

# **PINE TREE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 2019–2020 Employee Handbook**



If you have difficulty accessing the information in this document because of a disability, please speak with your direct supervisor.

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# Employee Handbook Receipt

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Campus/Department \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby acknowledge receipt of a copy of the Pine Tree ISD Employee Handbook. I agree to read the handbook and abide by the standards, policies, and procedures defined or referenced in this document.

All employees have access to the employee handbook in electronic format at [www.ptisd.org](http://www.ptisd.org).

**An employee may request a hard copy of the employee handbook from their direct supervisor.**

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 document. 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 and the Office of Human Resources of any changes in personal information such as phone number, address, etc. I also accept responsibility for contacting my supervisor or the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Student Services if I have questions or concerns or need further explanation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please sign and date this receipt and forward it to the campus secretary for collection and verification.

# 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 the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Curriculum.

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 non contract 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 online at [www.ptisd.org](http://www.ptisd.org).

# District Information

## Description of the District

Pine Tree Independent School District is one of three school districts serving Longview, Texas. Pine Tree ISD was established in 1847 when Texas had been a state for only a year. Growth was slow but stable, with the oil boom in 1931 bringing thousands of people to East Texas causing rapid growth for Pine Tree schools. Since that time, the district's reputation for quality education has attracted steady enrollment. The district currently consists of eight campuses serving approximately 4,600 students and employing about 675 individuals.

## Mission Statement, Goals, and Objectives

### *Policy AE*

Our mission is to continue a tradition of excellence by providing a high quality and challenging educational environment, maximizing opportunities for the success of all students, equipping them to become responsible, involved, and productive citizens.

### PUBLIC EDUCATION MISSION, GOALS, AND OBJECTIVES

The mission of the Texas public education system is to ensure that all Texas children have access to a quality education that enables them to achieve their full potential and fully participate now and in the future in the social, economic, and educational opportunities in our state and nation. That mission is grounded on the conviction that a general diffusion of knowledge is essential for the welfare of Texas and for the preservation of the liberties and rights of Texas citizens. It is further grounded on the conviction that a successful public education system is directly related to a strong, dedicated, and supportive family and that parental involvement in the school is essential for the maximum educational achievement of a child. The objectives of public education are:

OBJECTIVE 1: Parents will be full partners with educators in the education of their children.

OBJECTIVE 2: Students will be encouraged and challenged to meet their full educational potential.

OBJECTIVE 3: Through enhanced dropout prevention efforts, all students will remain in school until they obtain a diploma.

OBJECTIVE 4: A well-balanced and appropriate curriculum will be provided to all students.

OBJECTIVE 5: Educators will prepare students to be thoughtful, active citizens who have an appreciation for the basic values of our state and national heritage and who can understand and productively function in a free enterprise society.

OBJECTIVE 6: Qualified and highly effective personnel will be recruited, developed, and retained.

OBJECTIVE 7: Texas students will demonstrate exemplary performance in comparison to national and international standards.

OBJECTIVE 8: School campuses will maintain a safe and disciplined environment conducive to student learning.

OBJECTIVE 9: Educators will keep abreast of the development of creative and innovative techniques in instruction and administration using those techniques as appropriate to improve student learning.

OBJECTIVE 10: Technology will be implemented and used to increase the effectiveness of student learning, instructional management, staff development, and administration.

The academic goals of public education are to serve as a foundation for a well-balanced and appropriate education. The students in the public education system will demonstrate exemplary performance in:

GOAL 1: The reading and writing of the English language.

GOAL 2: The understanding of mathematics.

GOAL 3: The understanding of science.

GOAL 4: The understanding of social studies.

*Education Code 4.001, 4.002*

## **Board of Trustees**

*Policies BA, BB series, BD series, 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 laws 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. Board members are elected by place and serve three-year terms. Board members serve without compensation, must be qualified voters, and must reside in the district.

Current board members include:

- Frank Richards, President
- Adam Graves, Vice-President

- Jim Cerrato, Secretary
- Dr. Melanie Roudkovski
- Aaron Klein
- Dr. Kerri Daugbjerg
- Mike Smith

The board usually meets the second Monday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Pine Tree ISD Administration Building. In the event that large attendance is anticipated, the board may meet at an alternate location. Special meetings may be called when necessary. A written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted on the district website and the Central 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.

## **Board Meeting Schedule**

*The second Monday of the month at 6:00 p.m. at the Central Administration Building located on Pine Tree Rd.*

## **Central Administration**

Superintendent: Steven “Steve” Clugston

Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources & Curriculum: Dr. Eric Cederstrom

Assistant Superintendent of Innovation and Academies: Dr. Valerie Baxter

Assistant Superintendent of Business and Finance: Salena Jackson

Assistant Superintendent of Facilities and Planning: Tony Hollins

Director of Finance: Nikki Benoit

Director of Human Resources: Melanie Ferguson

Director of Special Education: Kalli VanMeter

Director of Athletics: Jody Berryhill

Director of Transportation: Jack Irvin

Director of Child Nutrition: Michelle Mitchell

Director of Technology: Todd Yohn

Director of Assessment: Debbie Terry

Director of Communications: Mary Whitton

Director of Student Services: Stephen English

Coordinator of PEIMS & Student Data: Amber Hargrove

# Academic Calendar



## 2019-2020 District Academic Calendar

### Holidays

- Labor Day: September 2
- Staff Development: October 14
- Veteran's Day: November 11
- Thanksgiving Break: November 25 - 29
- Christmas Break: December 23 - January 3
- MLK Day: January 20
- Staff Development: February 17
- Spring Break: March 9 - 13
- Good Friday: April 10
- Holiday: April 27
- Memorial Day: May 25

### Six Week Grading Periods:

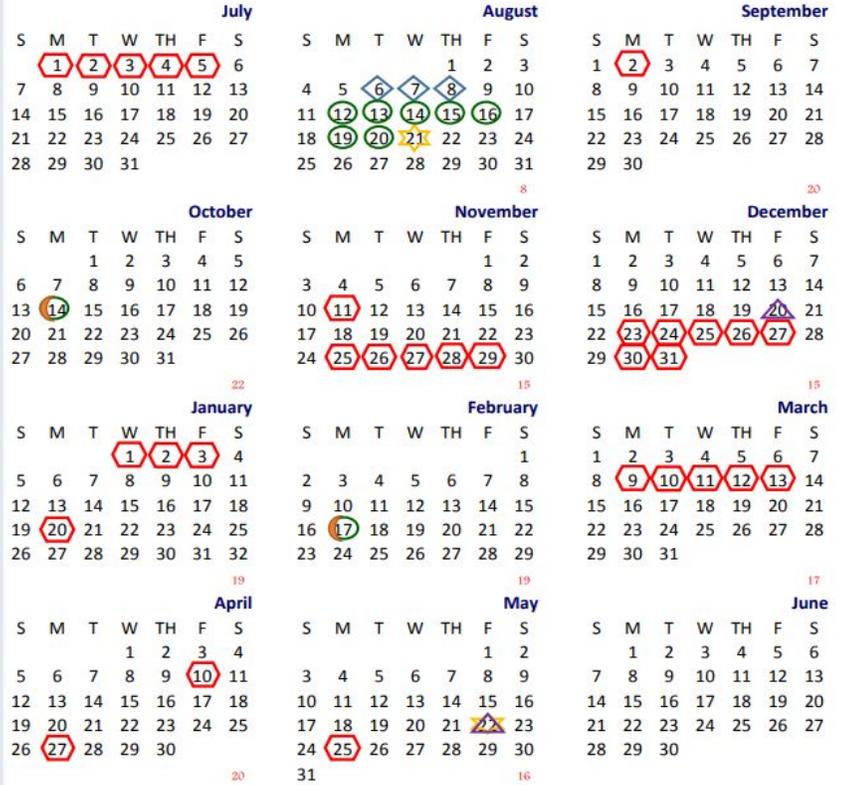
- Students in Grades 7th - 12th*
- 08/21 - 09/27 27 Instructional days
- 09/30 - 11/08 29 Instructional days
- 11/12 - 12/20 24 Instructional days
- 01/06 - 02/21 33 Instructional days
- 02/24 - 04/09 29 Instructional days
- 04/13 - 05/22 29 Instructional days
- Days by semester: Fall - 80 / Spring 91**

### Nine Week Grading Periods:

- Students in Grades PreK - 6*
- 08/21 - 10/18 41 Instructional days
- 10/21 - 12/20 39 Instructional days
- 01/06 - 03/06 43 Instructional days
- 03/16 - 05/22 48 Instructional days
- Days by semester: Fall - 80 / Spring 91**

### 2019-20 Bell Schedule by Campus

- Primary, Birch Elem., Parkway Elem.  
7:35 a.m. - 3:05 p.m. (450 minutes)
- Middle, Jr. High, High School, ExCEL  
8:20 a.m. - 3:50 p.m. (450 minutes)
- 171 Instructional Days**



- First/Last Day of Instruction
- Holiday
- Parent/Teacher Conference
- Student Registration
- Early Release
- Student holiday/Teach In-service

5/15/2019 10:09 AM

## Helpful Contacts

From time to time, employees have questions or concerns. If those questions or concerns cannot be answered by supervisors or at the campus or department level, the employee is encouraged to contact the appropriate department as listed below.

PINE TREE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT						
Central Office Ext.		#	District Telephone #'s (903)	295	Names	Secretary
Anders, Andrea	Tax Ofc	1775	Main District Number	5000		
Backer, Holly	Communications	1783	Superintendent (Fax 295-5178)	5022	Steve Clugston	Teresa ext. 1701
Baxter, Valerie	Innovation & Academies	1709	Assistant Superintendent	5010	Dr. Eric Cederstrom	Susan ext. 1750
Benoit, Nikki	Director of Bus.	1772	Assistant Superintendent (CFO)	5024	Salena Jackson	Shirley ext. 1770
Cederstrom, Eric	Asst. Sup. CIA/HR	1751	Assistant Superintendent	5000	Valerie Baxter	ext. 1709
Clugston, Steve	Superintendent	1701	Assistant Superintendent	5100	Tony Hollins	ext. 1805
Custodian Office	Cathey	1697				
Davis, Shirley	Admin. Asst. Bus.	1770	Tax Office (Fax 295-5180)	5005	Andrea Anders	ext. 1775
De la Mora, Pilar	Translator	1756				
Ferguson, Melanie	Dir. of HR	1704	Accounts Payable	5133	Shane Warner	ext. 1776
Gonzalez, Melissa	Ed Foundation	1782	Payroll	5139	Angie Kennedy	ext. 1778
Jackson, Salena	Asst Sup. Finance	1771	Purchasing	5135	Tammy Torres	ext. 1773
Jones, Christy	Reception/Sub.Coord	1700	Central Office Fax	5004	Transfer *22	
Kennedy, Angie	Payroll	1778				
Mullins, Dr. Lisa	CIA	1754	Primary (Fax 5098)	5095	Cristi Parsons	Evelyn ext 1607
Pearson, Susan	CIA/HR Admin Asst	1750	Birch Elem. (Fax 5126)	5120	Derrick Conley	Richie ext. 1502
Pruitt, Donna	Volunteers	1784				

Rau, Teresa	Supt Admin Asst	1701	Parkway Elem. (Fax 5155)	5151	Melanie Keoun	Amanda ext 1401
Rust, Jennifer	Assessment Sec.	1766	Middle 5/7 (Fax 5162)	5160	Mickey White	Kiya ext. 1301
Stuard, Daniel	Behavior	1724	Junior High (Fax 5082)	5081	Vanessa Robinson	Sherri K. ext. 1203
Terry, Debbie	Dir. of Assessment	1765	High School (Fax 5029)	5031	Cindy Gabehart	Karen ext. 1104
Torres, Tammy	Purchasing	1773				Roxanne ext. 1103
Walker, Michele	CIA	1757	ExCel HS (Fax 6754)	6753	Cleo Wadley	LaTosha ext. 1172
Warner, Shane	Accts Payable	1776	PACE (Fax 5145)	5130	Shalonda Adams	Candace ext. 1692
White, Robin	CIA	1753				
Whitton, Mary	Dir. of Communications	1781	Assessment and Accountability	5000	Debbie Terry	Jennifer ext. 1765
Woodruff, Kim	Leave & Benefits Spec.	1703	Athletic Office (Fax 759-0898)	5142	Jody Berryhill	Kristi ext. 1140
			Child Nutrition (Fax 295-5087)	5087	Michelle Mitchell	Judy ext. 1731 & Teresa ext. 1732
			Communications	5136	Mary Whitton	Holly ext. 1783
			Community Resources	5163	Donna Pruitt	ext. 1784
			Facility Services (Fax 295-5103)	5100	Tony Hollins	Melinda ext. 1807 Tammy ext. 1806
			Human Resources (Fax 759-2029)	5000	Kim ext. 1703 Melanie ext. 1704 Susan ext. 1750	Christy ext. 1700
			HS Band Hall	5031	Aaron Turner	Mindi ext. 1167
			HS Field House	5110 5111	Jody Berryhill	Kristi ext. 1140
			Marketing/Educ. Foundation/Alumni	5021	Melissa Gonzalez	ext. 1782
			PEIMS	5039	Amber Hargrove	Charlotte ext. 1741 Melanie ext. 1742
			Shipping & Receiving	5177	David & Paul	David ext. 1824 Paul ext. 1823

			Special Education (Fax 295-1808)	5172	Kalli VanMeter	Jeanne ext. 1712 Judy ext. 1710
			Technology	5038	Todd Yohn	Wess ext. 1790
			Transporation (Fax 295-5108)	5106	Jack Irvin	Penny ext. 1841
<a href="http://www.ptisd.org">www.ptisd.org</a>			<b>PO Box 5878, Longview TX 75608</b>			revised July 2019
<b>Physical Address:</b>			<b>1701 Pine Tree Rd, Longview TX 75604</b>			

## School Directory

<b>Campus</b>	<b>Principal</b>	<b>Address</b>	<b>Phone Number</b>	<b>Fax Number</b>
<b>Primary</b>	Cristi Parsons	1808 Silver Falls Rd.	903-295-5095	903-295-5098
<b>Birch Elementary</b>	Derrick Conley	815 Birch St.	903-295-5120	903-295-5126
<b>Parkway Elementary</b>	Melanie Keoun	601 PT Parkway	903-295-5151	903-295-5155
<b>Middle</b>	Mickey White	600 PT Parkway	903-295-5160	903-295-5162
<b>Junior High</b>	Vanessa Robinson	2100 NW Loop 281	903-295-5081	903-295-5082
<b>High School</b>	Cindy Gabehart	1005 West Fairmont	903-295-5031	903-295-5029
<b>ExCEL</b>	Cleo Wadley	1005 West Fairmont-Bldg B	903-295-6753	903-295-6754
<b>PACE</b>	Shalonda Adams	1701 Pine Tree Rd.	903-295-5130	903-295-5145

# Employment

## Equal Employment Opportunity

*Policies DAA, DIA*

Pine Tree ISD does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, gender, sex, national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, or on any other basis prohibited by law. Additionally, the district does not discriminate against an employee or applicant who acts to oppose such discrimination or participates in the investigation of a complaint related to a discriminatory employment practice. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant's job qualifications, experience, and abilities.

Employees with questions or concerns about discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment should contact the Assistant Superintendent of Innovation and Academies, Dr. Valerie Baxter. Employees with questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of a disability should contact Debbie Terry, the district ADA/Section 504 coordinator. Questions or concerns relating to discrimination for any other reason should be directed to the Superintendent.

## Job Vacancy Announcements

*Policy DC*

Announcements of job vacancies by position and location are posted on a regular basis to the district's website.

## NOTICE TO NEW EMPLOYEES

Pine Tree ISD has workers' compensation insurance coverage from Claims Administrative Services, Inc. to protect you. You can get more information about workers' compensation rights from any office of the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission or by calling 1-800-252-7031. You may elect to retain your common law right of action if no later than five days after beginning employment you notify Pine Tree ISD in writing that you wish to retain your common law right of action. You cannot obtain workers compensation income or medical benefits if you are injured and retain your common law right of action.

Pine Tree ISD está cubierto por aseguranza de compensación al trabajador a través de Claims Administrative Services Inc. para su protección. Usted puede obtener información adicional sobre sus derechos de compensación al trabajador de cualquier oficina de la comisión de Compensación de Trabajadores de Tejas, o puede llamar al 1-800-252-7031. Usted puede elegir retener su derecho a acciones bajo la ley común, si, no más tarde cinco días después de comenzar empleo, usted notifica a Pine Tree

ISD por escrito que usted desea retener su derecho bajo la ley común para recobrar danos por lesiones personales. Si usted elige su derecho de acción por a ley común, usted no puede obtener ingreso de compensación a trabajador o beneficios medicos si es usted lesionado/a.

## **Employment after Retirement**

### *Policy DC*

Individuals receiving retirement benefits from the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) may be employed under certain 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 Website ([www.trs.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov)).

## **Contract and Noncontract Employment**

### *Policy DC series*

State law requires the district to employ all full-time professional employees in positions requiring a certificate from the 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 a two-year lapse in district employment or employees who move to a position requiring a new class of certification may also 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 Contracts.** Full-time professionals employed in positions requiring certification and nurses will be employed by term contracts after they have successfully completed the probationary period. The terms and conditions of employment are detailed in the contract and employment

policies. All employees will receive a copy of their contract. Employment policies can be accessed online or copies will be provided upon request.

**Noncertified Professional and Administrative Employees.** Employees in professional and administrative positions that do not require SBEC certification (such as non-instructional administrators) are employed by a one-year or two-year contract that is not subject to the provisions for nonrenewal or termination under the Texas Education Code.

**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.

## **Certification and Licenses**

### *Policies DBA, DF*

Professional employees whose positions require SBEC certification or professional license are responsible for taking actions to ensure their credentials do not lapse. Employees must submit documentation that they have passed the required certification exam and/or obtained or renewed their credentials to the Office of Human Resources in a timely manner.

A certified employee's contract may be voided without due process and employment terminated if the individual does not hold a valid certificate or fails to fulfill the requirements necessary to renew or extend a temporary certificate, emergency certificate, probationary certificate, or permit. A contract may also be voided if SBEC suspends or revokes certification because of an individual's failure to comply with criminal history background checks. Contact the Director of Human Resources if you have any questions regarding certification or licensure requirements.

## **Recertification of Employment Authorization**

### *Policy DC*

At the time of hire, all employees must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (Form I-9) and present documents to verify identity and employment authorization.

Employees whose immigration status, employment authorization, or employment authorization documents have expired must present new documents that show current employment authorization. Employees should file the necessary application or petition sufficiently in advance to ensure that they maintain continuous employment authorization or valid employment authorization documents. Contact the Office of Human Resources if you have any questions regarding reverification of employment authorization.

## **Searches and Alcohol and Drug Testing**

*Policy CQ, DHE*

Non-investigatory 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, and work areas including district-owned technology resources, 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 if their duties include driving a commercial motor vehicle.

Drug testing will be conducted before an individual assumes driving responsibilities. Alcohol and drug tests will be conducted when 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 otherwise are 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 Office of Human Resources.

## **Health Safety Training**

*Policies DBA, DMA*

Certain employees who are involved in physical activities for students must maintain and submit to the district proof of current certification or training in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED), concussion, and extracurricular athletic activity safety. Certification or documentation of training must be issued by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, University Interscholastic League,

or another organization that provides equivalent training and certification. Employees subject to this requirement must submit their certification or documentation to the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources & Curriculum and the District Nurse, Jan Goldberg by the first instructional day of the academic year.

School nurses and employees with regular contact with students must complete a Texas Education Agency approved, online training regarding seizure disorder awareness, recognition, and related first aid.

## **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 his or her request according to the transfer guidelines. 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 and district leadership.

## **Voluntary Transfers**

Teachers and staff with an interest to relocate at another campus within PTISD are required to do so through a formal process. All transfer requests begin with the completion of the Transfer Request Form, which is disseminated to all staff in March and must first have the signature of the teacher's current principal as indicated by the principal's original signature.

### **APPLYING FOR A TRANSFER**

1. The transfer window opens the first business day in March and closes **April 15**.
2. The application must have the original signature of the campus principal for informational purposes. The principal's signature is not for permission for the transfer.

3. The teacher's request for transfer is submitted (a) directly to the receiving campus principal and (b) to the HR Office along with a cover letter and résumé.
4. At the receiving principal's discretion, the requesting teacher may be called for an interview. A transferring applicant is not guaranteed an interview.
5. After interviewing for the campus vacancy, the receiving principal will inform the transfer applicant of their tentative approval or disapproval of the transfer. **The receiving principal will return the transfer employee's application to the HR office whether the transfer applicant is approved or denied.**
6. If interviewed and selected for an open vacancy, the receiving principal will contact the original principal to notify them of the hiring decision.
7. The receiving principal will complete the necessary HR forms to complete the employee transfer.
8. The transfer employee will receive official notification of the new assignment by HR. Until a formal notification from HR is received, the transfer is not official or valid.
9. All teachers who request transfers will receive official notice of the acceptance or denial of their request by the first business week in May.

The following district needs are taken into consideration when a transfer is requested:

- Percentage of overall turn-over at a given campus or grade level
- Proven knowledge and skill of the transfer applicant
- Potential for growth of the applicant
- Previous academic success of students
- Professional reputation and relationships with stakeholders
- Recommendation of administrators and stakeholders
- Effect on the instructional programming of current school and receiving school
- Current official vacancy at the campus

*The Superintendent of Schools, along with any consultation deemed appropriate, reserves the final decision regarding employee reassignments.*

## **Workload and Work Schedules**

*Policies DEAB, DK, DL*

**Professional Employees.** Professional employees and academic administrators 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 start and end dates 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 within the instructional day. 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 receive notification of the required duty days, holidays, and hours of work for their position on an annual basis. Job duties and responsibilities may, and frequently, change to meet the needs of students and the organization. Any additional duties requested of an employee within the course of a 40-hour work week are a course of business. Extra compensation should not be expected or inferred. Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees must be compensated for overtime and are not authorized to work in excess of their assigned schedule without prior written approval from their supervisor. See Overtime Compensation for additional information.

## **Breaks for Expression of Breast Milk**

*Policies DEAB, DG*

The district supports the practice of expressing breast milk and makes reasonable accommodations for the needs of employees who express breast milk. A place, other than a multiple user bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from other employees and the public where the employee can express breast milk will be provided.

A reasonable amount of break time will be provided when the employee has a need to express milk. For nonexempt employees, these breaks are unpaid and are not counted as hours worked. Employees should meet with their supervisor to discuss their needs and arrange break times.

## **Notification to Parents Regarding Qualifications**

*Policies DK, DBA*

In schools receiving Title I funds, the district is required by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to notify parents at the beginning of each school year that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's teacher. ESSA also requires that parents be notified if their child has been assigned or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who does not meet applicable state certification or licensure requirements.

Texas law 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 notice under ESSA is sent. Inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers include individuals on an emergency permit (including individuals waiting to take a certification exam) and 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 Office of Human Resources.

## **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**

### *Policy DN series*

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, participate in a performance conference with their supervisor, and have the opportunity to respond to the evaluation.

## **Employee Involvement**

### *Policies BQA, BQB*

At both the campus and district levels, Pine Tree 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 central office.

## **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.

## **Compensation and Benefits**

### **Salaries, Wages, and Stipends**

*Policies DEA, DEAA, DEAB*

Employees are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and an established pay structure. 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 employees and academic administrators 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 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 Payroll for more information about the district's pay schedules or their own pay.

### **Paychecks**

All salaried and hourly employees of Pine Tree ISD are paid monthly. All employees are required to maintain current information with the Business Office regarding bank information. If the employee changes the financial institution handling their funds, it is the employee's responsibility to communicate that information timely to avoid a delay in compensation. Checks will not be released to any person other than the district employee named on the check without the employee's written authorization. Please see Payroll for additional information.

Check stubs are available electronically through the "Staff" page of the PTISD website under Business Office: JR3 Login. Instructions on how to retrieve paystubs is available under the "JR3 Login Instructions Download" tab.

PTISD utilizes an electronic time clock system to account for and the reconciliation of work time.

Payroll is released according to the following schedule below. Individual banking institutions may release funds earlier, which is out of the District’s control.

## **Automatic Payroll Deposit Dates**

2019-2020 Pay

<b>Periods</b>	<b>(Once a month payroll)</b>			
<b>Pay period Begin</b>	<b>Pay period End</b>	<b>Due in Business Office</b>	<b>Pay Day - All direct deposit</b>	
<b>Date</b>	<b>Date</b>			
7/27/2019	8/30/2019	9/6/2019		9/25/2019
8/31/2019	9/27/2019	10/4/2019		10/25/2019
9/28/2019	10/25/2019	11/4/2019		11/22/2019
10/26/2019	11/29/2019	12/5/2019		12/20/2019
11/30/2019	12/27/2019	1/1/2020		1/24/2020
12/28/2019	1/24/2020	2/4/2020		2/25/2020
1/25/2020	2/25/2020	3/3/2020		3/25/2020
2/22/2020	3/25/2020	4/3/2020		4/24/2020
3/28/2020	4/24/2020	5/1/2020		5/22/2020
4/25/2020	5/22/2020	6/4/2020		6/25/2020
5/30/2020	6/26/2020	7/6/2020		7/24/2020
6/27/2020	7/24/2020	8/4/2020		8/25/2020

Employees must have their paychecks electronically deposited into a designated account. Contact payroll for more information about the automatic payroll deposit service.

## **Payroll Deductions**

*Policy CFEA*

The district is required to make the following automatic payroll deductions:

- Teacher Retirement System of Texas (TRS) or Social Security employee contributions;
- Federal income tax required for all full-time employees;
- Medicare tax (applicable only to employees hired after March 31, 1986);
- Child support and spousal maintenance, if applicable;
- Delinquent federal education loan payments, if applicable.

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 or prepaid tuition programs. Employees also may request payroll deduction for payment

of membership dues to professional organizations and certain charitable contributions approved by the board. Salary deductions are automatically made for unauthorized or unpaid leave.

## **Overtime Compensation**

*Policies DEAB, DEC*

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. A nonexempt employee who works overtime without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action.

Overtime is legally defined as all hours worked in excess of 40 hours in a workweek and is not measured by the day or by the employee's regular work schedule. For the purpose of calculating overtime, a workweek begins Saturday at midnight and ends on Friday at 11:59.

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.

Employees may be compensated for overtime (i.e., hours beyond 40 in a workweek) 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 20 hours of comp time with written supervisor approval.
- Comp time must be used in the duty year 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 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.

## **Travel Expense Reimbursement**

*Policy DEE*

Before any travel expenses are incurred by an employee, the employee's supervisor and the Business Office 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 allowable expenses other than mileage.

If a district vehicle is available, and an employee chooses to travel using a personal vehicle, mileage is subject to non-reimbursed.

## **Health, Dental, and Life Insurance**

### *Policy CRD*

Group health insurance coverage is provided through TRS-ActiveCare, the statewide public school employee health insurance program. The district's contribution to employee insurance premiums is determined annually by the board of trustees. Employees eligible for health insurance coverage include the following:

- Employees who are active, contributing TRS members; and
- Employees who are not contributing TRS members and who are employed for 10 or more regularly scheduled hours per week

TRS retirees who are enrolled in TRS-Care (retiree health insurance program) are not eligible to participate in TRS-ActiveCare.

The insurance plan year is from September 1 through August 31. Current employees can make changes in their insurance coverage during open enrollment each year or when they experience a qualifying event (e.g., marriage, divorce, birth). Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, employee cost, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees in a separate booklet. Employees should contact the Benefits Specialist for more information.

## **Supplemental Insurance Benefits**

### *Policy CRD*

At their own expense, employees may enroll in supplemental insurance programs for additional services. Premiums for these programs can be paid by payroll deduction. Employees should contact the Benefits Specialist 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 Claims Administrative Services effective the employee's first day of employment.

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 the Benefits Specialist. 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*, for information about the 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 Benefits Specialist.

## **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 eligible to purchase a year of creditable service in TRS. 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 Human Resources 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.texas.gov](http://www.trs.texas.gov)).

# Leaves and Absences

## *Policies DEC, DECA, DECB*

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 expect to be absent for an extended period of more than five days should call the Human Resource Office for information about applicable leave benefits, payment of insurance premiums, and requirements for communicating with the district.

Paid leave must be used in half-day or full-day increments. Earned comp time must be used before any available paid state and local leave. Unless employee requests otherwise, available paid state and local leave will be used in the following order:

- Compensation time
- Local leave
- State sick leave accumulated before the 1995-1996 school year
- State personal leave

Employees must follow district and department or campus procedures to report or request any leave of absence and complete the appropriate form or certification. An employee may not choose to be docked compensation rather than utilizing any leave time available.

**Immediate Family.** For purposes of leave other than family and medical leave, immediate family is defined as the following:

- Spouse;
- Son or daughter, including a biological, adopted, or foster child, a son- or daughter-in-law, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee stands in loco parentis;
- Parent, stepparent, parent-in-law, or other individual who stands in loco parentis to the employee;
- Sibling, stepsibling, and sibling-in-law;
- Grandparent and grandchild;
- Any person residing in the employee's household at the time of illness or death.

For purposes of family and medical leave, the definition of family is limited to spouse, parent, son or daughter, and next of kin. The definition of these are found in Policy DECA (LEGAL).

**Medical Certification.** Any employee who is absent more than three 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.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits covered employers from requesting or requiring genetic information of an individual or family member of the individual, except as specifically allowed by this law. To comply with this law, we ask that employees and health care providers do not provide any genetic information in any medical certification. ‘Genetic information,’ as defined by GINA, includes an individual’s family medical history, the results of an individual’s or family member’s genetic tests, the fact that an individual or an individual’s family member sought or received genetic services, and genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or an individual’s family member, or an embryo lawfully held by an individual or family member receiving assistive reproductive services.

**Continuation of Health Insurance.** Employees, on an approved leave of absence other than family and medical leave, may continue their insurance benefits at their own expense. Health insurance benefits for employees on paid leave and leave designated under the Family and Medical Leave Act will be paid by the district as they were prior to the leave. Otherwise, the district does not pay any portion of insurance premiums for employees who are on unpaid leave.

Under TRS-Active Care rules, an employee is no longer eligible for insurance through the district after six months of unpaid leave other than FML. If an employee’s unpaid leave extends for more than six months, the district will provide the employee with notice of COBRA rights.

## **Personal Leave**

State law entitles all employees to five days of paid personal leave per year. Personal leave is available for use at the beginning of the year. A day of personal leave is equivalent to the number of hours per day in an employee’s usual assignment, whether full-time or part-time. State personal leave accumulates without limit, is transferable to other Texas school districts, and generally transfers to education service centers. Personal leave may be used for two general purposes: nondiscretionary and discretionary.

**Nondiscretionary.** Leave taken for personal or family illness, family emergency, a death in the family, or active military service is considered nondiscretionary leave. Reasons for this type of leave allow very little, if any, advance planning. Nondiscretionary may be used in the same manner as state sick leave.

**Discretionary.** Leave taken at an employee’s discretion that can be scheduled in advance is considered discretionary leave. An employee wishing to take discretionary personal leave must submit a request to his or her principal or supervisor two days in advance of the anticipated absence. The effect of the employee’s absence on the educational program or department

operations, as well as the availability of substitutes, will be considered by the principal or supervisor.

**Leave Proration.** If an employee separates from employment with the district before his or her last duty day of the year, or begins employment after the duty day, state personal leave will be prorated based on the actual time employed. When an employee separates from employment before the last duty day of the school year, the employee's final paycheck will be reduced by the amount of state personal leave the employee used beyond his or her pro rata entitlement for the school year.

## State Sick Leave

State sick leave accumulated before 1995 is available for use and may be transferred to other school districts in Texas. State 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.

State 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; or
- Active military service.

## Local Leave

Local leave is granted based on Board Policy DEC(LOCAL), concurrently with state leave. Local sick leave shall be non-cumulative and shall be taken with no loss of pay. **Please Note:** The number of local leave days granted to employees by PTISD is based on the number of days the employee is annually employed by the district. Reference Board Policy DEC(LOCAL) for specific information.

For the purpose of personal illness, illness in the immediate family, family emergency, or death in the immediate family, available leave shall be used in the following order:

1. Compensation or over-time leave
2. Local leave
3. State sick leave accumulated prior to the 1995-96 school year

4. State personal leave
5. Prior accumulated local sick leave
6. Leave granted by the sick leave bank

### **School Business Days**

Taking school business is a two level process and must be approved by the direct immediate supervisor as well as the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources & Curriculum.

### **Prohibited Leave Days**

Each employee with direct responsibilities to students (campus professionals and paraprofessionals) is required to report to work in the following situations unless approved by direct supervisor and the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Curriculum:

- First and last day of contract;
- First and last day of instruction;
- The day before and after a holiday;
- State assessment days [Prohibited days for state assessment are grouped as follows: (1) Primary, Birch, Parkway, (2) Middle, JH, and (3) HS/ExCEL. If there is an assessment at JH, employees at both Middle and JH are expected to report for work.]

Failure to do so will result in loss of compensation for that day. Absence requests must be submitted in writing by the employee at least 15 business days in advance of the planned absence to the direct supervisor.

### **Sick Leave Bank**

A sick leave bank membership is available to all employees on a voluntary basis. The purpose of the sick leave bank is to provide sick leave to members of the bank in the event of a life threatening or catastrophic disability due to illness, injury, or non-elective/emergency surgery. This source of sick leave is available only to bank members and only after a member's available leave resources such as compensation time, non-duty days, accumulated state personal leave, and/or state and local leave have been exhausted. The enrollment period for current employees and new employees hired prior to the opening of school is July 1 through September 15. Questions regarding the sick leave bank and full procedures for operations should be addressed with the Benefits Specialist. See Sick Leave Bank guidelines.

### **Neutral Absence Control Policy**

After an employee has exhausted all available leave days to which he or she is entitled, the District shall provide the employee written notice via email that all available leave has expired. The employee shall be notified that he or she has five workdays within which to apply for another leave for which the employee may be eligible or to notify the District in writing that the employee is ready, willing, and able to return to work, accompanied by a medical clearance showing that the employee is physically able to perform the essential functions of his or her position, given reasonable accommodations(s) if necessary. An individual receiving workers' compensation benefits who elects not to receive any additional paid leave shall be provided the notice referenced in this section at the expiration of any workers' compensation income benefits.

A contract employee who does not apply for and receive approval for additional leave and who does not report and document his or her availability and fitness to return to work within the time set forth above shall resign or be deemed to be in repeated and continued neglect of duties and subject to termination.

A noncontract employee who does not apply for and receive approval for additional leave and who does not report and document his or her availability and fitness to return to work within five work days shall be deemed to have resigned his or her position with the District effective upon the expiration of the five workday period provided in this policy.

### **Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA)**

As an educational institution focused on the wellbeing and safety of all children, employees who serve as official advocates for children may request up to two days per year, once per semester, to utilize for this purpose. Official court documentation must be presented to the direct supervisor and the office of human resources prior to the event for approval.

### **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)—General Provisions**

The following text is from the federal notice, *Employee Rights and Responsibilities under the Family and Medical Leave Act*. Specific information that the district has adopted to implement the FMLA follows this general notice.

#### **Leave Entitlements**

Eligible employees who work for a covered employer can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave in a 12-month period for the following reasons:

- The birth of a child or placement of a child for adoption or foster care;
- To bond with a child (leave must be taken within 1 year of the child's birth or placement);
- To care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a qualifying serious health condition;
- For the employee's own qualifying serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job;
- For qualifying exigencies related to the foreign deployment of a military member who is the employee's spouse, child, or parent.

An eligible employee who is a covered service member's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin may also take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave in a single 12-month period to care for the service member with a serious injury or illness.

An employee does not need to use leave in one block. When it is medically necessary or otherwise permitted, employees may take leave intermittently or on a reduced schedule.

Employees may choose, or an employer may require, use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. If an employee substitutes accrued paid leave for FMLA leave, the employee must comply with the employer's normal paid leave policies.

## **Benefits and Protections**

While employees are on FMLA leave, employers must continue health insurance coverage as if the employees were not on leave.

Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to the same job or one nearly identical to it with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions.

An employer may not interfere with an individual's FMLA rights or retaliate against someone for using or trying to use FMLA leave, opposing any practice made unlawful by the FMLA, or being involved in any proceeding under or related to the FMLA.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

An employee who works for a covered employer must meet three criteria in order to be eligible for FMLA leave. The employee must:

- Have worked for the employer for at least 12 months;
- Have at least 1,250 hours of service in the 12 months before taking leave;\* and

- Work at a location where the employer has at least 50 employees within 75 miles of the employee's worksite.

## **Requesting Leave**

Generally, employees must give 30-days' advance notice of the need for FMLA leave. If it is not possible to give 30-days' notice, an employee must notify the employer as soon as possible and, generally, follow the employer's usual procedures.

Employees do not have to share a medical diagnosis, but must provide enough information to the employer so it can determine if the leave qualifies for FMLA protection.

Sufficient information could include informing an employer that the employee is or will be unable to perform his or her job functions, that a family member cannot perform daily activities, or that hospitalization or continuing medical treatment is necessary. Employees must inform the employer if the need for leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified.

Employers can require a certification or periodic recertification supporting the need for leave. If the employer determines that the certification is incomplete, it must provide a written notice indicating what additional information is required.

## **Employer Responsibilities**

Once an employer becomes aware that an employee's need for leave is for a reason that may qualify under the FMLA, the employer must notify the employee if he or she is eligible for FMLA leave and, if eligible, must also provide a notice of rights and responsibilities under the FMLA. If the employee is not eligible, the employer must provide a reason for ineligibility.

Employers must notify its employees if leave will be designated as FMLA leave, and if so, how much leave will be designated as FMLA leave.

## **Enforcement**

Employees may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer.

The FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement that provides greater family or medical leave rights.

For additional information:

1-866-4US-WAGE (1-866-487-9243) TTY: 1-877-889-5627  
[www.wagehour.dol.gov](http://www.wagehour.dol.gov)

## Local Family and Medical Leave Provisions

Eligible employees can take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in the 12-month period from July 1 through June 30

**Use of Paid Leave.** FML runs concurrently with accrued sick and personal leave, temporary disability leave, compensatory time, assault leave, and absences due to a work-related illness or injury. The district will designate the leave as FML, if applicable, and notify the employee that accumulated leave will run concurrently.

**Combined Leave for Spouses.** Spouses who are employed by the district are limited to a combined total of 12 weeks of FML to care for a parent with a serious health condition; or for the birth, adoption, or foster placement of a child. Military caregiver leave for spouses is limited to a combined total of 26 weeks.

**Intermittent Leave.** When medically necessary or in the case of a qualifying exigency, an employee may take leave intermittently or on a reduced schedule. The district does not permit the use of intermittent or reduced-schedule leave for the care of a newborn child or for adoption or placement of a child with the employee.

**Fitness for Duty.** An employee that takes FML due to the employee's own serious health condition shall provide, before resuming work, a fitness-for-duty certification from the health care provider. If certification of the employee's ability to perform essential job function is required, the district shall provide a list of essential job functions (e.g., job description) to the employee with the FML designation notice to share with the health care provider.

**Reinstatement.** An employee returning to work at the end of FML will be returned to the same position held when the leave began or to an equivalent position with equivalent employment benefits, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment.

In certain cases, instructional employees desiring to return to work at or near the conclusion of a semester may be required to continue on family and medical leave until the end of the semester. The additional time off is not counted against the employee's FML entitlement, and the district will maintain the employees group health insurance and reinstate the employee at the end of the leave according to the procedures outlined in policy (see DECA (LEGAL)).

**Failure to Return.** If, at the expiration of FML, the employee is able to return to work but chooses not to do so, the district may require the employee to reimburse the district's share of insurance premiums paid during any portion of FML when the employee was on unpaid leave. If the employee fails to return to work for a reason beyond the employee's control, such as a continuing personal or family serious health condition or a spouse being unexpectedly

transferred more than 75 miles from the district, the district may not require the employee to reimburse the district's share of premiums paid.

**District Contact.** Employees that require FML or have questions should contact the Benefits Specialist for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

## **Temporary Disability Leave**

**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. Temporary disability leave must be taken as a continuous block of time. It may not be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule. Pregnancy and conditions related to pregnancy are treated the same as any other temporary disability.

Employees must request approval for temporary disability leave. An employee's notification of need for extended absence due to the employee's own medical condition shall be accepted as a request for temporary disability leave. The 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 calendar days.

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 direct supervisor AND the Benefits Specialist 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. Certified employees returning from leave will be reinstated to the school to which they were previously assigned if an appropriate position is available. If an appropriate position is not available, the employee may be assigned to another campus, subject to the approval of the campus principal. If a position is not available before the end of the school year, the employee will be reinstated to a position at the original campus at the beginning of the following school year.

## **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 available, partial-day increments of sick leave or any other paid leave benefits to make up the difference between wage benefits and pre-injury or -illness wages. 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 non-responsible 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.

## **Bereavement Leave**

The District does not offer a separate bereavement leave. Employees are required to utilize available compensation time, local leave, or state leave.

## **Jury Duty**

The district provides paid leave to employees who are summoned to jury duty including service on a grand jury. Employees who report to the court for jury duty may keep any compensation the court provides. An employee should report a summons for jury duty to his or her supervisor

as soon as it is received and may be required to provide the district a copy of the summons to document the need for leave.

An employee may be required to report back to work as soon as they are released from jury duty. The supervisor may consider the travel time required and the nature of the individual's position when determining the need to report to work. A copy of the release from jury duty or of documentation of time spent at the court may be required.

## **Compliance with a Subpoena**

Employees will be paid while on leave to comply with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative proceeding and will not be required to use personal leave. Employees may be required to submit documentation of their need for leave for court appearances.

## **Truancy Court Appearances**

An employee who is a parent or guardian of a child and any court-appointed guardian ad litem of a child who is required to miss work to attend a truancy court hearing may use personal leave or compensatory time for the absence. Employees who do not have paid leave available will be docked for any absence required because of the court appearance.

## **Religious Observance**

The district will reasonably accommodate an employee's request for absence for a religious holiday or observance. Accommodations such as changes to work schedules or approving a day of absence will be made unless they pose an undue hardship to the district. The employee may use any accumulated personal leave for this purpose. Employees who have exhausted applicable paid leave may be granted an unpaid day of absence.

## **Military Leave**

**Paid Leave for Military Service.** Any employee who is a member of the Texas National Guard, Texas State Guard, reserve component of the United States Armed Forces, or a member of a state or federally authorized Urban Search and Rescue Team is entitled to paid leave when engaged in authorized training or duty orders by proper authority. Paid military leave is limited

to 15 days each fiscal year. 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 duty as a member of the military force of any state (e.g., National or State Guard) may return to employment if they are honorably discharged. Employees who wish to return to the district will be reemployed 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 within the time specified by law to Human Resources. In most cases, the length of federal military service cannot exceed five years.

**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 Benefits Specialist for details on eligibility, requirements, and limitations.

## **Employee Relations and Communications**

### **Employee Recognition and Appreciation**

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. Recognition and appreciation activities also include various campus-based awards, teacher of the year award, employee of the year award, Pirate Pride award, and Pirate Proud awards.

### **District Communications**

Throughout the school year, the campus leadership and the Office of Public Relations 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.

### **Email Use**

Pine Tree ISD affords a professional email account for all employees. Mass email submissions to entire campus groups or district-wide require the approval of the campus principal or department head. District email should not be used to advertise the sale of personal items or the promotion of for-profit efforts. Please see the District Acceptable Use Policy for additional

information. As a resource for business use, there should be no assumption of privacy when using the District provided email.

## **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. Level I grievance forms are available from either principals, direct supervisors, or the office of the superintendent.

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 available at the campus or central office and in Board Policy DGBA. Level I complaints will be conducted by the campus principal or department leader.

# **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, including intentionally making a false claim, offering false statements, or refusing to cooperate with a district investigation 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 after the superintendent knew of the incident. See *Reports to the Texas Education Agency*, for additional information.

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

### ***Texas Educators' Code of Ethics***

#### **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 and good moral character. 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. This chapter shall apply to educators and candidates for certification. (19 TAC 247.1(b))

#### **Professional Standards**

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

**Standard 1.1** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district, educational institution, educator preparation program, the Texas Education Agency, or the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and its certification process.

**Standard 1.2** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly or recklessly 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 of students, 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 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.

**Standard 1.9** The educator shall not make threats of violence against school district employees, school board members, students, or parents of students.

**Standard 1.10** The educator shall be of good moral character and be worthy to instruct or supervise the youth of this state.

**Standard 1.11** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly or recklessly misrepresent his or her employment history, criminal history, and/or disciplinary record when applying for subsequent employment.

**Standard 1.12** The educator shall refrain from the illegal use or distribution of controlled substances and/or abuse of prescription drugs and toxic inhalants.

**Standard 1.13** The educator shall not be under the influence of alcohol or consume alcoholic beverages on school property or during school activities when students are present.

## **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, gender, disability, family status, or sexual orientation.

**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 or provides information for a disciplinary investigation or proceeding 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 intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly treat a student or minor in a manner that adversely affects or endangers the learning, physical health, mental health, or safety of the student or minor.

**Standard 3.3** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly 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, gender, disability, national origin, religion, family status, or sexual orientation.

**Standard 3.5** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in physical mistreatment, neglect, or abuse of a student or minor.

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

**Standard 3.7** The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child or knowingly allow any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.

**Standard 3.8** The educator shall maintain appropriate professional educator-student relationships and boundaries based on a reasonably prudent educator standard.

**Standard 3.9** The educator shall refrain from inappropriate communication with a student or minor, including, but not limited to, electronic communication such as cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, or other social network communication. Factors that may be considered in assessing whether the communication is inappropriate include, but are not limited to:

- (i) the nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;
- (ii) the subject matter of the communication;

- (iii) whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;
- (iv) whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;
- (v) whether the communication was sexually explicit; and
- (vi) whether the communication involved discussion(s) of the physical or sexual attractiveness or the sexual history, activities, preferences, or fantasies of either the educator or the student.

## **Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation**

### *Policies DH, DIA*

Employees shall not engage in prohibited harassment, including sexual harassment, of other employees, unpaid interns, student teachers, 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.

Individuals 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 complaint should be made 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 available on line at [www.ptisd.org](http://www.ptisd.org) DIA(Local).

## **Harassment of Students**

### *Policies DH, DHB, FFG, FFH, FFI*

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 of a student by an employee or adult 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*, and *Bullying*, for additional information.

The district's policy that includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating harassment of students is available in policy DHB(Legal) and FFH(Local).

## **Reporting Suspected Child Abuse**

*Policies DG, DH, FFG, GRA*

All employees are required by state law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect, as defined by Texas Family Code §261.001, to a law enforcement agency, Child Protective Services (CPS), 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. Alleged abuse or neglect involving a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child (including a teacher) must be reported to CPS.

Employees are also required to make a report if they have cause to believe that an adult was a victim of abuse or neglect as a child and they determine in good faith that the disclosure of the information is necessary to protect the health and safety of another child, elderly person, or person with a disability.

Reports to Child Protective Services can be made online at <https://www.txa-busehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx> or to the Texas Abuse Hotline (800-252-5400). State law specifies that an employee may not delegate to or rely on another person or administrator 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 taking an adverse employment action against a certified or licensed professional 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 as a Class A misdemeanor. The offense of failure to report by a professional may be a state jail felony if it is shown the individual intended to conceal the abuse or neglect. In addition, a certified employee's failure to report suspected child abuse may result in disciplinary procedures by SBEC for a violation of the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics.

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 agency.

Reporting the concern to the principal does not relieve the employee of the requirement to report it to the appropriate state agency. In addition, employees must cooperate with investigators of child abuse and neglect. 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.

## **Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment of Children**

The district has established a plan for addressing sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children, which may be accessed at the District website at [www.ptisd.org](http://www.ptisd.org). As an employee, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused or maltreated. Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Maltreatment is defined as abuse or neglect. Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility under state law for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect following the procedures described above in *Reported Suspected Child Abuse*.

Employees are required to follow the procedures described above in *Reporting Suspected Child Abuse*.

## **Reporting Crime**

### *Policy DG*

The Texas Whistleblower Act protects district employees who make good faith reports of violations of law by the district to an appropriate law enforcement authority. The district is prohibited from suspending, terminating the employment of, or taking other adverse personnel action against an employee who makes a report under the Act. State law also provides employees with the right to report a crime witnessed at the school to any peace officer with authority to investigate the crime.

## **Technology Resources**

### *Policy CQ*

The district's technology resources, including its networks, computer systems, e-mail accounts, devices connected to its networks, and all district-owned devices used on or off school property, are primarily for administrative and instructional purposes. Limited personal use is permitted if the use:

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

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

Employees are required to abide by the provisions of the acceptable use agreement and administrative procedures. Failure to do so can result in suspension of access or termination of privileges and may lead to disciplinary and legal action. Employees with questions about computer use and data management can contact the Director of Technology.

## **Personal Use of Electronic Communications**

### *Policy DH*

Electronic communications includes all forms of social media, such as text messaging, instant messaging, electronic mail (e-mail), Web logs (blogs), wikis, electronic forums (chat rooms), video-sharing websites (e.g., YouTube), editorial comments posted on the Internet, and social network sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram). Electronic communications also includes all forms of telecommunication such as landlines, cell phones, and Web-based applications.

As role models for the district's students, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not acting as district employees. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of electronic media as they are for any other public conduct. If an employee's use of electronic media interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If an employee wishes to use a social network site or similar media for personal purposes, the employee is responsible for the content on the employee's page, including content added by the employee, the employee's friends, or members of the public who can access the employee's page, and for web links on the employee's page. The employee is also responsible for maintaining privacy settings appropriate to the content.

An employee who uses electronic media for personal purposes shall observe the following:

The employee may not set up or update the employee's personal social network page(s) using the district's computers, network, or equipment.

- The employee shall limit use of personal electronic communication devices to send or receive calls, text messages, pictures, and videos to breaks, meal times, and before and after scheduled work hours, unless there is an emergency or the use is authorized by a supervisor to conduct district business.
- The employee shall not use the district's logo or other copyrighted material of the district without express, written consent.
- An employee may not share or post, in any format, information, videos, or pictures obtained while on duty or on district business unless the employee first obtains written approval from the employee's immediate supervisor. Employees should be cognizant

that they have access to information and images that, if transmitted to the public, could violate privacy concerns.

- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics, even when communicating regarding personal and private matters, regardless of whether the employee is using private or public equipment, on or off campus. These restrictions include:
  - Confidentiality of student records [See Policy FL];
  - Confidentiality of health or personnel information concerning colleagues, unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law [See Policy DH (EXHIBIT)];
  - Confidentiality of district records, including educator evaluations and private e-mail addresses. [See Policy GBA];
  - Copyright law [See Policy CY]; and
  - Prohibition against harming others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system. [See Policy DH (EXHIBIT)].

See *Use of Electronic Media with Students*, below, for regulations on employee communication with students through electronic media.

Employees are held financially responsible for any lost or damaged electronic equipment issued by the District.

## **Electronic Communications between Employees, Students and Parents**

### *Policy DH*

A certified or licensed employee, or any other employee designated in writing by the superintendent or a campus principal, may use electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the district. The employee must comply with the provisions outlined below. Electronic communications between all other employees and students who are enrolled in the district are prohibited. Employees are not required to provide students with their personal phone number or e-mail address.

An employee is not subject to provisions regarding electronic communications with a student to the extent the employee has a social or family relationship with a student. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew, a student who is the child of an adult friend, a student who is a friend of the employee's child, or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, or religious organization. An employee who claims an exception based on a social relationship shall provide written consent from the student's parent. The written consent shall include an acknowledgement by the parent that:

- The employee has provided the parent with a copy of this protocol;
- The employee and the student have a social relationship outside of school;
- The parent understands that the employee’s communications with the student are excepted from district regulation; and
- The parent is solely responsible for monitoring electronic communications between the employee and the student.

The following definitions apply for the use of electronic media with students:

- *Electronic communications* means any communication facilitated by the use of any electronic device, including a telephone, cellular telephone, computer, computer network, personal data assistant, or pager. The term includes e-mail, text messages, instant messages, and any communication made through an Internet website, including a social media website or a social networking website.
- *Communicate* means to convey information and includes a one-way communication as well as a dialogue between two or more people. A public communication by an employee that is not targeted at students (e.g., a posting on the employee’s personal social network page or a blog) is not a *communication*: however, the employee may be subject to district regulations on personal electronic communications. See *Personal Use of Electronic Media*, above. Unsolicited contact from a student through electronic means is not a *communication*.
- *Certified or licensed employee* means a person employed in a position requiring SBEC certification or a professional license, and whose job duties may require the employee to communicate electronically with students. The term includes classroom teachers, counselors, principals, librarians, paraprofessionals, nurses, educational diagnosticians, licensed therapists, and athletic trainers.

An employee who communicates electronically with students shall observe the following:

- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students using any form of electronic communications, including mobile and web applications, that are not provided or accessible by the district unless a specific exception is noted below.
- Only a teacher, trainer, or other employee who has an extracurricular duty may use text messaging, and then only to communicate with students who participate in the extracurricular activity over which the employee has responsibility. An employee who communicates with a student using text messaging shall comply with the following protocol. The employee must do one of the following:
  - The employee shall include at least one of the student’s parents or guardians as a recipient on each text message to the student so that the student and parent receive the same message;

- The employee shall include his or her immediate supervisor as a recipient on each text message to the student so that the student and supervisor receive the same message; or
- For each text message addressed to one or more students, the employee shall send a copy of the text message to the employee's district e-mail address.
- The employee shall limit communications to matters within the scope of the employee's professional responsibilities (e.g., for classroom teachers, matters relating to class work, homework, and tests; for an employee with an extracurricular duty, matters relating to the extracurricular activity).
- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students through a personal social network page; the employee must create a separate social network page ("professional page") for the purpose of communicating with students. The employee must enable administration and parents to access the employee's professional page.
- The employee shall not communicate directly with any student between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m. An employee may, however, make public posts to a social network site, blog, or similar application at any time.
- The employee does not have a right to privacy with respect to communications with students and parents.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics including:
  - Compliance with the Public Information Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including retention and confidentiality of student records. [See Policies CPC and FL];
  - Copyright law [Policy CY]; and
  - Prohibitions against soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student. [See Policy DHB]
- Upon request from administration, an employee will provide the phone number(s), social network site(s), or other information regarding the method(s) of electronic media the employee uses to communicate with one or more currently-enrolled students.
- Upon written request from a parent or student, the employee shall discontinue communicating with the student through e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, or any other form of one-to-one communication.
- An employee may request an exception from one or more of the limitations above by submitting a written request to his or her immediate supervisor.

- All staff are required to use school email accounts for all electronic communications with parents. Communication about school issues through personal email accounts or text messages are not allowed as they cannot be preserved in accordance with the district's record retention policy.
- An employee shall notify his or supervisor in writing within one business day if a student engages in an improper electronic communication with the employee. The employee should describe the form and content of the electronic communication.

## **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, 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 on school property or at a school-sponsored activity; or
- Crimes involving moral turpitude.

Moral turpitude includes 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;
- Crimes involving any felony possession or conspiracy to possess, or any misdemeanor or felony transfer, sale, distribution, or conspiracy to transfer, sell, or distribute any controlled substance;

- Felonies involving driving while intoxicated (DWI); or
- Acts constituting abuse or neglect under the SBEC rules.

If an educator is arrested or criminally charged, the superintendent is also required to report the educator’s criminal history to the Division of Investigations at TEA.

## **Alcohol and Drug-Abuse Prevention**

*Policies DH, DI*

Pine Tree 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 is available in policy DH(Local) and DI.

## **Tobacco Products and E-Cigarette Use**

*Policies DH, FNCD, GKA*

State law prohibits smoking, using tobacco products, or e-cigarettes on all district-owned property and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities, on or off school property. 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, using tobacco products, or e-cigarettes 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.

## **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 include 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, except as otherwise permitted by law or district policy;
- Inappropriately destroying, removing, or using records, furniture, fixtures, or equipment;
- Failing to provide financial records required by federal, state, or local entities;
- Failure to disclose conflicts of interest as required by law or district policy;
- Any other dishonest act regarding the finances of the district; or
- Failure to comply with requirements imposed by law, the awarding agency, or a pass-through entity for state and federal awards.

## **Conflict of Interest**

*Policy CB, DBD*

Employees are required to disclose in writing to the district 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; or
- Non-school employment.

Employees should contact their supervisor for additional information.

## **Employee Dress**

Pine Tree ISD expects a standard of professional dress that supports the overall educational environment of the district and demonstrates the personal integrity of employees. The purpose of the district dress code outlined below is to ensure that the employees and staff members of the district present a professional image to the public and students they serve. It is believed that staff dress is a major factor contributing to an appropriate educational climate on a campus.

The dress and grooming of district employees shall be clean, neat, in a manner appropriate for their assignments, and in accordance with any additional standards established by their supervisors and approved by the Superintendent.

- All garments shall be properly fitted and convey a dignified and professional appearance.
- Jeans are allowed only on spirit days. Any other jean days require the approval of the Superintendent or designee.
- Shirts must cover the midriff and must not be low cut (chest area/cleavage must be covered.)
- Employees should not wear clothing that exposes cleavage, the midriff, undergarments, or that is otherwise immodest.
- Tank tops, muscle shirts, spaghetti straps, and backless shirts or dresses will not be worn. Collar-less t-shirts should not be worn unless the t-shirt is Pine Tree ISD affiliated.
- Pants or other clothing with holes are not acceptable.
- Form fitting attire such as leggings, tights, or similar clothing is not permitted unless worn under a skirt, dress, sweater dress, etc. no shorter than 3: from the top of the knee as measured from the garment's shortest point.
- Yoga pants are not allowed.
- Skirts and dresses will not be shorter than 3" above the knee while in a normal standing position.
- Beach/shower type shoes/flip flops are not allowed.
- Employees are encouraged to keep all tattoos covered while at work and in the educational environment. Tattoos, if they create a distraction to others while working or learning, or if it offends, students, staff, or the community, may require covering at the supervisor's request.
- Pierced jewelry may be worn only in the ear (no gauging).
- No hats, caps, or any type of head covering will be worn in the buildings unless required by your position as directed by your supervisor.
- Wind suits and sweat suits are unacceptable except for coaches and physical education teachers. Coaches must wear professional attire when in the academic classroom.

Staff should adhere at a minimum to the student dress code. Pine Tree ISD will observe the guidelines listed above as standards for professional appearance at all times. Directors and principals may impose additional standards of dress as appropriate for their department or campus. Exceptions to this policy may be requested in writing and approved by the Superintendent or designee.

## **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, electronic textbooks, instructional materials or technological equipment 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.

## **Copyrighted Materials**

### *Policy CY*

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.). Electronic media, including motion pictures and other audiovisual works, are to be used in the classroom for instructional purposes only. Duplication 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.

## **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 employers 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. The district encourages personal participation in the political process, including voting. Employees who need to be absent from work to vote during the early voting period or on election day must communicate with their immediate supervisor prior to the absence.

## **Charitable Contributions**

### *Policy DG*

The Board or any employee may not directly or indirectly require or coerce an employee to make a contribution to a charitable organization or in response to a fundraiser. Employees cannot be required to attend a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions. In addition, the Board or any employee may not directly or indirectly require or coerce an employee to refrain from making a contribution to a charitable organization or in response to a fundraiser or attending a meeting called for the purpose of soliciting charitable contributions.

## **Safety**

### *Policy CK series*

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. See Emergencies on page \_\_\_\_ for additional information. 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.

While driving on district business, employees are required to abide by all state and local traffic laws. Employees driving on district business are prohibited from texting and using other electronic devices that require both visual and manual attention while the vehicle is in motion. Employees will exercise care and sound judgment on whether to use hands-free technology while the vehicle is in motion.

Employees with questions or concerns relating to safety programs and issues may contact Human Resources.

Employees are expected to use all appropriate safety measures while on the job. Use of good judgement and appropriate tools for the given task is essential. Even when all precautions are taken, the possibility of injuries still exist. If an accident occurs during the commission of job

performance, the employee is expected to submit the following three documents to Human Resources

## **Identification Badges**

Each employee and substitute is provided an identification badge annually which must be displayed prominently on their person at all times while in the work setting. Lost badges may be replaced at a personal cost to the employee of \$5.

## **Use of District Owned White Fleet Vehicles**

These regulations are intended to ensure the safety of District students, the general public, and drivers of District vehicles. Vehicle accidents are costly to the District, but more importantly, they may result in injury. It is the driver's responsibility to operate the vehicle in a safe manner and to drive defensively to prevent injuries and property damage. As such, the District endorses all applicable state motor vehicle regulations relating to driver responsibility. The District requires each operator of a District vehicle to comply with all applicable traffic laws. Only authorized employees of the District are allowed to operate District motor vehicles or any motor-powered or motor driven vehicle. District vehicle may only be used for approved school business. (See PTISD Board Policy CNB (Local) and GKA (Local)).

## **Driver Eligibility**

Employees who use District vehicles are required to provide Jack Irvin, Director of Safety, Security & Transportation with a copy of their Texas Drivers License. The Director of Safety, Security & Transportation, will confirm eligibility for District vehicle driving privileges at time of hire, based upon job requirements. Meeting eligibility requirements may include, but not limited to:

- Personal driving record review (at least once annually),
- Possession of a valid driver's license,
- Consent to a medical exam for driver fitness,
- Consent to previous employer reference

District vehicles are to be driven by authorized employees only, or in case of repair testing, by a mechanic. Any employee who has his or her driver's license revoked or suspended will notify his

or her immediate supervisor immediately and will discontinue operation of any District vehicle. The notified supervisor will contact the Director of Safety, Security & Transportation.

Drivers must immediately report all tickets received for moving violations during the operation of a District vehicle to their immediate supervisor and the Director of Safety, Security & Transportation. In the event a driver of a District vehicle is determined to have incurred serious violations, a written advisory will be issued stating he or she is in jeopardy of forfeiting his or her rights under this regulation, pending investigation. The lone exception to this rule is if the violation is of such magnitude to be the sole cause for termination of employment or driving rights.

All accidents are subject to review through investigations conducted by the Director of Safety, Security & Transportation and the Vehicle Accident Review Team. District vehicles are to be driven only by the operator(s) to whom the vehicles have been assigned. Under no circumstances will non-approved drivers be allowed to operate District-owned vehicles. Any District employee asked to drive a District vehicle must first be authorized to do so by the Director of Safety, Security and Transportation.

## **Work Injury Reporting**

Employees who are injured or sustain an occupational illness while on duty shall report the injury or illness at the time of the occurrence to the District, or to an employee of the District who holds a supervisory/management position, regardless of whether medical care is necessary or not.

The Designated Supervisor (i.e. Principal, office manager, supervisor, etc.) is required to report the injury or illness upon notice by the employee within twenty-four (24) hours of the accident. The designated Supervisor will forward the completed "Employee's Report of Injury" to the Pine Tree ISD Human Resource Department at [hr@ptisd.org](mailto:hr@ptisd.org).

The Designated Supervisor (i.e. Principal, office manager, supervisor, etc.) is required to conduct a written "Supervisor's Accident Investigation Report" and if applicable, any "Accident Witness Statements" and submit these documents to the Pine Tree ISD Human Resources Department at [hr@ptisd.org](mailto:hr@ptisd.org) within three (3) business days after the accident.



## Supervisor's Accident Investigation Form

Location where accident occurred		Employer's Premises: Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		Date of incident or illness
		Job Site Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>		
Who was injured?			Time of Accident:	
Length of Time with PTISD	Job Title or Occupation	Name of dept assigned to		How long has employee worked at job where injury occurred?
What property/equipment was damaged?			Property/equipment owned by:	
How did injury occur? List all objects and substances involved				
Part of body affected/injured?			Any prior physical conditions? If so, what? Yes No	

**PLEASE INDICATE ALL OF THE FOLLOWING WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THE INJURY OR ILLNESS**

<input type="checkbox"/>	Failure to lockout	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improper Maintenance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor housekeeping
<input type="checkbox"/>	Failure to secure	<input type="checkbox"/>	Improper protective equipment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Poor ventilation
<input type="checkbox"/>	Horseplay	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inoperative safety device	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsafe arrangement or process
<input type="checkbox"/>	Improper dress	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lack of training or skill	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsafe equipment
<input type="checkbox"/>	Improper guarding	<input type="checkbox"/>	Operating without authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	Unsafe position
<input type="checkbox"/>	Improper instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Physical or mental impairment	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	

Supervisors corrective action to ensure this type of accident does not recur:


Was employee trained in the appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment/Proper Safety procedure:	Yes	No
Was employee cautioned for failure to use Personal Protective Equipment/Proper safety procedures?....	Yes	No
Did employee promptly report the injury/illness.....	Yes	No
Is modified duty available at your work location ? .....	Yes	No

Supervisor's Name	Supervisor's Signature	Phone #	Date
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# Accident Witness Statement

Injured Employee's name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

	Last	First	Middle	
--	------	-------	--------	--

Name of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone# \_\_\_\_\_

Last	First	Middle	Cell Phone # _____
------	-------	--------	--------------------

Job Title of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ How long employed here? \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address of Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Accident \_\_\_\_\_

Address (Name of Building)	Area ( loading dock, bathroom, etc)
----------------------------	-------------------------------------

Date of Accident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Accident: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe fully how accident occurred: (include event that occurred immediately before the accident):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Describe injury sustained (be specific about body part(s) recurring):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Recommendation on how to prevent this accident from recurring \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Supervisor of  
Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of  
Witness: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Possession of Firearms and Weapons**

*Policies DH, FNCG, GKA*

Employees, visitors, and students, including those with a license to carry a handgun, 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. A person, including an employee, who holds a license to carry a handgun may transport or store a handgun or other firearm or ammunition in a locked vehicle in a parking lot, garage, or other district provided parking area, provided the handgun or firearm or ammunition is properly stored, unloaded, and not in plain view. 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 supervisor or call Human Resources 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. Identification will be presented and visitors screened by office personnel. 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.

## **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 school. A copy of the district's management plan is kept in the main office and is available for inspection during normal business hours.

## **Pest Control Treatment**

*Policies CLB, DI*

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 administrative office. In addition, individual employees may request in writing to be notified of pesticide applications. An employee who requests individualized notice will be notified by telephone, written, or electric means. Pest control information sheets are available from campus principals or facility managers upon request.

# 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, to release students early, or to cancel school, district officials will post a notice on the district's website and notify the following radio and television stations:

*KLTV, Longview News Journal, and the District website.*

## Emergencies

*Policies CKC, CKD*

All employees should be familiar with the safety procedures for responding to emergencies, including a medical emergency. Employees should locate evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas and be familiar with shelter in place, lockout, and lockdown procedures. Emergency drills will be conducted to familiarize employees and students with safety and evacuation procedures. Each campus is equipped with an automatic external defibrillator. Fire extinguishers are located throughout all district buildings. Employees should know the location of these devices and procedures for their use.

## Purchasing Procedures

*Policy CH*

All requests for purchases must be submitted to the Finance 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. Further, only designated employees may obligate the district contractually with a provider. Contact the Assistant Superintendent for Business and Finance, 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 Human Resource office if there are any changes or corrections to their name, home address, contact

telephone number, marital status, emergency contact, or beneficiary. The form to process a change in personal information can be obtained from the HR website.

## **Personnel Records**

*Policy DBA, GBA*

Most district records, including personnel records, are public information and must be released upon request. In most cases, an employee's personal e-mail address is confidential and may not be released without the employee's permission.

Employees may choose to have the following personal information withheld:

- Address;
- Phone number, including personal cell phone number;
- Information that reveals whether they have family members; and
- Personal e-mail address

The choice to not allow public access to this information or change an existing choice, may be made at any time by submitting a written request to Human Resources. New or terminated employees have 14 days after hire or termination to submit a request. Otherwise, personal information may be released to the public until a request to withhold the information is submitted or another exception for release of information under law applies. An employee is responsible for notifying the district if he or she is subject to any exception for disclosure of personal or confidential information.

## **Building Use**

*Policies DGA, GKD*

Employees who wish to use district facilities after school hours must follow established procedures. The Assistant Superintendent of Facility Services and Planning, is responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Contact facility services 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 at least 45 days before the first day of instruction of the following school year. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to the Office of Human Resources and the direct supervisor. Contract employees may resign at any other time only with the approval of the superintendent or the board of trustees. A contracted employee requesting release from their contractual obligation is asked to meet personally with the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources and Curriculum for guidance. Resignation without consent may result in disciplinary action by the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC).

The principal is required to notify the superintendent of an educator's resignation following an alleged incident of misconduct for any of the acts listed in *Reports to Texas Education Agency*. The superintendent will notify SBEC when an employee resigns and reasonable evidence exists to indicate that the employee has engaged in of the same acts.

**Noncontract Employees.** Noncontract employees may resign their position at any time. A written notice of resignation should be submitted to their direct supervisor and the Office of Human Resources 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.

Employees who resign or retire are asked to complete an exit interview either on-line, with their immediate supervisor, with HR personnel, or on their own in hard copy form.

## Dismissal or Nonrenewal of Contract Employees

### *Policies DF Series*

Employees on probationary, term, and continuing contracts can be dismissed during the school year according to the procedures outlined in district policies. Employees on probationary or term contracts can be nonrenewed at the end of the contract term. 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 when the employee's certification is revoked for misconduct. Information on the timelines and procedures can be found in the DF series policies that are provided to employees or are available online.

## **Dismissal of Noncontract 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, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, military status, genetic information, 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. (See *Complaints and Grievances*)

## **Exit Interviews and Procedures**

Exit interviews may be scheduled with the direct supervisor for all employees leaving the district or an electronic, on-line survey will be shared upon departure. Employees are encouraged to visit the Benefits Specialist for additional information on the continuation of benefits, release of information, and procedures for requesting references. 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, including intellectual property, and equipment must be returned upon separation from employment.

## **Reports to Texas Education Agency**

*Policy DF, DHB*

The resignation or termination of a certified employee must be reported to the Division of Investigations at TEA if there is evidence that the employee was involved in any of the following:

- Any form of sexual or physical abuse of a minor or any other unlawful conduct with a student or a minor;
- Soliciting or engaging in sexual contact 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 district or school property or funds;
- An attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit for the purpose of promotion or additional compensation; or
- Committing a criminal offense or any part of a criminal offense on district property or at a school-sponsored event.

The reporting requirements above are in addition to the superintendent's ongoing duty to notify TEA when a certified employee has a reported criminal history. "Reported criminal history" means any formal criminal justice system charges and dispositions including arrests, detentions, indictments, criminal information, convictions, deferred adjudications, and probations in any state or federal jurisdiction that is obtained by a means other than the Fingerprint-based Applicant Clearinghouse of Texas (FACT).

## **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. Notice of the following must be sent to the support recipient and the court or, in the case of child support, the Texas Attorney General Child Support Division:

- 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*

Pine Tree ISD does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, 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 based on any of the reasons listed above should be directed to the superintendent or superintendent's designee.

## 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: The rights of parents transfer to a student who turns 18 or is enrolled in an institution of post-secondary education. A district is not prohibited from granting the student access to the student's records before this time.
- 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 PEIMS and Student Records 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 teacher 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 may administer prescription medication, nonprescription medication, and herbal or dietary supplements to students. Exceptions apply to the self-administration of asthma medication, medication for anaphylaxis (e.g., EpiPen<sup>®</sup>), and medication for diabetes management, if the medication is self-administered in accordance with district policy and procedures. A student who must take any other 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 Conduct and 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.

## **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 submit a letter/note to the campus explaining the cause absence. These requirements are addressed in campus training and in the student handbook. Contact the campus principal for additional information.

## **Bullying**

*Policy FFI*

Bullying is defined by §TEC 37.0832. All employees are required to report student complaints of bullying, including cyber bullying, to the campus administration. The district's policy includes definitions and procedures for reporting and investigating bullying of students available from the campus administration or counselor.

## **Hazing**

*Policy FNCC*

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 administrator.