaching activity prior to being cleared to work by the Human Resources Department. The Athletic Handbook governs student participation in athletics.

See School Board Policy 3120.03 and 4120.03. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

ATTENDANCE

All employees are expected to be present during all working hours. Absence without prior approval (also called absence without authority –AWA) from an administrator or supervisor, chronic absences, absences without paid leave, habitual tardiness or abuse of designated working hours are all considered neglect of

duty and will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Sick leave and leaves made necessary by sudden emergencies may be granted if the employee makes a prompt report to administration concerning the absence.

See School Board Policy 1430, 3430, and 4430. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

CARE OF BUILDING, FURNITURE AND EQUIPMENT

School administrators and/or designee will provide staff members with an inventory sheet for their room at the beginning of the school year. This sheet is to be completed and returned to the administrator and/or designee. Each room is equipped with the necessary furniture as far as circumstances permit; therefore, furniture and equipment may not be moved from one room to another without the approval of the principal and/or designee and recorded on the inventory sheet. The furniture is assigned to the room, not the teacher. The condition of the furniture and equipment in any classroom is the direct responsibility of the teacher and any damage or defacing of same must be reported in writing to the principal and/or designee immediately.

Furniture and equipment may not be moved from one campus to another without the approval of the principal and/or designee, recorded on the proper form (SO-PC-009) and forwarded as an attachment to the Property Department to schedule transfer via entry through the School Dude program. Furniture and equipment purchased with Federal Funds may not be moved from one campus to another without the approval of the Director of Federal Programs or designee.

Furniture and other district owned property are not to be left outside the school overnight unless arrangements have been made directly with the Property Department. If the property has been deemed no longer in safe usable condition by the Property Department, instructions will be given as to how the items are to be handled.

CERTIFICATION

The state Certification Office processes applications for initial certification, certain add-ons, and all other services for non-employees. The district certification office processes requests of initial FLDOE certificates (upon the issuance of clearance to work), renewals, certain add-ons, and name changes. The state Certification Office approves all coursework for certification purposes. Teachers must call the toll free number 1-800-445-6739 with the following information: the name of the institution; the course prefix, number and title; and the certification requirement they are attempting to satisfy by completing the course. This line is extremely busy during registration periods, so be sure to plan ahead. Also, you can e-mail the Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) at education.certification@fldoe.org. Please include your name, certificate number, and your FLDOE number, if known, in your e-mail.

You may access the FLDOE website, <http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/>, for the following services: Certification Lookup, Application Status Lookup, and Request Materials. If you click on Application Status Lookup, you will be prompted to create a Login I.D. and Password. Once you are on this site, you will be able to access the following information about your certification file: the status/progress of your valid application and Statement of Status of Eligibility; a record of any valid Florida educator's certificate that you hold; and the official transcripts, score report and information received from the district within the last calendar year.

Teachers who hold a five-year non-renewable temporary certificate must follow their Statement of Status of Eligibility. This document is an individualized listing of all the deficiencies that you must satisfy to be issued a Professional Certificate. If your Statement of Status of Eligibility (SOE) reflects that you have

specific testing requirements to meet, you must register for the exams at www.fl.nesinc.com. For more information about the requirements listed on your Statement of Status of Eligibility, you may visit the FLDOE website: http://www.fldoe.org/edcert/cert_types.asp.

For reappointment purposes, all the deficiencies outlined on your Statement of Status of Eligibility must be completed and documented with the district certification office no later than March 1st of the year of expiration of your temporary certificate. As a courtesy to our teachers, the district certification office sends reminder notices to teachers on temporary certificates throughout the validity period of the certificate.

Teachers who hold five-year Professional certificates must renew their certificates every five years. During the validity period of this certificate, you are required to earn either a minimum of 120 in-service points to include 20 in-service points in teaching Students with Disabilities (SWD) or six semester hours of college credit to include one semester hour in teaching Students with Disabilities (SWD).

An educator whose certificate has a beginning validity date of July 1, 2020, or thereafter, must have earned at least two (2) college credits, forty (40) inservice points, or a combination thereof, in evidence-based instruction and interventions grounded in the science of reading per Rule 6A-6.053, F.A.C., specifically designed for students with characteristics of dyslexia, including the use of explicit, systematic, and sequential approaches to reading instruction, developing phonological and phonemic awareness, decoding, and implementing multisensory intervention strategies if the educator is renewing any of the following coverages: Elementary Education (K-6), Prekindergarten/Primary Education (age 3 through grade 3), Elementary Education (grades 1-6), Primary Education (grades K-3), English (grades 1-6), Middle Grades English (grades 5-9), Middle Grades Integrated Curriculum (grades 5-9), English (6-12), Exceptional Student Education (grades K-12) (renewal beginning with a validity date of July 1, 2025), Reading (K-12), Reading (Endorsement), and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) (grades K-12).

For individuals who holds a certificate in educational leadership, the individual must earn a minimum of one college credit or 20 inservice points in Florida's educational leadership standards to renew their professional certificate with renewals beginning July 1, 2025 or later. This is included in the total 120 in-service points required for renewal as well.

Information pertaining to renewal requirements, and in-service equivalent renewal credit, is available on the FLDOE website: <https://www.fldoe.org/teaching/certification/renewal-requirements/>

The earliest that the district certification office will accept your application for renewal is July 1st for the following June 30th expiration (in other words, 1 year before your professional certificate expires).

As a courtesy to our teachers, the district certification office notifies teachers of expiring professional certificates. Notification of expiring professional certificates is sent in July of the year your professional certificate expires by the FLDOE directly to the email attached to your FLDOE account.

If you are teaching out-of-field, proof of required in-service, coursework, or a passing score on the appropriate subject area exam and add-on application, must be submitted to the district certification office or the Florida Department of Education (depending on the type of certificate held) by April of the year you were placed out-of-field. Refer to your out-of-field documentation for more information.

When you earn a higher degree from an accredited institution, you must submit an official transcript with the higher degree conferred to Certification in the Human Resources Department. If your degree major matches an area of certification on your certificate, a pay change will take effect as soon as official transcripts have been received and reviewed along with the signed Request for Advanced degree form by the Human Resources Department. The HCSD accepts all diplomas and degrees from sources accredited

or approved by the Florida Department of Education, including foreign institutions. In other words, the Florida DOE requires the HCSD to reject any fraudulent or questionable diploma or degree from a disreputable source. Tendering a worthless diploma or degree constitutes just cause for termination for violating the Principles of Professional Conduct.

CONTACT INFORMATION UPDATE

Current employees who need to report a change of address and/or name change may do so by accessing the Hernando County School District website at hernandoschools.org. Click on “Staff” then “[How to Update Your Contact Information](#)” and follow the directions.

The Human Resources Department will process your request. If you have any questions or can’t log into your Hire Enterprises account, please call Human Resources for help at 352-797-7005.

COMMUNICATIONS

Employees are reminded that in all communications, including any electronic communication (text, email), they are to ensure that they meet the ethical standards required by School Board Policy, State Board Rules 6A-10.081 , and State Statutes (Chapter 112).

Refer to the Student Code of Conduct regarding student use of electronic devices.

The School District encourages positive and professional communication between staff and students. The School District has provided staff with the means to communicate electronically with students and/or parents concerning school matters. These means include:

- official school website
- parent portal
- official school social media,
- district-approved messaging applications
- District email

and are sufficient for the purposes intended. For staff to communicate regarding school matters with students and/or parents by personal electronic means when sufficient District means are available exposes the School District to possible violation of its legal obligations. Such communication could cause the appearance of inappropriate association with students.

Staff communications via private electronic media concerning non-school related matters are governed by School Board Policy, Florida Statute and the Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Conduct. Violation of these policies may lead to disciplinary action.

CELL PHONES - DISTRICT

District cell phones are provided to specific staff members to use for school-related business as needed. No personal calls should be made or received using District cell phones which are the property of the school district. Employees who are assigned District cell phones are responsible for the proper care of the cell phone. Employees are responsible for the cost of replacing their District phone if it is lost, stolen, or damaged. Each case will be reviewed individually to determine if the employee acted with due diligence or if an unusual circumstance existed that may hold the employee harmless for replacement costs. The employee’s cost for the replacement phone will be determined by the actual replacement cost the District incurs for the phone.

CELL PHONES - PERSONAL

Students and staff shall refrain from using cell phones for **personal use** during emergency situations. The use of cell phones by students and staff during emergencies could overload cell towers and hamper emergency response personnel's ability to communicate.

Staff members should avoid the use of personal cell phones during student contact time.

EMAIL

All staff members should check email at least once each morning and afternoon. The Hernando County email system is to be used for School Board related business and educational projects only.

District emails not for personal use. These restrictions also apply to accessing the email system on Hernando County School Board computers. Communications reside on servers within the District and can be monitored by administrative directive. **District email is public record and can be viewed in accordance with public record laws.** It is advised not to use student names in email in a manner that violates School Board Policy, Florida Statute or the Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Conduct. It is important to check District email regularly because important information is distributed in this manner.

INTERNET & NETWORK USAGE

All staff users of the HCSD network and internet must acknowledge receipt of and adhere to the Hernando County Staff Technology Acceptable Use and Safety Policy and Internet Acceptable Use Agreement. It is a requirement that all computers accessing the internet through the county-wide area network will start on the same homepage. The homepage is the District's homepage located at <http://www.hernandoschools.org>.

No unauthorized devices, including but not limited to, computers, printers and mobile devices shall be connected to the HCSD network without the express permission of the Director of Technology Information Services, or designee. Under no circumstances shall any router (wireless or wired), switch, wireless access point, or any other device to allow computers and other devices to connect to a network, be connected to the HCSD network by wire, wirelessly or otherwise without the express written permission of the Director of Technology Information Services or designee.

The use of VPNs, SD-WAN, SASE or any other service, software or hardware for similar purpose is prohibited on the HCSD network, other than that provided by Technology and Information Services.

VPN – Virtual Private Network: A virtual private network, or VPN, is an encrypted connection over the Internet from a device to a network. The encrypted connection helps ensure that sensitive data is safely transmitted. It prevents unauthorized people from eavesdropping on the traffic and allows the user to conduct work remotely.

SD-WAN - Software-Defined Wide Area Network: A software-defined wide area network is a wide area network that uses software-defined networking technology, such as communicating over the Internet using overlay tunnels which are encrypted when destined for internal organization locations.

SASE – Secure Access Service Edge: A secure access service edge is technology used to deliver wide area network and security controls as a cloud computing service directly to the source of connection rather than a data center.

See School Board Policy 7540.04, 7542 and 7543. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

MAILBOXES

All staff members should check their mailboxes each day upon arrival at their site and again before leaving their site. Administrative approval is required before placing any material in the staff mailboxes or on any bulletin board and access to mailboxes is determined by the site administrator. If items being put in mailboxes were delivered by a representative of HUSW and HCTA, the items should be considered approved by those organizations.

PASSWORDS

No staff member's computer passwords should be disseminated to students or any unauthorized person. Passwords are confidential and should not be shared. Unauthorized sharing of passwords violates School Board Policy, and such violation is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

PHONE CALLS

Telephones are provided for use during planning periods. Calls made during student contact time shall be for school related matters only.

TEXT MESSAGING

Staff may utilize text messaging for communicating with other staff using "transitory" messages only. A transitory message is defined by Florida law to be one which is created primarily to communicate information of short-term value such as scheduling appointments. They are not intended to formalize or perpetuate knowledge and do not set policy, establish guidelines or procedures, certify a transaction, or become a receipt. If there is any question about the type of information being sent, staff are advised to consult with their administrator before sending the information.

No employee may communicate with a student or students via text messaging. Electronic communication with students, if any, may only be made via District provided resources and only in compliance with the guidelines for such set forth in this Handbook.

Employees are advised that text messages, even if sent or received on a privately owned device, **may be considered public record and subject to review by district administration and possibly the public.**

Accordingly, staff are consenting to a review and/or search of their personal electronic device if such is used for text messaging in violation of School Board Policy, Florida Statute and the Code of Ethics and Principles of Professional Conduct.

See School Board Policy 7530.02, 7544, 7540.02 and 7540.04 Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

COMPUTER AND ONLINE SOFTWARE, RESOURCES AND APPLICATIONS

All staff members, prior to installing, using, or otherwise accessing online resources, including webpages and applications must first obtain approval by submitting a completed Software Approval form and following the Software Approval Process. If the software, online resource, or application is not purchased by the Hernando County School District and is purchased by the staff member or other party, the software approval process must still be followed, and the appropriate Software Approval Form files and a donated property form must be completed and submitted as well.

In no event shall any such software, online resource or application be used, accessed or installed on any

computer or other device owned by the Hernando County School District nor used or otherwise accessed on the HCSD network without the required approval.

All requested installs of software are subject to Rule 6A-1.0955 and S.B. 662 or their successors and if student data will be transmitted or typed into such software, online resource or application, or students will use such software, online resource or application, an approved Digital Security and Privacy Agreement (DSPA) must be signed by the vendor prior to any installation or use of that software, online resource or application.

All the above shall also apply to any free software, online resource, or application.

See School Board Policy Board Policy 7540.02(D). Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) AND NATURAL LANGUAGE PROCESSING TOOLS (NLP TOOLS)

The School Board recognizes the positive impact that Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology may have in the District's educational program and operations. The Superintendent is authorized to support the use of artificial intelligence technology when its use is consistent with the District's mission, goals, and operational integrity.

Any use of artificial intelligence technology in the District's educational program or operations must be in accordance with State and Federal law as well as Board policies including, but not limited to the following: Policy 5505 – *Academic Honesty*; Policy 5500 – *Student Conduct*; Policy 5517 – *Anti-Harassment*; Policy 5517.01 – *Bullying and Harassment*; Policy 2266 – *Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs and Activities (The Board's Policy and Grievance Procedures for Responding to Sexual Harassment Alleged to Have Occurred Prior to 8/1/2024)*; Policy 8330 – *Student Records*; Policy 2240 – *Controversial Issues*; Policy 7540.03 – *Student Internet Safety and Acceptable Use*; and Policy 7540.04 – *Staff Technology Acceptable Use and Safety*.

Utilization of AI/NLP tools is strictly prohibited for the completion of schoolwork. The use of AI/NLP tools, without the express permission/consent of a teacher, undermines the learning and problem-solving skills that are essential to academic success and that the staff is tasked to develop in each student. Students are encouraged to develop their own knowledge, skills, and understanding of course material rather than relying solely on AI/NLP tools and they should ask their teachers when they have questions and/or need assistance. Unauthorized use of AI/NLP tools is considered a form of plagiarism and any student found using these tools without permission or in a prohibited manner will be disciplined in accordance with the Student Code of Conduct.

Notwithstanding the preceding, students can use AI/NLP tools in the school setting if they receive prior permission/consent from their teacher, so long as they use the AI/NLP tools in an ethical and responsible manner. Teachers have the discretion to authorize students to use AI/NLP tools for the following uses:

- A. Research assistance: AI/NLP tools can be used to help students quickly and efficiently search for and find relevant information for their school projects and assignments.
- B. Data Analysis: AI/NLP tools can be used to help students to analyze, understand, and interpret large amounts of data, such as text documents or social media posts. This can be particularly useful for research projects or data analysis assignments – e.g., scientific experiments and marketing research.
- C. Language translation: AI/NLP tools can be used to translate texts or documents into different languages, which can be helpful for students who are learning a new language or for students who are studying texts written in a different language.

- D. Writing assistance: AI/NLP tools can provide grammar and spelling corrections, as well as suggest alternative word choices and sentence structure, to help students improve their writing skills.
- E. Accessibility: AI/NLP tools can be used to help students with disabilities access and understand written materials. For example, text-to-speech software can help students with specific learning disabilities or visual impairments to read texts and AI-powered translation tools can help students with hearing impairments understand spoken language.

As outlined above, under appropriate circumstances, AI/NLP tools can be effectively used as a supplement to and not a replacement for traditional learning methods. Consequently, with prior teacher permission/consent, students can use such resources to help them better understand and analyze information and/or access course materials. If a student has any questions about whether they are permitted to use AI/NLP tools for a specific class assignment, they should ask their teacher.

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary consequences. Students may be disciplined for violations, up to and including suspension or expulsion.

Staff may be disciplined for violations, up to and including suspension or termination of employment.

The administration will refer any illegal acts to law enforcement.

See School Board Policy Board Policy 7540.08. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Any School District employee who also works for an organization doing business with the School Board must reveal such a contractual agreement, in writing, to the Superintendent. The Superintendent may approve such an arrangement; however, if the Superintendent determines the relationship to be a conflict of interest, a request will be made for the employee to terminate his/her employment with either the organization or the School District.

See School Board Policy 1129, 3129 and 4129. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS

According to Board Policy 2531, staff shall abide by all provisions of the copyright laws.

- Commercial materials, whether printed or non-printed, may not be duplicated without prior written permission from the owner or copyright holder.
- The School District does not sanction or condone illegal duplication in any form, the use of illegally duplicated materials, or the improper use of commercially duplicated materials.
- Procedures and guidelines for the legal duplication of materials for instructional purposes may be obtained from the school or the Academic Services Department.
- Employees who willfully infringe upon current copyright laws may be subject to disciplinary action by the School Board.

Any staff member shall, prior to installing any computer software not purchased by the School District, obtain approval for such by completing a donated property form and delivering same and providing a valid license for the utilization of such software. In the event such software is not to be donated, the staff member shall lease the software to the School District at no cost to the District by denoting such on the donated property form. In no event shall any such software be installed upon any computer owned by the Hernando

County School District without the approval required herein from the Director of Technology Information Services, or designee. All requested installs of software are subject to Rule 6A-1.0955 and S.B. 662 or their successors and if student data will be transmitted or typed into such software, online resource or application, or students will use such software, online resource or application, an approved Digital Security and Privacy Agreement (DSPA) must be signed by the vendor prior to any installation or use of that software, online resource or application.

See School Board Policy 2531. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

DRESS

As professionals, employees are expected to dress professionally and appropriately for their job assignments. Personal hygiene and appearance set examples for students. When building-level questions arise, employees should contact their immediate supervisor. **All employees must wear identification badges while on duty.**

DUTY

A duty roster and guidelines will be issued during pre-school and at other times, when necessary. Teachers will be assigned various types of duty on an equitable rotation basis, and rosters will be in accordance with the Hernando Classroom Teachers' Association (HCTA) bargaining agreement.

EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSURES

Employees who had previously requested paid leave (sick/personal/vacation) **for only the day(s) of the emergency closure AND** were in attendance the day before **AND** the day after the emergency closure(s), will not be charged leave for the day(s) of the closure.

Employees who previously requested paid leave (sick/personal/vacation) which included the **DAY BEFORE** the emergency closure and the **DAY(S) OF** the emergency closure, will be charged leave for the emergency closure day(s).

Employees who previously requested multiple days paid leave (sick/personal/vacation) which was to begin **ON** the first day of the emergency closure and **CONTINUE AFTER**, shall be charged for the entire requested leave.

Any employee on an extended leave or scheduled to begin an extended leave after the emergency closure, will remain in that leave status and will be required to use leave accrual or in leave accrual is exhausted, will be unpaid. During the emergency closure, leave donations will be suspended.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Behavioral health services are available to all permanent employees of the Hernando County School District and their eligible dependents through our group health plan with Florida Blue. For those employees and dependents not covered under our group health plan, assistance is available through BayCare Behavioral Health by contacting (800) 878-5470.

See School Board Policy 1170.01, 3170.01 and 4170.01. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

EQUITY

It is the policy of the School Board of Hernando County, Florida, not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, or handicap in its educational programs or employment practices. By operating in this manner, the School Board adheres to the provisions of Federal Law and other applicable laws.

Specifically, Hernando District Policy states, “It is the policy of the Hernando County School Board not to illegally discriminate or to allow its employees to illegally discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, marital status, disability, pregnancy, military status, ancestry, or Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) in its educational programs or employment practice.” The District also provides equal access to its facilities to the Boy Scouts and other identified Title 36 patriotic youth groups, as required within 34 C.F.R. 108.9.

In accordance with Florida Administrative Code, national origin minority or English Language Learners (ELL) students shall not be subjected to any disciplinary action because of their appropriate use of a language other than English.

To file concerns, please follow the complaint procedures found in School Board Policy.

The compliance officer for Employee related issues is Matthew Goldrick, Director of Labor Relations & Professional Standards, 352-797-7005. Compliance officers for student related issues are Anna Jensen, Director of Exceptional Student Education, 352-797-7022 and Jill Kolasa, Director of Student Services (504 coordinator). The compliance officer for ADA related issues is Matthew Goldrick, Director of Labor Relations & Professional Standards, 352-797-7005.

See School Board Policy 1122, 3122 and 4133. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT

Please refer to the appropriate employee evaluation manual for evaluation procedures for all employees. This information is available on the District website <https://www.hernandoschools.org>

GRIEVANCES

Refer to the appropriate union or association contract for guidelines on grievances. Union contracts can be found on the District website <http://www.hernandoschools.org>.

HIGHER DEGREE PAYMENT

- Instructional employees hired prior to July 1, 2011 may receive additional pay if they earn a higher academic degree and provide a transcript with a conferred date within the guidelines of the applicable union contract and School Board approved salary schedule.
- Instructional employees and school-based administrators hired on or after July 1, 2011 may receive additional pay if they earn a higher academic degree if the degree matches their area of certification as per Statute. An official transcript must be provided along with the signed Request for Advanced Degree form.
- Administrative employees hired prior to July 1, 2011 may receive additional pay based on the degree

earned in accordance with the School Board approved Administrative Salary Schedule.

- Administrative employees hired on or after July 1, 2011 may receive an additional amount if they earn a degree beyond that which their job description requires. An official transcript must be provided along with a signed Personnel Action Form.
- Confidential and noninstructional employees, who have acquired 60 semester hours or more, as verified by an official transcript, will be paid an additional amount per the School Board approved salary schedule.
- Professional/Technical/Supervisory employees may receive an additional amount if they earn a degree beyond that which their job description requires. An official transcript must be provided along with a Personnel Action Form.

Transcripts with a conferred date must be received in the Human Resources Department in order for the salary adjustment to occur. The adjustment will be made from the beginning of the pay period during which the appropriate documentation was received. It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that the Human Resources Department receives the official transcripts and appropriate documentation in order for the higher degree payment to continue.

HOURS

Work hours for staff will be in accordance with School Board policy, the Fair Labor Standards Act and contractual obligations. **No staff member is permitted to leave earlier than the designated time unless they have notified and have permission from their supervisor or designee.** Please refer to the Hernando County School District Fair Labor Standards Act Compliance Manual and the HCTA and HUSW contracts for guidance.

School staff members are to be at their assigned stations to supervise students as directed by the school administration before, during and after student hours. All staff must follow the designated procedures at each site regarding the use of sign-in sheets and, if applicable, time clocks.

HUMAN RESOURCES – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do I obtain tenure status if I am a noninstructional employee?

A noninstructional employee must work three (3) full consecutive years and be reappointed to a fourth year within the district in order to obtain tenure. If a noninstructional employee has a break in service, he/she returns on a non-tenured status. The only exception to this is made for Interim Food Service Assistant Managers due to the temporary nature of the position. A full year is defined as one day more than half of the contracted year.

2. How do I verify military experience? How many years of military experience can I bring in?

To verify military experience, a copy of a DD-214 must be given to the Human Resources Department. Professional/Technical/Supervisory and Administrative personnel will not be granted military experience. Instructional employees can bring in ten (10) years of military experience. Non-instructional and Confidential Military Veterans may be granted a \$500 supplement for military experience provided a DD-214 is submitted to the Human Resources Department for review and approval. At least one year of full-time military active duty is required to be eligible for the supplement. If the DD-214 is received within forty-five (45) days of the employee's start date, the new pay will be retroactive back to his/her start date. If the DD-214 is received after the first forty-five (45) days of employment, the new pay will start at the

beginning of the pay period in which it is received.

3. How do I verify my previous experience? How many years of experience can I bring in?

To verify previous experience, a Verification of Experience form must be given to the Human Resources Department. Professional/Technical/Supervisory employees can verify ten (10) years of experience. Administrative employees can verify fifteen (15) years of experience. Instructional employees can verify twenty (20) years of prior teaching experience. If the experience form is received within forty-five (45) days of the employee's start date, the new pay will be retroactive back to his/her start date. If the experience form is received after the first forty-five (45) days of employment, the new pay will start at the beginning of the pay period in which it is received. Previous experience can only be brought in one time for the entire duration of employment with the Hernando County School District regardless of employment changes. Once a determination is made by Human Resources, the employee shall have thirty (30) days to request an appeal.

4. Are there unions in Hernando County?

Instructional personnel are represented by the Hernando Classroom Teachers' Association. Noninstructional personnel are represented by the Hernando United School Workers. Confidential, professional/technical/supervisory and administrative personnel are not eligible for membership in unions.

5. How do I transfer sick leave from my previous school district?

Sick leave can be transferred to the Hernando County School District from any accredited Florida school district. Employees must request that their previous district send their balance of sick leave to the Human Resources Department, 919 N. Broad Street, Brooksville, FL 34601. According to School Board Policy, no transferred leave shall be credited to an employee's account at a rate, or in an amount exceeding that earned while an employee of the Hernando County School District.

6. How do I find additional resources?

In addition to this Staff Handbook, there are other reference sources including:

- School Board Policies - *Click this link:* [School Board Policies](#)
- School/Department Handbooks and Procedures – many district departments produce excellent and informative handbooks and/or procedures pertaining to the services and procedures applicable to their departments. Schools produce handbooks specific to the procedures applicable to schools and students. It is important to note that all policies and procedures in school/department handbooks must align with applicable statutory requirements, School Board Policy and collective bargaining agreements.
- Collective Bargaining Agreements – for information specific to your own position, refer to your respective Collective Bargaining Agreement. A copy of each Agreement is available for view on our website at www.hernandoschools.org. The Agreements are very detailed regarding the procedures and provisions applicable to your position within the District. Two Agreements exist:
 - HCTA – Hernando Classroom Teachers' Association – represents all instructional classified employees.
 - HUSW – Hernando United School Workers – represents all non-instructional classified employees.
- School District Website - www.hernandoschools.org

GENERAL INFORMATION – DISTRICT & INTERNAL ACCOUNT/SCHOOL FUNDS

For guidance with district funds, refer to the “*Red Book*” located on the district website, www.hernandoschools.org/departments/budget-finance/index.

FUNDING SOURCES

Schools are provided funding from the following sources:

- District Budget Funds- allocations from district
- Small Grants/Donations – determined by the amount of the grant
- Internal/Student Funds – all funds collected (e.g. general sales, gate receipts, fundraising & donations) at the school level become part of the internal funds unless they have been accounted for at the district level.

DISTRICT BUDGET FUNDS

The funds in the district budget are separate from the Internal Account/Student funds. The principal determines the funding level for each grade level, department, team and/or teacher. District funds not spent by June 30th, the end of the fiscal year, will generally not roll forward into the new fiscal year. Internal account funds roll from one year to the next in most cases.

GRANT AND FEDERAL PROJECT FUNDS

Grants and Federal project funds are school specific and often come with restrictions on how the funds can be spent. For more information regarding regular grants and federal project grants, contact the Budget & Finance Department.

PURCHASE ORDERS – DISTRICT & INTERNAL ACCOUNT/SCHOOL FUNDS

All requests for purchase orders go to the bookkeeper and must be supported by documentation (i.e. quote, order form, copy of registration form, etc.). Vendors must have a completed W-9 on file before a purchase order or check can be processed. The Purchasing Department adds new vendors for items applicable to the schools. All receipts, invoices, and packing slips must be signed, dated, and returned to the bookkeeper within five (5) workdays from the delivery or receipt of the merchandise or services.

PROCUREMENT CARDS (P-CARDS)

The district’s purchasing card (P-Card) program is designed to improve efficiency in processing purchases (e.g. office supplies, cleaning supplies and equipment) by allowing approved district employees to purchase approved goods and services directly from a vendor using the P-Card as the payment vehicle. This program is an alternative approach to utilizing purchase orders and is in alignment with Best Business Practices.

The P-Card program works very much like a personal credit card. The administrator requests a card for an employee by completing the Individual Purchasing Card Holder’s Agreement. In order to use the card, the employee must go through training and sign that he/she understands his/her responsibilities as a cardholder. The cardholder has a spending limit each month and the P-card has restrictions on certain merchant codes in order to prevent purchase of restricted items. Under NO circumstances is the card to be used to make personal purchases.

Individuals that are authorized to use a site purchasing card must properly sign the card out and sign the card back in when the card is returned. Individuals checking out the card are responsible for the security of their card. All precautions should be taken to maintain confidentiality of all information relating to the card, such

as the card holder account number and expiration date. The card or the account number should never be left in a conspicuous place for others to access.

Individuals who have checked out the card are required to turn in invoices or itemized receipts signed “Approved for Payment” by the next working day to the site coordinator. Repeated failure to turn required information in to the site coordinator may result in the employee personally reimbursing the district for the expenditure, revocation of the Purchasing Card privilege and/or possible disciplinary action.

Disciplinary Action Guidelines Unauthorized use of the Purchasing VISA Card will result in appropriate disciplinary action being taken. The disciplinary action may range from a warning up to the revocation of the Purchasing Card privilege and/or possible disciplinary action. For more information regarding the P-card program go to www.hernandoschools.com/Purchasing.

DISTRICT BIDS AND STATE VENDORS – DISTRICT & INTERNAL ACCOUNT/ SCHOOL FUNDS

The district has various bids and state contracted vendors that offer discounts to the school system. Schools are obligated to honor the currently awarded vendor bids and contracts for purchases. See the bookkeeper for information about when and how bid vendors must be used. The current bid list can be found by accessing the Purchasing Department’s website at www.hernandoschools.org/Purchasing.

SALES TAX EXEMPT STATUS

A copy of the district’s sales tax exemption certificate can be obtained from the bookkeeper upon request. The sales tax certificate is to be used for district and school purchases only. Outside Parent Teacher Organizations and Booster Clubs must obtain their own sales tax exemption certificate from the state and meet the requirements for a non-profit organization as required by law. Outside organizations cannot under any circumstances use the district’s sales tax-exempt certificate.

EMPLOYEE TRAVEL

Employee and student travel requires approval from the Administrator and/or Superintendent’s staff and/or School Board depending upon whether the travel is in-county, out-of-county or out-of-state travel. Be sure to check current policies before planning, registering, or encumbering funds that require travel.

More detailed information can be found on the district website, www.hernandoschools.org/departments/budget-finance/travel. Staff should work with the bookkeeper who will provide all the required information prior to travel (i.e. scheduling travel, authorized approval(s), allowable expenses and completion of paperwork with receipts for reimbursement to staff). All employee travel paid by the district must be submitted to Finance no later than 30 days from the last day of travel.

INTERNAL ACCOUNT/SCHOOL FUNDS

The Finance Department offers reference guidance for handling money and making purchases through the “Internal Account Procedures Manual” and “Purchasing Card Manual.” These guides are available on the district website and the school’s bookkeeper office for all staff. It is important that staff comply with requirements stated.

Internal/School Activity funds are collected internally by the school. The school’s internal account funds shall be used to benefit the students and those activities as authorized by the district. These funds generally come from field trips, fundraisers, and ticket sales. Internal funds shall be administered in accordance with Florida Statutes, State Board of Administrative Rules, Financial and Program Cost Accounting and

Reporting for Florida Schools (["Red Book"](#)), Hernando County School Board policies, and the Internal Accounts Procedures Manual.

SPENDING FUNDS

All purchases for merchandise and services must be pre-approved by district or school administration as applicable and processed by the bookkeeper prior to purchase. All orders (mail, telephone, internet or direct pick up) may only be placed when the purchase order has been processed by the bookkeeper and the approved copy has been returned to the person requesting approval.

Vendors with district bids or a state contract must be utilized first, regardless of the price or convenience. Additional vendors may be considered when the requested item is unavailable.

Internal funds shall not be used to cash checks to accommodate individuals, make any kind of loans, pay any form of compensation directly to employees or extend credit. Employees of the school district who are compensated for additional services, such as working at athletic events, shall be paid through the school district payroll department or, when appropriate, as prescribed by district school board rules. Blanket Purchase Orders may not be issued to HCSD employees. All reimbursements to HCSD employees may not exceed \$50.00 for a single purchase and only be issued in an emergency circumstance.

CASH COLLECTIONS

Internal Account/School funds are collected internally by the school. The school's internal account funds shall be used to benefit the students and those activities as authorized by the district. Refer to School Board Policy 6610 located on the district website, School Board Policy.

All money should be collected in the school office. Funds collected by the school must be substantiated by a Monies Collected form from school activities and are to be turned in to the bookkeeper at the end of the day. Collections made outside of normal business hours must be remitted to the school office no later than the next business day. If the bookkeeper is unavailable, monies collected should be placed in the school's safety drop box or given to the site administrator or designated backup. If there is no drop box or no administrator present, a note to that effect should be included with the supporting documentation turned in with the money. This is considered an extreme circumstance. No monies are to be held by employees overnight except in the case of an extreme circumstance as noted (documentation required). Do not leave the money unattended in the bookkeeping office.

Students and/or volunteers may not handle cash collections without the direct supervision of a HCSD employee.

RECEIPT BOOKS

Receipt books issued to staff members during the year must be returned to the bookkeeper as part of the teacher check-out process. If an issued receipt book is not returned, the staff member is responsible for signing a letter of acknowledgement to that effect for review by auditor. See Red Book requirements.

All collections received by any club or school organization, other than PTA/PTSAs/PTOs and those previously designated as a 501(c)(3) organization, must be deposited in the school internal account fund. These funds must be properly safeguarded, and the person having custody of the money will be held fully accountable.

STUDENT FEES

Student fees will be collected at the time of registration for the new school year and also during the first few weeks of school. These fees, including certain class fees, are deposited in the school's Internal Account/School funds and are to be used for consumable supplies. Athletic participation, band, and choral

fees are required and the money collected is remitted to the bookkeeper.

FUNDRAISING

The purpose of fundraising projects is to contribute to the educational experience of the students. All fundraisers must comply with Hernando County School Board policies and should not be in conflict with the overall instructional program. Refer to School Board Policy #5830.

All fundraising projects and activities must be submitted on SO-Gadm-053 – Fundraising Request Form & Recap located on the district website, www.hernandoschools.org/departments/budget-finance/internal-accounts. The application must be approved by administration and scheduled on the calendar in advance of the event.

ASSEMBLIES & OTHER ACTIVITIES DURING THE SCHOOL DAY

Activities that take students out of class during the school day must receive administrative approval prior to any planning and advertising. Events that will impact large numbers of students may be reviewed before administrative approval is given. The staff sponsor of students participating in performances and/or assemblies during the school day must send a list of all participants to the attendance secretary and teachers one week prior to the event.

Assemblies, performances, and other school-wide programs that support the school and student body as a whole will be approved by school administration on a limited basis during the school year. When school-wide activities are held, school staff will assist in the supervision of students at the activity or by supervising those students who choose not to participate. A list of duty assignments may be published.

ACTIVITY ADMISSION FEES

Per Board Policy 6610, fundraising activities for which students are charged an admission shall not be present during school hours.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE

All staff are expected to be on duty each day unless there is a compelling reason why they cannot be in attendance. Questions concerning absences should be directed to the substitute coordinator at the site. The instructional employee is responsible for providing detailed plans for the substitute. When an employee is going to be absent in excess of ten (10) consecutive days, he/she must complete an Extended Leave Form [SO-PER-018](#) which can be obtained through the designated staff member at the site or the school district website. The Request for Extended Leave Form [SO-PER-018](#) must be completed by the employee and approved by the site administrator, a Human Resources Administrator and the School Board prior to taking leave when need is known in advance and as soon as possible when leave is an emergency. Employees will be notified if any additional paperwork is required. If an employee is on a leave of absence without pay, he/she is responsible for his/her benefit premium payments. If the employee is deficient in paying premiums, the employee's benefits will be terminated.

It is imperative that staff members review and become familiar with the School Board policies governing leaves of absence. Leaves must be officially granted in advance and may not be granted retroactively.

Absence without prior approval from an administrator or supervisor, chronic absences, absences without paid leave, habitual tardiness or abuse of designated working hours are all considered neglect of duty and will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Sick leave and leaves made necessary by sudden emergencies may be granted if the employee makes a prompt report to administration concerning

this absence.

When requesting a leave, the staff member must complete a Leave of Absence form [SO-PER-025](#) and return it to the site administrator and/or designee as stated in Board policy and bargaining unit agreements.

Any employee who is absent because of illness must file an appropriate sick leave claim within five (5) working days following return to work. This requirement is applicable to both sick leave and illness-in-the-line-of-duty leave.

All leaves, except sick leave, are to be approved in advance by the site administrator and/or designee. It is necessary to notify the appropriate personnel when a leave is canceled or if other changes are made from the original request.

See School Board Policy 1430, 3430 and 4430. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

ABSENT WITHOUT AUTHORITY

All employees are expected to be present during all working hours. Absence from work without approval will be documented as Absent Without Authority.

If an employee is absent without authority for more than five (5) consecutive days it will be considered job abandonment. The site will initiate correspondence with the employee. If an employee does not respond to the notice of job abandonment, it will constitute his/her voluntary resignation. The Superintendent will take the appropriate employment action.

ABSENCE WITHOUT LEAVE OR EXCESSIVE ABSENTEEISM

Punctual and regular attendance is an essential function of an employee's job. If an employee has extensive absences during a school year, the timekeeper should notify the site administrator as soon as the employee takes time off without pay. If the employee, or the employee's family member, has a serious medical condition that is contributing to the need for unpaid leave then a Request for Extended Leave [SO-PER-018](#) & Certification of Physician form [SO-PER-178](#) must be completed and forwarded to the Human Resources Department for consideration of intermittent or extended FMLA. Administrators should not approve leaves without pay (unless first approved by Professional Standards for extreme cases). Excessive absences, chronic absences and absences without leave are all considered neglect of duty and will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)

As required in the Family Medical Leave Act (see Appendix H), in order to qualify for FMLA, an employee must have worked for the Hernando County School District for at least twelve (12) months and at least 1,250 hours during the preceding twelve (12) months. The Family Medical Leave cannot exceed twelve (12) weeks for any employee within a twelve (12) month period. This leave can only be taken for specific reasons as required by law. Once the Human Resources Department is notified of a leave request that might meet FMLA requirements, the appropriate forms will be sent to the employee. A final determination of eligibility will be made by the Human Resources Department.

When an employee is on Family Medical Leave, continuous or intermittently, the School District will continue to contribute its portion of the employee's health and life insurance, and the employee is responsible for his/her portion and any other benefit premium payments. The premium payment should be made through the Hernando County School District, Attention Benefit Payments. If an employee is

deficient in paying premiums, the employee's benefits will be terminated.

Upon return from Family Medical Leave, the employee is entitled to be restored to the same position that the employee held when the leave began, or to an equivalent position with the equivalent benefits, pay and other terms and conditions of employment.

Employees who are the spouses, children, parents or next-of-kin of a service member may take up to twenty-six (26) weeks of leave under the FMLA to care for the service member who incurred an injury during military service when that injury results in the service member being unable to perform his/her duties. The employee requesting such leave will be notified by the Human Resources Department regarding eligibility.

EMPLOYEES RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)

See School Board Policy 1430.01, 3430.01 and 4430.01. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

PERSONAL LEAVE

All personal leave taken with pay is charged against sick leave and will reduce the employee's sick leave balance. Unpaid Personal leave will only be approved for reasons outlined in School Board Policy 1430.04, 3430.04 and 4430.04. Personal leave may or may not be approved for the days preceding or following school holidays as determined by the supervisor or principal. As per School Board Policy, requests for extended leave to take another position for salary shall be denied unless there are extenuating circumstances that are acceptable to the School Board.

Any employee may request to take up to three (3) working days of leave from work in any 12-month period if the employee, or a family or household member of an employee, is the victim of domestic violence. This leave must be approved by the administrator if it meets the criteria listed below. This leave must be used to:

- seek an injunction for protection against domestic violence or an injunction for protection in cases of repeat violence, dating violence or sexual violence; obtain medical care, mental health counseling or both for the employee or a family or household member to address physical or psychological injuries resulting from the act of domestic violence;
- obtain services from a victim-services organization, including, but not limited to, a domestic violence shelter or program or a rape crisis center as a result of the act of domestic violence;
- make the employee's home secure from the perpetrator of the domestic violence or to seek new housing to escape the perpetrator; or
- seek legal assistance in addressing issues arising from the act of domestic violence or to attend and prepare for court-related proceedings arising from the act of domestic violence.

Except in cases of imminent danger to the health or safety of the employee, or to the health or safety of a family or household member, an employee seeking leave from work under this section must provide to his/her employer appropriate advance notice of the leave as required by the employer's policy along with sufficient documentation of the act of domestic violence as required by the employer.

See School Board Policy 1430.04, 3430.04 and 4430.04. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

SICK LEAVE

The 1984 Florida Legislation states, "an employee who is absent because of illness must file an appropriate sick leave claim within five (5) working days following return to work." The immediate

supervisor, director or administrator must be notified when an employee is going to be late or absent. If the employee cannot contact his/her immediate work supervisor, he/she must contact his/her office. Per School Board Policy 1430.03, 3430.03 and 4430.03, any claim for sick leave must be filed “within five (5) working days upon return of the employee to duty.”

Note: In accordance with School Board Policy, any claim for sick leave shall be filed with the Superintendent, or his/her designee, within five (5) working days upon return of the employee to duty. Any leave that is not verified within the five (5) day limit may be recorded as “absence **without authority**” and may result in nonpayment. When an employee is absent in excess of ten (10) consecutive days, he/she must complete an Extended Leave Form [SO-PER-018](#) which can be obtained through the designated staff member at the site or the school district website under Print Shop Documents. The Request for Extended Leave Form [SO-PER-018](#) must be completed and approved by the site administrator, a Human Resources Administrator and the School Board. Employees will be notified if any additional paperwork is required.

See School Board Policy 1430.03, 3430.03 and 4430.03. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

SICK LEAVE - DONATION TO FAMILY MEMBERS

A district employee may allow his/her immediate family members to use his/her sick leave as outlined in Florida Statute and School Board policy.

SICK LEAVE - DONATION TO OTHER EMPLOYEES

A district employee may authorize any district employee to use sick leave that has been accrued by the authorizing employee as outlined in Florida Statute and School Board policy 1430.03, 3430.03 and 4430.03. A request for donations must be made through the Sick Leave Donations channel, located in the District Communication Team, after proper documentation is received per School Board Policy. Please refer to Appendix M: Frequently Asked Questions about Sick Leave Donation for additional information.

See School Board Policy 1430.03, 3430.03 and 4430.03. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

SICK LEAVE – DONATION TO SICK LEAVE BANK FOR INSTRUCTIONAL PERSONNEL

Per HCTA contract: At the time of resignation, the employee may choose to donate or bank the sick leave balance. If no choice is elected upon resignation, as a default the hours will be donated to the sick leave bank.

SICK LEAVE – TRANSFER FROM OTHER FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

An employee may transfer sick leave earned with another Florida school district to the Hernando County School District. However, no transferred leave shall be credited to an employee’s account at a rate, or in an amount exceeding that earned while an employee of the Hernando County School Board. It is the responsibility of the employee to acquire and submit the required documentation to the Human Resources Department.

SICK LEAVE DONATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How do I ask for donations?

Employees that want to request donations must be on an approved extended leave of absence. They can then send an email to the Payroll Department with their name, id#, job title and site name. requesting that their name be added to the sick leave donation icon in TEAMS under “DISTRICT COMMUNICATIONS”.

2. When can sick leave be donated?

An employee may donate his/her accrued sick leave to another HCSD employee provided that the donation relates to a catastrophic illness or disability of the employee, maternity, or catastrophic illness or death of an immediate family member of the employee requesting leave donation. Immediate family member is defined as sibling, spouse, parent, or dependent child. The authorizing employee must retain at least ten (10) days of sick leave as of the time of donation.

3. Who must be sick in order for me to donate sick leave?

The employee requesting donation or an immediate family member as defined in #2 above.

4. What documentation do I need to supply in order to receive donated sick time?

Prior to requesting donations for the employee’s own personal illness or for the illness of an immediate family member as defined in #2 above, the recipient employee must have provided appropriate documentation (Certification of Physician form) from a physician licensed to treat or provide service related to the condition requiring leave and the recipient must already be on an approved Extended Leave or approved Intermittent FMLA leave.

5. How many days of sick leave must I anticipate needing before I can participate in this program?

You must anticipate the need for at least 10 days of sick leave in order to receive transfers under this program.

6. Do I need to apply for extended leave if other employees are donating their sick time to me?

Yes. Only employees with a verified, catastrophic illness, accident or injury requiring an extended leave are eligible to receive donated sick leave. Please refer to question #2.

7. Can I use sick leave for the death of a family member as defined above?

No, refer to #2 above for use of donated sick time. However, employees may ask for three days of bereavement leave for the death of a family member. Employees must have exhausted their bereavement leave first and then may ask that subsequent days be counted as sick leave.

8. How do I know how much sick time I have accumulated?

Employees can log into Skyward under “EMPLOYEE ACCESS” and choose the “TIME OFF STATUS” tab to see their current leave balances. Employees can also see their site timekeeper to get this information.

9. May I donate to a family member?

Yes. District employees may allow their family members (spouse, child, parent or sibling) to use the sick leave that has accrued to the employee if the family members are also district employees. The family member can only use the donated sick leave when all of his/her sick leave has been depleted.

10. Do I have to donate full days or can I just donate hours?

There is no minimum number of "days" that have to be donated by an employee but the hours donated have to equal one day. Therefore, if an employee is donating time to someone who regularly works a 7.75 hour day, exactly 7.75 hours must be donated. If the employee receiving donated time regularly works a 4 hour day then the donor must donate exactly 4 hours. Please make sure that the donation form is filled in correctly by knowing how many hours the employee requesting time regularly works before submitting the paperwork. Any paperwork with an insufficient number of hours to equal 1 paid day will be returned for reprocessing. This may cause the employee, who is requesting the time, to not receive the donation. The donor must fill out the form completely by indicating how many hours the recipient needs for the current payroll run. Only hours for the current payroll run should be submitted to the timekeeper at the recipients cost center. Donors who are submitting hours for another HCSD employee must maintain at least (2) weeks of sick leave hours in their balance. Family to family donations do not require the (2) week balance. All donation forms for the current school year become invalid on the last day of the school year.

11. When will sick leave donations be credited to my sick leave balance?

After all Extended leave documentation is received and the employee is approved to receive sick leave donations, an email will be sent out on TEAMS under "DISTRICT COMMUNICATIONS". At that time, employees may donate leave time to the employee requesting donations. Completed donation forms should be sent to the recipient's timekeeper. Credit of donated sick leave will only be posted for the current payroll run. Requests will not be processed retroactively. Timely submission of required documentation is required due to the time needed to review and determine if an employee qualifies to receive sick leave donations.

12. Is there a cutoff time when donations can no longer be accepted?

Yes, once an employee is out of time and no more donations have come in for the current payroll cycle, the employee will no longer be eligible for donations and no more donations can be accepted. After Human Resources closes the employee in Skyward he/she can no longer receive donations.

13. What forms do I use?

The forms required to request Family Donations or Employee to Employee Donations can be found at www.hernandoschools.org under Human Resources Department / Payroll / Sick Leave Donations.

TEMPORARY DUTY LEAVES AND REIMBURSEMENTS

Temporary duty may be approved for in-services, district meetings, conferences, competitions, and field trips. Any other request for temporary duty leave must be tied to position and must be of benefit to the District. Such activities require administrative approval. Any request for temporary duty that involves additional expenses such as registration, hotel, per diem, etc. must be approved in advance and submitted within 30 days of the last travel date. School Board approval is required in advance for all out of state travel. Travel reimbursement for hotel stays will be reimbursed for one room at a single conference room rate when the destination is greater than 50 miles for HCSD employees only. Travel procedures can be found on the District website <http://www.hernandoschools.org>.

See School Board Policy 1440, 3440 and 4440. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

UNPAID EXTENDED LEAVE

If an unpaid extended leave is approved for any reason, it will only be approved for the current school year. Unpaid extended leaves will not be approved past the current school year except in cases of personal illness as verified by the Human Resources Department, or one (1) full school year to provide child care after birth or adoption. Extensions of such leave must be approved by the School Board. Military leave orders will be

honored. Unpaid Personal leave will only be approved for reasons outlined in School Board Policy.

See School Board Policy 1430.04, 3430.04 and 4430.04. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

VACATION LEAVE

The following schedule shall be used in determining the accrual of annual leave:

Employees on 12-month contracts are entitled to accrue leave as follows:

1 year of service:	1/2 day per month
2 thru 5 years of service:	1 day per month
6 thru 10 years of service:	1 1/4 days per month
Over 10 years of service:	1 1/2 days per month

Vacation days must be earned before they can be used and may be accrued without limit, however, as per School Board Policy, there is a limit on the number of hours that may be paid out upon resignation, retirement or if transferred to a position that is not eligible to earn vacation leave. The scheduling of vacation leave shall be by mutual agreement between the employee and his/her supervisor.

See School Board Policy 1430.06, 3430.06 and 4430.06. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

MEETINGS

Faculty meetings will be called primarily on the basis of need of either the administration or upon request from the faculty. **Attendance is required at all faculty meetings unless otherwise approved by the principal.** Meetings of other staff members shall be scheduled, as needed. Any staff member may contribute to the agenda. Please refer to HCTA and HUSW contracts for additional information.

See School Board Policy 1243 and 3243. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

PARKING

All staff must park in the designated area. Parking on grass, sidewalks or designated fire lanes may result in the vehicle being towed at the owner's expense. Towed vehicles may be recovered from the designated wrecker service.

PAYROLL INFORMATION

In compliance with federal labor laws, employees must accurately record daily work hours on the appropriate time log. Falsification of these payroll records is grounds for termination.

- Paychecks for regular employees are subject to mandatory payroll deductions for social security tax, FRS, Medicare tax and federal withholding tax, based on Forms W-4 and the tax tables furnished by the Internal Revenue Service. Payroll matters concerning salary, payroll deductions and pay date should be handled through the work site timekeeper when possible.
- Personnel Action Form – PAF forms can be used to drop payroll deductions such as Annuity account deductions. Only your signature is required on this form.
- Payroll Calendar – The payroll calendar, which designates payroll due date and pay dates, will be

developed and issued annually by the Payroll Department.

- Notices of Deposit – No Notices of Deposit will be released before payday.
- Substitutes, temporary and part-time employees [less than four (4) hours per day] will be paid an hourly rate.

DIRECT DEPOSIT

Direct Deposit is mandatory for all employees. Employees can change their direct deposit at any time but cannot stop their direct deposit status. The inability to maintain a direct deposit account will result in the non-renewal of your annual employment contract. To make changes to your direct deposit information, you will need to present original documents to the timekeeper at your cost center. If you prefer, you can visit the District Office and ask for a representative from the Payroll Department. Your identification must be verified at the time you submit these documents. We will not accept direct deposit changes by email or fax.

PAYROLL - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. As a new hire, when can I expect my first paycheck?

If you begin work at the start of the school year, you should expect to receive your first check on the pay date according to the payroll calendars you will find online, as they are job specific. After the start of the school year, where your start date falls within the pay periods on the payroll calendars, determines when you will receive your first check. After the first check, the pay date is every two weeks.

2. What is “pro-rated” pay?

Employees who work for the HCSD will have their pay pro-rated, if applicable. The overall intent is to give employees as close to equal payments as possible, even when employees are off for Winter and Spring breaks. Employees can view and print paystubs from Employee Access.

3. What if my employment in a position did not begin until after the first day of the school year?

When your job is opened by H.R., the annual contract amount will be set according to the number of working days remaining in the current contract year. Payroll will provide an explanation of your bi-weekly pay.

4. What if I have a change in my salary or a change in my work schedule?

Your bi-weekly pay will be adjusted for the number of working days left in the current school year, and you will be paid accordingly.

5. When I terminate my employment with the school board, when may I expect to receive payment for unused sick leave, vacation leave, and extra pay earned but not paid due to pro- rata?

The termination date is the determining factor as to when payouts are paid. The Payroll Calendar shows the Pay Period and the corresponding Pay Date. If the termination date falls in the middle of the ‘pay period’ it is still calculated and paid out on that ‘pay date’.

6. How will I be paid for my sick leave when my employment ends?

An employee’s sick leave payout is determined by the number of years they have worked for the district. Per School Board Policy: after 10 years and up to 12 years = 50% payout. 13 years or more = 100% payout. After the termination date is entered by Human Resources, the Payroll Department can then calculate the sick leave payout. The actual pay date is determined by the termination date and where it coincides with

the Payroll Calendar for that school year. Teachers, Administrators, Professional Technical and Confidential employee's eligible sick leave payoffs go to Bencor if the total is \$1,000 or more. The actual portion that is eligible to go to Bencor is based on the fiscal earnings of the employee at the time of resignation/retirement.

7. What if I have any unpaid absences? How will they affect my pay?

Unpaid absences are deducted from the pay period in which the absence occurs on the Payroll Schedule. Any unpaid absences will result in an employees' paycheck being lower than normal for that pay period. For contract employees, the unpaid absence appears on their paystub as negative pay under the DOCK code. The negative pay is calculated by multiplying the DOCK hours by the employee's primary hourly rate.

8. What if I want to put in extra time over 40 hours to get my work done?

If you are a non-exempt employee, you may only do so with the prior approval of your supervisor. Employees who disregard this rule will be disciplined.

9. What if my supervisor asks me to stay late to finish work?

You must first both agree that you will receive comp time for the extra time worked and an Authorization to Accrue Comp Time Form must be signed. If you prefer to be paid for overtime your supervisor must secure prior approval of the superintendent by having the Authorization to be Paid for Overtime Worked Form signed.

10. What is the HCSB policy on Comp time?

Compensatory or "comp" time is given to any non- exempt employee who works over 40 hours in a workweek and follows Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) guidelines. See [FLSA Manual](#) and [HUSW contracts](#) for additional information. A non-exempt employee can only have a maximum balance of 240.0 hrs. comp time at any given time.

11. Do teachers earn comp time?

Teachers do not earn comp time. An administrator may give permission for a teacher to have some time off if the teacher has been asked to work beyond his/her normally scheduled hours. Supervisors must not allow time off on an hour-per-hour basis for work performed by an exempt employee. Please refer to the HCTA contract for additional information on Alternate Schedule Time (AST).

12. Do paras earn comp time?

Paras earn comp time (time and a half) if they are asked to work over 40 hours in a workweek.

13. When can they use it?

Paras can use comp time whenever they have prior approval of their administrator.

14. Can I use comp time before it is accrued?

No

15. How do I document that I have earned comp time?

Non-exempt employees will notate the hours worked on the Authorization to Accrue Comp Time Form and

have it signed prior to working extended hours. The non-exempt employee will also note hours worked on his/her time sheet.

16. Do I keep my comp time if I transfer to another site?

Yes. Your Comp Time Balance will transfer with you to any location. You are, however, asked to use the time before transferring to a new site, if possible. If you transfer to an exempt position, your comp time will be paid out to you.

17. Can I choose to get paid time and a half instead of earning comp time?

Yes. It is your choice to receive pay rather than earn comp time, however, the Superintendent must pre-approve, in writing, any request for overtime pay in lieu of comp time. Requests to accrue comp time must be mutually agreed upon by you and your immediate supervisor prior to working extended hours.

18. I am a supervisor who has told my nonexempt employees to NOT come in early or stay late but they do so anyway. What should I do? Do I have to pay them overtime?

You must compensate them for any time worked over 40 hours even if your employees have been told not to work early or late. However they will be disciplined for insubordination and this discipline may lead to termination.

19. What is the HCSB policy on Flex-time?

Flex-time may be used either by non-exempt or exempt employees, during non-student contact hours only. All flex-time must be approved by an immediate supervisor in advance. Employees should request flex-time on a temporary and infrequent basis. Flex-time is earned at the site level only and is not recorded in Skyward. Flex-time must be utilized during the same pay period the flex-time is earned. Example, an employee requests to leave half an hour prior to the end of their shift Monday but will remain half an hour after the end of their shift Tuesday. Flex-time does not accumulate.

20. A non-exempt employee asks to take his lunch hour during the last hour of the day. Can the supervisor allow this?

This change to lunch schedule should only be allowed when it does not disturb the workflow and is not done frequently by the same employee. The employee should sign out on a site/department sign out sheet indicating that lunch is being taken at the end of the workday. This sheet should be retained by the timekeeper. The employee should sign his/her timesheet indicating the correct time that he/she left.

21. Is an employee permitted to change his/her work hours by taking lunch or break time at the end of each day and leaving early?

No.

22. Do times on timesheets have to be exact?

Timesheets must accurately reflect the hours worked. Employees may sign in up to 7 minutes prior to the scheduled work time and sign out up to 7 minutes after the scheduled work time without the expectation of additional compensation. This does not permit employees to report to work later than the assigned time or leave prior to the end of shift.

23. Where can I learn more?

Visit the U.S. Department of Labor's website at: www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/hrg.htm. Or review our [FLSA Manual](#).

PERSONNEL RECORDS

Personnel/employment records are processed and maintained in the Human Resources Department. All personnel files are public records and as such are available for public inspection. If you would like to review your personnel file, please contact the Human Resources Department for an appointment. You may also make an electronic request by following this link: <https://www.hernandoschools.org/our-district/public-records-request>

The School Board automatically exempts some confidential and sensitive personal information, such as social security numbers and medical information, from your personnel file before public disclosure in accordance with the Public Records Law. An agency that is the custodian of the personal information specified shall maintain the exempt status of the personal information only if the officer, employee, justice, judge, or other person, or employing agency of the designated employee, submits a written request for maintenance of the exemption to the custodial agency. If you are a current School District employee who is either an active or former employee in one of the above categories, and/or you are the spouse of an active or former employee, you may exercise your right of exemption from certain Public Records laws. If you elect to exempt your address and telephone number from all School District publicists, please fill out the [Exempt from Public Record](#) form and return it to the Human Resources Department. For more information about this written exemption or to see if you qualify, please refer to Florida Statute 119.071. If you qualify, you will need to complete in writing the Exempt from Public Record form. If you need additional assistance, please contact Human Resources.

Use of Social Security Numbers

The Human Resource Department should be notified in writing of any changes in personal status such as changes in name, address or marital status. Please notify Risk, Benefits and Wellness regarding any changes in beneficiary for life insurance purposes and/or changes in the number of dependents.

See School Board Policy 1590, 3590 and 4590. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

New employees and current employees with employment unit changes work a probationary period during which they can be terminated without cause. There are five (5) employment units within the school system: Administrative, Confidential, Instructional, Noninstructional and Professional/Technical/Supervisory. For administrative (that require a Florida Educator's Certificate) employees, the probationary period is 97 work days as per Florida Statute. For instructional employees, the probationary period is one (1) year as per Florida Statute. For instructional staff who work less than one-half of their contract year, if reappointed, will be issued a probationary contract for the next full school year. If an instructional employee has a break in service, they will be issued a new probationary contract upon return to active employment as long as the break in service was not for an approved extended leave. A break in service occurs when an employee resigns, retires, is terminated or is nonreappointed and is not re-hired before the first day of the teacher contract for the next school year.

For all other employees, the probationary period is 60 work days. The probationary period begins on the first work day. The probationary period excludes weekends, paid/unpaid holidays and orientations.

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

WHAT IS A PUBLIC RECORD? Any document or record that is created or received by an agency in connection with official agency business, and not considered confidential.

- Email messages sent from and to the district network
- Staff employment records
- Staff discipline records (10 days after investigation is complete)
- Social media posts to and from the district network
- Staff Directory Information (addresses, personal phone numbers, email, etc.) unless exempt.

While personal notes and/or emails are exempt from public record, the Hernando County School Board Policy states that employees are to use school board equipment for business use only.

All public record requests are to be forwarded to the Communications & Government Relations Department. An electronic request may be submitted by following this link: <https://www.hernandoschools.org/our-district/public-records-request>. The Communications and Government Relations Department staff will work with the appropriate custodian of the record and respond to the requester in a timely manner.

REAPPOINTMENTS AND EMPLOYMENT CONTRACTS

Employees who are classified as Confidential, Professional/Technical/Supervisory, Administrative, and Instructional (hired after July 1, 2011) are on Annual Contract status regardless of how long they have worked within the district.

Instructional employees are hired on a probationary contract. The employee will remain on probationary contract during the first full year of service. Once the employee is reappointed, after a full year of service, an annual contract will be issued in accordance with Florida Statute 1012.335. An instructional employee on probationary is not guaranteed reemployment each year and may be recommended for non-reappointment. Additional information regarding annual contract can be found in 8.105 of the Agreement between the Hernando County School Board and the Hernando Classroom Teachers' Association. If a teacher was employed within the Hernando County Schools on a Professional Services Contract and is rehired after a break in service, he/she will be placed back on Probationary Contract, in accordance with Florida law.

Noninstructional employees gain tenure after completing three (3) years of service. A noninstructional employee without tenure is not guaranteed reemployment each year and may be recommended for non-reappointment by the site administrator. After successfully completing three (3) years of experience with the Hernando County School District and being recommended for reappointment by the site administrator for the fourth consecutive year, a noninstructional employee gains tenure.

If an employee on an annual or probationary contract is not being recommended for reappointment, a reason or justification is not required due to annual contract status.

RESIGNATIONS

Any person who wishes to resign is expected to complete the electronic resignation form on the District's Application Management System. The Superintendent is authorized to accept resignations on behalf of the School Board. Upon submitting their resignation, an employee must provide keys and identification/access badge to their supervisor prior to final departure from their worksite.

A resignation cannot be rescinded or amended by the employee after submission.

Employees who wish to schedule an Exit Interview may do so by contacting the Coordinator of Retention at 352-797-7005 ext. 467.

SAFE DRIVER PLAN

Employees of the School District or employees who volunteer to drive who, during the performance of their job assignments, operates a School District vehicle or regularly uses their personal vehicle for School District use are required to adhere to the Safe Driver Plan. All drivers shall sign a receipt acknowledging they have received a copy of the Safe Driver Plan and shall supply a copy of their driver's license to the Transportation Department so their driving record can be checked. For more information, please click here: [Safe Driver Plan](#)

SAFETY AND SECURITY

ELECTRONIC SURVEILLANCE DEVICES

All HCSD property is protected by electronic surveillance devices. These devices may be used to monitor students, staff, and visitors while on HCSD property. All cameras are digitally recorded 24 hours a day. Video generally remains available for approximately 30 days unless a prior request to preserve video has been made through the Office of Safe Schools. Cameras used to monitor activity may be installed by the Office of Safe Schools in any room or area with the exception of bathrooms and changing rooms in any school district facility. Video and audio from HCSD buses and other video equipped HCSD vehicles is generally available for 3 to 30 days, depending on the recording equipment used. There is no expectation of visual or audio privacy in any HCSD-owned vehicles.

The cameras used in HCSD-owned vehicles record both video and audio input.

DOORS AND GATES

It is the directive of HCSD that **all** classroom doors and gates are to remain closed and locked during the school day when students are present. Pedestrian gates are to be closed and locked unless manned for the periods of arrival and dismissal.

Teachers and staff are responsible for maintaining locked doors and windows of their classrooms at all times. Failure to follow this procedure may put students and staff at risk. Failure to secure doors and gates may be subject to employee disciplinary procedures.

DRONES

At all times, the use of drones on school board property is strictly prohibited unless as part of approved

curriculum AND under the supervision of an HCSD staff member.

EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS

In order to streamline the HCSD Emergency Notifications, a district contact has been assigned the task of receiving all emergency notifications during the school day and after hours. The lead site administrator or his/her designee will be responsible for ensuring the timely reporting of any and all incidents at each HCSD school. The Director of Safe Schools must be notified at the first opportunity. In turn, the Director of Safe Schools will immediately notify the Superintendent of Schools and any other required emergency response agencies or affected departments. If a facilities or maintenance emergency exists, notification must be made to the Director of Facilities Operations Division or his/her designee. Notifications will follow state rules.

Each site will be responsible for calling 911 if the situation requires it and then calling the Director of Safe Schools at (352)797- 7233 or cell (352) 263-5869. It is essential that all other elements of the site's emergency plans are followed during an emergency. This includes, but is not limited to, evacuations, secure campus events, lockouts, lockdowns, active shooter events, and/or weather- related emergencies.

The principal, site administrator or designee is responsible to ensure that any incident involving first responders beyond the SRO on campus is reported to the Director of Safe Schools at (352)797-7233 or cell (352)263-5869 as immediately as possible.

Reportable incidents which should be called in as immediately as possible include:

- Evacuations (for any reason to include, but not limited to: fire, bomb, chemical spill)
- Active Campus Threat (secure perimeter, hold in place, reverse evacuation)
- Weapons found, fired or reported on or near campus
- Sexual Battery
- Kidnapped or missing children
- Hostage situation
- Any threat or act of violence against a student, staff member, or site
- Any student, staff member or other person who is injured on an HCSD site AND is transported to the hospital
- Break-ins, vandalism, or theft of property from a site
- The on-site arrest of any student, staff member or other person
- The death or attempted suicide of any student or staff member off site and student, staff member or other person on site
- Any prolonged loss of utility service (electrical, water, phone, internet, digital radios and air conditioning) that creates a disruption of the school/site.
- Any motor vehicle accident that takes place on HCSD property or involves a HCSD owned, rented or leased vehicle on or off HCSD property. This includes golf carts, gators, tractors, and all other motorized vehicles.
- All other incidents that take place on or off- site that may cause a disruption to the normal operation of a facility or requires a response from an outside agency such as: Law Enforcement, Fire Departments, Emergency Management, Health Department, Hazmat Team or the Department of Environmental Protection.

The contact numbers for reporting incidents are: Director of Safe Schools: Office 352-797- 7233, Cell Phone: 352-263-5869 OR Fire Official: Office (352)797-7050, or Personal Cell (352)573-7878.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

See your site administrator for site specific emergency plans/procedures.

EMERGENCY SHELTERS

The following locations are made available for use by the general public in case of natural disasters (such as hurricanes or tornadoes) or man-made disasters and provide an orderly method of operating the facility should the need arise. The facilities named below have been designated as emergency shelters, should the County Director of Emergency Management determine it is necessary. These will be the only school facilities open to the public for this purpose unless the Superintendent of HCSD makes the decision to open other locations as needed:

- Central High School
- Challenger K-8 School of Science and Mathematics (special needs and service animals only)
- Chocachatti Elementary School
- D.S. Parrott Middle School (Pet Friendly: accepts dogs and cats only at shelter)
- Deltona Elementary School
- Explorer K-8 School
- Fox Chapel Middle School
- F.W. Springstead High School
- Hernando High School
- Moton Elementary School
- Nature Coast Technical High School
- Suncoast Elementary School
- Weeki Wachee High School
- West Hernando Middle School
- Winding Waters K-8 School

These facilities will be supervised by Hernando County School District staff members as determined/directed by the HCSD Superintendent or designee. All general population shelters may be activated as pet friendly shelters.

EMERGENCY EMPLOYEE SCREENING FOR SUICIDALITY OR THREAT ASSESSMENT

- All cases where an individual who is reportedly (by self or others) displaying signs of suicidal or threatening behavior must be taken seriously. At no time shall the individual be left alone. The site supervisor shall follow the steps below:
- The individual of concern should be escorted to a location separate from other staff members and placed in the presence of a confidential employee.
- The site administrator must immediately inform the District's Director of Labor Relations & Professional Standards who will inform the Superintendent of the situation.
- The site administrator must contact the Director of Safe Schools who will inform the Coordinator of Threat Assessment of the need for a suicide risk assessment or behavioral threat assessment. This assessment will be separate from any interviews or investigations by site administrators that may lead to discipline. To protect privacy, union representation is not permitted during these assessments.
- The Coordinator of Threat Assessment will communicate findings to the Director of Labor Relations & Professional Standards.
- The Director of Labor Relations & Professional Standards will advise the Superintendent of assessment findings and make appropriate recommendations.

I.D. BADGES/ELECTRONIC ACCESS CARDS

Employee ID badges are photo IDs provided by the Office of Safe Schools Department and are free of charge to all employees. ID badges/Access badges **must** be worn at all times by staff for security purposes. Replacement of broken or damaged badges are provided free of charge to all employees. If it is determined

by the Office of Safe Schools, that any badge was damaged by neglect, improper storage, or purposeful damage then a replacement cost of \$20 will be charged. Lost badges are replaced at a cost of \$20.00. Employee ID badges can be kept year-round for ID and discount purposes.

KEYS AND ELECTRONIC ACCESS CARDS

Keys are to be secured through the principal and/or designee. Requests for additional or duplicate keys must be approved by the principal. **A request for additional keys must be requested through the work order system. Keys may only be duplicated by the HCSD Office of Safe Schools and only after approval is gained through the work-site administrator and Safe School's designated staff member.** Staff may not issue or loan keys or electronic access cards to students or other staff members. Keys and electronic access cards are assigned to specific staff members who are responsible for the security of the areas to which they provide access. Staff may not unlock doors to other rooms at the request of students nor allow students to enter rooms unsupervised. Keys and Electronic Access Cards are to be kept secured at all times, so as to avoid the possibility of loss or theft.

Keys and electronic access cards for district equipment, vehicles and buildings are the responsibility of the staff member to whom the keys were assigned. In the event an employee's assigned keys or electronic key cards are lost or stolen, the employee will be responsible for the cost of replacing them and/or the equipment associated with them (re-keying locks, key blanks, reprogramming locks, etc.). The wages of an employee who does not timely reimburse the district may be garnished until reimbursement is made. Each case of a lost or stolen key will be reviewed individually to determine if the employee acted with due diligence or if an unusual circumstance existed that may hold the employee harmless for replacement costs. The cost of replacing a damaged Electronic Access Card is free as long as the damaged card is available for review. If it is determined by the Office of Safe Schools, that any badge was damaged by neglect, improper storage, or purposeful damage then a replacement cost of \$20 will be charged. The cost of replacing a lost or stolen Electronic Access Card is \$20.00. At the time Keys or Electronic Access Cards become lost or stolen, the site administrator and HCSD Office of Safe Schools must be informed immediately so that the site administrator can be made aware, and the electronic access card can be removed from the system. When sending electronic access cards and payment for lost or stolen badges through interoffice mail, the designated Office of Safe Schools transit bag must be used. All transactions using the secured transit bags must go through the site access coordinator.

The site administrator or his/her designee shall collect all keys, electronic access cards (specific for that site) from any employee whose employment is ending with the HCSD, transferring to a different site, or on leave of absence. If keys and or electronic access cards are not retrieved, the HCSD Office of Safe Schools shall be notified immediately. Keys issued to all employees who work less than 249- day contracts must be turned in to each school/site administrator at the end of each school year.

Exceptions may be made on an individual basis as agreed upon by the site administrator and Office of Safe Schools Director or designee. Keys will be reissued to employees returning for the following school year during pre-school week.

ID/Access badges must be audited by each work-site's key coordinator annually. Once the key coordinator has verified the possession and quality of each employee's ID/Access Badge, the badge may be returned to the employee. Any broken, significantly faded, or non-functioning badge should be returned to the Office of Safe Schools for replacement. If it is determined by the Office of Safe Schools, that any badge was damaged by neglect, improper storage, or purposeful damage then a replacement cost of \$20 will be charged. Employees who work less than 249 days per year will have their electronic access temporarily

disabled (for their scheduled time off) unless explicit permission is sought by the site administrator and granted by the Office of Safe Schools.

VENDORS

Vendors who come on school campuses must have a current State and HCSD-issued Vendor ID showing they have successfully completed the proper background check. Any vendor who does not have a valid HCSD vendor ID must be directed to the Office of Safe Schools and must not enter school grounds.

The visitor management program cannot be used as a substitute for the required background check and School District-issued Vendor-ID.

All staff should redirect vendors without the proper vendor ID to the front office where they will be given instruction on how to get the proper vendor ID. If a vendor does not return to the main office or leave the premises staff are instructed to call law enforcement and have them removed from the premises. See Appendix J for specific information about badge colors and requirements for vendors and contractors.

VISITORS

A visitor's pass must be issued to all non-employee and non-vendor persons, including family members and parents/ guardians, who are on the campus. All visitors must be escorted or with a HCSD staff member while on campus and should never be alone with students. Staff members are to escort any persons without the proper visitor pass to the office. All visitors to school campuses during normal business hours must present a valid driver's license, State ID or military ID. The ID must be scanned through the visitor management program to ensure that the visitor or volunteer is not a sexual offender or predator. No sexual offenders or predators may enter any Hernando County School District site unless they have been cleared by the Safe Schools Department and follow the restriction placed on them by the School District.

HCSD staff, and/or Hernando County first responders who are wearing their agency identification badge should sign in at the main office using the current sign in method (visitor management system). If employees or first responders in uniform are signed into the visitor management program, the school can enter a birthdate of 01/01/11. This way all visitors to campus can be accounted for in the event of an emergency. Any district staff member who is **NOT** wearing his/her badge **must** produce a driver's license and be scanned in through the visitor management software system.

STAFF INVESTIGATIONS

If there is an allegation of misconduct made about a staff member, then an investigation is initiated. An investigation should be completed by the supervisor of that employee. The Superintendent will designate investigator in extenuating circumstances. Human Resources will coordinate investigations where multiple supervisors may be involved due to student involvement and/or multiple worksites. A staff member will be informed of the complaint/general allegation coming to the attention of the supervisor and that he/she is under investigation, prior to public notification being made. A staff member may be removed from student contact or work duties. That removal may be to report to a specific place at the work site, another work site, or in certain cases may include administrative leave. Administrative leave will mean that the employee will not report to work and will continue to receive regular pay during the investigation. Employees will receive all due process provided by policy, applicable bargaining contracts, and applicable law. Employees who are members of a bargaining unit are entitled to representation in accordance with the bargained employment contract. It is up to the employee to coordinate that representative, though supervisors or may make direct contact with the appropriate union representative when that action may simplify scheduling issues. After the investigation has been concluded discipline may be issued in accordance with district policy, due process, applicable bargaining agreements, and applicable law. Certificated employees whose

misconduct requires reporting to the Department of Education will be informed that such a report has been made.

Other agencies may have parallel investigation(s), separate from those being conducted by the school district. When the district has knowledge and is able to notify staff member(s) of these investigations, they will do so. Every effort will be made to maintain employee confidentiality during the investigation.

See School Board Policy 1139, 1139.01, 1140, 1550, 3139, 3139.01, 3140, 3140.01, 3550, 4139.01, 4140, 4550, and 8141 Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

TOBACCO FREE ENVIRONMENT

TOBACCO USE AND E-CIGARETTES

School Board Policies prohibit the use of any form of tobacco products anywhere on the campus of any facility owned or leased or contracted for the Board, including, but not limited to, practice fields, playgrounds, football fields, baseball fields, softball fields, pool areas, soccer fields, tennis courts, all open areas and in any area utilized by students or designated for student activities. Additionally, the use of tobacco products in any form in facilities, vehicles and areas designated for various student programs and activities is prohibited. This includes the use of e-cigarettes, “vapor”, or other substitute forms of cigarettes, clove cigarettes, or other smoking devices.

NICOTINE PATCHES

The wearing of a nicotine patch is allowed by staff when prescribed by a medical doctor. Patches should be worn under clothing, if possible.

See School Board Policy 7434, 1215, 3215, 4215 and 5512. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

TOXIC SUBSTANCES AT WORK

Employees have a right to know about exposures to toxic substances in the workplace. A list of toxic substances is listed at each school or District facility. Toxic Hazard Preparedness (THP) is the responsibility of the Facilities and Operations Division. Current files of Safety Data Sheets (SDSs) will be maintained for every hazardous material present on District property. In fulfilling these responsibilities, the Facilities and Operations Division may enlist the aid of county and municipal authorities and, if possible, the owners or operators of identified potential sources of toxic hazards.

See School Board Policy 8431. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

USE OF SCHOOL FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT

Use of facilities is governed by Board Policy. Any individual or organization leasing Board facilities must comply with the Use of Facilities Procedures. Site administrators do not have the authority to waive Use of Facility fees. Events may not take place which will interfere in any way with regular school activities, adult education programs, or community school programs. Requests for use of facilities should be made in such a fashion to assure adequate time for consideration by the Superintendent to either grant or deny approval of a request. Final approval must be obtained before advertising the activity. Facility Use process documents can be found on the District website: <https://www.hernandoschools.org/departments/budget->

finance/use-of-facilities

Employees should not use district-owned equipment for personal use.

The Loan of District Equipment form (SO-PC-002) must be completed by the employee when any type of district equipment is loaned (i.e., bringing a laptop computer home). Employees are responsible for the cost of any damages to, or the loss of, the equipment. Equipment loaned will be for business use only and shall not be used for gainful outside employment or private use of employees for personal gain, or by any outside group or organization, in accordance with School Board policy.

See School Board Policy 7510 and 7530. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

AUDIO-VISUAL EQUIPMENT

Equipment will be available from the media center and can be checked out by the media center staff. Employees are responsible for the prompt return and care of the equipment.

VOLUNTEERS LEVEL I AND LEVEL II (A+)/SPONSORS

Volunteers who are NOT employees will be addressed through the School Board-Adopted Volunteer Guidelines Manual and policy.

Any staff member who serves as a volunteer for any school-sponsored activity remains governed by Board policies related to employee behavior and action.

See School Board Policy 2430.01. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

WEAPONS/FIREARMS

It is the expressed policy of the Hernando County School Board that District employees are prohibited from openly carrying a handgun or carrying a concealed weapon or firearm, in a school safety zone, into any elementary or secondary school, administration building, as well as into any Board meeting, any setting that is under the control and supervision of the Board for the purpose of school activities approved and authorized by the Board including, but not limited to, property leased, owned, or contracted for by the Board, a school-sponsored event, or in a Board-owned vehicle.

All persons, including school personnel, violating the provisions of this policy, while on School Board property or while attending school activities, wherever located, shall be immediately reported to the proper law enforcement authority. Employees violating the above provisions shall also be reported to the School Board and to the Professional Practice Commission. The Superintendent shall report any Employee violation of the provisions hereof to the School Board and shall also include a recommendation for disciplinary action, which may include suspension or dismissal.

Authorized school programs such as School Safety Guardians which require the usage of firearms shall be exempted as follows:

*The only District employees who may possess weapons on campus include Safe Schools' employees who hold positions of School Safety Guardians. Guardians may open carry only when they are in uniform and

on duty fulfilling the job responsibilities of their role as School Safety Guardian for the site to which they are assigned – at school, on school transportation or at a school-sponsored event, e.g. football game, or a School Board Meeting. School Safety Guardians may not carry a weapon concealed at any time while on duty. The Director of Safe Schools may, under extraordinary circumstances, briefly possess a firearm that has been assigned to a School Safety Guardian.

See School Board Policy 1217, 3217 and 4217. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

WORK EXPERIENCE – (salary purposes only)

EARNING YEARS OF WORK EXPERIENCE

Employees must work one (1) full day more than one-half (1/2) of the contract year (assigned to their position) in order to earn a year of experience. If an employee does not earn a year of experience, he/she will remain on the current salary schedule step/level until the following school year ends.

WORK EXPERIENCE GRANTED FOR MILITARY EXPERIENCE

Professional/Technical/Supervisory and Administrative personnel will not be granted military experience unless the military experience is deemed like to said PTS or Administrative job description.

Instructional personnel may receive up to ten (10) years of credit for military experience. A copy of the DD-214 must be submitted to the Human Resources Department.

Non-instructional and Confidential Military Veterans may be granted a \$500 supplement for military experience provided a DD214 is submitted to the Human Resources Department for review and approval. At least one year of full-time military active duty is required to be eligible for the supplement. The DD-214 form(s) must be received in the Human Resources Department within 45 calendar days of the employee's start date to be retroactive to the employee's start date. If the forms are received after the 45 days, the salary adjustment will be made from the beginning of the pay period during which the forms were received.

WORK EXPERIENCE GRANTED FOR PREVIOUS EMPLOYMENT

All experience must be verified by the former employer(s). Verification of Work Experience Forms are available on the Human Resources Department link on the HCSD website. The Work Experience Forms are also provided at the time of on-boarding. It is the responsibility of the employee to request these forms and provide the completed forms to the Human Resources Department.

The verification of employment forms must be received in the Human Resources Department within 45 calendar days of the employee's start date to be retroactive to the employee's start date. If the forms are received after the 45 days, the salary adjustment will be made from the beginning of the pay period during which the forms were received.

Instructional personnel may be granted up to twenty (20) years of teaching experience if the following criterion is met:

- Must have documentation of a satisfactory evaluation rating in a full-time teaching position for each year verified
- Must have the previous employer listed on the occupational experience section of the application for employment
- Form(s) must be complete and signed by previous employer or employment agency and must

- include contact information (address, phone number, etc.)
- Previous position must have required a valid teaching certificate
- Previous employer must have been an accredited institution

Professional/Technical/Supervisory personnel may be granted up to ten (10) years of like experience if the following criteria are met:

- Must be like job experience (similar duties) as determined by Human Resources
- Must have previous employer listed on the occupational experience section of the application for employment
- Form(s) must be complete and signed by previous employer or employment agency and must include contact information (address, phone number, etc.)

Administrative personnel may be granted up to fifteen (15) years of administrative experience if the following criteria are met:

- Must be like job experience (similar duties)
- Must have been in a supervisory or administrative capacity
- Must have previous employer listed on the occupational experience section of the application for employment
- Form(s) must be complete and signed by previous employer or employment agency and must include contact information (address, phone number, etc.)

The employee may be required to provide additional documentation, such as a job description, if required by the Human Resources Department administrator. Previous experience can only be brought in one time for the entire duration of employment with the Hernando County School District regardless of employment changes. Employee has up to 30 days from the date experience is granted to appeal the number of years granted.

WORK EXPERIENCE SUBSTITUTED FOR REQUIRED POST SECONDARY EDUCATION

Related work experience equivalencies may be substituted in lieu of postsecondary education as per Senate Bill 1310 for a position of employment if the person seeking the position is otherwise qualified for such position. Related work experience may not substitute for any required licensure, certification, or registration required for the position of employment as indicated in the board approved job description of the position of employment.

A public employer may include a postsecondary degree as a baseline requirement only as an alternative to the number of years of direct experience required, not to exceed:

- Two years of direct experience for an associate degree;
- Four years of direct experience for a bachelor's degree;
- Six years of direct experience for a master's degree;
- Seven years of direct experience for a professional (specialist) degree; or
- Nine years of direct experience for a doctoral degree.

Any years used to substitute for a required postsecondary education may not be used as experience towards

salary. Only years in excess of those used to substitute for the required postsecondary education may be applied towards determining the starting salary for said position, as applicable.

Staff Handbook

Section 3: Employee Benefits and Risk Management

Employee Benefits

Qualifying Event/Change in Status

Retirement

Workers' Compensation

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

NEW EMPLOYEE BENEFIT ELECTIONS

An election confirmation and enrollment form, provided as a downloadable document via the new employee orientation, must be completed and returned to Human Resources during onboarding. The new employee can make changes within the first 30 days from the first day of employment by emailing a new election confirmation form marked “revised” to a Risk, Benefits & Wellness Specialist. When adding dependents, you must provide dependent verification: birth certificate, marriage certificate, etc. Benefits will be effective on the first of the month following a sixty (60) day waiting period. The employee will not be eligible to make changes to his/her insurance until the open enrollment period unless he/she is experiencing a qualifying event as per IRS Section 125 regulation. If an employee elects to participate, premiums will be charged retroactively to the employee’s effective date via payroll deduction. The effective date will be the 1st of the month following a sixty (60) day waiting period. Visit the [Benefits](#) page on our website for more information.

NEW EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT ELECTION

New employees must choose to participate in a Florida Retirement System (FRS) plan before the deadline, 4:00pm ET on the last business day of the eighth month following their month of hire. If the employee does not submit a plan choice by the deadline, the Investment Plan will be considered their 1st Election by default. Contact MyFRS Financial Guidance Line toll-free at 1-866-446-9377, Option 2 for free retirement planning.

BENEFITS WHILE ON UNPAID EXTENDED LEAVE OF ABSENCE

While on unpaid extended leave of absence, the employee is responsible for 100% of benefit premium payments. Life insurance must be converted to an individual policy. If the leave is due to illness, the employee may be eligible for a waiver of premium from the life insurance company. The employee’s payment should be made through the Hernando County School District, Attention Benefit Payments. If an employee is deficient in paying premiums, the employee’s benefits will be terminated. It is the employee’s responsibility to notify Risk, Benefits and Wellness and the life insurance company when he/she returns to active employment.

BENEFITS WHILE ON FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

When an employee is out on continuous or intermittent Family Medical Leave, the School District will continue to contribute its portion of the employee’s health and life insurance premium, and the employee is responsible for his/her portion of any other benefit premium payments. The employee’s payment should be made through the Hernando County School District, Attention Benefit Payments. If an employee is deficient in paying premiums, the employee’s benefits will be terminated. It is the employee’s responsibility to notify Risk, Benefits and Wellness and the life insurance company when he/she returns to active employment. The employee will automatically be enrolled in the District’s group life insurance plan on the first of the month following a sixty (60) day waiting period unless the employee elects differently by completing and returning the election confirmation and enrollment form within the first 30 days of returning to active employment status.

BENEFITS WHILE ON MILITARY LEAVE

While on Military Leave, the employee is responsible for 100% of benefit premium payments. The life insurance must be converted to an individual policy. The employee’s payment should be made through the Hernando County School District, Attention Benefit Payments. If the employee is deficient in paying premiums, the employee’s benefits will be terminated. It is the employee’s responsibility to notify Risk,

Benefits and Wellness and the life insurance company when he/she returns to active employment. The employee will automatically be enrolled in the District's group life insurance plan on the first of the month following a sixty (60) day waiting period unless the employee elects differently by completing and returning the election confirmation and enrollment form within the first 30 days of returning to active employment status.

BENEFITS WHILE ON RETIREMENT

Retired School District personnel and their eligible dependents may be able to continue participation in their current group insurance plans. Insurance premiums are paid by the retiree. Retirees will be required to have their benefit payments deducted from their FRS Pension check. If the employee is not receiving a pension check because they elected the Investment Plan option or if their pension check is not sufficient to be able to deduct the benefit payment, the retiree may pay the benefit premium direct to the Hernando County School District, Attention Benefit Payments. If the retiree is deficient in paying premiums, the retiree's benefits will be terminated. Contact Risk, Benefits and Wellness for more information.

BENEFITS WHILE ON SUSPENSION WITH OR WITHOUT PAY

While on suspension with or without pay, the School District will continue to contribute its portion of the employee's health and life insurance. The employee is responsible for his/her portion of any other benefit premium payments. The employee's payment should be made through the Hernando County School District, Attention Benefit Payments. If the employee is deficient in paying premiums, the employee's benefits will be terminated. It is the employee's responsibility to notify Risk, Benefits and Wellness and the life insurance company when he/she returns to active employment. The employee will automatically be enrolled in the District's group life insurance plan on the first of the month following a sixty (60) day waiting period unless the employee elects differently by completing and returning the election confirmation and enrollment form within the first 30 days of returning to active employment status.

BENEFITS WHILE ON WORKER'S COMPENSATION LEAVE

When an employee is out on Worker's Compensation Leave, the School District will continue to contribute its portion of the employee's health and life insurance. The employee is responsible for his/her portion of any other benefit premium payments. The employee's payment should be made through the Hernando County School District, Attention Benefit Payments. If the employee is deficient in paying premiums, the employee's benefits will be terminated. It is the employee's responsibility to notify Risk, Benefits and Wellness and the life insurance company when he/she returns to active employment. The employee will automatically be enrolled in the District's group life insurance plan on the first of the month following a sixty (60) day waiting period unless the employee elects differently by completing and returning the election confirmation and enrollment form within the first 30 days of returning to active employment status.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

An employee will continue coverage via the Hernando County School District's group insurance policy until the end of the month in which he/she terminates. The termination date is determined by the last day an employee worked or was on an approved leave. A COBRA election notice will be sent with directions on how to continue benefits.

WAIVER OF BENEFITS

If an employee does not choose to enroll in the health, vision or dental plan, the employee must complete the Election Confirmation and Enrollment Form to decline coverage, elect a beneficiary and forward to Risk, Benefits and Wellness. The employee will automatically be enrolled in the District's group life insurance plan and will not be eligible for benefits until the next open enrollment period unless the employee

experiences a qualifying event as described in IRS Section 125 regulation. The employee will have thirty (30) days from the date of the qualifying event to make changes.

QUALIFYING EVENT/CHANGE IN STATUS

What is a qualifying event/change in status?

A Qualifying Event/Change in Status is an IRS permitted mid-year plan election change.

Can I change my benefits during the year?

In general, during the plan year, under limited circumstances as provided by the District School Board of Hernando County's plans and IRS regulations, a Change in Status event may permit you to change a benefit election if you, your spouse, or dependent gained or lost eligibility for coverage under a qualified plan, as described in IRS Section 125 regulation.

What type of changes can I make?

The IRS requires that mid-year plan election changes must be on account of and corresponds with a change in status that affects your own, your spouse's, or your dependent's eligibility. The IRS requires mid-year plan election changes be on account of, and consistent with, a permitted event. Mid-year plan election changes are not automatic. Even if you experience a permitted Change in Status election change event under IRS regulations, your employer's component plans' insurance contracts may not allow (or may limit) mid-year plan election changes.

How do I know if I have experienced a change in status?

The 2-Step Rule: You can only change your benefit election(s) during the plan year if:

1. a qualifying change in status event has occurred and
2. the requested election change(s) corresponds with the event

What are qualifying events?

1. Change in your legal marital status – including marriage, death of a spouse, or divorce.
2. Change in number of tax dependents – including marriage, birth, death, adoption, or placement for adoption.
3. Change in employment status that affects your own, your spouse or dependent's eligibility – including termination or commencement of employment, commencement or return from unpaid leave of absence.
4. The gain or loss of a dependent eligibility status – such as attainment of specified age; student status; marital status; or any similar circumstances which satisfy or cease to satisfy eligibility status.
5. Change of residence of employee, spouse, or dependent that affects his/her eligibility for coverage.

When can I complete paperwork to add my newborn?

You can enroll your newborn by completing and returning the necessary paperwork to Risk, Benefits and Wellness within 30 days. If you do not enroll your newborn within 30 days of the birth date, the newborn's claims will not be paid and you will have to wait until the next open enrollment to enroll him/her in the Board's health care plan.

Can I add other dependents when I add my newborn?

Yes, you can add existing dependents whenever a dependent gains eligibility because of a qualifying change in status event.

If one of my dependents becomes eligible for Medicaid/Medicare, can I cancel coverage for all of my dependents at this time?

No, you may cancel coverage for that dependent only.

If my dependent becomes eligible for Florida KidCare can I drop my dependent coverage mid- year?

Yes, you may drop coverage for the covered dependent.

If my dependent loses eligibility for coverage under Medicaid or Florida KidCare, can I enroll them in health coverage?

Yes. If you or your dependent(s) lose eligibility for coverage under Medicaid or Florida KidCare or become eligible for premium assistance, you must notify the Risk, Benefits and Wellness within 30 days.

If I purchase an individual policy from an outside provider. Can I drop my dependent coverage mid-year?

No, IRS regulations do not allow a cafeteria plan participant to cease participation if he or she becomes eligible for a plan other than an employer sponsored group plan, Medicaid, Medicare or SCHIP (*Florida KidCare*).

Can I change my benefits at any time after I have experienced a change in status?

No, you must notify the Benefits Department within 30 days of a qualifying change in status event.

What happens if I fail to notify the employee benefits department of my change in status event within 30 days?

It is the responsibility of the employee to notify Risk, Benefits and Wellness of a change in status that affects the employee's, his/her spouse's, or his/her dependent's eligibility. Failure to notify Risk, Benefits and Wellness within 30 days will result in your benefit election(s) continuing until the next plan year. You can make such changes during open enrollment to be effective January 1, or the next calendar year. It is the School Board's policy not to refund overpayment of premiums.

Mid-year plan changes qualifying events:

1. Marriage
2. Divorce
3. Adoption
4. Birth
5. Over-Aged Dependent
6. Court Order
7. Change in Employment
8. Gain Employer, Federal or State Coverage
9. Involuntary Loss of Coverage
10. Moved from Service Area

IF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED A QUALIFYING EVENT, YOU MUST:

Contact Risk, Benefits and Wellness within 30 days of such change to request the appropriate forms to stop or modify your benefit election(s) at (352) 797 – 7007. Complete and return the change in status request forms to Risk, Benefits and Wellness with documentation that authenticate the qualifying event.

A Risk, Benefit and Wellness Specialist will determine if your change in status meets IRS regulations. If your change results from a qualifying change in status event, the change(s) to your benefit(s) will be made following receipt of all properly completed forms and necessary documentation, including but not limited to dependent verification if necessary. Premium deduction(s) or reimbursement(s) will be processed on the

effective date of coverage as determined by the qualifying event date.

CHANGE IN STATUS DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS:

- Marriage - Copy of Marriage Certificate
- Divorce - A certified copy of the “Final Judgment”
- Birth - Copy of birth certificate or social security card application “Notification Letter”
- Adoption - Copy of adoption decree, placement for adoption papers or forms provided by the court
- Death - Copy of Death Certificate
- Legal Custody of Child - Documentation that the child is your legal dependent
- Eligible for Medicare, Medicaid, or State Children Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP, i.e. Florida KidCare)
 - Copy of card or letter stating the effective date of coverage and names of individual eligible for coverage
- Dependent Flexible Spending Account - Letter from provider stating the effective date of change and the rate of increase or decrease
- Unpaid Leave - Letter from employer stating dates of unpaid leave
- Significant Change in Coverage
 - Loss of Coverage - A letter from employer stating the date coverage terminates
 - New Eligibility - A letter from spouse’s employer stating date of newly eligible coverage
- Change in Employment (Spouse)
 - New Hire – A letter from employer stating the date of hire and date eligible for medical coverage
 - Termination–Documentation stating the effective termination date of medical coverage
- Ineligible Dependent
 - Employment – A letter from dependent’s employer stating date of hire and date eligible for medical coverage
 - Student – If dependent has graduated or dropped out of college, a letter from the college stating such
 - Marriage – Copy of marriage certificate
 - Plans that provide health coverage for dependents are required to extend the coverage of dependents (adult children) to age 26, regardless of their eligibility for other insurance coverage. Health Plans must provide coverage to all eligible dependents, including those who are not enrolled in school, not dependents on their parents' tax returns, and those who are married

RETIREMENT

NOTE: The information below is subject to change based on Florida Retirement System (FRS) guidelines.

DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PROGRAM (DROP)

Employees who reach normal retirement age/years may elect to participate in the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP). This program allows an employee to effectively retire under the Florida Retirement System (FRS) Pension Plan and begin accumulating his/her retirement benefits without terminating employment, for up to 96 months. While participating in DROP, monthly retirement benefits accumulate in the FRS Trust Fund. The earliest an employee may begin participation in DROP is the month they reach normal retirement date based upon age, or the month after the month of normal retirement date based upon years of service. If an employee delays application to participate in DROP, it may affect eligibility. Noninstructional employees must apply within one (1) year of reaching normal retirement age or years of service, whichever comes first, or participation will not be allowed. For instructional personnel, there is no time limit to participate after reaching normal retirement age. To apply for DROP, an employee must complete a DROP packet. The packet can be obtained by calling FRS at (844) 377-1888 or logging on to [MyFRS](#). Contact Risk, Benefits and Wellness for more information.

DROP EXTENSION REQUEST

If an employee is in an instructional or administrative position as defined in section 1012.01(2)(a)-(d) of Florida Statute, he/she may be permitted to extend his/her DROP Participation. This extension must be authorized by the Superintendent or designee and approved by the Division of Retirement. The employee must be employed on a contractual basis in an eligible position at the time they complete his/her initial 96-month eligibility period and must remain in an eligible position during his/her extended DROP participation. To request an extension of DROP, the employee must submit a written request to Risk, Benefits and Wellness along with a completed FRS DP-EXT form prior to the end of his/her initial period of DROP participation. This form can be obtained by calling FRS at (844) 377-1888 or logging on to [MyFRS](#). DROP extension requests will only be authorized through the end of the employee's current contract year. Contact Risk, Benefits and Wellness for more information.

RE-EMPLOYMENT AFTER RETIREMENT

Before becoming reemployed in any capacity, including substituting, with any FRS employer after retiring or terminating DROP participation, the employee should contact the Bureau of Retirement Calculations Department for guidance at (844) 377-1888.

RE-EMPLOYMENT LIMITATION PERIOD

Employment with any FRS employer during the first year of your retirement may result in suspension of your retirement benefits. There are no exceptions. Prohibited employment includes full-time, part-time, temporary, other personal services (OPS), and contractual services. Contact FRS at (844) 377-1888 before beginning employment with an FRS employer to ensure that the limitation period is over.

Note: Retirement includes Pension, DROP, Investment Distribution and three percent Employee Contribution Distribution.

INSURANCE BENEFITS

School District personnel who have ended their employment by retiring may continue to participate in the current group health insurance program of the district provided the person also retires with the Florida Retirement System (FRS) within thirty (30) days of the last day of their employment and there is no interruption in insurance coverage. After completing an online Resignation/Retirement process on the District's website, the employee will receive a letter with instructions on how they can continue their insurance benefits. For more information contact Risk, Benefits and Wellness.

INTENT

In addition to the requirements for FRS, the employee must advise his/her administrator of his/her intent to retire. The employee must complete the online Resignation/Retirement process on the District's website. For additional information, please refer to [Initiate Your Retirement Process](#) which outlines the retirement process.

NEW EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT ELECTION

New employees must choose to participate in a Florida Retirement System (FRS) plan before the deadline, 4:00pm ET on the last business day of the eighth month following their month of hire. If the employee does not submit a plan choice by the deadline, the Investment Plan will be considered their 1st Election by default. Contact MyFRS Financial Guidance Line toll-free at 1-866-446-9377, Option 2 for free retirement planning.

RETIREMENT PROCESS

As per the Division of Retirement, to apply for Service Retirement or DROP via the Florida Retirement

System (FRS), the employee must submit a signed and notarized application form to the Bureau of Retirement Calculations Department. Applications are accepted up to six (6) months prior to the termination of employment date. **The law does not provide retroactive benefits for an employee who delays completing an application, contact the Florida Retirement System with questions. It is the responsibility of the employee to initiate his/her retirement process.**

Forms and assistance can be obtained via the Division of Retirement by calling (844) 377-1888, logging on to [MyFRS](#) or contacting a Financial Advisor. Contact Risk, Benefits and Wellness for more information. **Please note that Risk, Benefits and Wellness personnel in the Human Resources Department serve strictly as liaisons between the Florida Retirement System and School District employees and cannot legally provide retirement advice.**

VACATION/TERMINAL PAY BENEFITS

Employees may be entitled to vacation and/or terminal pay benefits depending on years of service (see School Board Policy 1430.06, 4430.06, 1430.03, 3430.03 and 4430.03). Administrators, Instructional, Professional Technical and Confidential staff must request Bencor information by calling (888) 258-3422 option 1, eligible sick pay may be sent to Bencor. You can request a payout or rollover form from Bencor 30 days after your resignation date by calling (888) 258-3422 option 1.

See School Board Policy 1430.06, 4430.06, 1430.03, 3430.03 and 4430.03. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

The procedure for filing a Workers' Compensation claim is listed below:

- An injured employee must report the incident to the site Administrator or workers' compensation coordinator. All injuries need to be recorded on the site's Employee First Aid Log within thirty (30) days of the injury.
- If medical treatment is necessary, the workers' compensation coordinator will do the following:
 - EMERGENCY: a medical emergency is an injury that is acute and poses an immediate risk to a person's life or long-term health. Call 911 and get professional help immediately. Alert Risk, Benefits and Wellness and Fire Official.
 - Injured worker must call PMA 24 hr. nurse with the assistance of the site's worker's compensation coordinator.
 - Advise the employee that it is his/her responsibility to give the workers' compensation coordinator and their direct Supervisor all documentation from the treating physician immediately following treatment. Employee must immediately return to work unless otherwise stated by workers' compensation provider.
- Advise employee that in order to receive workers' compensation benefits, he/she must stay within the assigned workers' compensation network of doctors. All authorizations for specialty medical services must be approved by the workers' compensation carrier.
- The employee must submit documentation from the authorized workers' compensation treating physician in order for time off to be considered as workers' compensation paid in line of duty leave. Leave for any employee, as prescribed by law, shall be authorized for a total not to exceed ten (10) work days during any school fiscal year for an illness contracted or any injury sustained in the line of duty, or a total of ten (10) days for the same illness or injury. Once the employee has been released to return to work, he/she will notify his /her supervisor immediately. Failure to do so may subject the employee to progressive discipline that may include termination. Upon return to work

the employee MUST provide a “release to return to work” from the authorized workers’ compensation treating physician to the site administrator.

- If an employee with a worker’s compensation injury is out for 10 consecutive days, he/she must complete an extended leave form and follow extended leave procedures with Risk, Benefits and Wellness.

While on Workers’ Compensation Leave, the School District will continue to contribute its portion of the employee’s health and life insurance premium payments. The employee is responsible for his/her portion of all other benefit premium payments. The employee’s payment should be made through the Hernando County School District, Attention Benefit Payments. If an employee is deficient in paying premiums, the employee’s benefits will be terminated. It is the employee’s responsibility to notify Risk, Benefits and Wellness and the life insurance company when he/she returns to active employment. Employees will automatically be enrolled in the District’s group life insurance plan on the first of the month following a sixty (60) day waiting period unless the employee elects differently by completing and returning the election confirmation and enrollment form within the first 30 days of returning to active employment status.

MODIFIED DUTY ASSIGNMENT

If an employee is placed on a modified duty assignment, the placement must be based on a condition that resulted from a workplace injury. The specific restrictions must be identified by an authorized workers’ compensation physician. The employee’s supervisor then determines if the regular position can be temporarily modified to meet the specific restrictions. If the employee’s regular job cannot be modified, the employee may be placed in a modified duty assignment by the site Administrator or Risk, Benefits and Wellness. The employee will be paid at his/her normal rate of pay and benefits. Work hours may be modified. If the injured employee does not agree to work in the modified duty assignment, the employee will forfeit workers’ compensation benefits and no longer be paid by the workers’ compensation carrier or the School District. Workers’ compensation medical benefits will continue until the employee reaches maximum medical improvement (MMI) as determined by the assigned workers’ compensation physician. If the restrictions are not able to be accommodated, as determined by Risk, Benefits and Wellness, the employee will continue on workers’ compensation and will be paid by workers’ compensation carrier. Medical benefits will continue (if applicable). Modified duty assignments will be reviewed periodically. If an employee has not been released to regular duty at the end of a 120-day period, an assessment will be made regarding the employee’s progress and employment status.

See School Board Policy 1430.05, 3430.05, 4430.05, 4124 and 8442. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

Staff Handbook

Section 4: Employee Policies & Procedures for Students

Attendance - Student

Bullying, Harassment and Dating
Violence and Abuse

Child Abuse Reporting

Clinic

Confiscated Student Property

Counseling Services

Cumulative Folders

Dropping and Transferring Students

Field Trips

Fundraising

Grades

Instruction

Instructional Materials

Lesson Plans

Locker Room Security

Media Centers

Parent/Guardian Pick up

Passes

Reporting to Parents/Guardians

Return of Students to Classroom
(Authority of the Teacher)

Student Absences

Student Access, Referrals and
Interviews

Student Conduct Policies

Supervision of Students

Surveys of Students

ATTENDANCE - STUDENT

- Complete and accurate records of students' grades and attendance must be kept for every class. Based on each school's attendance procedure a phone call is made daily in reference to students who were absent and/or tardy. Grades and attendance must be up to date at all times and will be checked periodically by the administration.
- Students must attend school in order to receive a grade. A student's attendance must be in accordance with School Board Policy.
- Students are not to take attendance.
- If a student is to be absent from a class for the purpose of helping a teacher to do work for the school (pictures, newspaper, band, etc.), approval must be given in advance by the student's assigned teacher.
- Attendance will be taken daily by the teacher. Students who have a school approved activity absence are not to be listed on the official record of absence but the absence and reason should be indicated in the teacher's record book. All other absences shall be reported in accordance with school procedures.
- No student is to leave the school grounds to run an errand for any employee of the school system during the time they are under the jurisdiction of the school.

See School Board Policy 5200, 1213, 3213, 4213. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

BULLYING, HARASSMENT, DATING VIOLENCE AND ABUSE

The Hernando County School District is committed to creating a safe, healthy, learning environment for all students that is free from bullying and harassment. All employees are expected to model and support a school culture that promotes positive interactions and respect for others. Bullying is more specifically addressed in the [Student Code of Conduct](#) as well as School Board Policy.

"Bullying" includes "cyberbullying" and means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one (1) or more students or employees. It is defined as any unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student, that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve: teasing, threats, intimidation, stalking, cyberstalking, physical violence, theft, sexual, religious, or racial harassment; public or private humiliation; destruction of property; and social exclusion.

Bullying can be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or cyber in nature.

Harassment means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or staff employee.

*See full definition in the Student Code of Conduct

Staff members who witness or become aware of bullying will immediately intervene in the following manner:

- Establish the safety of the victim of bullying.
- Report to administration. School administrators are required to investigate all allegations of bullying.

See School Board Policy 5516, 5517, 5517.01, 5517.03. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING

Professionals in daily contact with children are the first line of defense against child abuse and neglect. **Florida Statutes require that anyone who suspects that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect is legally obligated to immediately call in their suspicion to the Abuse Registry Hotline at 1-800-96 ABUSE (1-800-962-2873).** Child abuse reports can also be faxed to 1-800-914-0004 or reported online at www.dcf.state.fl.us/abuse/report. **Penalties for those who suspect a child is being abused but fail to report it have been increased from a misdemeanor to a felony.** Additionally, the Ethics in Education Act requires mandatory reporting of child abuse. Failure to report child abuse is a breach of ethics and could result in job termination, as well as revocation of your teaching certificate. All reports are confidential; however, new revisions require that you provide your name, occupation, name of school and work number for contact by the Abuse Registry staff. As a professional courtesy, administration should be informed of any suspected child abuse that has been called in, but informing administration does not preclude the individual's duty to call in any suspected abuse. Florida Statute 1012.98 requires teachers in grades Pre-K – 12 to participate in continuing education training provided by the Department of Children Family Services on identifying and reporting child abuse and neglect. For further information regarding this training, contact the Professional Learning Department.

See School Board Policy 8462. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

CLINIC

The clinic is attended by a School Health Professional with varying levels of medical training and supervised by a HCSB/DOH RN. The clinic provides health services to students. For staff, the clinic provides emergency care only. Students and Staff should not seek explanation of illness from clinic personnel as they are not able to provide a diagnosis or treatment plan. Awareness of an injury must be reported to the clinic immediately. A student who is injured should be evaluated by the clinic. If the student has suffered a major injury, do not move the student; instead notify the principal and/or designee and clinic at once. They will notify the parent or guardian of the details of the accident. **An accident report must be completed by the staff member who was present at the time of the accident and must be submitted prior to the close of the school day. The report should list all staff present.** If an accident occurs after hours, a report must be completed and turned in prior to noon of the next school day.

ADMINISTRATION OF EPIPENS

Florida Statute 381.88 provides that teachers and others who have the likelihood to work with children who need EpiPens must be trained in the proper administration of the medication through an injection, should the child be unable to self-administer. The School Health Professional must advise teachers of any students in their class who carry an EpiPen and arrange for training in proper administration. If a teacher has a student in his/her class who carries an EpiPen and has not had training, he/she must contact the clinic immediately.

BIOHAZARD WASTE DISPOSAL

Procedures for the disposal of biohazardous wastes are outlined in the "Biohazardous Waste Disposal Plan" which is distributed to clinic personnel and custodians.

CLINIC/SCHOOL NURSE PERSONNEL

School Health Professionals are responsible for:

- assisting the Hernando County Health Department School Health Nurses and HCSB RN's
- assisting the Hernando County Health Department School Nurse Professional in carrying out a school health service program designed to promote, maintain, and improve the health of students

per the Guidelines written by the Health Department School Health Nurses and HCSB RN's

- administering first aid to ill or injured students
- administering medication to students, as per state statute
- conducting health screenings as per FL statutes and referring students with detected health concerns
- helping to prevent and control diseases
- providing comfort measures to students with minor discomfort and remaining with and giving comfort to ill or injured students until released to their parents or guardians; and ensuring that all staff members know about student medical issues as appropriate and in compliance with the law

MEDICATION POLICY (PRESCRIBED AND OVER-THE-COUNTER)

The Hernando County School District recommends that the administration of medications for students be scheduled before and/or after school hours. In the event that this is not possible, medication guidelines must be followed:

Authorized/trained school personnel may administer medication to students in compliance with the following policy procedures as approved by the Hernando County School District and the Hernando County Public Health Department:

- Only medication trained staff may receive, return, or administer medications in clinic or classroom.
- Medications may also be administered on school sponsored events within the state of Florida by staff who have been "Field Trip Medication" trained for the current school year.

A student may possess and use a medication to relieve headaches while on school property or at a school-sponsored event or activity without a physician's note or prescription if the medication is regulated by the United States Food and Drug Administration for over-the-counter use to treat headaches. Violations of Over-the-Counter (OTC) medication policy, include but are not limited to: distributing, dispersing, or sharing of OTC, carrying or possessing OTC in a package other than the original manufacturer's packaging, or ingesting or utilizing OTC in a way that is not specifically directed or authorized by the manufacturer, as directed on the original packaging.

Staff members' personal medication(s) must be secured where students have no access.

See School Board Policy 5330, 5335. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

CONFISCATED STUDENT PROPERTY

Staff members who confiscate inappropriate item(s) from students are responsible for the security of the items. Staff members who do not follow this procedure will be held liable for replacement costs. When weapons or potentially dangerous items have been confiscated by staff members a school administrator or the school resource officer are to be contacted **IMMEDIATELY** to retrieve the confiscated items from the staff member. At the end of the day, **all confiscated items** must be returned to the student or turned over to designated personnel for secure storage until a parent or guardian can pick them up. **No illegal item will be returned.** All staff members should know and follow their site's designated procedures for handling and turning in confiscated items.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Teachers are encouraged to use the Certified School Counselor and Social Worker services to meet the academic, behavioral, and mental wellness needs of all the students. Certified School Counselors and School Social Workers must gain informed consent from the parent to provide counseling services.

CUMULATIVE FOLDERS

Cumulative folders will **remain in a designated location at all times**. Folders may be viewed by teachers when necessary. All materials must remain in the folder, unless otherwise directed by the principal and/or designee. Folders must be signed, dated, checked out and returned for each use.

Maintenance and access to student records shall be in accordance with School Board Policy and Federal law. Per Federal law, parents have the right to review their child's cumulative folder. Student records are covered under the Family Education Right to Privacy Act.

See School Board Policy 8330. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

DROPPING AND TRANSFERRING STUDENTS

No teacher may drop any student from a class roster. When a teacher decides that a student is not properly placed, the request for transfer must be made to the appropriate personnel and approved by the administrator.

FIELD TRIPS

All field trips must adhere to School Board Policy. Field trips shall use school buses, regular or special-purpose school vehicles for transportation on field and other District-sponsored trips. Transportation for all field and other District-sponsored trips may be limited by the availability of vehicles, drivers, and scheduling and will not be available when needed for general school purposes. The transportation for all field and other District-sponsored trips is to be by vehicles owned or approved by the District and driven by approved drivers. Exceptions must have the approval of the Superintendent. The Superintendent is authorized to establish transportation costs for school related and non-school related field trips. The transportation costs shall be reviewed annually by the Superintendent. This and additional information can be found in the Hernando County Schools Transportation Department Field Trip Manual.

See School Board Policy 8640 and 8660. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

FUNDRAISING

The purpose of fundraising projects is to contribute to the educational experience of the students. All fundraisers must comply with Hernando County School Board policies and should not conflict with the overall instructional program. The School Board does not permit the use of crowdfunding for District or school programs or activities, including co-curricular or extra-curricular activities. Other fundraising opportunities can be researched through the Hernando County Education Foundation.

All fundraising projects and activities must be submitted on a Fundraising Request Form/Recap located on the HCSD website. The application must be approved by administration and scheduled on the calendar in advance of the event.

- **All fundraising requests that include the sale of food or beverages must be approved by the Administrator.**

- All requests for exempt fundraisers should be sent to the Food and Nutrition Department. (Information on determining what constitutes as an exempt fundraiser can be found on the District's website under Food and Nutrition.)
- Elementary schools may not have door-to-door sales
- Selling candy and/or distributing candy as a fundraiser is not allowed on school grounds during school hours or on school buses

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL FUNDRAISING (K-5)

- Each elementary school may have no more than three (3) school-wide fundraising projects per school year.
- Each school should make an effort not to duplicate the activity of another school at the same time of year or season.
- All approved off-campus fundraising activities by a school, student club or class must have a teacher present at all times.

SECONDARY SCHOOL FUNDRAISING (6-12)

All students selling articles for any school, student club or class must have a current letter of introduction signed by the principal and/or designee. This applies to all organizations within the school, i.e., classes, clubs, athletic department, etc. Even if the project is connected with the school indirectly, the above procedure must be followed.

CHARITABLE DRIVES

- High Schools: Student participation in charitable drives is limited to voluntary participation of clubs and associations in secondary schools.
- Elementary and Middle Schools: Participation in charitable drives cannot be done in lieu of work detail.
- Raffles and other activities of chance shall not be conducted by any schools.

See School Board Policy 5830, 6605. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

GRADES

Reports on the progress of students shall be made by the schools to parents/guardians at regular intervals throughout the school year. These reports will contain the information prescribed by the Superintendent of Schools. Notification of student progress and other home school communication should be made in a language understood by the parent unless it is not feasible. Each school has a designated translator for Spanish. If communication is needed in other languages that the school does not have resources to support, please contact your school's ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Lead Teacher for assistance.

- Report cards will be available digitally through the Skyward Parent Portal within ten (10) school days after the end of each nine (9) week grading period. If a parent/guardian would like a paper copy of the report card, they need to notify the school in writing.
- In addition to the nine-week report card, grades will be entered weekly.
- Teachers should notify a parent/guardian more frequently if a problem is apparent.
- Teachers are required to follow the prescribed rules dictating updates to Parent Portal.
- Teacher/parent conferences and other means of personal contact will be used whenever possible to report the progress being made by students and to aid in developing understanding between home and school.

- Teachers are responsible for obtaining student's transfer grades from the Certified School Counselor. Certified School Counselors are responsible for obtaining transfer grades from transferring schools, or they can use the Florida electronic grade system.
- Teachers should check with the school counseling department in order to give a student an appropriate report card when transfer grades are available to be considered with local grades.
- Teachers are required to adhere to the adopted grading policies for each grade level.

See School Board Policy 5421. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

INSTRUCTION

Teachers are responsible for using the Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework as a guide to ensure effective instruction for ALL students. Instruction should be based on the appropriate grade level State Standards incorporating a variety of effective instructional strategies. Effective strategies that have been found to have a strong effect on student achievement include but are not limited to the following:

- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Differentiated Instruction
- Setting goals and providing specific feedback
- Gradual Release lesson format that includes modeling
- Determination of appropriate intervention based on student need
- Use of collaborative structures and engagement strategies
- Summarizing, note taking, and use of graphic organizers
- Acceleration

In addition, teachers are expected to:

- Utilize data driven decision making and problem solving (including all demographic groups)
- Document, monitor and communicate student progress
- Make data-based decisions regarding instructional interventions needed to support struggling students
- Assist students in the development of good study habits and time management skills
- Use effective classroom management strategies
- Consider the English language proficiency levels of ELLs (English Language Learners) when planning instruction and assessment
- Consider accommodations for ESE students when planning instruction and assessment

Please refer to the MTSS Handbook for further information. Link below:

[Multi-Tiered System of Supports](#)

INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

BOARD APPROVED INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

- Each district school board is responsible for the content of all instructional materials and any other materials used in a classroom, made available in a school or classroom library, or included on a reading list, whether adopted and purchased from the state-adopted instructional materials

list, adopted and purchased through a district instructional materials program under s. [1006.283](#), or otherwise purchased or made available.

- Teachers are expected to adhere to FL statute 1006.283 and use district approved instructional materials.

All primary instructional materials in grades K-12 must be School Board approved. The booklist is defined in the Florida BEST Benchmarks.

PURCHASING TEXTBOOKS

- All District adopted textbooks shall be consistent with District approved goals and objectives, State Standards, grade level expectations and course code descriptions.
- It is the responsibility of the principal to ensure that all textbooks for instructional use have been School Board approved and are being used at the grade level(s) or ability level(s) for which they were designed.

Purchase orders for growth and replacement are generated by the Department of Teaching and Learning. Every effort will be made to submit purchase orders in a timely manner.

RECEIVING TEXTBOOKS

- The principal and/or designee must carefully review an incoming textbook shipment to assure the accuracy of the order.
- If problems occur with the textbook order, the principal and/or designee should contact the supplier to correct the error.

SELECTION OF ADOPTED TEXTBOOKS

The staff of the Department of Teaching and Learning is responsible for the textbook adoption and curriculum review process. The goal throughout the process will be the adoption of one (1) program choice for each division – elementary, middle and high. The following process will be used:

- A subject area Instructional Materials Review Team will be established.
- The Instructional Materials Review Team will adhere to the prescribed procedures for evaluating materials consisting of the following:
 - Review the historical and current research related to the subject area.
 - Review of the state approved instructional materials using the prescribed evaluation tool.
 - Evaluate the materials to ensure compliance with the State Standards.
 - Reach consensus on the final two (2) program/publishers and make a recommendation to the curriculum supervisor.
- The instructional staff for the subject area at the schools will be given an opportunity to review the recommended materials and vote for one (1) program choice.
- The votes will be submitted to the appropriate curriculum supervisor.
- The curriculum supervisors will submit the Instructional Materials Review Team recommendation and instructional staff vote results to the Superintendent of Schools.
- The Superintendent of Schools will make a recommendation to the School Board, who will be asked to approve the instructional materials that have been selected.
- The curriculum supervisors and the principal designee will collaborate to generate the purchase orders of the approved instructional materials for each school.
- Professional learning will be planned to assure successful implementation of the new instructional program.

- A review of student performance data will be conducted to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and instructional materials adopted.

CLASSROOM LIBRARIES

Please refer to the [media handbook](#) procedures.

TEXTBOOK MANAGEMENT

- The principal's designee should properly label and add all new textbooks to the District adopted circulation system before distribution.
- Textbooks will be issued using the District approved electronic circulation system.
- The principal's designee will do an inventory of teacher assigned resources with each teacher during post-school or at the time a teacher terminates employment at the school.
- An annual inventory of all textbooks at the school site must be completed to determine the quantity and quality of supply.
- A notice of obligation must be completed for all lost or damaged books and noted on the electronic file.

The principal and/or designee has the responsibility to manage the use of instructional materials. As a part of that management, authority is given by Florida Statute 1006.28(3) (b) to collect, from students, payment for the full cost of lost or damaged materials. All funds collected for lost and damaged textbooks shall be remitted to the Finance Department with the school's monthly Internal Account checklist.

LESSON PLANS

A systematic plan for organization and presentation of daily delivery of instruction should be maintained.

- Lesson plans/outlines must include full use of available material (textbooks and supplementary materials) and should be based on and include State Standards and grade level expectations.
- Lesson plans must include the documentation of strategies, accommodations or modifications for students according to federal and state law, as stated in the student's Individual Education Plan and 504 Plans.
- Lesson Plans must include documentation of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) strategies, accommodations and/or modifications for English Language Learners (ELLs) being served under the ESOL Program. In addition, all the ESOL strategies, accommodations and/or modifications for an ESOL student should be noted on the Hernando County ESOL Strategies, Adaptations and Accommodation Form (Form SO-ESOL-019).
- Teachers are expected to appropriately differentiate instruction to meet individual student needs.
- Lesson plans should include emergency procedures, regulations, seating charts and special duty assignments.
- Lesson plans should be prepared as directed by the principal/supervisor at least one (1) week in advance. These plans must be available for administrative review upon request and also may be reviewed during the evaluation process.
- Lesson plans must be readily available for substitutes and should provide continuity of instruction when a substitute is needed. Lesson plans for substitutes should be developed in accordance with the requirements of the individual school.
- Lesson plans are the responsibility of Long-Term Substitutes.
- Elementary teachers are expected to communicate grade level expectations to parents.
- Secondary teachers are expected to develop a yearly syllabus for the purpose of communicating

course content and student expectations.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

All electronic media (Videos, CDs, DVDs, etc.) used in the classroom **must be related to the curriculum being taught**, be grade level appropriate and must be approved by school administration prior to viewing by students. See [media handbook](#) and audiovisual policy 2540 for more information.

See School Board Policy 2540. Click this link: [School Board Policies](#)

LOCKER ROOM SECURITY

To ensure proper supervision at secondary schools in the locker room, the principal and/or designee is to direct the Physical Education Department and Athletic Department to arrange their schedules so that a gender appropriate teacher, coach or paraprofessional is in the locker room at all times for supervision when students are present. When students are not in the locker room, the Physical Education Department and Athletic Department must be aware that they will be held responsible for making sure that locker rooms are locked and secure. When possible, it is recommended that two (2) staff members of the same sex be present for locker room supervision. Referees and anyone other than students may not use the locker room to change clothing or shower when students are present.

MEDIA CENTERS

Teachers at each site should become familiar with the procedures and resources at their site. The Principal or designee should develop a plan, to be approved by the principal, for collecting payment for lost or damaged items. When developing a plan for such items, the following guidelines are recommended:

- The plan must be consistent with [F.S. 1006.28\(3\)\(b\)](#).
- Items damaged beyond repair should be considered lost and may be discarded following the correct procedures for discarding.
- A student should pay for materials after receiving an overdue notice or parent letter. It may also be necessary to send a Notice of Obligation to the student's home by U.S. mail.
- The plan should establish procedures to determine who will collect the money.
- Payment should be in the exact amount requested and may be paid in cash, check or money order as determined by the school. Checks must be made payable to the school.
- An individual receipt from a receipt book must be issued to the student. Receipt books can be signed out to the person receiving the money by the school's bookkeeper. It is recommended that the title, call number and barcode number be written on the receipt in case the item is later retrieved.
- If the staff member is collecting the money, he/she should list all monies received by receipt number and the amount received on the correct form and give it to the bookkeeper at the end of the same day.
- Accurate records of the lost and damaged books must be kept.

If a student transfers to another school within the district without returning a media item, the Principal or designee should notify the receiving school's Principal or designee. Every effort should be made to retrieve the item(s) or payment, and the students should be allowed to use media materials in the confines of media centers. A block preventing students from checking out media materials may be placed on the student's

record through the checkout system until the material(s) have been returned or reimbursement has been received.

PARENT/GUARDIAN PICK UP

When a parent/guardian desires a student to leave school during the day, or when the parent/guardian wishes to pick up the student, the parent/guardian must make such a request in person or in writing. The student must be signed out in the office. All passes to leave school will be issued by the office. School personnel shall not release any student at any time **without proper authorization**. Students are not to be released from school at the request of any person other than those listed on the student info/emergency info card. The student must be signed out and the individual must have his/her Florida state issued ID checked through the districts Safe Visitor system to ensure that the person is not a sexual offender, predator, or private alert.

PASSES

Students must have a pass when leaving a scheduled class or activity.

- To assure the safety of students, passes must be issued before students are allowed to leave the direct supervision of a staff member.
- Extreme discretion should be used by staff in giving a pass to a student. A real need should exist before the issuance of any pass by school personnel.
- A staff member shall not keep a student after class except with prior approval.
- As determined by administration, students in elementary schools should use the “buddy” system when leaving class.

REMOVAL OF STUDENT FROM CLASS (AUTHORITY OF THE TEACHER)

The principal shall make provisions for students to be removed from class when the continued presence of the student in the classroom is intolerable, in accordance with Florida Statute 1003.32. If a teacher makes the request that a continually disruptive student not be returned to his/her class, the principal may not return the student to the teacher’s class. The teacher and the Placement Review Committee must render decisions within five (5) working days of the removal of the student from the classroom.

Teachers should follow their school’s procedure for the removal of students who are acting out. Suggestions include: having an adult accompany the student from the class or requesting an administrator to come to the class. If the principal is recommending that the student be returned to the teacher’s classroom, then the case will be presented to a school-based Placement Review Committee which consists of three (3) teacher representatives [one (1) selected by the school’s faculty and one (1) selected by the teacher who removed the student and one (1) teacher appointed by the principal]. The principal must notify each teacher in that school about the availability, the procedures and the criteria for the Placement Review Committee as outlined in this section. If no teacher volunteers to participate in the Placement Review Committee, then the Hernando Classroom Teachers’ Association (HCTA) President will appoint members to serve on that school’s committee. If the Placement Review Committee’s decision is contrary to the decision of the teacher to withhold consent to the return of the removed student to the teacher’s class, the teacher may appeal the committee’s decision to the Superintendent of Schools.

If the student is in Special Education, then the student should be referred to the Individual Education Plan (IEP) Committee for review per due process. If the IEP Committee feels that the most appropriate placement is with the referring teacher, that decision, with meeting minutes, is presented to the Placement Review Committee to serve as documentation.

The teacher who does not wish the student readmitted to the class may not serve on the committee, nor may the principal serve on the Placement Review Committee. The teacher and the principal may speak before the committee. Neither may be present when the committee members deliberate to reach their decision.

The Placement Review Committee has the authority to make alternative placement decisions within the frameworks of federal and state laws. The District Student Code of Conduct, Civil Rights provisions and availability of appropriate alternative placements must be considered in reaching a decision. If the decision of the committee is to remove a student from a particular class, due process procedures may require additional time to implement the change in placement.

Whenever the committee meets, records must be kept. These records must include the date and time of the meeting and any written statements provided. All decisions should be signed by the committee members rendering the decision.

Parents must be notified of their right to appear before the Placement Review Committee to present information. Parents need not be present for the committee to render a decision and they shall not be present when the committee members are deliberating. The committee serves to determine whether the principal's recommended placement is the best or only available alternative. If the committee determines that such placement is not the best or only available alternative, then the committee members will determine the placement of the student. The committee may also recommend the return of the child to the teacher's class. In those cases, the committee shall provide a written reason for this decision. All decisions of the Placement Review Committee must be made within five (5) working days of the student being removed from class.

REPORTING TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS

In an effort to improve parent/guardian involvement and to ensure parent/guardian awareness of their child's progress, each teacher should contact parents/guardians to inform them of their child's progress. It is the teacher's professional responsibility to be completely straightforward with parents/guardians concerning the academic progress of their children. Should a parent/guardian contact the teacher for specific information regarding his/her child, a teacher is to provide accurate information. If a teacher does not have the information available, the teacher should arrange to contact the parent/guardian at a time when the information is available. When parents/guardians call the school and ask that the teacher call them, every effort should be made to return their call within 2 work days or sooner.

Parents/guardians may make an appointment with the teacher before or after school, or the teacher may send home notes requesting a parent conference. If a conference is requested by the administrator during the teacher's planning time, the teacher will be notified of such conference and the teacher is to attend (HCTA Contract, section 5.13 B). A record of contacts (i.e. conferences, telephone calls) should be kept by the teacher for reference (see School Procedures Handbook for details). Notification of student progress and other home school communication should be made in a language understood by the parent unless it is not feasible. Each school has a designated translator for Spanish. If communication is needed in other languages that the school does not have resources to support, please contact your school's ESOL (English

for Speakers of Other Languages) Lead Teacher for assistance.

STUDENT ABSENCES

Statute 1003.26 requires upon each unexcused absence, or absence for which the reason is unknown, the school principal or his or her designee shall contact the student's parent to determine the reason for the absence. If the absence is an excused absence, as defined by district school board policy, the school shall provide opportunities for the student to make up assigned work and not receive an academic penalty unless the work is not made up within a reasonable time.

STUDENT ACCESS, REFERRALS, AND INTERVIEWS

A student will not be allowed to leave school with any person other than the student's parent/guardian or a person with a parent's/guardian's verified authorization. The enrolling parent/guardian must provide a certified court order indicating sole custody or a restraining order if they do not wish the other parent/guardian to have access to his/her child.

- **Separated/Divorced Parents/Guardians:** The question of legal custody of a child is not the responsibility of our educational establishment. School personnel shall assume the enrolling parent/guardian has legal custody of a child.
- **Legal Authorities:** It may be necessary at times for legal authorities, such as law enforcement officials, to take a student into custody or question a student on campus during school hours.
 - When a student is subject to a criminal investigation for an offense that occurred off campus, the principal shall make an attempt to contact the student's parent/guardian before allowing law enforcement officers to interview the student. The principal or designee shall document attempts.
 - If a parent cannot be contacted, the officer will be allowed to go forth with interviewing the student. The principal or staff member shall be present at such interviews. If a high school student requests that the principal or designated staff member not be present, such requests will be honored.
 - If the parent can be contacted, they will be informed that they may be present while his/her child is being interviewed as a subject in the investigation and a reasonable time will be allowed for them to appear at the school.
 - When a student is the subject in an administrative investigation, school officials, which includes the school resource officer, shall be permitted to conduct necessary interviews.
 - When a student is not the subject in a criminal or administrative investigation, but is being interviewed as a victim or witness, the principal shall permit such interview by police officers or administrative investigators. The principal shall make an attempt to contact the student's parent/guardian before allowing law enforcement officers to interview the student. The principal and/or designee shall document attempts. If the investigation involves a suspected child abuse case, the principal and/or designee may be present, in accordance with Florida Statute for such interview, if requested by a student and/or the official conducting the interview. In suspected child abuse and/or neglect cases, school authorities are not to contact the parent/guardian. This is the sole responsibility of law enforcement and the investigating agency.

- Each student has certain rights when an officer (defined as a police officer or an identified representative of the court) wishes to remove a student from school premises.
 - Should the officer request to take the student out of the school, he/she shall do so only with the consent of the parent/guardian or with a subpoena, which requires the student to be a witness. If the officer desires to make an arrest, either with or without an arrest warrant, he/she shall be allowed to do so without objection by the administrator or teacher in charge. If a student is removed by an officer, the administrator shall endeavor to notify the parent/guardian prior to the student's removal from the school premises or as soon thereafter as possible.
 - If an officer demonstrates to a principal and/or designee that a child needs to be taken into protective custody, pursuant to Florida Statute 39.401, the officer shall be permitted to remove the student.
- Referrals to outside agencies involving punitive action against a student shall be made on the referral form by the agency concerned.

STUDENT CONDUCT POLICIES

All student conduct policies are subject to School Board regulations. The Student Code of Conduct contains these regulations and is available to parents/guardians, students and teachers in both English and Spanish.

The Student Code of Conduct and the Suicide Prevention Guide and the Threat Assessment Manual will be adhered to at all times.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Suicidal Individual

ALL SUICIDAL IDEATIONS/ATTEMPTS ARE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY

Procedural Guidelines for Students – The student should be taken directly to the Certified School Counselor's Office to be screened for possible risk assessment. The child should not be left alone at any time. All suicidal ideation or attempts must be attended to **immediately**. If a certified school counselor or school social worker is not available, notify administration immediately and contact the Director of Student Services Department at (352) 797-7008. In the event that any student is taken into custody and subject to an involuntary examination, the Director of Student Services shall be notified. The Director of Student Services will notify the Superintendent and any affected departments.

Administration, School Counselors, and Student Services Staff refer to the Suicide Prevention Flowchart for detailed process and statutory requirements of parental notification.

THREAT ASSESSMENT

Individual Engaging in Threatening Behavior

ALL HOMICIDE THREATS/ATTEMPTS TO HARM SELF OR OTHERS ARE TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY AND REPORTED IMMEDIATELY

Procedural Guidelines – The goal of all school safety efforts is to prevent violence or harm to members of the school community. A Threat Assessment must be completed any time a student threatens to harm or kill another student or staff member or that student exhibits concerning behaviors that may indicate that they pose a threat to the school community. The threat must be immediately reported to the Chair of the school’s established Threat Management Team so it can be assessed for level of concern and necessary protective measures and interventions can be established. Each school’s Threat Management Team must include the “Core Four” members as outlined in the Florida Model for Harm Prevention and Threat Management. The “Core Four” member roles are School Administrator, Instructional Staff Member, Mental Health Professional and Certified Law Enforcement Officer (SRO). These members must have completed the required training in the Florida Model. All threats that are being investigated must be reported to the Director of Safe Schools immediately to allow for proper notification to the Superintendent and Board Members. If any assistance is needed in completion of the Threat Assessment, The District Threat Management Coordinator should be contacted.

Please refer to the Threat Assessment Manual for further details.

SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS AND GROUNDS

Employees are advised that they should not touch students in any way except for the protection of the health, safety and/or welfare of a student or for protection of themselves.

Notice of Limited Supervisory Times: The school will provide supervision to its students during regular school hours; and during the time the student is on the school premises participating with authorization in a school-sponsored activity; and during a reasonable time before and after a student is on the premises for attendance at school or for authorized participation in a school-sponsored activity. There is a rebuttable presumption that the term “reasonable time” means 30 minutes before or after the activity is scheduled or actually begins or ends, whichever is longer (Florida Statute). However, it is the policy of the Hernando County School Board to not leave students unattended at any time.

Do Not Leave Your Class Unattended: Teachers are responsible for students in their class at all times. If it is necessary to leave class for any length of time or if an emergency arises, contact the main office, principal and/or designee so that arrangements can be made for classroom coverage. **Teachers are not to leave their classes unsupervised at any time. Only school personnel may supervise students.** This includes, but is not limited to, students being placed in the hallway unsupervised for testing purposes and/or disciplinary reasons. Whenever a class is moved, notify the office and post a note on the regular classroom door. **Never send a student back to an unsupervised classroom for any reason.**

SURVEYS OF STUDENTS

Students are not required to participate in any survey that concerns one or more of the following protected areas without prior written consent:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student’s parents
2. Mental and psychological problems of the student or the student’s family
3. Sexual behavior or attitudes
4. Illegal, antisocial, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom the respondent has close family relationships

6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or the student's parent
8. Income (other than required by law to determine program eligibility)

Parents have the right to inspect any survey before it is administered or distributed by contacting the school and making an appointment during regular school hours.

Individuals have the right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failure by the District to comply with the requirements of Family Educational Rights Privacy Act (FERPA). The address of the office that administers Family Educational Rights Privacy Act is: Family Policy Compliance Office, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue S.W., Washington, D.C. 20202.