

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

2023-2024



2023-2024

Helena School District Employee

Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Helena Public Schools!

The material covered within this employee handbook is intended as a method of communicating to employees regarding general District information, rules, and regulations and is not intended to either enlarge or diminish any Board policy, administrative regulation, or collective bargaining agreement. Material contained herein may, therefore, be superseded by such Board policy, administrative regulation, collective bargaining agreement, or changes in state or federal law.

Any information contained in this employee handbook is subject to unilateral revision or elimination, from time to time, without notice, consultation, or publication, except as may be required by contractual agreements or law.

No information in this document shall be viewed as an offer, expressed or implied, or as a guarantee of any employment of any duration.

In this handbook Board policies are noted in ***bold and italics***. Please direct any questions to your supervisor or to the Human Resources Department at humanresources@helenaschools.org.

VISION

Helena Public Schools foster dynamic educational experiences that prepare all students for life.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Helena Public Schools educate, engage, and empower each student to maximize their individual potential with the knowledge, skills and character essential to being a responsible citizen and life-long learner.

This mission will be supported through the wise use of resources to meet students' needs, regardless of interests and talents. Students, families, educators and the community are committed to sharing the responsibility for creating a student-centered educational community that acknowledges learning as a life-long process.

2023 District



July 2023

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Holiday and Student Dismissal Dates

August 28 & 29	Staff Orientation
August 30	First Day of School for
Grs 1-5, Gr 6 CRA & HMS, Grs 9-12 PAL, Gr 9 CHS & HHS	
August 31	First Day of School for
Grs 7-8 CRA & HMS, Grs 10-12 CHS & HHS	
September 4	Labor Day - No School - District Closed
September 5	First Day of School for Kindergarten
October 19 & 20	Educator Conferences-No School
November 6	2nd Quarter Begins: Grades 6-12
November 22-24	Thanksgiving Break-No School
November 23 & 24	District Closed
December 1	12:00 P.M. Grades K-5 Student Early Dismissal
December 1	Grades 6-12: Full Day of School
December 1	P.M. K-5 Staff Records Day
December 4	Trimester 2 Begins: Grades K-5
December 22 - Jan.1	Winter Break-No School
December 25, 26 & January 1	District Closed
January 15	Martin Luther King Day-No School-District Closed
January 17, 18 & 19	High School Semester Testing
January 19	Grades K-5: Full Day of School
January 19	12:00 P.M. Grades 6-8 Early Dismissal
January 19	P.M. 6-8 Staff Records Day
January 22	No School K-12, HS Staff In-Service & Records Day
January 23	3rd Quarter Begins: Grades 6-12
February 19	President's Day-No School-District Closed
March 4	Trimester 3 Begins: Grades K-5
March 25- 29	Spring Break-No School
April 1	4th Quarter Begins: Grades 6-12
May 3	Vigilante Day - No school Grades 9-12/11:00 AM Dismissal K-8
May 27	Memorial Day-No School-District Closed
June 1	High School Graduation
June 4, 5 & 6	High School Semester Testing
June 6	Last Day & 12:00 p.m. Early Dismissal Students K-8
June 6	Last Day for Students 9-11
June 6	P.M. K-8 Staff Records Day: Last Day for Staff K-8
June 7	HS Staff In-Service-Records Day: Last Day for Staff 9-12
July 3 & 4	District Closed

Mondays are Professional Release days for Helena School District staff. School for students will dismiss early. Please see below.

- Elementary School Student day ends 45 minutes early
- Middle School Student day ends 45 minutes early
- High School Student day ends 45 minutes early

- First Day of School for Various Grade Levels
- Holiday or Break- No School-All Grades
- Staff Orientation
- ◇ Last Day of School 9-12 Students
- High School Semester Testing
- Early dismissal Students K-5 ONLY/halfday K-5 Records Day
- Early dismissal Students 6-8/ halfday 6-8 Records Day
- Early dismissal Students K-8/ halfday K-8 Records Day
- △ HS staff in-service-records day-No School K-12
- Vigilante Day-K-8 released 11:00 AM / HS No School

Calendar 2024

January 2024

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February 2024

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April 2024

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Board of Trustees Approved
3/14/2023

BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2023-2024

The Legislature of the State of Montana delegates to the Board responsibility for the conduct and governance of district schools. The Trustees for the 2023-24 school year, as elected by residents of this district, are as follows:

Executive Committee

Siobhan Hathhorn - Chair
Jennifer McKee – Vice Chair
Janet Armstrong

MTSBA

Siobhan Hathhorn

Budget and Finance Committee

Janet Armstrong – Chair
Terry Beaver
Jeff Hindoien

Budget Recommendation Committee

Janet Armstrong
Terry Beaver
Jennifer McKee

Facilities and Maintenance Committee

Kay Satre – Chair
Terry Beaver
Siobhan Hathhorn
Jeff Hindoien

Teaching and Learning Committee

Jennifer McKee - Chair
Janet Armstrong
Linda Cleatus
Jennifer Walsh

Facilities Master Plan

Siobhan Hathhorn

Wellness Committee

Siobhan Hathhorn

Health Benefits Committee

Kay Satre

Student Representatives

Willa Bishop - HHS
Luna Hernandez - CHS

Policy Committee

Janet Armstrong – Chair
Linda Cleatus
Jeff Hindoien
Jennifer Walsh

All committee members can be reached at boardoftrustees@helenaschools.org

Superintendent

Rex Wertz

Lincoln Center
1325 Poplar Steet, Helena, MT 59601
(Work) 324-2001
Email: rwertz@helenaschools.org

For general information regarding meetings of the Board of Trustees, please check the District website.

GENERAL TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT

The Board is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, ancestry, marital status, military status, citizenship status, culture, social origin or condition, use of lawful products while not at work, political affiliation, or a physical, mental or sensory handicap, or by any other distinguishing characteristic if otherwise able to perform the essential functions of a job with or without reasonable accommodations, and other legally protected categories.

Reasonable accommodation for individuals with disabilities will be made as required by law.

If considerations of sex, age or disability have a bona fide relationship to the unique requirements of a particular job or if there are federal or state legal requirements that apply, then sex, age or disability may be taken into account as a bona fide occupational qualification, provided such consideration is consistent with governing law.

If you have questions concerning District compliance with state and federal equal opportunity employment laws, including but not limited to Title IX, contact the District's Title IX Coordinator and HR Director, Keri Mizell at (406) 324-2014 or the District 504 Coordinator Joslyn Davidson at (406) 324-2002. Inquires may also be directed to the Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Ave SW, Washington D.C., 20202. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5000 Equal Employment Opportunity***.

HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION

The Board of Trustees intends that employees have a safe and orderly work environment in which to do their jobs. Therefore, the Board does not condone and will not tolerate harassment or bullying of employees, discrimination against employees, or any act prohibited by Board policy that disrupts the workplace and/or keeps employees from doing their jobs. Bullying, harassment, intimidation, between employees or by third parties, is strictly prohibited and shall not be tolerated. This includes bullying, harassment, or intimidation via electronic communication devices ("cyberbullying").

Employees are expected to be civil, respectful, and act in an orderly manner toward one another. Workplace harassment and bullying may be defined as the deliberate, hurtful, repeated mistreatment of an employee, driven by a desire to abuse or control that individual.

Common behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Injuring, threatening, harassing or intimidating a staff member, board member or any other person;
- Defamation of character and/or reputation;
- Yelling, shouting, and screaming; hostile glares and other intimidating gestures toward fellow employees;
- Behind-the-back-put-downs, insulting, and unfair criticism;

- Damaging or threatening to damage another's property;
- The deliberate sabotage and undermining of another's work performance;
- Impeding, delaying, or otherwise interfering with the orderly conduct of the district employee program or any other activity occurring on school property;
- Operating a motor vehicle in a risky manner to scare or intimidate;
- Exclusion or social isolation; and
- Other inappropriate behavior that intimidates, offends, degrades or humiliates a co-worker, including occurrences in front of another co-worker, students, parents, contractors or visitors.

Any employee who believes they, or any other employee or student, is being subjected to harassment or discrimination should bring the matter to the attention of their Supervisor and/or Building Principal. Complaints of sexual harassment should be brought to one of the District's Title IX Coordinators. The District will investigate any such concerns promptly and confidentially to the extent possible. Complaints will be addressed via the applicable grievance procedure; the District's grievance procedures can be found on the District's website. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 1085 Uniform Grievance Procedure***.

No employee will be subject to any form of reprisal or retaliation for having made a good-faith complaint under policy. For complete information concerning the District's position prohibiting harassment/discrimination, assistance in reporting and responding to alleged incidents, and examples of prohibited behaviors, employees should refer to the District's policies and related procedures. For additional information if an employee believes they have been discriminated against or harassed on the basis of a protected category, please refer to ***Board Policies 5000 – Equal Employment Opportunity, 5005 Sexual Harassment and 5015 Bullying Harassment Intimidation Prevention Reporting***.

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

All employees receive a copy of their job description and responsibilities for review. Immediate supervisors may assign other duties as needed and direct the methods of completion as determined through best practices. Employees will be expected to perform their position with the upmost professionalism, including adhering to established behavioral competencies set by the district.

Employees should ask their supervisor if they have questions regarding their assigned duties and/or responsibilities. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5025 Employment and Assignment***.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

Any finalist recommended to be employed in a paid or volunteer position with the District, including employees of firms that hold a contract with the District, who will have unsupervised access to students will be required to submit to a comprehensive criminal background investigation to include fingerprinting.

Any requirement of a candidate, volunteer, or employee of a contractor to submit to a fingerprint background check will be in compliance with the National Child Protection Act and applicable federal regulations. If an individual has any prior record of arrest or conviction by any local, state, or federal law enforcement agency for an offense other than a minor traffic violation, the facts must be reviewed by the Superintendent or designee who will decide whether the individual will be declared eligible for employment or volunteering.

Employees and volunteers have the responsibility to notify the District as soon as possible if they are arrested, charged with a crime, or served a restraining order. The District will take appropriate action, up to and including termination, if upon notification it is determined the criminal activity impacts the individual's continued employment or ability to volunteer. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5122 Criminal Background Investigation***.

CONFIDENTIALITY

In certain circumstances, employees may receive confidential information regarding students' or employees' medical, discipline or court records. Employees are required to keep student and personnel information in the strictest confidence and are legally prohibited from passing confidential information along to any unauthorized individual(s). If employees have any questions about access to confidential information, they should speak to their Supervisor and/or refer to ***Board Policy 5035 Staff Ethics and Political Activity***.

SALARIES AND PAYROLL DISTRIBUTION

Employees are paid once per month on the 25th. Determination of experience, and changes to employees compensation are determined in compliance with the appropriate collective bargaining agreement.

SALARY DEDUCTIONS

The District makes all payroll deductions required by law or as authorized by the employee.

BENEFITS AND LEAVE

EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEMS

All District employees are members of either the Montana Teachers Retirement System (MTRS) or the Montana Public Employees Retirement System (MPERS). Questions regarding retirement should be directed to the appropriate system.

EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT

School personnel are reimbursed for travel that is required as part of their duties or for school-related activities approved by the supervisor. Employees should ask their supervisor for information regarding expense reimbursement and/or refer to ***Board Policy 7020 Travel Allowances and Personal Reimbursements***.

HOLIDAYS

Holidays for staff are dictated in part by the school calendar. Substitute employees will not receive holiday pay. Part-time employees will receive holiday pay on a prorated based on criteria established in the appropriate collective bargaining agreement or policy.

The District will observe all school holidays as required by statute. When an eligible employee is required to work any of the school holidays, another day shall be granted in lieu of such holiday, unless the employee elects to be paid for the holiday in addition to the employee's regular pay for all time worked on the holiday. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5060 Holidays***.

INSURANCE

The Board provides unemployment insurance, workers' compensation and liability insurance for all employees. In addition, the Board provides group health insurance to eligible employees. Part-time employees receive a pro-rated cafeteria amount based on their full-time equivalency. Continuation of health insurance requires an employee to be in a paid status ten (10) days per pay period or to self-pay.

For more information regarding insurance benefits, please refer to ***Board Policy 5051 Insurance Benefits for Employees***, the [District web site](#) and/or contact the [District Benefits Manager](#) at Lincoln Center.

LEAVE

In order to provide the highest level of service, employees are expected to be at work and on time every day. However, when circumstances dictate, the District provides leave to its employees pursuant to Montana law, collective bargaining agreements and individual contracts. Employees who must be absent should inform their supervisor as soon as they anticipate the absence, or as soon as possible, but no later than the start of their scheduled start time. Listed below is general information regarding several types of leave available to employees. Please note that in many cases a written request, submitted for approval before leave begins, is required. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5055 Leave of Absence***.

Leave of Absence

The District provides leave to its employees pursuant to Montana law, collective bargaining agreements and individual contracts. Those employees in paid leave status continue to accrue seniority and are eligible for District benefits. Employees in unpaid leave status of more than twenty (20) consecutive days do not accrue seniority. Employees who are not in a pay status for

ten (10) days in a payroll period may not be eligible for benefits through the District unless specified differently in the collective bargaining agreement.

Sick Leave

Employees in a represented position will be granted sick leave according to the terms of their collective bargaining agreement. Employees in non-represented positions shall be granted sick leave pursuant to Montana law governing public employees. Administrators shall be granted sick leave pursuant to the terms of the Administrators' Handbook. Unless otherwise stated, "sick leave" means a leave of absence, with pay, for an illness suffered by an employee or immediate family. "Immediate family" means the employee's spouse, domestic partner, parent, sibling, child and like relations of the spouse or domestic partner. A maximum of ten (10) days of accumulated sick leave may be used per year because of death in the immediate family.

An employee may donate sick leave to another District employee who is in need and has exhausted available accrued leave due to a qualifying event and qualifying family member under the Family Medical Leave Act (i.e., serious health condition, parental leave, military exigency for self, spouse/domestic partner, child or parent). Requests for sick leave donations are coordinated and approved by the Human Resources Office. Donated leave may only be used by the recipient for the approved qualifying event.

Employees may not donate accrued leave that would cause the employee's own combined accrued leave balance to fall below eighty (80) hours after the transfer.

Any donated leave no longer needed by the recipient as determined by the Human Resources Director based on medical or military documentation, or within one year of the approved event, which ever shall come first, will be returned to the donor(s).

Bereavement Leave

Employees in a represented position will be granted bereavement leave according to the terms of their collective bargaining agreement. Other employees shall be allowed up to five (5) days of bereavement leave for death in the immediate family (employee's spouse, domestic partner, parent, sibling, child, grandparent, grandchild and like relations of the spouse or domestic partner). In the event the employee needs additional bereavement time, an additional leave of up to five (5) days may be awarded at the discretion of their immediate supervisor. One (1) day of bereavement leave may be granted to allow an employee to attend a funeral of a family member who does not meet the criteria of "immediate family." Any leave categorized as bereavement leave shall be without loss of pay.

Personal and Emergency Leave

Employees will be granted personal and emergency leave according to the terms of their collective bargaining agreement. Administrators will be granted personal and emergency leave pursuant to the terms of the Administrators' Handbook or at the discretion of the Superintendent. Personal and emergency leave is without pay unless otherwise stated in the applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Civic Duties Leave

Employees shall be granted leave for service on a jury, in the Legislature, or in response to a subpoena as outlined below and in accordance with state law.

Employees will promptly inform the District when notified of a jury duty summons and will cooperate in requesting a postponement of service if warranted by business demands. Each

employee who is under proper summons as a juror shall collect all fees and allowances payable as a result of the service and forward the fees to the Business Office. Juror fees shall be applied against the amount due the employee from the employer. However, if an employee elects to charge juror time off against personal leave, the employee shall not be required to remit juror fees to the employer. In no instance is an employee required to remit to employer any expense or mileage allowance paid by the court.

Employees will promptly inform the District when they receive a subpoena. An employee subpoenaed to serve as a witness shall collect all fees and allowances payable as a result of the service and forward the fees to the Business Office or may elect to charge their witness time off against personal leave, provided the employee has been subpoenaed on the employer's behalf or the subpoena is for a legal proceeding which is unrelated to the personal or financial matters of the employee. Witness fees shall be applied against the amount due the employee from his employer. In no instance is an employee required to remit to the employer any expense or mileage allowances paid by the court.

Military Leave

Employees shall be granted leave for service in the military in accordance with state and federal law. The District will comply with all federal regulations regarding the employee's return to service following military leave.

Vacation Leave

Employees will accrue and be granted vacation leave pursuant to Montana law or the terms of their collective bargaining agreement. Administrators will accrue and be granted vacation leave pursuant to the terms of the Administrators' Handbook and Montana law. The District, in its sole discretion and/or subject to the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, may provide cash compensation for unused vacation leave in lieu of the accumulation of vacation leave.

Maternity, Paternity & Adoption Leave

The District will provide maternity leave to employees pursuant to Montana law.

The District may provide leave related to the adoption of a child pursuant to the terms of any collective bargaining agreement, Administrators' Handbook, or the law.

Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)

Eligibility

Employees are eligible if they have worked for the District for at least one (1) year, and for one thousand two hundred fifty (1,250) hours during the twelve (12) months immediately prior to the date the leave is requested and there have been at least fifty (50) District employees within seventy-five (75) miles for each working day during twenty (20) or more workweeks in the current or preceding calendar year.

Length and Purpose of Leave

In accordance with provisions of the FMLA, a leave of absence of up to twelve (12) weeks during a twelve(12)month period may be granted to an eligible employee for the following reasons: 1) birth of a child; 2) placement of a child for adoption or foster care; 3) a serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform functions of the job; 4) to care

for the employee's spouse/domestic partner, child, or parent with a serious health condition (not parent-in-law); 5) because of a qualifying exigency (as determined by regulation) arising out of the fact that the spouse/domestic partner, son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on covered active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty) in the Armed Forces.

Service member Family Leave

An eligible employee who is the spouse/domestic partner, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered service member shall be entitled to a total of twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave during a twelve (12) month period to care for the service member. The leave described in this paragraph shall only be available during a single twelve (12) month period.

Employees will be required to use appropriate paid leave while on FMLA leave. Workers' compensation absences will be designated FMLA leave.

For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5045 Family Medical Leave Act***.

Leave and Return to Work

Unless the employee's request for intermittent leave is granted, the employee has no job responsibilities while on leave. If on intermittent leave, the employee can only be required to perform job responsibilities while on duty.

Employees have the right to continuation of health care coverage while on approved leave, restoration to the same or equivalent position upon expiration of leave, and freedom from discrimination or retaliation for exercising these rights.

The employee may seek extended leave for other reasons, terms of which are covered in their specific collective bargaining agreement, and/or state and federal law.

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

EMPLOYMENT AND ASSIGNMENT

Each certified and administrative employee will be employed under a written contract, subject to the terms and conditions of the collective bargaining agreement and District policies and procedures.

Renewal and non-renewal will be determined by the Board after receiving a recommendation from the Superintendent and in conformance with law.

The District reserves the right to change employment conditions affecting an employee's duties, assignment, supervisor, or grade. The Superintendent may assign, reassign, and/or transfer positions and duties of all staff, subject to any provisions contained in the collective bargaining agreement. Nothing in this policy prevents reassignment of a staff member during a school year. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5025 Employment and Assignment***.

EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE

District employees who fail to fulfill their job responsibilities or to follow reasonable directions of their supervisors, or who conduct themselves on or off the job in ways that affect their effectiveness on the job, may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. Behavior, conduct, or action that may call for disciplinary action or dismissal includes, but is not limited to, reasonable job related grounds based on a failure to satisfactorily perform job duties, disruption of the District or member school district's operation, or other legitimate reasons.

Discipline will be reasonably appropriate to the circumstance and will include, but not be limited to, a supervisor's right to reprimand an employee, or the Superintendent's or designee's right to suspend an employee, with or without pay, or to impose other appropriate disciplinary sanctions. Disciplinary sanctions will be documented and placed in the employee's personnel file. In accordance with Montana law, only the Board may terminate an employee or non-renew employment. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policies 5070 Disciplinary Action, 5255 Disciplinary Action, and 5075 Termination of Employment.***

No public officer or public employee shall retaliate against or condone or threaten to retaliate against an individual who, in good faith, alleges waste, fraud or abuse.

EVALUATIONS

Each non-administrative employee's job performance will be evaluated by the employee's direct supervisor. The evaluation process includes scheduled annual evaluations using forms applicable to the job classification and description, and day-to-day appraisals. Employees in represented positions shall be evaluated according to terms of the collective bargaining agreement. Employees have a right to access the evaluation instrument and the right to respond in writing to the completed evaluation.

The supervisor will provide a copy of the completed evaluation to the employee and will provide an opportunity to discuss the evaluation. The original should be signed by the employee and filed in the personnel file. If the employee refuses to sign the evaluation, the supervisor should note the refusal. Employees may have up to ten (10) working days to submit a rebuttal to the evaluation for inclusion in the personnel file. Failure to sign an evaluation form noting receipt may subject the employee to discipline. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5065 Evaluation of Non-Administrative Staff.***

GIFTS AND SOLICITATION

Staff members are to avoid accepting anything of value offered by another for the purpose of influencing their professional judgment. No organization may solicit funds from employees within school buildings, nor may anyone distribute flyers or other materials related to fund drives unless it has received District approval.

The solicitation of employees by sales people, other staff, or agents during on-duty hours is prohibited without building principal and Superintendent approval. Any solicitation should be reported at once

to the employee's supervisor and Superintendent. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5105 Conflicts of Interest***.

GRIEVANCES/COMMUNICATIONS

Employees covered by the collective bargaining agreement must use the grievance procedure in the collective bargaining agreement to address alleged violations of the contract.

District employees shall use the District's Uniform Grievance Procedure to address complaints/concerns about District policies, procedures and directives that cannot be resolved informally.

District employees shall use the Title IX Grievance Procedure to address complaints/concerns about sexual harassment. A copy of the Title IX Grievance Procedures is available at the District web page, Human Resources Office, or at any district or school office.

District employees shall use the Section 504 Grievance Procedures to address complaints/concerns about disability discrimination. A copy of the Section 504 Grievance Procedures is available at the district office.

For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 1085 Uniform Grievance Procedures***.

MEETINGS

Staff meetings are scheduled for the purpose of organization and communication of business that typically cannot be handled through electronic communications, staff bulletins, or email. All staff are expected to attend staff meetings unless prior arrangements have been made with the building principal or supervisor. Meetings sponsored or called by recognized collective bargaining units during contract hours are subject to prior approval of the building principal. Attendance of staff members at such meetings is left to the discretion of each employee.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT OR ACTIVITIES

Employees may not perform any duties related to an outside job during their regular working hours.

PERSONNEL RECORDS

An official personnel file is established for each person employed by the district. An employee's personnel file may contain such information as applications for employment, records relative to compensation, evaluations, and disciplinary actions. All records containing medical information, such as workers' compensation reports and release/permission to return to work forms, will be kept confidential, in a separate medical file.

All personnel records are considered confidential and not open to public inspection.

The employees' personnel records will be maintained in the District's administrative office, under the direct supervision of the Human Resources Office. Employees will be given access to their personnel records upon request. Employees' designees will be given access with written authorization. For additional information, please refer ***Board Policy 5040 Personnel Records***.

PARTICIPATION IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Employees are encouraged to participate in civic and/or political activities of their choice. Whenever possible, the District will attempt to make it convenient for employees to engage in such activity. Employees are encouraged to voice their views on civic and political matters as long as it is conducted in compliance with both federal and state law (i.e. Hatch Act, Section 13-35-226 MCA). It is also important that employees distinguish between personal views or position on political issues and the views or position of the Helena Public Schools.

The Board of Trustees and the Superintendent have the responsibility for developing the "Helena Public Schools position" on relevant legislation and regulatory proposals. Unless an employee is specifically designated by the Superintendent to represent the Helena Public Schools position on relevant legislation or regulatory proposals, all views or positions an employee presents must be identified as a personal or professional position and not the position of the Helena Public Schools.

Employees may not use any employer resources to promote their personal or professional views or position on political issues (this includes District letterhead school property/equipment including computers and the electronic communication system(s)). Employees may not participate in civic and/or political activity on scheduled or contract work time unless taking preapproved leave for this activity. This includes testifying in hearings. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5035 Ethics & Political Activity***.

Questions regarding the procedure should be directed to the Human Resources Office.

PARTICIPATION IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES

Employees may not encourage, discourage, persuade, dissuade, sponsor, participate in, or discriminate against a religious activity or an activity because of its religious content while in the course of performing official duties of that employee's position(s) with the District.

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

Absenteeism and Tardiness

Regular and timely attendance is an essential function of each position within the District. Core business hours are Monday – Friday, 7:30am – 4:30pm (8am – 4pm during the summer months when school is not in session). Employees are expected to report for work on time and to notify their immediate supervisor if they must be tardy or absent. Failure to maintain regular and timely attendance may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employee Contact Information

All employees are asked to keep their personal contact information updated. Updated information should be entered via the secure employee portal. Please allow 48 hours after submittal for changes to be approved and recorded. **Updated information is imperative in the event that staff must be contacted regarding emergencies.** Please contact the Human Resources Office for information regarding the employee portal or visit the District website.

Employee Identification Badges

All District personnel are required to wear employee identification badges during work hours while on School District property. The purpose of these badges is to provide school security and to ensure that only authorized individuals are on the premises. Badges must be worn in a clearly visible location on the upper portion of the body.

Disrupting the Educational Process

Any employee who participates in or encourages activities that disrupt the educational process or the operations of the District may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Behavior that disrupts the educational process includes, but is not limited to:

- ☐ Conduct that threatens the health, safety or welfare of others;
- ☐ Conduct that has or may damage public or private property (including the property of students or staff);
- ☐ Illegal activity;
- ☐ Conduct that interferes with a student's access to educational opportunities or programs, including ability to attend, participate in, and benefit from instructional and extracurricular activities; and/or
- ☐ Conduct that disrupts delivery of instructional services or interferes with the orderly administration of the District, school and school-related activities or District operations.

Dress and Appearance

District employees are required to dress in a **professional** manner. No mode of attire will be considered proper if it distracts from, or is disruptive to, the positive learning environment of the school, department or any District work site to which the employee is assigned.

Breastfeeding Accommodations

The District will provide reasonable accommodations for breastfeeding mothers, including access to a private area to express breast milk or breastfeed an infant child, permission to bring a breast pump and any other equipment to express breast milk, access to a power source for a breast pump or any other equipment for expressing breast milk, and access to a place to store expressed breast milk safely. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5100 Breastfeeding in the Workplace.***

USE OF ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION SYSTEM/SOCIAL NETWORKING PAGES

Employees cannot expect confidentiality or privacy of the information in District electronic communication systems (i.e., email, Internet, etc.). Authorized District personnel may monitor the use of electronic equipment from time to time, and violations of policy may result in discipline up to and including termination.

The on-campus and off-campus conduct of employees may impact their ability to function professionally and effectively in the District. Given student and parent interest in and use of electronic media, this is especially true as related to employees' action on electronic social networking websites. Employees may not set up or update their personal electronic social networking websites using the District's computers, network, equipment or District time. Employees who set up personal electronic social networking webpages on their home or personal computers are responsible for the content of their webpages, including but not limited to: content added by employees, their friends or members of the public who can access their webpages; or content that is linked to the employees' webpages. In the event an employee chooses to represent themselves as an employee of the District, their actions may be subject to review and potential discipline if the content is deemed inappropriate, in violation of District policy, violation of public trust or compromises the educational services to the Helena Community.

Employees who set up personal websites or webpages do so at their own risk; however, employees are strongly encouraged to keep their personal webpages and social networking private and to prevent students and the parents of students from accessing their personal webpages. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5090 Employee Electronic Services***.

USE OF SCHOOL PROPERTY

Employees may not use any District facility, vehicle, electronic communication system(s), equipment, procurement cards or materials for personal non-district related reasons. These items (including security codes and electronic records such as e-mail) are District property. Employees may not use a code, access a file, or retrieve any stored communication unless they have been given authorization by a supervisor to do so. District property that can be accessed for use by the general public is also available for employees who comply with the same process for use as the general public. Employees are prohibited from taking any equipment home for personal purposes, except as authorized by the Superintendent or designee. Utilization is limited to professional district related activities unless otherwise authorized.

Employees who drive any District-owned vehicle and who receive a traffic citation during the year must report the citation to the Superintendent immediately.

For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 7405 Procurement Card Use***.

CONTRACTED SERVICES

Contractors, guest instructors, chaperones, event hosts, accompanists and others, who may provide services to the district and students must contact the Human Resources Office in advance of the work being completed and comply with a criminal background investigation as outlined in Board Policy 5122. All contractors must be in compliance with the Department of Labor and Industry and Workers Compensation regulations.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

ACCIDENT REPORTING PROCESS

Student, employee, and visitor accidents, injuries, and serious illnesses occurring on District property, in transit, or at school-sponsored activities shall be reported promptly to the principal or supervisor who will make a report to the Safety Programs Manager on the form prescribed for this purpose available through the building school secretary.

Students and visitors should report incidents on the prescribed accident injury form. District employees should report incidents on the prescribed worker compensation form available from the building secretary, Payroll Office or Human Resources Office within twenty-four (24) hours of the incident.

Contractors working on school property should report any accidents to the Safety Manager.

The incident form needs to be filled out completely, signed by the building principal or supervisor, and a copy scanned to the Safety Programs Manager and Payroll Office. The original form should be sent to the Payroll Office.

ASSAULTS AND THREATS OF VIOLENCE

Employees should immediately report any threats they receive (oral or written) to their Principal or immediate supervisor and to the Human Resources Director.

ASSIGNMENT OF KEYS

Master keys and access cards shall be issued only to District employees who have responsibilities that require admittance to buildings during hours other than the regular school or workday for employment related activities.

Keys and access cards should not be loaned or given to students, friends, or family under any circumstances. No person shall possess keys or access cards for any building without the knowledge of the building principal or supervisor.

Keys, access cards, and/or fobs which are lost or stolen should be reported immediately to the Safety and Operations Manager at access@helenaschools.org.

CHILD ABUSE

A District employee, third party contractor providing service to students, student teacher or student nurse who has reasonable cause to suspect that a student may be abused, neglected or subject to sex trafficking by anyone shall report such a case to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) or local law enforcement, and notify the Superintendent or principal that a report has been made. Any District employee who fails to report a suspected case of abuse, neglect, or sex trafficking to DPHHS, or who prevents another person from doing so, is civilly liable for damages proximately caused by such failure or prevention and is guilty of a misdemeanor. The employee will also be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination, for failure to report.

When a District employee makes a report, the DPHHS may share information with the reporting individual or others as permitted by law. Individuals in the District who receive information related to a report of child abuse, neglect, or sex trafficking shall maintain the confidentiality of the information.

For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5030 Abused and Neglected Child Reporting.***

Any employee who may know, or there is probable cause to suspect, that an individual engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of law, is prohibited from assisting said individual in the acquisition of new employment this includes writing letters on district letterhead. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policies 5122 Criminal Background Investigations and 5032 Prohibition on Aiding and Abetting Sexual Abuse.***

DRUG AND ALCOHOL FREE SCHOOLS

All District workplaces are tobacco product, marijuana product, drug, and alcohol free.

Smoking or otherwise using a tobacco product, vapor product, or alternative nicotine product while on District premises or while performing work for the District is prohibited.

Employees must not manufacture, distribute, dispense, be under the influence of, purchase, possess, use, or attempt to obtain in the workplace or in the performance of duties, alcohol, marijuana, a controlled substance that is not legally attainable or being used in a manner other than as prescribed, or legally obtainable but has not been legally obtained.

An employee may show a tobacco product, vapor product, alternative nicotine product, or marijuana product in a classroom or otherwise on District school property as part of a lecture, demonstration, or educational forum concerning the risks of such product with prior notice and approval of the building administrator.

Employee violations may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Violations may also result in notification to appropriate legal officials. Any employee convicted of a workplace violation of drug abuse statutes must notify the Superintendent of the conviction within five (5) working days. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 5020 Tobacco Product, Drug and Alcohol Free Workplace.***

HEALTH, SAFETY AND SECURITY

It is the intent of the District to provide a safe and healthful working environment for all employees. Employees should report any security hazards or conditions they believe to be unsafe to their immediate supervisor. For information on the Helena Public Schools Safety Plan and Bloodborne Pathogen Control Plan, contact your Principal or supervisor. For more detailed information contact the District's Safety Manager and/or refer to ***Board Policy 7060 School Safety***.

Except for those vaccinations required by law, the District will not discriminate against an employee by denying or withholding employment opportunities based upon the employee's vaccination status.

RESUSCITATION

No staff member may comply with any directive from parents or others, written or verbal, that life sustaining emergency care be withheld from a student in need of such care while under the control and supervision of district staff.

Life-sustaining emergency care means any procedure or intervention applied by appropriately trained district staff that may prevent a student from dying who, without such procedure or intervention, faces a risk of imminent death. Examples of life-sustaining emergency care may include: efforts to stop bleeding, unblocking airways, mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, and cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR).

In a life-threatening situation, staff members are expected to dial 911 for paramedic assistance and provide life-sustaining emergency care to any student requiring it in order to sustain life, until relieved by paramedics or other appropriate medical personnel.

SEARCHES AND SEIZURES

For the safety and supervision of students in the absence of parents, to maintain discipline and order in schools, and to provide for the health, safety and welfare of students and staff, school authorities are authorized to conduct searches of students and their personal effects, as well as District property. Such authorization includes, but is not limited to, the use of canines for searches of school property, personal property and motor vehicles.

School authorities may search a student and/or the student's personal effects (e.g., purses, book bags, motor vehicles, etc.) when there is reasonable suspicion that the search will produce evidence the student has violated or is violating either the law or the District's student conduct rules. The search itself must be conducted in a manner which is reasonably related to its objectives and not excessively intrusive in light of the age and sex of the student and the nature of the infraction. When feasible, the search should be conducted outside the view of others, including students, in the presence of an adult witness and by a certificated employee or administrator of the same sex.

Immediately following a search, a written report shall be made by the school authority who conducted the search. The report shall be submitted to the Principal and forwarded to the Superintendent. The parent of the student shall be notified of the search as soon as possible.

School Property Searches

School property, including, but not limited to, desks and lockers, is owned and controlled by the District and may be searched by school authorities at any time. School authorities are authorized to conduct area-wide, general administrative inspections of school property without notice to or consent of the students or staff members and without reasonable suspicion (e.g. unannounced canine searches).

Seizure of Property

If a search produces evidence that the student has violated or is violating the law, or the District's policies or rules, such evidence may be seized and impounded by school authorities, and disciplinary action may be taken. When appropriate, such evidence may be transferred to law enforcement authorities.

If a school property search produces evidence that a staff member has violated or is violating the law, or the District's policies or rules, such evidence may be seized and impounded by school authorities, and disciplinary action may be taken. When appropriate, such evidence may be transferred to law enforcement authorities.

SERVICE ANIMALS AND THERAPY – FACILITY DOG

The District complies with all state and federal laws, regulations, and rules regarding the use of service animals by students, staff, or community members when the service animal is required because the individual has a disability and the service animal is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of that individual. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 4035 Service Animals and Form 4035F***.

The use of a therapy/facility dog must be approved by the building administrator in which the dog's handler works. The administrator will consider any extenuating circumstances including but not limited to; student and staff allergies, breed / type of animal, etc. when determining whether or not to allow the use of a therapy dog in the school building. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy, Procedure and Form 4036 Facility / Therapy Dogs***.

STUDENT TRANSPORTATION IN PRIVATE VEHICLES

During school or school-sponsored functions, students may be transported only in school-approved vehicles operated by authorized school personnel unless specific approval by the Superintendent or designee has been obtained.

The Board specifically forbids any employee to transport students for school purposes without prior authorization by the Superintendent or designee. When transporting students, seat belts must be worn by all occupants and they must be transported in the passenger compartment of the vehicle. Employees may not transport more passengers than the number of seat belts in the vehicle.

VIDEO SURVEILLANCE

The Board has authorized the use of security and surveillance video cameras on District property to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of all staff, students, and visitors to District property, and to safeguard District buildings, grounds and equipment.

Video or audio recording of students beyond what has been approved by the District is not allowed without prior parent permission.

Video cameras will assist in ensuring that behavior on school property is consistent with the established safety and conduct rules, policies and procedures. If unacceptable behavior is observed and/or reported, timely and appropriate corrective action will occur. Cameras will be utilized to monitor activity in common areas such as hallways, school buses and parking lots. Only employees authorized by the Superintendent may use and/or monitor the video surveillance system. To protect the privacy rights of staff, students, and visitors all State and Federal statutes will be followed. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 3097 Use of Video Monitoring Cameras*** or contact the Safety Program Manager.

WEAPONS

Carrying, bringing, using or possessing any weapon or dangerous instrument in any District building, on school grounds, in any school vehicle, including school buses, or at any school-sponsored activity is prohibited. Except for authorized law enforcement officials, the District prohibits carrying concealed weapons on District property. Staff members who violate this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS

ADMINISTERING MEDICATIONS TO STUDENTS

When a student's licensed health care provider and parent or guardian believe that it is necessary for the student to take a medication during school hours, the health care provider and parent or guardian must request that the school dispense the medication to their child and otherwise follow the District's procedures on dispensing medication. All medications will be kept in locked storage unless a student is authorized to carry medication during the school day. Parents of students who must carry and self-administer medication must complete the Montana Authorization to Possess or Self-Administer Medication form and return it to the building office. The form can be found at the following link: <https://dphhs.mt.gov/assets/publichealth/Asthma/asthmaelfmedicationform.pdf>

A teacher may not administer medication to a student without parental consent and an appropriate delegation by the school nurse. Teachers may be expected to assist students in remembering when a medication is scheduled to be administered. If the student refuses to take medication, teachers are expected to notify the school nurse who will contact the parent or guardian. The school nurse will document the date and time when the parent or guardian were contacted. For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 3070 Administration of Medication***.

CLASS INTERRUPTIONS

The District is committed to protecting instructional time. Class interruptions of any kind will be kept to a minimum. Students are not to be permitted to interrupt a class in session without authorization from an administrator or the classroom teacher. Intercom use is restricted to administrative use or administrative approved use only.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The use of corporal punishment in any form is strictly prohibited by the District. Corporal punishment is defined as the willful infliction of, or willfully causing the infliction of physical pain.

A staff member is authorized to employ physical force when, in their professional judgment, the physical force is necessary to prevent a student from harming self, others, or doing harm to district property.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum established for the courses and grade levels of this district provides the flexibility necessary to meet the individual needs of students and their divergent learning rates and styles. Deviations from established curriculum, textbooks, and instructional materials are not permitted without prior building principal approval. Teachers with questions should contact the building principal.

It is the expectation of the district, that all employees implement district adopted curriculum and technological resources in their classrooms and instruction. Teachers will employ instructional practices and strategies, framework and best practices as defined by administration. Any variation or alternative to District adopted curriculum or technology must receive advanced approval through the curriculum office. District approved scope, sequence and pacing has been established in all curricular areas and posted on SharePoint along with any district developed common unit assessments. Adjustments to sequence and pacing must also receive prior approval through the curriculum office.

Though teaching methodology may vary, classroom instruction is expected to reflect “best practices” consistent with research on effective instruction as defined by district administration. Teachers are expected to deliver program materials with fidelity, meeting program expectation, philosophical methodology and within the directives set by building level administrators and the administration of the district.

Teachers are expected to actively participate in the Professional Learning Community (PLC) process with their grade level and/or content area colleagues. During PLC time, teachers should use data-driven decision making to adjust instruction and provide support for students.

The District may receive and/or provide remote, offsite, and technology delivered learning programs, as provided in Montana law and set forth in District procedures. Teachers and specialists will be required to follow District guidelines including the adaptation of District remote standards, online learning and digital platforms.

HUMAN SEXUALITY INSTRUCTION

Teachers must notify parents and guardians no less than 48 hours prior to holding an event or assembly or introducing human sexuality material for instructional use.

“Human sexuality instruction” means teaching or otherwise providing information about human sexuality, including intimate relationships, human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexually transmitted infections, sexual acts, sexual orientation, gender identity, abstinence, contraception, or reproductive rights and responsibilities.

This notice will contain:

- 1) the basic content of the district's or school's human sexuality instruction; and
- 2) the right to withdraw the student from the instruction

For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 2016 Human Sexuality Instruction***.

DISMISSAL OF CLASSES

Teachers should never dismiss a class before the established dismissal time. Detaining the entire class after dismissal time is also discouraged. Whenever individual students are detained after class, the teacher is expected to provide the student a note for the student's next class teacher. This will help reduce unnecessary hall traffic as students reporting to class late will need to account for their tardiness.

FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

Field trips and other student activities involving travel may be authorized by the building principal or program supervisor when such trips or activities contribute to the achievement of desirable educational goals.

Requests should be submitted to the building principal well in advance of the proposed activity. All such requests will be considered, based on such factors as availability of funds, the educational value derived, the safety and welfare of the students involved, impact on the regular school program, and availability of appropriate supervision, either from within school staff or from volunteers.

Written parental permission must be obtained for each approved trip. Teachers are expected to submit the signed forms showing parental approval and acknowledgment of the student conduct guidelines to the office prior to departure for the scheduled activity.

The presence of a person with a currently valid American Red Cross standard first aid card or current certification from an equivalent first aid course is required during school-sponsored activities, including field trips, athletic and other off-campus events.

Staff members should contact the office for appropriate substitute and vehicle arrangements and related field trip procedures and forms. Substitute teachers should not be participating in the field trip activity in lieu of the regular classroom teacher.

Any out-of-state or out-of-the-country travel or field trips that extend overnight must be approved by the Superintendent.

For additional information, please refer to ***Board Policy 2075 Field Trips and Administrative Procedure 2075P.***

GRADING

The evaluation of student progress is a primary responsibility of all teachers. The highest possible level of student achievement is a common goal of both the district and the home. As a close working relationship between the district and the home is essential to the accomplishment of this goal, regular communications with parents is essential.

Teachers should use a variety of communication devices, including telephone, email and personal conferences as well as written grade reports, to keep parents well informed. Teachers in grades 4-12 must keep information in PowerSchool updated so parents and students can access current information through the PowerSchool parent and student portals.

At the beginning of the grading period, students and parents are to be informed regarding the basis of the grades and the methods to be used in determining grades.

Grading guidelines can be found in the Student/Parent Handbooks.

LEGAL ACTION INVOLVING STUDENTS

District employees may be asked to testify or provide information to entities involved in legal action involving students. At no time should employees provide any information without first consulting with their building principal or immediate supervisor. This includes subpoenas, depositions, or any other information request related to a legal action involving a student.

STUDENT CONDUCT

All teachers are expected to review the student conduct rules contained in the Student/Parent Handbook with their students during the first week of the school year.

Educators may develop student conduct rules unique to their own classroom. All such rules must be consistent with district policy and local building administrative regulations governing student conduct and discipline. Classroom rules and consequences are to be reviewed with students, posted in classrooms, and made available to parents.

VISITORS

Students are not permitted to bring visitors to school without prior approval of the building principal.

Staff members are expected to report any unauthorized person on school property to the building principal or their supervisor.

**HELENA PUBLIC SCHOOL
2023-2024 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT STATEMENT**

Employees acknowledge through the Insurance Open Enrollment process that they have read, received, understand and will comply with, the Helena Public Schools Employee Handbook and follow all District Policies and Procedures.

This handbook is available on the Helena Public Schools website.

Employees are directed to consult with their Principal, supervisor or the Human Resources Office if they have questions.

By acknowledging receipt, employees commit to and understand:

1. This handbook is intended as a general guide to District personnel policies and procedures and that it is not intended to create any sort of contract between the District and any one or all of its employees;
2. In the event there is a conflict between this handbook and District policies and procedures, the policies and procedures will control;
3. The District may modify any or all of these policies and procedures, in whole or in part, at any time, with or without prior notice; and
4. Un the event the District modifies any of the policies or procedures contained in this handbook, the changes will become binding immediately upon issuance of the new policy or procedure by the District.

Employees understand that as an employee of the District they are required to review and follow the policies and procedures set forth in this Employee Handbook and agree to do so.