



LIMESTONE COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION

Employee Handbook

Engage. Enlighten. Empower.

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Introduction

This handbook has been prepared to provide Limestone County School (LCS) employees with an overview of the district's policies and procedures affecting its employees. This is not a contract and is not intended to be a contract. This handbook is not intended to be comprehensive or to address all the possible applications of or exceptions to the general policies and procedures described. For that reason, if the employee has any questions concerning eligibility for a particular benefit or the applicability of a specific policy or practice, the employee should refer to the Limestone County Schools Policy Manual or address specific questions to the Human Resources Department. In the event an actual or perceived conflict arises between the language contained in the LCS Policy Manual and this document, the policy prevails.

The policies and other information contained in this manual are subject to change at any time by the Superintendent, Acts of the State Legislature, Board directives, or due to business needs at any time without advanced notice. Employees affected will be notified as soon as practicable. All employees are expected to be familiar with such changes whether the board has provided specific notice of such changes to its employees.

In any instance, except where required by statute or rule of the State Personnel Board, the Superintendent of Education may delegate responsibilities for administration of the policies within this manual to the Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations or other similarly situated and responsible supervisor or manager within the Limestone County Board of Education.

Vision Statement

Limestone County Schools in partnership with families and the community will create a world-class school district focused on empowering ALL students for life and work in the twenty-first century.

Mission Statement

High expectations and high achievement for ALL.

Equal Employment Opportunity

Limestone County Schools is an equal opportunity employer. Personnel actions and decisions will be made without regard to factors or considerations prohibited by federal or state law, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, religion, marital status, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation. Complaints or inquiries regarding compliance with state and federal equal opportunity employment laws should be directed

to the Human Resources Department.

Americans with Disabilities Complaint Procedures

Persons who believe that they have been discriminated against on the basis of a disability in the provision of services, activities, programs or benefits covered by Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act may file a written complaint with the Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations. The process and appeal procedure is outlined in the Limestone County Board of Education Policy Manual. The ADA Complaint Form can be obtained from the Department of Human Resources.

Harassment and Civility

All employees shall behave with civility, fairness and respect in dealing with fellow employees, students, parents, patrons, visitors, and anyone else having business with the district. The Limestone County Board of Education prohibits any form of harassment (sexual, religious, racial, online, telephone, verbal, physical, face-to-face, email, etc.) and/or retaliation in the work place. Limestone County Schools strives to create working conditions that are non-discriminatory and foster an environment that encourages everyone to perform their best. Please report any forms of harassment experienced personally or observed by others, including employee-to-employee, employee-to-student, student-to-employee, or student-to-student. Such behaviors should be reported to the immediate supervisor or to the Human Resources Department. Employees may be subject to disciplinary action under building and/or district policy or guidelines. Retaliation against a person who reports a claim of uncivil behavior is prohibited. Sexual harassment has specific reporting procedures defined by law, which can be found in the Limestone County Board of Education Policy Manual.

Grievance

The goal of the grievance process is to encourage the best possible relations among employees and to enhance morale. Employees who have complaints and/or become concerned in grievance matters are urged to work together constructively to resolve their disagreements. Complaints and grievances, which may arise from time to time, should be resolved at the lowest possible level that provides equitable and satisfactory solutions. When the nature of the grievance dictates otherwise, the employee may present his or her grievances to any other higher supervisor. The goal is to create a professional working environment. Employees who have a grievance should refer to Limestone County Board of Education Policy Manual for further information on grievances.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Work Schedules and Time Clock Procedures

Work schedules (Teachers) – Supervisory and instructional duties of teachers commence fifteen (15) minutes prior to the instructional day and conclude fifteen (15) minutes after the departure of students. Except as may otherwise be provided by the Board or required, the instructional day for teachers work is seven and a half (7.5) hours. Assignments and duties may extend beyond the instructional day and may include but are not limited to off campus functions, events, and activities; conferences and meetings with parents; supervision of student arrival and departure; and preparation for the following instructional day. Teachers will be provided a minimum of thirty (30) minutes free of instructional and supervisory responsibilities each instructional day.

Certified employees must utilize the payroll time clock system upon arrival each day to certify their attendance. When an absence occurs, the system will prompt the employee to select the reason for the absence upon returning to work. *Clocking in for another employee is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.*

Work Schedules (Support Personnel) – The Superintendent is authorized to establish work schedules, including minimum work times, for support personnel. Work schedules are subject to change anytime during the year based on building level needs, such as revisions to summer hours' schedule.

Classified employees must utilize the payroll time clock system upon arrival each day to certify their attendance. Employees must begin work immediately after clocking in for work. Failure to do so is considered falsification of timekeeping records. Employees are required to ensure hours worked, overtime hours, and absences are recorded accurately. *Employees are not to record time for other employees. Violations of this policy will result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.*

Classified employees should choose “received a thirty minute duty free lunch” when clocking out. If the employee did NOT receive thirty minutes duty free, then they should select the correct box. If an employee does not receive his/her lunch, please discuss this with your supervisor. It is the expectation of the Limestone County Board of Education that all employees receive the appropriate lunch time. A final clock out must occur at the end of the workday. Failure to comply with time clock procedures could result in further disciplinary action.

Recording Absences - When an absence occurs, the system will prompt the employee to select the reason for the absence upon returning to work. Classified employees will receive a time sheet at the end of each month to verify the accuracy of their work hours and absences. An employee's signature validates the accuracy of the time sheet. If an error is

found on the time sheet, it should be reported to the supervisor or payroll bookkeeper immediately to be resolved. A revised time sheet will be provided for employee validation. Clocking in and out for another employee is strictly prohibited. Failure to adhere to time clock procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Compensatory (Comp) Time

Non-exempt employees are expected to complete all of their work during scheduled work hours. However, in response to the needs of the school or the school system, employees classified as non-exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) may be required to work in excess of prescribed working hours. Any hours worked between 37.5 hours to 40 hours are not considered overtime. Employees must accurately report all time worked for the Board. All over-time must be approved in advance by the immediate supervisor or district administration.

Examples of non-exempt employees include but are not limited to bus drivers, cafeteria workers, custodians, maintenance workers, secretaries, bookkeepers, and teacher assistants. Teachers and certified professional staff are examples of exempt employees.

Non-exempt employees who work more than 40 hours in a work week may be, upon agreement between the employee and the Board, paid overtime in the form of compensatory time. Compensatory time is defined as the number of hours worked beyond 40 hours in the work week. Compensatory time is only applicable for time that has been approved in advance and authorized by the supervisor. Compensatory time is accrued on a work week basis.

An employee must be permitted to use accrued compensatory leave within a reasonable time after it is requested, unless to do so would unreasonably disrupt operations. No more than 60 hours of compensatory time may be accumulated per year and a Request for Approval of Compensatory Time Form must be submitted to the supervisor for prior approval. Employees can carry over no more than 40 hours of compensatory time to the next school year.

When an employee requests time off, compensatory time should be used before any other leave is authorized (such as sick leave, vacation leave, etc.).

The Limestone County Board of Education reserves the right to require an employee to use compensatory time as its needs require and may “pay down” any compensatory time balance in its discretion.

District Requirements for Permanent Employee Status

All regular employees of Limestone County Schools are considered probationary upon hire and are eligible to obtain tenure or non-probationary status according to the Students First Act of 2011. According to the Students First Act, a teacher shall attain tenure upon the completion of three complete, consecutive school years of full-time employment as a teacher with Limestone County Schools. Likewise, a probationary classified employee shall attain

non-probationary status upon the completion of three complete, consecutive school years of full-time employment with LCS.

Professional Certification and Procedures

In addition to requirements established by the State Board of Education and the pertinent job description, certified employees must hold a degree from an accredited college or university, as well as a current, valid, and properly endorsed Alabama Teacher's Certificate, which will be maintained in the Human Resources Office. A teacher who has completed, or is working to complete, the certification process but has not received the certificate may be employed on tentative or temporary basis pending verification of certification from the State Department of Education. Upon receipt of such verification, appropriate adjustments will be made to the teacher's salary. If a teacher earns a higher degree from a regionally accredited institution that merits increased compensation under the approved salary schedule, the teacher must provide an official transcript conferring the higher degree earned to Human Resources. Human Resources will submit to the Certification Office of the State Department of Education to verify earned degree. Once verified by the Certification Office, the teacher's increase in salary will start the first of the following month after approval of the State Superintendent. If verification is received in May, the teacher's increase will begin the first workday of the next school year. Non-instructional professional personnel (ancillary support services, nurses, etc.) likewise must be properly licensed and/or certified for their respective assignments.

To continue a valid renewable professional educator's, instructional leader's, or administrator's certificate with an expiration date of June 30th:

- Requirements must be met by June 30 of the year of certification expirations
- All documents **including fees** must be received in the Teacher Certification Office of the Alabama Department of Education **no later than June 30 of the year of expiration**
- Instructional Leader/Administrative certificate renewal must meet PLU requirements whether an employee is serving in a teaching or administrative position, and include the applicable PLU's approved by ACLD

Employee Conflicts of Interest/Employment Outside LCS

Close relatives (as defined by Code of Alabama Title 16 Education), partners, those in a dating relationship, or members of the same household are not permitted to be in positions that have a reporting responsibility to each other.

If employees begin a dating relationship or become relatives, partners, or members of the same household, and if one party is in a supervisory position, that person is required to inform their administration and the Human Resources Department of the relationship.

Employees may not use their offices or positions for personal gain to themselves or their family members and must adhere to applicable provisions of the Alabama Ethics Law.

Employees may only engage in outside employment under the following provisions:

- Employees will not engage in outside business activities or render any service for another employer during such time as duties and responsibilities have been assigned by the Limestone County Board of Education;
- Employees will not accept outside employment that would interfere with or impair the ability of the employee to perform duties effectively;
- Employees may not accept work that could compromise the employee's independent judgment in the exercise of duties for the Limestone County Board of Education;
- Employees may not use or disclose confidential or personally identifiable information acquired through Board employment for their personal gain or benefit of a third party;
- Employees shall not receive pay or other compensation for private tutoring of students enrolled in classes they teach. If they tutor other students in the school district not enrolled in their classes, written notice of such activity must be given to the building principal.

Employee Observations and Evaluations

Employee evaluation is a continuous process to assist employees in their job performance, emphasizing praise for excellence and suggestions for improvement. *Certified employees* (other than contract principals) will be evaluated in accordance with an evaluation program approved for use by the Alabama State Board of Education. *Contract principals* will be evaluated in accordance with rules, regulations, and requirements promulgated by the State Department of Education or as may otherwise be permitted by law. *Non-certified personnel* may be evaluated in accordance with criteria and procedures to be developed by the Superintendent.

The Teacher-Student Relationship See also Alabama Code of Ethics

The teacher-student relationship is a central point in personnel relationships. This relationship is aided by educational and curriculum materials, physical facilities, instructional coaches, and administrative personnel that comprise the educational effort for each student. Teachers are considered role models and set an example for students to follow.

Employees are prohibited from establishing an inappropriate personal relationship with students. An inappropriate personal relationship between an employee and a student is defined as including, but not necessarily limited to:

- Dating
- Any touching of an intimate or sexual nature
- Sexual contact or sexual relations
- Any touching otherwise prohibited by law or objected to by the student
- Giving a gift having a sexual overtone

- Making comments or jokes of a sexual nature or reflecting sexual innuendo to or about a student or any similar activity such as:
 - Texting
 - Sexting
 - Facebook, Twitter, or other social media

Any employee who has knowledge or reasonably suspects that another employee may have engaged in prohibited conduct as defined by this policy must immediately report this information to the employee's supervisor, the student's principal, and the Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations. Failure to comply with this policy shall subject the employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Inclement Weather Guidelines

The Superintendent may close or delay schools and all support functions prior to school opening or during the school day. The decision will be released to the news media by the Superintendent's Office and communicated in terms of delayed hours as a closing. Essential personnel may be required to work in certain situations. To the extent not provided for in the school calendar, any days lost by reasons of an emergency closing will be made up and a revised school calendar approved, if necessary, to reflect any extension or adjustment of the school year required by such action, unless approval to waive the days is obtained in accordance with State law.

The work time missed due to delays or closings is classified as "unavoidable leave" and is paid at the employee's regular rate of pay. Employees who are absent on the affected days(s) due to illness, vacation, or other leave of absence are not eligible for unavoidable leave. Unavoidable leave is specific to the time announced for the delay or closing and may not be "banked" or transferred to another time of absence.

Employee Gifts

Employees are not allowed to solicit gifts. Employees are prohibited from receiving anything for himself/herself or a family member. Employees are allowed to receive gifts (including gift cards) valuing \$25 or less per occasion, but not to exceed \$50 in calendar year from a single provider. Alabama Ethics Law Section 36-25-1

Safe Schools Policy (Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco, and Weapons)

Employees must not bring firearms, weapons, illegal drugs, alcohol, and/or tobacco in a school building, on school grounds, on LCS property, on school buses, or at school-sponsored functions. Disciplinary sanctions up to and including termination of employment and referral for prosecution will be imposed upon employees who violate the Safe Schools Policy. Sanctions for violation thereof may include but are not limited to the requirement that the employee complete an appropriate rehabilitation program, reprimands, non-renewal, cancellation, or termination of employment. Employees shall be advised through

employee publications about drug and alcohol counseling and rehabilitation and reentry programs that are available.

Personnel Searches

Limestone County Schools reserves the right to search Limestone County School property. An employee on Limestone County Schools' property or attending school events may be searched should there be reasonable suspicion that there exists a violation of Limestone County Schools Policy or an item or substance that could create harm or injury in the school or workplace.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parent-Teacher Conferences will be scheduled and held during the school year. Teacher attendance at Parent-Teacher Conferences is mandatory. A teacher may only be excused from attending a Parent-Teacher Conference in writing by the Principal. Teachers are expected to be prepared for such conferences by having up-to-date grade books, reports, student papers, etc. Teachers are expected to maintain an up-to-date log of any parental contact.

Employee Attire

The Limestone County Board of Education expects employees to present a professional and business-like appearance. Teachers are expected to maintain modest professional attire and grooming when on duty. As a minimal guide, teachers should not wear clothing which students would not be permitted to wear at school. All clothing should be clean, neat and in good repair. Local school administration may establish more detailed guidelines for attire.

Visitors to Employees (See Limestone County Board of Education Policy)

Employees are not to have visitors on school property except on a short-term basis and only with permission of the principal or supervisor. Employees should encourage personal visitors to visit them before/after school. Included in the definition of visitors are family members and friends of the employee. Visitors should follow posted procedures for being on school property. Staff is prohibited from bringing their children to school with them in lieu of taking them to childcare.

Supervising Student Teachers

Certified employees who consent to the assignment of a practicum student or student teacher agree to accept all of the accompanying responsibilities. Certificated employees are in charge of and responsible for the practicum and student teachers in their classes. Practicum and student teachers are subject to the same rules, policies, regulations and orders as all certificated employees.

Internet Safety and Use of Technology

All Limestone County Schools employees must sign the Internet Safety and Use of Technology Acceptable Use Agreement each year and agree to follow its guidelines. The implementation of this policy shall include technology protection measures with respect to computers with Internet access, consistent with district standards, the Children's Internet Protection Act or other laws. The Superintendent or the Superintendent's designees are authorized and directed, as part of the administration of this district, to establish and enforce regulations, forms, procedures, guidelines and specific district standards to implement this policy. Employees who violate the Acceptable Use Agreement may be denied usage of the Limestone County Schools technology resources and be subject to disciplinary action.

Within the last few years, the opportunities to interact through internet-based social media (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, etc.) have increased dramatically. Due to the explosion of this new media, it is impossible to formulate one rule relating to staff usage of this technology. Limestone County Schools' policy prohibits the use of any social media that adversely affects or otherwise interferes with school purposes as determined at the sole discretion of the District.

Remember that students, parents and community members may use a search engine, such as Google, to learn information concerning you and your personal life. Personal information (photos, videos, posts on blogs, etc.) contained on the Internet may affect your ability to do your job effectively and even lead to disciplinary consequences, up to and including termination. Before posting anything to the Internet, think carefully about all of the possible audiences viewing the information.

Use of Cell Phones - Teachers shall not use personal cell phones for non-school purposes when the teacher is responsible for students except in the event of an emergency. Failure to comply with the communication systems policy is considered insubordination and may result in disciplinary action or termination.

TIME OFF / LEAVES OF ABSENCE

Leaves of Absence

All leave will be granted in accordance with established policies of the Board of Education. In computing annual, sick, educational, military and other special leave for employees in state service, non-working days are not counted. Leave does not accrue except when an employee is actually working or on authorized leave with pay, and in no case shall leave accrue subsequent to actual separation from state service.

All employees are required to enter absences in AESOP. Please verify with the building administrator/supervisor which employee groups must utilize this service. It is the employee's responsibility to register an absence when he/she will not be reporting to work or notify the building administrator/supervisor of the absence.

Substitute Teachers (See Limestone County Board of Education Policy)

All arrangements for substitutes (for both certified and classified staff) must be made through the AESOP Absence Management System. Both certified and classified staffs are not allowed to secure the services of any substitute outside those provided through AESOP, or to make arrangements for the pay thereof. Such matters are strictly within the discretion of the Board of Education. AESOP is maintained and supervised by the Human Resources Department.

Personal Leave

Personal leave is an absence by a teacher/employee for personal business and/or emergencies. All regular, full time employees are eligible for three noncumulative personal leave days each scholastic year without loss of pay. All regular, full time employees are eligible to take one (1) additional personal leave day for which the employee will be charged an amount equal to the average daily rate of pay for a substitute teacher.

Teachers/employees shall notify principal or immediate supervisor as far in advance as possible prior to the absence so that adequate plans can be made to cover assigned

responsibilities. Requests will be submitted in writing to the principal for approval. Such absences shall be reported as personal business.

In the case of an unforeseen absence or tardiness, an employee shall give immediate notification, not later than one hour before his/her scheduled starting time, to the Principal, Assistant Principal, or immediate Supervisor when it is necessary to be absent from work for unscheduled leave.

Personal leave may be taken two days per semester except in an extenuating situation. (See below) If a teacher/employee resigns during the first semester and 3 or more paid personal leave days have been taken, the third day shall be deducted from the last paycheck. In addition, the following conditions apply:

1. Employees on leave for the entire year will not earn personal leave.
2. Personal leave will not be approved during the first week of the school year.
3. Personal leave will not be approved during the last ten (10) days of each school year except by written approval from the Limestone County School Superintendent.
4. No teacher or support employee as a condition to receive personal leave shall be required to divulge his or her reasons for requesting such leave.
5. No more than 10% of a local school certified staff may take personal leave concurrently. Requests will be approved on a first submitted basis.

Exceptions to the personal leave policy may be granted when extenuating situations arise. The request will be submitted in writing to the principal. The principal and the superintendent will approve or disapprove the request.

At the end of the employment year, all **unused personal leave** days will be converted to sick leave.

On-The-Job Injury Leave Procedures

On-the-job injury is defined as any accident or injury to the employee occurring during the performance of duties for the employer, which prevents the employee from working or returning to his/her job. This does not include a serious medical situation or degenerative condition that occurs while working on the job (i.e. heart attack, stroke, arthritis, etc.). Employees who are injured due to personal negligence may not qualify for On-The-Job Injury leave. The following regulations, procedures, and rights are established pertaining to employees who are injured while on the job:

1. Notify your immediate supervisor within 24 hours after the injury occurred. If clinically unable to make notification, another person reasonably knowledgeable of the incident may make notification on the injury. An ***Employee Accident/Incident Report*** must be completed for all employee injuries and signed by the employee and his/her supervisor.

2. If medical attention is required due to an injury, the Board requires a statement from a licensed medical doctor certifying the employee's injury would not allow the employee to return to work within five days of filing the ***Employee Accident/Incident Report***, unless hospitalization or special circumstances exist and the supervisor is notified. This form must be submitted to your supervisor when completed. Upon determination that an employee has been injured on the job and cannot return to work as a result of the injury, sick days shall be reinstated for a period of up to ninety working days, with board approval. The employee must submit an Application for Leave in Lieu of Sick Leave form to reinstate sick days as On-The-Job Injury to the Director of Human Resources and Operation. Recertification may be required for intermittent absences. The Employee and Student Accident/Incident Report can be obtained from the Human Resource Department, the Limestone County Schools' website, or principal.

3. If out of pocket medical expenses are incurred due to an injury, employees of the Limestone County Board of Education have the right to file a claim to the State Board of Adjustment requesting reimbursement. **This claim must be submitted no later than one year from the date of injury due to the statute of limitations.** If ongoing treatments are necessary beyond the first year, employees must file a claim each year seeking reimbursement. Limestone County Schools is not affiliated with the State Board of Adjustments, therefore, **IT IS THE EMPLOYEE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO FILE A CLAIM.** To review the Rules of the Alabama Board of Adjustment and obtain claim forms, go to: www.bdadj.alabama.gov

Sick/Medical Leave

Sick leave is defined as absence from work of an employee because of personal illness or injury, illness in your immediate family that requires your presence or death in your immediate family. Immediate family includes the employee's spouse, children, grandchildren, parents or grandparents, siblings, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, and son-in-law. Where unusually strong personal ties exist, due to an employee's having been supported or educated by a person of some relationship other than those listed, this relationship may be recognized for leave purposes at the discretion of the supervising administrator.

Sick leave with pay is not a right for which you may make a demand, but a privilege granted in accordance with prescribed rules and regulations to which the State Personnel Board may make exceptions. It is the intent of the Board to adhere to policies established by the State of Alabama.

Five Consecutive Absences

If an employee is absent five consecutive days, the principal/supervisor may require a doctor's excuse or other justification if there is probable cause to believe that sick leave is being abused or misused. Abuse of sick leave may subject the employee to disciplinary action, including possible loss of pay.

Twenty or More Consecutive Absences

If an employee is going to be absent twenty (20) or more consecutive days, a request in writing must be submitted to the principal/supervisor with the beginning and ending dates of anticipated leave. A licensed medical doctor's statement/medical certification must be attached to the letter requesting the leave of absence. The principal/supervisor will send a Personnel Recommendation Form to the Benefits Department who presents leave requests to the Superintendent for board approval. If a medical leave extension is needed beyond 12 weeks, the employee must acquire updated medical certification and submit a letter requesting an extension of leave. Additional leave must be approved by the Superintendent and Board, but is not guaranteed. Benefits will be discontinued after 12 weeks of leave under the Family Medical Leave Act, UNLESS benefits accrued by the employee are available such as sick days or catastrophic donations.

If an employee has worked a minimum of 1,250 hours during the 12 months prior to the start of the leave, he/she may be entitled to 12 weeks of leave for reasons specified under the *Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). For applicable reasons, definitions of serious health conditions, and medical certification requirements, please refer to the Limestone County Schools' Policy Manual. ***Limestone County Schools' policy requires an employee who has available sick leave, vacation leave, compensatory time, or other applicable paid leave, to utilize those forms of leave before taking unpaid leave. In that instance, the paid leave and FMLA leave will run concurrently from the first absence as long as the need for such leave results from one or more of the qualifying reasons under FMLA. This policy does not apply for maternity leaves.***

The U.S. Department of Labor (Form WH-380-E) allows an employer to request certification from a health care provider for an employee or family member's serious health condition under FMLA regulations. The health care provider may be asked to provide medical facts to approve leave including, but not limited to, the items listed below:

- Approximate date condition commenced
- Probable duration of condition
- Was patient admitted for an overnight stay in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility and dates of admission?
- Was medication other than over-the-counter medication prescribed?
- Was the patient referred to other health care providers for evaluation or treatment?
- Is the medical condition pregnancy?
- After employer submits the employee's job title and essential job functions, will the employee be unable to perform any of the job functions listed due to medical condition? If so, which job functions apply?
- Amount of time needed for recovery, follow-up visits, adjusted work schedule, recommendations, etc.
- A description of other relevant medical facts, if any, related to the condition for which the employee seeks leave (i.e. symptoms, diagnosis, or regimen of continuing treatment such as the use of specialized equipment)

Requesting Leave for Family Medical Leave Act

When it is foreseeable, an employee must request FMLA-qualifying leave at least 30 days in advance of the need for leave. Examples of foreseeable leave might be a birth of a child,

placement of a child for adoption or foster care, or planned medical treatment for a serious health condition of the employee or of a family member. Necessary information for the request must consist of:

1. The reasons for the requested leave.
2. The anticipated duration of the leave.
3. The anticipated start of the leave.

If 30 days notice is not practicable, such as a medical emergency, notice must be given as soon as practicable (which ordinarily means at least verbal notification to the employee's department within one or two business days of when the need for leave becomes known to the employee). Reasonable efforts must also be made to schedule foreseeable leave so as not to unduly disrupt work operations, subject to the doctor's approval. Failure to give the required notice may delay the taking of FMLA leave until at least 30 days after the date the employee provides notice to the employer of the need for FMLA leave.

FMLA Complaint

If an eligible employee has a complaint regarding an FMLA violation, he or she should discuss it with their supervisor, following the chain of authority leading to the Human Resources Department. After pursuing this course of action, if the employee is not satisfied with the resolution of the problem, the employee may contact the Chief School Financial Officer.

Note: Following this procedure does not toll the running of the statute of limitations. As a matter of recourse, an eligible employee may file a charge with the Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations, who is authorized to investigate and attempt to resolve complaints of violations on the employee's behalf.

Maternity/Paternity Leaves

Maternity/Paternity leave requests must be made in writing to the principal/supervisor at least 60 days before the beginning of leave or delivery due date. Such requests must be accompanied by a statement from the physician stating the necessity of the leave. Up to 12 weeks of unpaid maternity/paternity leave under the FMLA are available if an employee meets eligibility under the regulations of the law, which is working a minimum of 1,250 hours during the previous 12 months. Sick leave cannot be applied past the amount of time the physician states is needed for personal recovery. Employees who are not eligible for FMLA can request maternity leave for the amount of time the physician states the employee needs for personal recovery only. If an employee chooses not to return after FMLA leave is exhausted, a letter of resignation must be submitted to the Human Resources Department as other leave is not available. Regarding paternity leave, Limestone County Schools will allow three weeks (15 working days) to be paid leave if the employee has accumulated enough sick, personal, compensatory time, or vacation days to cover the absences. Under the FMLA, ***Spouses Employed by the Limestone County Board of Education Requesting Maternity and Paternity Leave*** have a combined total of twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave (or applicable paid leave described previously) for a husband and wife employed by the same board of education is allowed.

Other Relevant Information Concerning Medical and Maternity/Paternity Leaves under FMLA Leave and End of Academic Term Rules

An employee may be required to take leave through the end of an academic term, or semester, when the following circumstances exist:

- If the leave exceeds 5 weeks before the end of the semester and the employee would return within 3 weeks of the term end
- If the leave is less than 5 weeks before the end of the term and the leave is more than 2 weeks with the employee returning within 2 weeks of the term end; or
- If the leave is less than 3 weeks before the end of the term and is longer than 5 working days.

Sick Leave Bank

Full-time certified and classified employees are eligible to voluntarily participate in the Sick Leave Bank, which gives employees potential eligibility for extra sick leave days for illnesses. The employee may deposit their personal five sick leave days in the Sick Leave Bank in order to be eligible and participate. When a participant has exhausted all other leave, the employee can borrow up to 10 sick leave days from the Sick Leave Bank. Employees who wish to participate in the Sick Leave Bank must complete the *Notice of Participation*. Additionally, such employees are subject to rules and regulations developed by the Sick Leave Bank Committee. Open enrollment for the Sick Leave Bank occurs in September and October. New employees can join the Sick Leave Bank within the first 30 days of their employment.

Leave Donation

All school district employees who are members of the Sick Leave Bank may donate a specified number of unused sick leave (within the prescribed 30-day maximum) to another Alabama Public School System employee so long as:

- The request is made in writing.
- The employee is on catastrophic leave.
- Is acted upon prior to the leave being used.

Catastrophic Leave

To apply for Catastrophic Leave, an employee must be a member of the Sick Bank. The required form to complete to request catastrophic leave may be obtained from the Human Resources Department. Upon a determination of eligibility by the Sick Leave Bank Committee, employees may request donated days from Alabama public school employees to

cover absences. The approval of catastrophic leave is solely at the discretion of the Sick Bank Committee. For additional information regarding catastrophic illness procedures, please contact the Human Resources Department at the Central Office.

Catastrophic Leave for Maternity Leave Requests

If an employee does not have accumulated sick leave to cover the amount of time the physician certifies the employee will not be able to perform regular job duties, and is a member of the sick bank, a request in writing for catastrophic leave is submitted to the Department of Human Resources to cover the amount of time the physician states the employee must remain off work for recovery only. Catastrophic donations cannot be applied past the amount of time the physician states is needed for personal recovery. For example, normal deliveries may require a mother to remain off work for 6 – 8 weeks. If the employee is eligible for FMLA, she may take up to 12 weeks of leave, but catastrophic donations only apply to the 6 – 8 weeks the physician certifies is required. The remainder of the leave would be unpaid. Catastrophic donations can be applied past this amount of time if the pediatrician certifies there are medical issues that require additional time from the caregiver, or the mother is experiencing post-delivery complications that present a serious health condition defined under FMLA.

Leaves Extending Beyond One Year

If a medical condition continues to exist after extending medical leaves covered under FMLA, the employee is unable to perform the job duties and responsibilities designated in the job description, and all paid leave has been exhausted, the employee must contemplate separation of employment. A resignation and/or filing for long term disability should be considered. Questions regarding how to apply for disability should be directed to the Human Resources Department.

Return to Work Release

The board may require an employee who has taken leave due to the employee's own serious medical condition to provide the healthcare provider's certification to return to duty. If a 9-month employee was on a leave of absence at the end of the scholastic year, a return to duty release is required upon returning if the physician certification is inconclusive regarding a return date. Bus drivers are required to submit an Alabama State Department of Education Physical Examination Report every two years to continue employment.

Professional Leave

The Superintendent is authorized to grant professional leave with pay to Board employees to engage in educational activities which, in the judgment of the Superintendent, serve the needs and interests of the school system. The number of days approved for such leave will be at the

discretion of the Superintendent; provided, however, that any such leave exceeding five (5) days in a scholastic year must be approved by the Board. If an employee is to receive a stipend for attending a professional growth activity, he/she must sign documentation with the legal name recognized in all payroll/benefits information.

Military Leave

Military leave is available for military service, training or other obligations to all eligible employees in accordance with state and federal law under the Family and Medical Leave Act without loss of pay, time, annual vacation, sick leave. However, no person granted such leave of absence with pay shall be paid for more than 168 working hours per calendar year. State Personnel Board Rule No. 670-X-15-02 describes Military Leave Provisions.

Employees should request military leave and submit in duplicate along with a copy of the military orders, through the immediate supervisor who will initial and submit to the Human Resources Department.

Court Attendance Leave

Employees in Board service, who are required to attend court in the capacity of jurors, shall be granted court attendance leave with pay under the form of administrative leave. Documentation of such court attendance may be requested by the immediate supervisor.

Attendance in a court by law enforcement officers or other employees in an official capacity shall not be considered as on court attendance leave but rather as a part of their assigned duties; and no provision of this section shall alter or affect in any way the existing statutes or rules regulating such attendance and the disposition of witness fees.

Employees who are a party to a lawsuit arising out of and because of the performance of their Board duties wherein the employee is identified as a party and sued in an official and/or individual capacity shall not be required to take leave to participate in such proceedings.

Employees involved in legal proceedings whose presence is **not** requested or required by Limestone County Schools or Superintendent, must take personal leave, vacation, compensatory time, and/or leave without pay, whichever is appropriate.

Time off for Voting

It is the policy of the Limestone County Department of Education to encourage its employees to vote. Such time off as needed to vote, not to exceed one hour, will be granted at the discretion of the immediate supervising administrator. A schedule of employees voting will be maintained in order to ensure that all functions of the school or department are not compromised.

Time Off for Giving Blood

Although it is a policy of the Board of Education to encourage personnel to give blood to the American Red Cross Blood Bank or any other blood bank, excessive employee absences from campus during the workday could greatly interfere with instruction and the functioning of the school. To this end, employees are encouraged to participate in blood drives taking place on their campus during the workday. They are, also, encouraged to give blood after school hours.

Leave Without Pay

Leave without pay (LWOP) must be approved by the principal and the superintendent prior to the date of such leave. *Leave without pay is limited to one year only. If an employee has available sick, personal, compensatory time, or vacation leave, the employee must utilize those forms of leave before taking unpaid leave.

Subject to the approval of the Board, the Executive Director Human Resources and Operations may grant in writing to any permanent certificated employee a leave of absence without pay for a period not to exceed one year. Upon the expiration of such leave of absence, the employee shall be reinstated to a position in the classification he/she occupied at the time the leave was granted, even though this may require laying off an employee engaged to perform the duties during the period of the leave of absence. Failure of an employee to report for duty promptly at the expiration of a leave of absence shall be just cause for dismissal. If necessary to the efficient conduct of the business of the Board, an employee on such leave of absence may be notified to return to work prior to the time of the expiration of the leave. Should he/she fail to return to work as notified, the Human Resources Director shall declare the position vacant and shall fill it by the means prescribed in these rules for the filling of vacant positions.

LWOP automatically extends an employee's probationary period for the number of calendar days of leave without pay. (Statutory Authority: 36-269, Code of Alabama 1975.)

Additional Leave Without Pay (LWOP) Board of Education Rules

1. Leave without pay is not an alternative form of leave.
2. Leave without pay (LWOP) will be granted only upon a showing of good cause.
3. A period of LWOP is defined as any period not covered by sick or annual leave or personal leave.
4. Leave without pay status without compelling reason will result in disciplinary action.
5. The use of LWOP is not to be utilized intermittently for an employee's financial gain for holidays, insurance purposes, or in leave accruals. An employee must deplete all his/her leave balances prior to granting of leave without pay.

Any period of LWOP must be requested in writing by the employee at least two weeks in advance of the proposed beginning date of leave. In the event of an emergency or other

compelling reason that LWOP cannot be requested in advance by an employee, the supervising administrator of the employee authorized to approve leave may designate and enter a probationary LWOP for the employee until approval is granted from the Executive Director Human Resources and Operations. An employee has the burden to contact the immediate supervisor and speak to the supervisor in person to explain the nature of the emergency or compelling reason justifying the request for LWOP. A Request for Leave form should be forwarded to the Payroll Department for the employee's personnel file and as justification for the reduction in the employee's pay check for the leave without pay.

TITLE IX DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT

Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 ("Title IX") provides that "[n]o person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance."

This means that our students and employees are entitled to be free from sex-based discrimination in our educational programs or activities. This includes discrimination based on gender, gender identity, pregnancy status, parenting status, and sexual harassment. For more information, please see the District's Title IX Policy. If you believe that you have been subjected to discrimination in violation of Title IX, you may complete this complaint form or write a formal complaint and submit it to the Title IX Coordinator.

Please note that the District cannot guarantee that your complaint will be kept confidential, because District personnel are required to share certain information with all parties involved. Nonetheless, the District will make reasonable efforts to avoid sharing information regarding your complaint beyond those required to receive such information. If you have any questions, please contact the Title IX Coordinator.

LEAVING LIMESTONE COUNTY SCHOOLS

Contract Termination, Cancellation, or Non-Renewal (See Limestone County Board of Education Policy)

Contract terminations, cancellations, and non-renewals of certificated employees as defined by state law will be in accordance with procedures set forth in statute and the negotiated agreement.

Supervisors shall notify the appropriate Human Resource supervisor about certificated employees with performance deficiencies or inappropriate behavior at the earliest opportunity.

The Executive Director of Human Resources and Operations or designee recommends terminations, cancellations, or non-renewals to the Superintendent and the Board of Education for approval.

References in this Manual to 'termination' are intended to include the action of cancellation, which is the immediate ending of a certificated employee's employment.

Resignation

Professional personnel shall resign in accordance with provisions of the Alabama School Code. The Code states: "No teacher (to include all School District Professional Personnel), whether in continuing service status, or not, shall be permitted to cancel his, or her, contract during the school term for which said contract is in effect, nor for a period of thirty (30) days previous to the beginning of such school term, unless such cancellation is mutually agreed upon; any such teacher shall be permitted to cancel his, or her, contract at any other time by giving five (5) days written notice to the employing board." Persons canceling their contract in any other manner shall be deemed unprofessional and subject to having their certificate revoked or suspended.

Staff members who wish to resign from Limestone County Schools must complete the appropriate form or a letter of resignation and submit it to the Human Resources Department.

Retirement

Retirement plans should be discussed with your immediate supervisor. Retirement paperwork must begin not more than 90 days and must be completed and sent to the State of Alabama Retirement Systems not less than 30 days prior to the last day of the month preceding the month of the effective date of retirement. The Human Resources Department and the Payroll Department should be notified of the employee's intent to retire at least two weeks prior to the effective date.

Return of District Property upon Separation

When, for any reason, employment ends, the former employee is to return all District property immediately. If the immediate return of District property is not possible, the employee is to return the property within one working day. District property includes, but is not limited to, building keys, name badges, cellular or electronic devices, teacher edition texts, and district computer equipment. Any item purchased with federal, state, or local funding including but not limited to PTO funds should also be returned to the local school unit in which the employee was assigned.

Accumulated Sick Leave

Employees cannot be paid for accumulated sick leave when they are separated from the Board's service except in the case of death. If an employee leaves the service in good standing and is reemployed within a period of four years from date of separation, the sick leave accumulated during previous employment, or any part thereof, may be restored upon recommendation by the appointing authority and approval by the Chief School Financial Officer. Requests for restoration of sick leave must be made in writing to the Board's payroll department.



Employee Handbook

RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I have received a copy of the Employee Handbook for Limestone County Schools. This document contains policies, regulations, and procedures that apply to me. I have received and read the Employee Handbook and will follow it during my employment with Limestone County Schools. I understand that my failure to adhere to and follow the policies, regulations, and procedures contained therein and any subsequent revisions, additions, or amendments to said policies may result in adverse action on my employment status up to and including separation from Limestone County School System.

This manual replaces any previously published version of the Employee Handbook.

Employee's Name (Printed)

School

Employee's Signature

Date

