



Handout by
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#6.24-2405
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To: Hernando County School Board Members
From: Hernando Classroom Teachers' Association
Re: Respect for Educators

Hernando Classroom Teachers' Association would first like to acknowledge the District's ongoing efforts to recruit and retain quality educators. At a time when districts across the state of Florida are struggling to find qualified teachers for every classroom, it cannot go unnoticed that our county has sought—and continues to seek—solutions that reflect an intentional investment in recruitment and retention. Creation of the Associate Teacher program to create pathways to the teaching profession and provision of experience-based supplements through local millage funds are two such initiatives. Though we often find ourselves reminding the District that there is much more to be done, it is evident that the need to address the ongoing teacher shortage here in our schools is understood. But strides made toward filling vacancies and keeping our experienced educators in the classroom can be easily undermined.

For this reason, Hernando Classroom Teachers' Association is compelled to issue the following appeal directly to the members of the Hernando County School Board. It is unfortunate and necessary that we find ourselves addressing Board comments directed toward employees and the roles they filled in the statutorily required book challenge process—a process for which clear procedures have been defined in Board policy [po2522]. Specifically, comments made by members of this Board during the May 7th Special School Board Meeting failed to meet the standards established in the District's Code of Civility.

While members of the Board may certainly disagree with the recommendation(s) submitted by a book challenge committee, in presenting such disagreement, all Board members should adhere to the District Code of Civility which requires the following:

- We listen carefully and respectfully as others express opinions that may be different from ours.
- We do not bully, belittle or tease another and we do not allow others to do so in our presence.
- We do not demean and are not abusive or obscene in any of our communications.

Employees should not be berated, belittled, attacked, or insulted for simply doing a job assigned to them. It is imperative that the Board recognize such commentary can be construed as threatening and is likely to result in a climate that is in fact counter-productive to recruitment and retention.

We call upon the Board to set the standard for civility others are to follow—refrain from demeaning, threatening and bullying district employees, particularly when the employee conduct is in accord with School Board policies and procedures. As members of the Board are well aware, failure to follow Board policies and procedures may lead to complaints and/or

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Code of Civility

The education of a child happens only through partnership, and among partners must be the child, the school faculty and staff, the parent(s) or guardian(s), the community and district office employees. Partnership is an active state that includes sharing responsibilities, meaningful communication and welcomed participation.

When people who are working together agree, the partnership runs smoothly. But no two people will always agree and that can make partnership difficult. The partnership is most powerful – as children are educated to reach their potential – when we agree on how to disagree. We must be civil in our discourse.

Civility is often described by its absence. We hear of harmful actions such as road rage, physical confrontation, ethnic stereotypes and slurs. But civility is not just an absence of harm. It is the affirmation of what is best about each of us individually and collectively. It is more than saying “please” and “thank you.” It is reflecting our respect for others in our behavior, regardless of whether we know or like them. It also is not simply being politically correct and is not to be used to stifle criticism or comment. It is being truthful and kind and is each of us taking responsibility for our own actions rather than blaming others.

As we communicate with each other, we need to remember that we are working together to benefit the children of this community.

Therefore, the Hernando County School Board requires that as we communicate, students, HCSD faculty and staff, parents, guardians and all other members of the community shall:

1. Treat each other with courtesy and respect at all times.

This means that:

- We listen carefully and respectfully as others express opinions that may be different from ours.
- We share our opinions and concerns without loud or offensive language, gestures or profanity.

2. Treat each other with kindness.

This means that:

- We treat each other as we would like to be treated.
- We do not threaten or cause physical or bodily harm to another.
- We do not threaten or cause damage to the property of another.
- We do not bully, belittle or tease another and we do not allow others to do so in our presence.
- We do not demean and are not abusive or obscene in any of our communications.

3. Take responsibility for our own actions.

This means that:

- We share information honestly.
- We refrain from displays of temper.
- We do not disrupt or attempt to interfere with the operation of a classroom or any other work or public area of a school or school facility.

4. Cooperate with one another.

This means that:

- We obey school rules for access and visitation.
- We respect the legitimate obligations and time constraints we each face.
- We notify each other when we have information that might help reach our common goal. This will include information about safety issues, academic progress, changes that might impact a student's work or events in the community that might impact the school.
- We respond when asked for assistance.
- We understand that we do not always get our way.

uncontrollable student be told to leave the classroom without the knowledge and consent of the principal or his/her designee.

6.31 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 F.S. 1003.32. The principal or his/her designee to whom the student has been referred shall inform the teacher of the action taken. The principal or his/her designee shall make available to bargaining unit members school rules and regulations to be utilized in student discipline and will be responsible for ensuring these rules are enforced. The principal shall discuss this matter with the teacher as soon as possible.

6.32 False accusations by students that jeopardize the professional reputation, employment, or professional certification of an instructional employee, will be addressed according to F.S. 1006.09 1(c) and the district school board Code of Student Conduct.

6.40 Any case of assault and/or battery upon a bargaining unit member shall be promptly reported to the principal or his/her designee. After such notice the principal or his/her designee will report the incident to the proper authorities and will conduct an investigation of the allegation(s). The teacher may request to have time in a non-student contact assignment until the investigation of the assault and/or battery case involving the teacher is completed. However, after conferring with the teacher, the principal will determine the duration of said assignment and when the teacher will return to the regular assignment.

6.50 If a bargaining unit member receives notice from his/her supervisor requesting a meeting at which he/she will be formally reprimanded, warned, or disciplined for any infraction of rules, investigatory and/or fact-finding meeting concerning potential discipline, or delinquency in professional performance, he/she shall be entitled to representation. A bargaining unit member who is a member of HCTA shall be entitled to have his/her choice of an HCTA trained Building Representative, HCTA President or HCTA Business Agent present. If a representative from another worksite is used, the meeting will occur after the duty day to avoid impact to the student day and costs for a substitute employee. Said meeting will take place as mutually scheduled between the bargaining unit member, his/her representative, and the supervisor within ten (10) working days, or as soon as possible.

6.51 The standard for discipline (reprimand, suspension without pay, demotion, or involuntary termination) shall be just cause. This standard does not apply to termination during probation, reappointment, or negative marks or comments on performance evaluations/assessment and/or observations. Furthermore, just cause is not the standard for actions regarding performance deficiencies as provided for in F.S. 1012.33 and 1012.34.

6.60 When a complaint is made by a parent, student, or any other individual against a bargaining unit member that may result in disciplinary action, he or she shall be made aware and given an opportunity to respond prior to administration taking any disciplinary action or the matter being noted in an evaluation.

6.70 Teachers are required to follow policies and procedures; if they are required to deviate from doing so, including matters of grade recovery, a complaint/grievance may be filed.

6.80 Inspection and examination of personnel file(s) shall be done in compliance with F.S. 119.07 and F.S. 1012.31. Documented attempt(s) to contact the employee(s) whose file is being inspected shall be made within a reasonable period of time utilizing the contact information on file at the District Office or through the school site.

6.81 Teachers shall receive a copy of and have the right to append any materials placed in their personnel file(s) as per F.S. 1012.31.

ARTICLE VIII

Salary and General Employment Practices

8.10 Beginning with the 2007-2008 school years, the teacher contract will be extended to 197 days. Due to unique program needs and/or previous commitments, some current ROTC instructors and School Psychologist positions are on a contract in excess of 197 days. If the bargaining unit member has a contract that exceeds 197