



*River Road Independent School District*

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# Employee Handbook 2009-2010

**Purple Pride**

# Table of contents

Introduction.....	5
Employee handbook receipt.....	6
<b>District information</b>	
Mission statement.....	7
Board of trustees.....	7
Administration.....	7
<b>Employment</b>	
Equal employment opportunity.....	8
Job vacancy announcements.....	8
Check recovery system fees.....	8
Employment after retirement.....	8
Contract and noncontract employment.....	8
Searches and alcohol and drug testing.....	9
First aid and CPR certification.....	10
Reassignments and transfers.....	10
Workload and work schedules.....	11
Notification of parents regarding qualifications.....	11
Outside employment and tutoring.....	12
Performance evaluation.....	12
Employee involvement.....	12
Staff development.....	13
<b>Compensation and benefits</b>	
Salaries, wages, and stipends.....	13
Annualized compensation.....	13
Paychecks.....	14
Automatic payroll deposit.....	16
Payroll deductions.....	16
Overtime compensation.....	17
Travel expense reimbursement.....	17
Health, dental, and life insurance.....	19
Supplemental insurance benefits.....	19
Cafeteria plan benefits (Section 125).....	19
Workers' compensation insurance.....	20
Unemployment compensation insurance.....	20
Teacher retirement.....	20
Other benefit programs.....	21
- Tax-sheltered Annuities (403(b)).....	21
- U.S. Savings Bonds.....	21
- Free Admission to Athletic Contests for Employees.....	21

## Leaves and absences

Personal leave.....	22
Sick leave.....	23
Local leave.....	23
Temporary disability.....	23
Family and medical leave.....	24
Vacations and holidays.....	26
Workers' compensation benefits.....	27
Assault leave.....	27
Jury duty.....	27
Other court appearances.....	27
Military leave.....	28

## Employee relations and communications

Employee recognition and appreciation.....	28
District communications.....	28

## Complaints and grievances.....

## Employee conduct and welfare.....

Standards of conduct.....	29
Discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.....	32
Harassment of students.....	32
Drug-abuse prevention.....	33
Reporting suspected child abuse.....	34
Fraud and financial impropriety.....	34
Conflict of interest.....	35
Gifts and favors.....	35
Associations and political activities.....	35
Safety.....	36
Tobacco use.....	36
Criminal history background checks.....	36
Employee arrests and convictions.....	37
Possession of firearms and weapons.....	37
Visitors in the workplace.....	37
Copyrighted materials.....	38
Computer use and data management.....	37
Asbestos management plan.....	38
Pest control treatment.....	38
Telephone Use.....	39
Employee Dress Code.....	39

## General procedures

Bad weather closing.....	40
Emergencies.....	40
Purchasing procedures.....	40
Name and address changes.....	40
Personnel records.....	41
Building use.....	41

## Termination of employment

Resignations.....	41
Dismissal or nonrenewal of contract employees.....	42
Dismissal of noncontract employees.....	42
Exit interviews and procedures.....	42
Reports to State Board for Educator Certification.....	43
Reports concerning court-ordered withholding.....	43

## Student issues

Equal educational opportunities.....	43
Student records.....	44
Parent and student complaints.....	44
Administering medication to students.....	44
Dietary supplements.....	45
Psychotropic drugs.....	45
Student discipline.....	45
Student attendance.....	45
Bullying.....	46
Hazing.....	46

## Introduction

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

This handbook is neither a contract nor a substitute for the official district policy manual. Nor is it intended to alter the at-will status of noncontract employees in any way. Rather, it is a guide to and a brief explanation of district policies and procedures related to employment. These policies and procedures can change at any time; these changes shall supersede any handbook provisions that are not compatible with the change. For more information, employees may refer to the policy codes that are associated with handbook topics, confer with their supervisor, or call the appropriate district office. District policies can be accessed on line at [www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/](http://www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/)

# Employee handbook receipt

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Campus/department \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby acknowledge that I have accessed and read the River Road ISD Employee Handbook. I agree to read the handbook and abide by the standards, policies, and procedures defined or referenced in this document.

The River Road ISD Employee Handbook can be found on the RRISD website at [www.rrisd.net](http://www.rrisd.net)

If you would like a copy of the River Road ISD Employee Handbook please request one IN WRITING to your building level principal.

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

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Note: You have been given two copies of this form. Please sign and date one and keep it. Sign and date the other copy and turn it in to your campus principal.

# District information

## Mission statement

*Policy AE*

Our mission is to provide an innovative and comprehensive educational program that prepares students to be productive and responsible citizens.

## Board of trustees

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

Texas law grants the board of trustees the power to govern and oversee the management of the district's schools. The board is the policy-making body within the district and has overall responsibility for the curriculum, school taxes, annual budget, employment of the superintendent and other professional staff, and facilities. The board has complete and final control over school matters within limits established by state and federal law and regulations.

The board of trustees is elected by the citizens of the district to represent the community's commitment to a strong educational program for the district's children. Trustees serve without compensation, must be registered voters, and must reside in the district.

The board usually meets in the River Road ISD Board Room on the second Monday of each month at 6:00PM. In the event that large attendance is anticipated, the board may meet at the River Road High School Auditorium. Special meetings may be called when necessary. A written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted at the Administration Building at least 72 hours before the scheduled meeting time. The written notice will show the date, time, place, and subjects of each meeting. In emergencies, a meeting may be held with a two-hour notice.

All meetings are open to the public. In certain circumstances, Texas law permits the board to go into a closed session from which the public and others are excluded. Closed session may occur for such things as discussing prospective gifts or donations, real-property acquisition, certain personnel matters including employee complaints, security matters, student discipline, or consulting with attorneys regarding pending litigation.

## Administration

Randy Owen, Superintendent  
Gaye L. Gage, Assistant Superintendent  
Mike Hurt, Finance Director  
Judith Evans, Special Education Director  
Bryan Whelps, Athletic Director

# Employment

## Equal employment opportunity

*Policies DAA, DIA*

The River Road ISD does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, military status, or on any other basis prohibited by law. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant's job qualifications, experience, and abilities.

Employees with questions or concerns relating to discrimination on any of the basis listed above should contact the Superintendent.

## Job vacancy announcements

*Policy DC*

Announcements of job vacancies by position and location are distributed on a regular basis and posted at the central administration building, campus offices, and on the district's Web site.

## Check recovery system

A Check Recovery System has been approved for use by RRISD School Board. Any checks returned for nonpayment for any reason will be subject to a charge for the recovery of funds. Currently that charge is \$35.00 per check. All employees are subject to this charge.

## Employment after retirement

Individuals receiving retirement benefits from the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) may be employed in limited circumstances on a full- or part-time basis without affecting their benefits, according to TRS rules and state law. Detailed information about employment after retirement is available in the TRS publication *Employment After Retirement*. Employees can contact TRS for additional information by calling 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. Information is also available on the TRS Web Site ([www.trs.state.tx.us](http://www.trs.state.tx.us)).

## Contract and noncontract employment

*Policies DC, DCA, DCB, DCC, DCD, DCE*

State law requires the district to employ all full-time professional employees in positions requiring a certificate from State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and nurses under probationary, term, or continuing contracts. Employees in all other positions are employed at-will or by a contract that is not subject to the procedures for nonrenewal or

termination under Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code. The paragraphs that follow provide a general description of the employment arrangements used by the district.

**Probationary contracts** - Nurses and full-time professional employees new to the district and employed in positions requiring SBEC certification must receive a probationary contract during their first year of employment. Former employees who are hired after at least a two-year lapse in district employment also may be employed by probationary contract. Probationary contracts are one-year contracts. The probationary period for those who have been employed as a teacher in public education for at least five of the eight years preceding employment with the district may not exceed one school year. For those with less experience, the probationary period will be three school years (i.e., three one-year contracts) with an optional fourth school year if the board determines it is doubtful whether a term or continuing contract should be given.

**Term and continuing contracts** - Full-time professionals employed in positions requiring certification and nurses will be employed by term or continuing contracts after they have successfully completed the probationary period. Campus principals and central office administrators are employed under a two-year term contract. The Assistant Superintendent is employed under a three-year term contract. The terms and conditions of employment are detailed in the contract and employment policies. All employees will receive a copy of their contract and employment policies.

**Non-certified professional and administrative employees** - Employees in professional and administrative positions that do not require SBEC certification (such as noninstructional administrators) are not employed by contract. Employment is not for any specified term and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the district.

**Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees** - All paraprofessional and auxiliary employees, regardless of certification, are employed at will and not by contract. Employment is not for any specified term and may be terminated at any time by either the employee or the district.

## Searches and alcohol and drug testing

### *Policy DHE*

Noninvestigatory searches in the workplace, including accessing an employee's desk, file cabinets, or work area to obtain information needed for usual business purposes may occur when an employee is unavailable. Therefore, employees are hereby notified that they have no legitimate expectation of privacy in those places. In addition, the district reserves the right to conduct searches when there is reasonable cause to believe a search will uncover evidence of work-related misconduct. Such an investigatory search may include drug and alcohol testing if the suspected violation relates to drug or alcohol use. The district may search the employee, the employee's personal items, work areas, including district-owned computers, lockers, and private vehicles parked on district premises or work sites or used in district business.

**Employees required to have a commercial driver's license** - Any employee whose duties require a commercial driver's license (CDL) is subject to drug and alcohol testing. This includes all drivers who operate a motor vehicle designed to transport 16 or more people, counting the driver; drivers of large vehicles; or drivers of vehicles used in the transportation of hazardous materials. Teachers, coaches, or other employees who primarily perform duties other than driving are subject to testing requirements when their duties include driving.

Drug testing will be conducted before an individual assumes driving responsibilities. Alcohol and drug tests will be conducted if reasonable suspicion exists, at random, when an employee returns to duty after engaging in prohibited conduct, and as a follow-up measure. Testing may be conducted following accidents. Return-to-duty and follow-up testing will be conducted if an employee who has violated the prohibited alcohol conduct standards or tested positive for alcohol or drugs is allowed to return to duty.

All employees required to have a CDL or who is otherwise subject to alcohol and drug testing will receive a copy of the district's policy, the testing requirements, and detailed information on alcohol and drug abuse and the availability of assistance programs. Employees with questions or concerns relating to alcohol and drug policies and related educational material should contact the Assistant Superintendent.

## **First aid, CPR, and AED certification**

*Policies DBA, DMA*

Certain employees who are involved in physical activities for students must maintain and submit to the district proof of current certification in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED). Certification must be issued by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or another organization that provides equivalent training and certification. Employees subject to this requirement must submit their certification to their immediate supervisor by the first day of each school year.

## **Reassignments and transfers**

*Policy DK*

All personnel are subject to assignment and reassignment by the superintendent or designee when the superintendent or designee determines that the assignment or reassignment is in the best interest of the district. Reassignment is a transfer to another position, department, or facility that does not necessitate a change in the employment contract. Campus reassignments must be approved by the principal at the receiving campus except when reassignments are due to enrollment shifts or program changes. Extracurricular or supplemental duty assignments may be reassigned at any time unless an extracurricular or supplemental duty assignment is part of a dual-assignment contract. Employees who object to a reassignment may follow the district process for employee complaints as outlined in this handbook and district policy DGBA (Local).

An employee with the required qualifications for a position may request a transfer to another campus or department. A written request for transfer must be completed and signed by the employee and the employee's supervisor. A teacher requesting a transfer to another campus before the school year begins must submit their request by June 1. Requests for transfer during the school year will be considered only when the change will not adversely affect students and after a replacement has been found. All transfer requests will be coordinated by the Human Resources Office and must be approved by the receiving supervisor.

## **Workload and work schedules**

*Policies DEA, DL, DLB, Education Code 11.164*

**Professional employees.** Professional and administrative employees are exempt from overtime pay and are employed on a 10-, 11-, or 12-month basis, according to the work schedules set by the district. A school calendar is adopted each year designating the work schedule for teachers and all school holidays. Notice of work schedules including required days of service and scheduled holidays will be distributed each school year.

Classroom teachers will have planning periods for instructional preparation, including conferences. The schedule of planning periods is set at the campus level but must provide at least 450 minutes within each two-week period in blocks not less than 45 minutes. Teachers and librarians are entitled to a duty-free lunch period of at least 30 minutes. The district may require teachers to supervise students during lunch one day a week when no other personnel are available.

**Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees.** Support employees are employed at will and will be notified of the required duty days, holidays, and hours of work for their position on an annual basis. Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees are not exempt from overtime and are not authorized to work in excess of their assigned schedule without prior approval from their supervisor.

**Classroom teachers and lesson plans.** The Superintendent has mandated the 100% use of the River Road ISD Curriculum, formerly referred to as C-Scope. Teachers are required to follow all aspects of the River Road ISD Curriculum including: lessons, activities, VADs, IFDs, and YAGs. Any deviation from the River Road ISD Curriculum requires approval at the district level. Those subjects for which a River Road ISD Curriculum are not provided will support the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). Teachers are expected to follow campus procedures for the collection and review of lesson plans.

## **Notification of parents regarding qualifications**

*Policies DK, DBA*

In schools receiving Title I funds, the district is required by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) to notify parents at the beginning of each school year that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's teacher. NCLB also

requires that parents be notified if their child has been assigned, or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by, a teacher who is not highly qualified.

Texas law also requires that parents be notified if their child is assigned for more than 30 consecutive instructional days to a teacher who does not hold an appropriate teaching certificate. This notice is not required if parental notification under NCLB is sent. Inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers include individuals serving with an emergency permit (including individuals waiting to take the EXCET exam) or individuals who do not hold any certificate or permit. Information relating to teacher certification will be made available to the public upon request.

Employees who have questions about their certification status can call the Assistant Superintendent.

## **Outside employment and tutoring**

*Policy DBD*

Employees are required to disclose in writing to their immediate supervisor any outside employment that may create a potential conflict of interest with their assigned duties and responsibilities or the best interest of the district. Supervisors will consider outside employment on a case-by-case basis and determine whether it should be prohibited because of a conflict of interest.

## **Performance evaluation**

*Policies DN, DNA, DNB*

Evaluation of an employee's job performance is a continuous process that focuses on improvement. Performance evaluation is based on an employee's assigned job duties and other job-related criteria. All employees will participate in the evaluation process with their assigned supervisor at least annually. Written evaluations will be completed on forms approved by the district. Reports, correspondence, and memoranda also can be used to document performance information. All employees will receive a copy of their written evaluation, have a performance conference with their supervisor, and get the opportunity to respond to the evaluation.

## **Employee involvement**

*Policies BQA, BQB*

At both the campus and district levels, River Road ISD offers opportunities for input in matters that affect employees and influence the instructional effectiveness of the district. As part of the district's planning and decision-making process, employees are elected to serve on district- or campus-level advisory committees. Plans and detailed information about the shared decision-making process are available in each campus office or from the Assistant Superintendent.

## Staff development

### *Policy DMA*

Staff development activities are organized to meet the needs of employees and the district. Staff development for instructional personnel is predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives, addressed in the campus improvement plan, and approved by a campus-level advisory committee. Staff development for noninstructional personnel is designed to meet specific licensing requirements (e.g., bus drivers) and continued employee skill development.

**Individuals holding renewable SBEC certificates are responsible for obtaining the required training hours and maintaining appropriate documentation. A copy of any documentation received for training and/or in-service must be submitted to the Superintendent's secretary for inclusion in your personnel file.**

## Compensation and benefits

### Salaries, wages, and stipends

#### *Policy DEA*

Employees are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and a pay structure established for each position. The district's pay plans are reviewed by the administration each year and adjusted as needed. All district positions are classified as exempt or nonexempt according to federal law. Professional and administrative employees are generally classified as exempt and are paid monthly salaries. They are not entitled to overtime compensation. Other employees are generally classified as nonexempt and are paid an hourly wage or salary and receive compensatory time or overtime pay for each overtime hour worked beyond 40 in a workweek. (See *Overtime Compensation*)

All employees will receive written notice of their pay and work schedules before the start of each school year. Classroom teachers, full-time librarians, full-time nurses, and full-time counselors will be paid no less than the minimum state salary schedule. Contract employees who perform extracurricular or supplemental duties may be paid a stipend in addition to their salary according to the district's extra-duty pay schedule.

Employees should contact the Human Resources Office for more information about the district's pay schedules or their own pay.

### Annualized compensation

#### *Policy DEA*

The district pays all salaried employees over 12 months regardless of the number of months employed during the school year. Salaried employees will be paid in equal monthly or bimonthly payments, beginning with the first pay period of the school year. An employee, who separates from service before the last day of instruction or retires

under TRS, will receive in his or her final paycheck, a lump sum payment for wages actually earned from the beginning of the school year to the date of separation. Employees that separate after the last day of instruction will continue to receive paychecks through the end of the summer.

## Paychecks

All professional, auxiliary, and administrative employees, including most clerical and secretarial employees, and salaried employees are paid monthly. Paychecks will not be released to any person other than the district employee named on the check without the employee's written authorization.

An employee's payroll statement contains detailed information including deductions, withholding information, and the amount of leave accumulated.

Monthly payrolls are paid on the 16<sup>th</sup> of each month. If the 16<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend or Federal Holiday, the monthly payroll is paid on the business day immediately prior to the 16<sup>th</sup>.

An employee's payroll statement contains detailed information including deductions, withholding information, and the amount of leave accumulated.

### Paycheck Stub

Your paycheck stub is broken down into two main parts. The top part shows what you have been paid for each "assignment". Every employee has one (i.e., assignment). Some employees have several, such as coaches, club sponsors, band directors, people who "moonlight" at other jobs, and any one who receives a check in September called "retro" pay. Totals for each assignment are shown for the fiscal year, which runs from September through August; the calendar year, which of course is January through December; and the current period, which is the actual pay period covered. Fiscal year totals show you how much has been paid on your employment contract in the current fiscal year, while calendar year totals will show you what your income is for the current tax year.

If you participate in the district's Section 125K Cafeteria Plan, you will see totals included in the top section of the stub. The cafeteria plan totals include any insurance premiums and dependent care or un-reimbursed medical amounts that you are "flexing" through the plan. By "flexing" these amounts you are reducing the amount of income that is subject to taxes, which results in higher take-home pay.

Items that **DO** qualify:

- Employee and Dependent health insurance premiums
- Dental insurance premiums
- Vision insurance
- Cancer insurance

- Dependent Care estimated amounts
- Un-reimbursed medical expenses (beginning fiscal year 2001)

Items that **DO NOT** qualify:

- Life insurance (Ft. Dearborn, Texas Permanent Life)

**IMPORTANT POINT:** The computer system subtracts the amount of qualified premiums and dependent care payments from your gross pay and then calculates taxes on the difference or so-called adjusted gross income. That is why these cafeteria plan amounts are included in the top section and not in the deductions section. Though it is a deduction to you, technically it is negative income and is thus treated as such.

The deduction section is different than the pay section when it comes to calendar totals. That is because some deductions are fiscal year deductions and others are calendar year only. But no deduction is both. Calendar year deductions are strictly withholding and FICA (social security) taxes, while all other deductions are fiscal year deductions. What about the cafeteria plan “deductions”? Here again, remember that while they are deductions to you, the system (and the IRS) treat those amounts as negative income.

Here’s what some of the deduction descriptions mean:

- **TRS Retirement Rate:** This is the required employee contribution into the retirement fund, as mandated by Section 825.403 of the Teacher Retirement Law. It represents 6.40% of compensation.
- **TRS Retirement Insurance:** This is .65% of compensation and is paid into the retired school employees’ group insurance fund. It is required by Section 16 of the Texas Public School Retired Employees Group Insurance law. It has always been a part of your total TRS monthly deduction. Together these deductions represent 7.05% of income, which is the amount required under law.
- **FICA MED:** The Social Security law is somewhat confusing in that certain employees pay only a portion of the total FICA tax, others pay the entire tax, and still others pay no FICA tax at all. It all depends on when you started working for the district and what employee group you belong to (professional, paraprofessional, or auxiliary). FICA MED is the Medicare insurance portion of the FICA tax. It represents 1.45% of income and is paid by all employees who came to work for the district after March 31, 1986. All employees who fall within this category pay at least this portion of the FICA tax regardless of their classification.
- **FICA HIGH:** This is the maximum FICA tax rate, which includes 1.45% FICA MED as well as the standard 6.20% FICA tax for a total rate of 7.65%. The district must match your FICA taxes dollar for dollar. You’ll see that in the portion of the stub under Employer Contributions.

## **Other Important Information:**

Tax Status and Direct Deposit: Your tax status, including numbers of exemptions claimed, is printed on the stub. You should check to make sure that it is the correct status for you. If you have any significant events that occur in your life (win the lottery, inherit money, etc...), then you should review your status with a qualified tax person to ensure that you are withholding the proper amount. You can change your tax status anytime during the year by filing a new W-4 Form with the payroll office. Also shown is information about your bank account for the direct deposit program offered by the district. You should check to make sure it is correct. Finally, there is a location code that shows the campus number where we send your check or direct deposit notice. Also check it to make sure we have the correct pay location.

Leave Balances: You should periodically check the balance of your leave accounts against whatever record, if any, that you maintain. Keep in mind that leave balances are automatically incremented each September pursuant to applicable Board policy.

Employer Contributions: At the middle right of your stub is information concerning amounts that have been paid on your behalf by the district for that particular pay date. These amounts include the matching FICA taxes paid by the district, and the district's contribution toward the employee portion of health. Regarding the latter, the deduction description contains the statutory employee classification, such as PROFESSIONAL/ADMIN or BUS DRIVER.

## **Automatic payroll deposit**

Employees must have their paychecks electronically deposited into a designated account. A notification period of two weeks is necessary to activate this service. With automatic deposit, an employee's pay is immediately available on the pay date. Contact the Payroll Office for more information about the automatic payroll deposit service.

## **Payroll deductions**

### *Policy CFEA*

Automatic payroll deductions for the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) and federal income tax are required for all full-time employees. Medicare tax deductions also are required for all employees hired after March 31, 1986. Temporary and part-time employees who are not eligible for TRS membership must have their Social Security contributions deducted.

Other payroll deductions employees may elect include deductions for the employee's share of premiums for health, dental, life, and vision insurance; annuities; and higher education savings plans. Employees also may request payroll deduction for payment of membership dues to professional organizations and for the purchase of US Savings Bonds. Salary deductions are automatically made for unauthorized or unpaid leave.

## Overtime compensation

### *Policy DEA*

The district compensates overtime for nonexempt employees in accordance with federal wage and hour laws. Only nonexempt employees (hourly employees and paraprofessional employees) are entitled to overtime compensation. Nonexempt employees are not authorized to work beyond their normal work schedule without advance approval from their supervisor.

Overtime is legally defined as all hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a work week and is not measured by the day or by the employee's regular work schedule. Nonexempt employees that are paid on a salary basis are paid for a 40-hour workweek and do not earn additional pay unless they work more than 40 hours. For the purpose of calculating overtime, a workweek begins at 12:01AM on Sunday and ends at midnight Saturday.

Employees may be compensated for overtime at time-and-a-half rate with compensatory time off (comp time) or direct pay. The following applies to all nonexempt employees:

- Employees can accumulate up to 60 hours of comp time.
- Comp time must be used in the duty year that it is earned.
- Use of comp time may be at the employee's request with supervisor approval as workload permits, or at the supervisor's direction.
- An employee may be required to use comp time before using any other available paid leave (e.g., sick, personal, vacation).
- Weekly time records will be maintained on all nonexempt employees for the purpose of wage and salary administration. **NO EMPLOYEE MAY CLOCK IN OR OUT FOR ANOTHER EMPLOYEE. Clocking in or out for another employee will result in disciplinary actions that may include immediate termination.**

## Travel expense reimbursement

### *Policy DEE*

Before any travel expenses are incurred by an employee, the employee's supervisor and the Superintendent must give approval. For approved travel, employees will be reimbursed for mileage and other travel expenditures according to the current rate schedule established by the district. Employees must submit receipts, to the extent possible, to be reimbursed for expenses other than mileage. The District's comprehensive Employee Travel Policy is reprinted below:

RIVER ROAD INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT  
EMPLOYEE TRAVEL POLICY

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1. Travel requests should be submitted at least 30 calendar days prior to departure. This will allow time for arrangements to be made and any prepayments to be processed and mailed.
2. A request to travel must first be submitted to the employee's principal or supervisor and then, if required, to the appropriate program director for approval. The program director will then send the request to the superintendent for final approval.
3. When the approved request is received in the Central Administrative Business Office, it will be checked for funds availability. If funds are not available in the budget category shown, then the request shall be returned to the principal or supervisor unprocessed. If no fund category is entered on the request, then the request shall also be returned to the principal or supervisor. An estimate of expenses must also be included with each request; otherwise, the request shall be returned to the campus or department.
4. No travel arrangements or reservations shall be made until approval of a travel request is granted by the Superintendent and funds availability is determined. Then, and only then, will the Business office proceed with arranging travel and reservations.
5. Advances for travel will not generally be allowed. The district will prepay transportation costs, lodging costs, fees, and tuition, thus eliminating the need to carry cash for these items. Employees are expected to use their own cash or credit for meals and other incidental expenses. The Business Office will issue a reimbursement check to the employee for their out-of-pocket expenses within 14 business days or less of receipt of reimbursement request, so there should be little or no risk to the employee of additional interest expense on credit card purchases.
6. Employees will be allowed the cost of local transportation by taxi, subway, street car or other public carrier from an airport and from lodging accommodations to business appointment and return. Under certain circumstances, employees may be allowed use of a rented car. All expenses for use of a rented car must be supported by receipts. Any unsupported costs will be disallowed. Employees will be allowed reasonable costs for taxis, subways, street cars, or other public carriers. If an amount is considered to be unreasonable, then, upon approval of the Business & Finance Manager, that amount shall be deducted from the amount of reimbursement calculated by the Business Office.
7. Employees using a privately owned vehicle shall be reimbursed at the rate of .405 cents per mile. If actual mileage is not recorded on the expense claim form then, the Texas Department of Highways and Public Transportation maps shall be used to determine the distance between points of departure and arrival. If actual mileage is used, reimbursement will not be authorized for mileage deemed to be excessive. Excessive mileage shall be determined by calculating the ratio of total miles claimed to the official distance between points of departure and arrival times two. A ratio of up to 1.25 will be considered reasonable for mileage above and beyond the points of departure and arrival.
8. If more than one employee from a campus is traveling to the same event by personal conveyance, then reimbursement for mileage at the rate specified shall be limited to one vehicle for every four employees attending the event.
9. Expenses for lodging and meals must be supported in full by receipts. Unsupported expenses will be disallowed. When determining reasonableness of expenses for meals, the district will use the following benchmarks for each meal as indicated:
  - Breakfast \$ 8.00 per day
  - Lunch \$10.00 per
  - Dinner \$12.00 per day
  - Total \$30.00 per day

10. Employees will be allowed expenses incurred for telegrams or telephone calls made in connection with official school district business. These costs must be supported by documentation identifying the purpose of the telegrams or calls.
11. If reservations (airline, rail, lodging, or car rental) are not used, then the employee is responsible for calling the travel office to cancel reservations. The district will not be responsible for any employee failing to advise the travel office of reservations not used.
12. Within three business days upon return, the employee is responsible for turning in to the Business Office an itemization of expense form that includes all receipts and other documentation to support the cost of the trip. This form will be returned to the employee if any discrepancy or unsupported or unreasonable costs are identified. If the employee is unable to support or substantiate any such costs, then no reimbursement for those items will be allowed.
13. If an employee receives a cash advance for a trip and actual expenses are less than the amount advanced, then the employee shall turn in the excess to the Business Office within three business days upon return along with the itemization of expense form. If expenses exceed the amount advanced, then a check for reimbursement will be issued to the employee subject to the requirements for reasonableness and support of expenses.

## **Health, dental, and life insurance**

### *Policy CRD*

Group health insurance coverage is available to all full time employees. Coverage is available through TRS Active Care or First Care. The district's contribution to employee insurance premiums is determined annually by the board of trustees. Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, prices, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees in a separate booklet that is issued to each participating employee.

The health insurance plan year is from September 1 through August 31. An open enrollment period is held during the first several weeks of the school year during which new employees may sign up for insurance coverage and current employees can make changes in their insurance coverage. Employees should contact Business Office for more information.

## **Supplemental insurance benefits**

### *Policy CRD*

At their own expense, employees may enroll in supplemental insurance programs for major dental, cancer, disability income, and life insurance. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deduction. Employees should contact the Human Resources Department for more information.

## **Cafeteria plan benefits (Section 125)**

Employees may be eligible to participate in the Cafeteria Plan (Section 125) and, under IRS regulations, must either accept or reject this benefit. This plan enables eligible employees to pay certain insurance premiums on a pretax basis (i.e., disability, accidental

death and dismemberment, cancer and dread disease, dental, and additional term life insurance). A third-party administrator handles employee claims made on these accounts.

New employees must accept or reject this benefit during their first month of employment. All employees must accept or reject this benefit on an annual basis and during the specified time period.

## **Workers' compensation insurance**

### *Policy CRE*

The district, in accordance with state law, provides workers' compensation benefits to employees who suffer a work-related illness or are injured on the job. The district has workers' compensation coverage from Texas Workers' Compensation Solutions, effective April 1, 2003. Benefits help pay for medical treatment and make up for part of the income lost while recovering. Specific benefits are prescribed by law depending on the circumstances of each case.

All work-related accidents or injuries should be reported immediately to their supervisor. Employees who are unable to work because of a work-related injury will be notified of their rights and responsibilities under the Texas Labor Code. See *Workers' compensation benefits*, page 41 for information on use of paid leave for such absences.

## **Unemployment compensation insurance**

### *Policy CRF*

Employees who have been laid off or terminated through no fault of their own may be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits. Employees are not eligible to collect unemployment benefits during regularly scheduled breaks in the school year or the summer months if they have employment contracts or reasonable assurance of returning to service. Employees with questions about unemployment benefits should contact the Business Office.

## **Teacher retirement**

### *Policy DEG*

All personnel employed on a regular basis for at least four and one-half months are members of the Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS). Substitutes not receiving TRS service retirement benefits who work at least 90 days a year are also eligible for TRS membership and to purchase a year of creditable service. TRS provides members with an annual statement of their account showing all deposits and the total account balance for the year ending August 31, as well as an estimate of their retirement benefits.

Employees who plan to retire under TRS should notify TRS as soon as possible. Information on the application procedures for TRS benefits is available from TRS at Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 1000 Red River Street, Austin, TX 78701-2698, or

call 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. TRS information is also available on the Web ([www.trs.state.tx.us](http://www.trs.state.tx.us)).

## **Other Benefit Programs**

### **Tax-sheltered Annuities (403(b))**

#### *Policy CRG*

Any employee who works 20 or more hours per week may enter into a salary reduction agreement with the district whereby an amount of their salary is withheld and paid directly to a third-party annuity or custodial account on their behalf. All amounts electively withheld in this manner are subject to applicable legal limitations and restrictions. A district Salary Reduction Agreement must be completed and on file. Additional information regarding the district's 403(b) program is available from the Business Office.

As of June 1, 2002, school districts and open-enrollment charter schools may enter into employee salary reduction agreements only if the product is offered by an eligible company whose name is shown on the TRS list (or the employee's contract with a company is grandfathered). The list is available on the TRS Web site for verification of eligibility.

### **U.S. Savings Bonds**

U.S. Saving's Bonds may be purchased by payroll deduction. Bonds are issued to the employee through the district's depository. Forms to sign up for purchase of bonds by payroll deduction are available through the Business Office.

### **Free Admittance for Employees to Athletic Contests**

Each RRISD employee is issued a season pass to all home regular season athletic contests. The pass is good for the employee and a guest. Passes are distributed during the first week of the school year, or they can be picked up from the Athletic Director's office during regular school hours.

## **Leaves and Absences**

#### *Policy DEC*

The district offers employees paid and unpaid leaves of absence in times of personal need. This handbook describes the basic types of leave available and restrictions on leaves of absence. Employees who have personal needs that will require long leaves of absence should call the Payroll Office for counseling about leave options, continuation of benefits, and communicating with the district.

Employees who take an unpaid leave of absence may continue their insurance benefits at their own expense. Health care benefits for employees on leave authorized under the Family and Medical Leave Act will be paid by the district as they were when they were working. Otherwise, the district does not make benefit contributions for employees who are on unpaid leave.

Employees must follow district and department or campus procedures to report or request any leave of absence and complete the appropriate leave request form. Any employee who is absent more than 5 days because of a personal or family illness must submit a medical certification from a qualified health care provider confirming the specific dates of the illness, the reason for the illness, and—in the case of personal illness—the employee’s fitness to return to work.

Personal and local sick leave is earned on a monthly basis. Leave is available for the employee’s use on the first day of work. If an employee leaves the district before the end of the work year, the cost of any unearned leave days taken shall be deducted from the employee’s final paycheck.

## Personal leave

State law entitles all employees to five days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave is earned at a rate of one half a work day for each 18 work days of employment. A day of earned personal leave is equivalent to an assigned workday. There is no limit on the accumulation of state personal leave, and it can be transferred to other Texas school districts and is generally transferable to education service centers. There are two types of personal leave: nondiscretionary and discretionary.

**Nondiscretionary.** Leave that is taken for personal or family illness, emergency, a death in the family, or active military service is considered nondiscretionary leave. This type of leave allows very little or no advance planning and will be granted to employees in the same manner as state sick leave. **Teachers, classroom assistants, and ancillary staff MUST directly contact the building level principal BEFORE applying for a substitute on the AESOP Website.**

**Discretionary.** Leave that is taken at an employee’s discretion and that can be scheduled in advance is considered discretionary leave. **An employee wishing to take discretionary personal leave must submit a notice of the request 3 days in advance of the anticipated absence to his or her principal or supervisor.** Discretionary personal leave will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis and will be subject to the following limitations:

- A maximum of 10% of campus employees in each job category will be permitted to take discretionary personal leave at the same time.
- Discretionary leave may not be taken for more than 2 consecutive work days, except with special approval for extenuating circumstances.
- Discretionary leave may not be taken on the following key days:
  - the day before a school holiday
  - the day after a school holiday
  - days scheduled for final exams, end-of-course exams, and benchmark exams
  - days scheduled for TAKS or other district testing
  - professional or staff development days
  - the first or last five (5) teaching days of any school year

- during any days designated as part of the Flex Calendar Schedule

### **Local Personal Leave**

All employees who receive Local Sick Leave will be awarded one (1) Local Personal Leave day on September 16<sup>th</sup> of each school year. This day can be used for any reason. Your Principal or immediate supervisor should be notified three (3) days prior to using this Local Personal Leave day.

### **Sick leave**

Previously accumulated state sick leave is available for use and may be transferred to other school districts in Texas. Sick leave can be used only in half-day increments except when coordinated with family and medical leave taken on an intermittent or reduced-schedule basis or when coordinated with workers' compensation benefits.

Sick leave may be used for the following reasons only:

- Employee illness
- Illness in the employee's immediate family
- Family emergency (i.e., natural disasters or life-threatening situations)
- Death in the immediate family
- Active military service

### **Local Sick Leave**

In addition to leave provided by state law, the District shall provide five (5) equivalent workdays of local sick leave per year without loss of pay for employees on a ten (10) month basis, at a rate of one-half day per month. Eleven (11) month employees are provided six (6) equivalent workdays of local sick leave per year without loss of pay. Twelve (12) month employees are provided seven (7) equivalent workdays of local sick leave per year without loss of pay.

Local sick leave may accumulate without limit, and may be used for personal illness, including pregnancy, injury, and family illness. General provisions pertaining to local sick leave are:

1. False claims for sick leave payments shall be grounds for disciplinary action. The action taken depends on the circumstances in each individual case. If the facts warrant, the employee may be subject to immediate dismissal.
2. The employee must notify his or her immediate supervisor prior to applying for a substitute using the AESOP Website.

### **Temporary disability**

**Certified employees.** Any full-time employee whose position requires certification from the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) is eligible for temporary disability leave. The purpose of temporary disability leave is to provide job protection to full-time

educators who cannot work for an extended period of time because of a mental or physical disability of a temporary nature. A full-time educator may request to be placed on temporary disability leave or be placed on leave. Pregnancy and conditions related to pregnancy are treated the same as any other temporary disability.

Employees must request approval for temporary disability leave. The leave request must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming the employee's inability to work and estimating a probable date of return. If disability leave is approved, the length of leave is no longer than 180 days. If disability leave is not approved, the employee must return to work or be subject to termination procedures.

If an employee is placed on temporary disability leave involuntarily, he or she has the right to request a hearing before the board of trustees. The employee may protest the action and present additional evidence of fitness to work.

When an employee is ready to return to work, the Central Administrative Office should be notified at least 30 days in advance. The return-to-work notice must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming that the employee is able to resume regular duties. Professional employees returning from leave will be reinstated to the school to which they were previously assigned as soon as an appropriate position is available. If a position is not available before the end of the school year, professional employees will be reinstated at the beginning of the following school year.

**Non-certified employees** - Temporary disability for non-certified, full-time auxiliary/support employees shall be limited to 60 calendar days; absence in excess of 60 calendar days may result in termination, at the option of the Superintendent, in accordance with Board policies.

If a non-certified employee is placed on temporary disability leave involuntarily, he or she has the right to request a hearing before the board of trustees. The employee may protest the action and present additional evidence of fitness to work.

When a non-certified employee is ready to return to work, the Central Administrative Offices should be notified at least 30 days in advance. The return-to-work notice must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming that the employee is able to do the job. Non-certified employees returning from leave will be reinstated to the school to which they were previously assigned as soon as an appropriate position is available.

## **Family and medical leave (FMLA)**

**Eligibility.** Employees who have been employed by the district for at least 12 months and have worked at least 1,250 hours in the 12 months immediately preceding the need for leave are eligible for family and medical leave. Eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave each year. This 12 month period within which the employee shall be eligible shall be defined as the fixed 12-month period measured forward from the day an individual employee's first family and medical leave begins. This leave may be granted for the following reasons:

- The birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child
- To care for a spouse, parent, or child with a serious health condition
- An employee's serious health condition
- A qualifying exigency resulting from active military service of a spouse, child, or parent

A husband and wife who are both employed by the district are subject to limits in the amount of leave that they can take to care for a parent with a serious health condition or for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child; or to care for a covered military service member.

**Military service family leave.** An eligible employee is entitled to leave to care for an active duty military service member who incurs a serious illness or injury in the line of duty. The service member must be the employee's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin. An eligible employee may take up to 26 weeks on a one-time basis to provide care to a covered service member.

**Continuation of benefits and job restoration.** Eligible employees are entitled to continue their health care benefits under the same terms and conditions as when they were on the job and are entitled to return to their previous job or an equivalent job at the end of their leave. Under some circumstances, teachers who are able to return to work at or near the conclusion of a semester may be required to continue their leave until the end of the semester.

**Use of paid leave.** Family and medical leave runs concurrently with accrued sick and personal leave, temporary disability leave, and absences due to a work-related illness or injury. The district will designate the leave as family and medical leave, if applicable, and notify the employee that accumulated leave will run concurrently.

**Intermittent leave.** In some circumstances, employees may take family and medical leave in blocks of time or by reducing their normal weekly or daily work schedule. Intermittent leave may be taken under the following circumstances:

- An employee is needed to care for a seriously ill spouse, child, or parent
- An employee requires medical treatment for a serious illness
- An employee is seriously ill and unable to work
- An employee becomes a parent or has a foster child placed in his or her home

**Requests for FMLA.** When the need for family and medical leave is foreseeable, employees must provide 30 days advance notice to the district. When the need for leave is not foreseeable, employees must contact their immediate supervisor and the Human Resources Office as soon as possible. Employees may be required to provide the following:

- Medical certification from a qualified health care provider supporting the need for leave due to a serious health condition affecting the employee or an immediate family member
- Second or third medical opinions and periodic recertification of the need for leave
- Periodic reports during the leave regarding the employee’s status and intent to return to work
- Medical certification from a qualified health care provider at the conclusion of leave of an employee’s ability to return to work
- Certification of the need for family military leave

Employees requiring family and medical leave should contact the Human Resources Office for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

### Vacations and Holidays

*DED(Local)*

Custodial, maintenance, and mechanical personnel who are in positions requiring 12 months of service shall earn vacation time according to years of employment with the District as follows:

Years of Employment	Vacation Time Earned
One year	1 week
Two years-Five years	2 weeks
Six years-Ten years	3 weeks
Eleven years or more	4 weeks

Money shall not be paid in lieu of vacation time. Vacation time shall not accumulate. A person shall be required to work at least one year to be entitled to one week vacation. Vacation must be taken annually. The Superintendent or designee shall determine all vacation time.

Custodial, maintenance, and mechanical personnel shall have the following holidays, as long as they are not used as a snow make-up day for the schools:

1. New Years Day
2. Good Friday
3. Memorial Day
4. July Fourth
5. Labor Day
6. Thanksgiving Day and the day after Thanksgiving
7. Christmas Eve
8. Christmas Day

Cafeteria employees and school clerks shall not be entitles to vacation time since they are not employed in positions that require twelve months of service.

Administrative secretaries and bookkeepers whose positions require twelve months of service shall be entitled to the same number of vacation days as twelve month positions that are under a contract.

## **Workers' compensation benefits**

An employee absent from duty because of a job-related illness or injury may be eligible for workers' compensation weekly income benefits if the absence exceeds seven calendar days.

An employee receiving workers' compensation wage benefits for a job-related illness or injury may choose to use sick leave or any other paid leave benefits. While an employee is receiving workers' compensation wage benefits, the district will charge available leave proportionately so that the employee receives an amount equal to the employee's regular salary.

## **Assault leave**

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

An employee who is physically assaulted at work may take all the leave time medically necessary (up to two years) to recover from the physical injuries he or she sustained. At the request of an employee, the district will immediately assign the employee to assault leave. Days of leave granted under the assault leave provision will not be deducted from accrued personal leave and must be coordinated with workers' compensation benefits. Upon investigation the district may change the assault leave status and charge leave used against the employee's accrued paid leave. The employee's pay will be deducted if accrued paid leave is not available.

## **Jury duty**

Employees will receive leave with pay and without loss of accumulated leave for jury duty. Employees must present documentation of the service and may retain any compensation they receive.

## **Other court appearances**

Employees will be granted paid leave to comply with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative proceeding. Absences for court appearances related to an employee's personal business must be taken as personal leave or leave

without pay (if no personal leave is available). Employees may be required to submit documentation of their need for leave for court appearances.

## Military leave

**Paid leave for military service.** Any employee who is a member of the Texas National Guard, Texas State Guard, or reserve component of the United States Armed Forces will be granted a paid leave of absence without loss of any accumulated leave for authorized training or duty orders. Paid military leave will not exceed 15 days each federal fiscal year (October 1–September 30). In addition, an employee is entitled to use available state and local personal or sick leave during a time of active military service.

**Reemployment after military leave.** Employees who leave the district to enter into the United States uniformed services or who are ordered to active state military duty (Texas National Guard or Texas State Guard) may return to employment if they are honorably discharged. Employees who wish to return to the district will be reemployed in the position they would have held if employment had not been interrupted or reassigned to an equivalent or similar position provided they can be qualified to perform the required duties. To be eligible for reemployment, employees must provide notice of their obligation or intent to perform military service, provide evidence of honorable discharge or release, and submit an application for reemployment to the Superintendent.

**Continuation of health insurance.** Employees who perform service in the uniformed services may elect to continue their health plan coverage at their own cost for a period not to exceed 24 months. Employees should contact the Human Resources Office for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

## Employee relations and communications

### Employee recognition and appreciation

#### *Policy DJ*

Continuous efforts are made throughout the year to recognize employees who make an extra effort to contribute to the success of the district. Employees are recognized at board meetings, in the district newsletter, and through special events and activities.

### District communications

Throughout the school year, the Superintendent's office publishes newsletters, brochures, fliers, calendars, news releases, and other communication materials. These publications offer employees and the community information pertaining to school activities and achievements. They include the following: PAWPRINTS, and the River Road ISD Newsletter. Information about the school district and its employees can also be found at [www.rrisd.net](http://www.rrisd.net).

## **Complaints and grievances**

### *Policy DGBA*

In an effort to hear and resolve employee concerns or complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted an orderly grievance process. Employees are encouraged to discuss their concerns or complaints with their supervisors or an appropriate administrator at any time.

The formal process provides all employees with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with an administrative response. Once all administrative procedures are exhausted, employees can bring concerns or complaints to the board of trustees. For ease of reference, the district's policy concerning the process of bringing concerns and complaints is reprinted as follows:

[www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/](http://www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/)

## **Employee conduct and welfare**

### **Standards of conduct**

#### *Policy DH*

All employees are expected to work together in a cooperative spirit to serve the best interests of the district and to be courteous to students, one another, and the public. Employees are expected to observe the following standards of conduct:

- Recognize and respect the rights of students, parents, other employees, and members of the community.
- Maintain confidentiality in all matters relating to students and coworkers.
- Report to work according to the assigned schedule.
- Notify their immediate supervisor in advance or as early as possible in the event that they must be absent or late. Unauthorized absences, chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and failure to follow procedures for reporting an absence may be cause for disciplinary action.
- Know and comply with department and district policies and procedures.

- Express concerns, complaints, or criticism through appropriate channels.
- Observe all safety rules and regulations and report injuries or unsafe conditions to a supervisor immediately.
- Use district time, funds, and property for authorized district business and activities only.

All district employees should perform their duties in accordance with state and federal law, district policies and procedures, and ethical standards. Violation of policies, regulations, or guidelines may result in disciplinary action, including termination. Alleged incidents of certain misconduct by educators, including having a criminal record, must be reported to SBEC not later than the seventh day the superintendent first learns of the incident. See *Reports to the State Board for Educator Certification* for additional information.

The *Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators*, adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification, which all district employees must adhere to, is reprinted below:

## **Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators**

### **Statement of Purpose**

The Texas educator shall comply with standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents, and members of the community and shall safeguard academic freedom. The Texas educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession, shall respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty. The Texas educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, shall extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession. The Texas educator, in accepting a position of public trust, shall measure success by the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as an effective citizen. The Texas educator, in fulfilling responsibilities in the community, shall cooperate with parents and others to improve the public schools of the community.

### **Professional Standards**

#### **1. Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices, and Performance**

**Standard 1.1** The educator shall not knowingly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district or educational institution.

**Standard 1.2** The educator shall not knowingly misappropriate, divert, or use monies, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.

**Standard 1.3** The educator shall not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.

**Standard 1.4** The educator shall not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.

**Standard 1.5** The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or to obtain special advantage. This standard shall not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.

**Standard 1.6** The educator shall not falsify records, or direct or coerce others to do so.

**Standard 1.7** The educator shall comply with state regulations, written local school board policies, and other applicable state and federal laws.

**Standard 1.8** The educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications.

## **2. Ethical Conduct toward Professional Colleagues**

**Standard 2.1** The educator shall not reveal confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

**Standard 2.2** The educator shall not harm others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system.

**Standard 2.3** The educator shall adhere to written local school board policies and state and federal laws regarding the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of personnel.

**Standard 2.4** The educator shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities.

**Standard 2.5** The educator shall not discriminate against or coerce a colleague on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability, or family status.

**Standard 2.6** The educator shall not use coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.

**Standard 2.7** The educator shall not retaliate against any individual who has filed a complaint with the SBEC under this chapter.

## **3. Ethical Conduct toward Students**

**Standard 3.1** The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.

**Standard 3.2** The educator shall not knowingly treat a student in a manner that adversely affects the student's learning, physical health, mental health, or safety.

**Standard 3.3** The educator shall not deliberately or knowingly misrepresent facts regarding a student.

**Standard 3.4** The educator shall not exclude a student from participation in a program, deny benefits to a student, or grant an advantage to a student on the basis of race, color, sex, disability, national origin, religion, or family status.

**Standard 3.5** The educator shall not engage in physical mistreatment of a student.

**Standard 3.6** The educator shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student.

**Standard 3.7** The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or knowingly allow any student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.

## Discrimination, harassment, and retaliation

*Policies DH, DIA*

Employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment, including sexual harassment, of other employees or students. While acting in the course of their employment, employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment of other persons, including board members, vendors, contractors, volunteers, or parents. A substantiated charge of harassment will result in disciplinary action.

Employees who believe they have been discriminated or retaliated against or harassed are encouraged to promptly report such incidents to the campus principal, supervisor, or appropriate district official. If the campus principal, supervisor, or district official is the subject of a complaint, the employee should report the complaint directly to the superintendent. A complaint against the superintendent may be made directly to the board.

The district's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating discrimination, harassment, and retaliation is reprinted below:

[www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/](http://www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/)

## Harassment of students

*Policies DH, FFG, FFH*

Sexual and other harassment of students by employees are forms of discrimination and are prohibited by law. Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and district employees are prohibited. Employees who suspect a student may have experienced prohibited harassment are obligated to report their concerns to the campus principal or other appropriate district official. All allegations of prohibited harassment or abuse of a student will be reported to the student's parents and promptly investigated. An employee

who knows of or suspects child abuse must also report his or her knowledge or suspicion to the appropriate authorities, as required by law. See *Reporting suspected child abuse* for additional information.

The district's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating harassment of students is reprinted below:

**Employee-to-student** - Sexual harassment of students by employees is a form of discrimination and is prohibited by law. Sexual harassment of students includes any welcome or unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other oral, written, physical, or visual conduct of a sexual nature. Romantic relationships between district employees and students are strictly prohibited. Other prohibited conduct includes the following:

- Engaging in sexually oriented conversations for the purpose of personal sexual gratification
- Telephoning students at home or elsewhere and engaging in inappropriate social relationships
- Engaging in physical contact that would reasonably be construed as sexual in nature
- Enticing or threatening students to get them to engage in sexual behavior in exchange for grades or other school-related benefits

In most instances, sexual abuse of a student by an employee violates a student's constitutional right to bodily integrity. Sexual abuse may include, but is not limited to, fondling, sexual assault, or sexual intercourse.

Employees who suspect a student is being sexually harassed or abused by another employee are obligated to report their concerns to the campus principal. All allegations of sexual harassment or sexual abuse of a student will be reported to the student's parents and promptly investigated. Conduct that may be characterized as known or suspected child abuse will also be reported to the appropriate authorities, as required by law. Employees with questions or concerns relating to the alleged sexual harassment of a student should contact Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction.

## Drug-abuse prevention

*Policies DH, DI*

River Road ISD is committed to maintaining an alcohol- and drug-free environment and will not tolerate the use of alcohol and illegal drugs in the workplace and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities on or off school property.

Employees who use or are under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs as defined by the Texas Controlled Substances Act during working hours may be dismissed. The district's policy regarding employee drug use follows:

[www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/](http://www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/)

## Reporting suspected child abuse

*Policies DF, DG, DH, FFG, GRA*

All employees are required by state law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to a law enforcement agency, Child Protective Services, or appropriate state agency (e.g., state agency operating, licensing, certifying, or registering a facility) within 48 hours of the event that led to the suspicion. Abuse is defined by Texas Family Code and includes any sexual conduct involving an educator and a student or minor. Reports to Child Protective Services can be made to a local office or to the Texas Abuse Hotline (800-252-5400). **State law specifies that an employee may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.**

Under state law, any person reporting or assisting in the investigation of reported child abuse or neglect is immune from liability unless the report is made in bad faith or with malicious intent. In addition, the district is prohibited from retaliating against an employee who, in good faith, reports child abuse or neglect or who participates in an investigation regarding an allegation of child abuse or neglect.

An employee's failure to report suspected child abuse may result in prosecution for the commission of a Class B misdemeanor. In addition, a certified employee's failure to report suspected child abuse may result in disciplinary procedures by SBEC for a violation of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators.

Employees who suspect that a student has been or may be abused or neglected should also report their concerns to the campus principal. This includes students with disabilities who are no longer minors. Employees are not required to report their concern to the principal before making a report to the appropriate agencies. In addition, employees must cooperate with child abuse and neglect investigators.

**Reporting the concern to the principal does not relieve the employee of the requirement to report to the appropriate state agency. Interference with a child abuse investigation by denying an interviewer's request to interview a student at school or requiring the presence of a parent or school administrator against the desires of the duly authorized investigator is prohibited.**

## Fraud and financial impropriety

*Policy CAA*

All employees should act with integrity and diligence in duties involving the district's financial resources. The district prohibits fraud and financial impropriety, as defined below. Fraud and financial impropriety includes the following:

- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of any document or account belonging to the district
- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of a check, bank draft, or any other financial document

- Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, or other district assets, including employee time
- Impropriety in the handling of money or reporting of district financial transactions
- Profiteering as a result of insider knowledge of district information or activities
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential or proprietary information to outside parties
- Unauthorized disclosure of investment activities engaged in or contemplated by the district
- Accepting or seeking anything of material value from contractors, vendors, or other persons providing services or materials to the district
- Destroying, removing, or inappropriately using records, furniture, fixtures, or equipment
- Failing to provide financial records required by state or local entities
- Failure to disclose conflicts of interest as required by policy
- Any other dishonest act regarding the finances of the district

## **Conflict of interest**

*Policies BBFA, DBD*

Employees are required to disclose to their supervisor any situation that creates a potential conflict of interest with proper discharge of assigned duties and responsibilities or creates a potential conflict of interest with the best interests of the district. This includes the following:

- A personal financial interest
- A business interest
- Any other obligation or relationship
- Nonschool employment

## **Gifts and favors**

*Policy DBD*

Employees may not accept gifts or favors that could influence, or be construed to influence, the employee's discharge of assigned duties. The acceptance of a gift, favor, or service by an administrator or teacher that might reasonably tend to influence the selection of textbooks may result in prosecution of a Class B misdemeanor offense. This does not include staff development, teacher training, or instructional materials, such as maps or worksheets, that convey information to students or contribute to the learning process.

## **Associations and political activities**

*Policy DGA*

The district will not directly or indirectly discourage employees from participating in political affairs or require any employee to join any group, club, committee, organization, or association. Employees may join or refuse to join any professional association or organization.

An individual's employment will not be affected by membership or a decision not to be a member of any employee organization that exists for the purpose of dealing with employees concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work.

Use of district resources, including work time, for political activities is prohibited.

## **Safety**

### *Policy CK*

The district has developed and promotes a comprehensive program to ensure the safety of its employees, students, and visitors. The safety program includes guidelines and procedures for responding to emergencies and activities to help reduce the frequency of accidents and injuries. To prevent or minimize injuries to employees, coworkers, and students and to protect and conserve district equipment, employees must comply with the following requirements:

- Observe all safety rules.
- Keep work areas clean and orderly at all times.
- Immediately report all accidents to their supervisor.
- Operate only equipment or machines for which they have training and authorization.

Employees with questions or concerns relating to safety programs and issues can contact their immediate supervisor.

## **Tobacco use**

### *Policies DH, GKA, FNCD*

State law prohibits smoking or using tobacco products on all district-owned property and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities, on or off campus. This includes all buildings, playground areas, parking facilities, and facilities used for athletics and other activities. Drivers of district-owned vehicles are prohibited from smoking while inside the vehicle. Notices stating that smoking is prohibited by law and punishable by a fine are displayed in prominent places in all school buildings.

## **Criminal history background checks**

### *Policy DBAA*

Employees may be subject to a review of their criminal history record information at any time during employment. National criminal history checks based on an individual's fingerprints, photo, and other identification will be conducted on certain employees and entered into the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Clearinghouse. This database provides the district and SBEC with access to an employee's current national criminal history and updates to the employee's subsequent criminal history.

## Employee arrests and convictions

### *Policy DH*

An employee must notify his or her principal or immediate supervisor within three calendar days of any arrest, indictment, conviction, no contest or guilty plea, or other adjudication of any felony, any offense involving moral turpitude, and any of the other offenses listed below:

- Crimes involving school property or funds
- Crimes involving attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle any person to hold or obtain a position as an educator
- Crimes that occur wholly or in part of school property or at a school-sponsored activity
- Crimes involving moral turpitude

Moral turpitude includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Dishonesty
- Fraud
- Deceit
- Theft
- Misrepresentation
- Deliberate violence
- Base, vile, or depraved acts that are intended to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of the actor
- Drug- or alcohol-related offenses
- Acts constituting abuse or neglect under the Texas Family Code

## Possession of firearms and weapons

### *Policies FNCG, GKA*

Employees, visitors, and students are prohibited from bringing firearms, knives, clubs or other prohibited weapons onto school premises (i.e., building or portion of a building) or any grounds or building where a school-sponsored activity takes place. To ensure the safety of all persons, employees who observe or suspect a violation of the district's weapons policy should report it to their supervisors immediately.

## Visitors in the workplace

### *Policy GKC*

All visitors are expected to enter any district facility through the main entrance and sign in or report to the building's main office. Authorized visitors will receive directions or be escorted to their destination. Employees who observe an unauthorized individual on the district premises should immediately direct him or her to the building office or contact the administrator in charge.

## **Copyrighted materials**

### *Policy EFE*

Employees are expected to comply with the provisions of federal copyright law relating to the unauthorized use, reproduction, distribution, performance, or display of copyrighted materials (i.e., printed material, videos, computer data and programs, etc.). Rented videotapes are to be used in the classroom for educational purposes only. Duplication or backup of computer programs and data must be made within the provisions of the purchase agreement.

## **Computer use and data management**

### *Policy CQ*

The district's electronic communications systems, including its network access to the Internet, is primarily for administrative and instructional purposes. Limited personal use of the system is permitted if the use:

- Imposes no tangible cost to the district
- Does not unduly burden the district's computer or network resources
- Has no adverse effect on job performance or on a student's academic performance

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of the electronic communications systems are not confidential and can be monitored at any time to ensure appropriate use.

Employees who are authorized to use the systems are required to abide by the provisions of the district's communications systems policy and administrative procedures. Failure to do so can result in suspension or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary action. Employees with questions about computer use and data management can contact the Technology Department.

## **Asbestos management plan**

### *Policy CKA*

The district is committed to providing a safe environment for employees. An accredited management planner has developed an asbestos management plan for each piece of district property. A copy of the district's management plan is kept in the Maintenance Office and is available for inspection during normal business hours.

## **Pest control treatment**

### *Policy DI, CLB*

Employees are prohibited from applying any pesticide or herbicide without appropriate training and prior approval of the integrated pest management (IPM) coordinator. Any

application of pesticide or herbicide must be done in a manner prescribed by law and the district's integrated pest management program.

Notices of planned pest control treatment will be posted in a district building 48 hours before the treatment begins. Notices are generally located in the principal's office. Pest control information sheets are available from campus principals or facility managers upon request.

## Telephone Use

District-owned telephones, including cell phones owned by the district and assigned to an individual, are for business use only. Personal use should be limited, particularly on cell phones.

Personal long distance calls on district telephones are prohibited, except under very limited circumstances. Employees are required to reimburse the district for all personal long distance calls made using district-owned equipment. Telephone and cell phone bills are routinely monitored to ensure proper usage of these devices.

Employees may use cellular phones for job-related communication during work hours provided such use does not disrupt the learning environment. Personal use of cellular phones shall be limited to off duty time, except in emergency situations.

## Faculty and Staff Dress Code

Employees of River Road ISD are required to maintain a professional appearance while on duty. Sweat pants, wind pants, and other athletic wear, including shorts, are not considered to be professional attire. Flip-flops are also not considered to be professional attire. Revealing clothing is not permitted. Appropriate under garments are to be worn and covered. Jeans may only be worn on Fridays and must be worn with a collared shirt, sweater, or blouse. Jeans may not have holes or be excessively worn and must be neat and professional in appearance.

If parent conferences, assemblies, or other activities to which the public is invited are held on a Friday, jeans are not considered professional attire and may not be worn. Jeans should also not be worn when attending events off campus. Remember, our desire is to portray River Road ISD in a positive and professional manner at all times.

There will be no "rewards", "fund raising activities" or "spirit activities" that countermand the dress code.

Coaches are permitted to wear appropriate athletic apparel only during athletic periods. While in the classroom, coaches will maintain the same dress code as other employees.

Any questions about the faculty and staff dress code may be directed to the building level principal, your immediate supervisor, or the Assistant Superintendent.

# General procedures

## Bad weather closing

The district may close schools because of bad weather or emergency conditions. When such conditions exist, the superintendent will make the official decision concerning the closing of the district's facilities. When it becomes necessary to open late or to release students early, the following radio and television stations will be notified by school officials:

- *KGNC, KMML, KDJW radio stations*
- *KVII, KAMR, K DFA television stations*

## Emergencies

*Policy CKC*

All employees should be familiar with the evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas. Fire, tornado, and other emergency drills will be conducted to familiarize employees and students with evacuation procedures. Fire extinguishers are located throughout all district buildings. Employees should know the location of the extinguishers nearest their place of work and how to use them.

## Purchasing procedures

*Policy CH*

All requests for purchases must be submitted to the Business Office department on an official district purchase order (PO) form with the appropriate approval signatures. No purchases, charges, or commitments to buy goods or services for the district can be made without a PO number. **The district will not reimburse employees or assume responsibility for purchases made without authorization.** Employees are not permitted to purchase supplies or equipment for personal use through the district's business office. Contact the Business Office for additional information on purchasing procedures.

## Name and address changes

It is important that employment records be kept up to date. Employees must notify the Central Administrations Office if there are any changes or corrections to their name, home address, home telephone number, marital status, emergency contact, or beneficiary.

## Personnel records

*Policy GBA*

Most district records, including personnel records, are public information and must be released upon request. Employees may choose to have the following personal information withheld:

- Address
- Phone number
- Social Security number
- Information that reveals whether they have family members

The choice to not allow public access to this information may be done at any time by submitting a written request to the Central Administrations Office. New or terminating employees have 14 days after hire or termination to submit a request. Otherwise, personal information will be released to the public.

## Building use

*Policies DGA, GKD*

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

# Termination of employment

## Resignations

*Policy DFE*

**Contract employees.** Contract employees may resign their position without penalty at the end of any school year if written notice is received 45 days before the first day of instruction of the following school year. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the Superintendent's Office. Contract employees may resign at any other time only with the approval of the superintendent or the board of trustees. Resignation without consent may result in disciplinary action by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

The superintendent will notify SBEC when an employee resigns and reasonable evidence exists to indicate that the employee has engaged in any of the acts listed in Reports to the State Board for Educator Certification.

**Non-contract employees.** Noncontract employees may resign their positions at any time. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to their immediate supervisor at least

two weeks prior to the effective date. Employees are encouraged to include the reasons for leaving in the letter of resignation but are not required to do so.

## **Dismissal or nonrenewal of contract employees**

*Policies DFAA, DFAB, DFBA, DFBB, DFCA, DFD, DFF*

Employees on probationary, term, and continuing contracts can be dismissed during the school year or nonrenewed at the end of the year according to the procedures outlined in district policies. Contract employees dismissed during the school year, suspended without pay, or subject to a reduction in force are entitled to receive notice of the recommended action, an explanation of the charges against them, and an opportunity for a hearing. The timelines and procedures to be followed when a suspension, termination, or nonrenewal occurs will be provided when a written notice is given to an employee. Advance notification requirements do not apply when a contract employee is dismissed for failing to obtain or maintain appropriate certification or whose certification is revoked for misconduct. Information on the time lines and procedures can be found in the DF series policies that are provided to employees or in the policy manuals located on the web at:

[www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/](http://www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/)

## **Dismissal of non-contract employees**

*Policy DCD*

Noncontract employees are employed at will and may be dismissed without notice, a description of the reasons for dismissal, or a hearing. It is unlawful for the district to dismiss any employee for reasons of race, religion, sex, national origin, disability, military status, any other basis protected by law, or in retaliation for the exercise of certain protected legal rights. Noncontract employees who are dismissed have the right to grieve the termination. The dismissed employee must follow the district process outlined in this handbook when pursuing the grievance.

## **Exit interviews and procedures**

*Policy DC*

Exit interviews will be scheduled for all employees leaving the district. Information on the continuation of benefits, release of information, and procedures for requesting references will be provided at this time. Separating employees are asked to provide the district with a forwarding address and phone number and complete a questionnaire that provides the district with feedback on his or her employment experience. All district keys, books, property, and equipment must be returned upon separation from employment.

## Reports to State Board for Educator Certification

### *Policy DF*

The dismissal or resignation of a certified employee will be reported to the SBEC when the superintendent first learns about an alleged incident of conduct that involves the following:

- A reported criminal history
- Any form of sexual or physical abuse of a minor or any other illegal conduct with a student or a minor
- Soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor
- The possession, transfer, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance
- The illegal transfer, appropriation, or expenditure of school property or funds
- An attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle the individual to a professional position or to receive additional compensation associated with a position
- Committing a crime on school property or at a school-sponsored event
- Violating assessment instrument security procedures

## Reports concerning court-ordered withholding

The district is required to report the termination of employees that are under court order or writ of withholding for child support or spousal maintenance to the court and the individual receiving the support (Texas Family Code §8.210, 158.211). Notice of the following must be sent to the court and support recipient:

- Termination of employment not later than the seventh day after the date of termination
- Employee's last known address
- Name and address of the employee's new employer, if known

## Student Issues

### Equal educational opportunities

#### *Policies FB, FFH*

The River Road ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs, in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Questions or concerns about discrimination of students on any of the bases listed above should be directed to the Superintendent's Office.

## **Student records**

### *Policy FL*

Student records are confidential and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use. Employees should take precautions to maintain the confidentiality of all student records. The following people are the only people who have general access to a student's records: Parents Married, separated, or divorced unless parental rights have been legally terminated and the school has been given a copy of the court order terminating parental rights

The student (if 18 or older or emancipated by a court)  
School officials with legitimate educational interests

The student handbook provides parents and students with detailed information on student records. Parents or students who want to review student records should be directed to the campus principal for assistance.

## **Parent and student complaints**

### *Policy FNG*

In an effort to hear and resolve parent and student complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, the board has adopted orderly processes for handling complaints on different issues. Any campus office or the superintendent's office can provide parents and students with information on filing a complaint.

Parents are encouraged to discuss problems or complaints with the teachers or the appropriate administrator at any time. Parents and students with complaints that cannot be resolved to their satisfaction should be directed to the campus principal. The formal complaint process provides parents and students with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management if they are dissatisfied with a principal's response.

## **Administering medication to students**

### *Policy FFAC*

Only designated employees can administer prescription medication, nonprescription medication, and herbal or dietary supplements to students. A student who must take medication during the school day must bring a written request from his or her parent and the medicine, in its original, properly labeled container. Contact the principal or school nurse for information on procedures that must be followed when administering medication to students.

## **Dietary supplements**

*Policies DH, FFAC*

District employees are prohibited by state law from knowingly selling, marketing, or distributing a dietary supplement that contains performance-enhancing compounds to a student with whom the employee has contact as part of his or her school district duties. In addition, employees may not knowingly endorse or suggest the ingestion, intranasal application, or inhalation of a performance-enhancing dietary supplement to any student.

## **Psychotropic drugs**

*Policy FFAC*

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance.

District employees are prohibited by state law from doing the following:

- Recommending that a student use a psychotropic drug
- Suggesting a particular diagnosis
- Excluding from class or school-related activity a student whose parent refuses to consent to a psychiatric evaluation or to authorize the administration of a psychotropic drug to a student

## **Student discipline**

*Policies in the FN series and FO series*

Students are expected to follow the classroom rules, campus rules, and rules listed in the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct. Teachers and administrators are responsible for taking disciplinary action based on a range of discipline management strategies that have been adopted by the district. Other employees that have concerns about a particular student's conduct should contact the classroom teacher or campus principal.

River Road ISD does not sanction the use of corporal punishment.

## **Student attendance**

*Policy FEB*

Teachers and staff should be familiar with the district's policies and procedures for attendance accounting. These procedures require minor students to have parental consent before they are allowed to leave campus. When absent from school, the student, upon returning to school, must bring a note signed by the parent that describes the reason for

the absence. These requirements are addressed in campus training and in the student handbook. Contact the campus principal for additional information.

## **Bullying**

*Policy FFI*

All employees are required to report student complaints of bullying to the campus principal. The district's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating bullying of students is reprinted below:

[www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/](http://www.tasb.org/policy/pol/private/188902/)

## **Hazing**

*Policy FNCC, FO*

Students must have prior approval from the principal or designee for any type of "initiation rites" of a school club or organization. While most initiation rites are permissible, engaging in or permitting "hazing" is a criminal offense. Any teacher, administrator, or employee who observes a student engaged in any form of hazing, who has reason to know or suspect that a student intends to engage in hazing, or has engaged in hazing must report that fact or suspicion to the designated campus discipline person.