



"Tomorrow's Education Today"

**South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc.
Horizon Montessori Public Schools**

2021 - 2022

Employee Handbook

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**SOUTH TEXAS EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES, INC.
HORIZON MONTESSORI PUBLIC SCHOOLS
EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM**

2021-2022

Name:	
Campus/Department	
Last 4 digits of Social Security #	

Listed below are the available options for the employee handbook. Please review each option and initial by each.

	I understand that I may access an electronic copy of the handbook at www.hmps.net .
	I understand that I may request a hard copy from the HR Department or campus administration.
	I understand that a hard copy is located at each campus secretary's office and/or each campus principal's office for review.

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

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

I understand that I have an obligation to inform the Human Resources Department of any changes in personal information, such as phone number, address, etc. I also accept responsibility for contacting my Principal/Supervisor or the Human Resources Department if I have questions or concerns or need further explanation.

By signing this document, I hereby acknowledge that I have access to the STET/HMPS Employee Handbook. I agree to read the handbook and abide by the standards, policies, and procedures defined or referenced in this document.

Signature	
Date	

PLEASE COMPLETE AND SIGN THIS FORM AND RETURN IT TO YOUR PRINCIPAL/SUPERVISOR WHO WILL FORWARD THE ORIGINAL TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT.

NOTE: PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MAKE A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS AGREEMENT

It is the policy of South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc. (Horizon Montessori Public Schools) to protect confidentiality of sensitive information related to students, faculty, and staff. Through the course of your employment with STET/HMPS, you may have access, occasional use, or otherwise acquire confidential information. As a condition of employment, I _____, hereinafter "Employee," agrees to protect any such confidential information as set forth below.

In the course of employment with STET/HMPS, Employee may have authorized access to or inadvertently encounter "confidential information." As used in this Confidentiality Agreement, "confidential information" includes but is not limited to:

- ◆ Education records, or information in education records, pertaining to students which is confidential under federal and/or state law;
- ◆ Disciplinary records, or information contained therein, pertaining to students;
- ◆ All information contained in an individual's employee or applicant personnel file;
- ◆ All compensation and benefit information;
- ◆ Any medical records or medical information related to employees or students;
- ◆ Any information pertaining to a grievance or disciplinary action concerning an employee;
- ◆ Any information the disclosure of which would cause an embarrassment to an employee or constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy.

Employee hereby agrees to hold STET/HMPS confidential information in the strictest confidence and not to disclose or otherwise utilize this confidential information except as necessary for Employee to perform his or her customary and regular job duties. This means that:

- ◆ Employee will only access confidential information for which Employee has a legitimate business need to know;
- ◆ With certain exceptions, Employee will have access to personally identifiable student information which is limited to the student, the parent or guardian of the student, and other persons authorized by state and federal law. Employee also understands that there are federal and state laws that protect the privacy rights of our administration, staff, and students (active or inactive).
- ◆ Employee will not in any way disclose, divulge, copy, release, review, alter or destroy any of STET/HMPS' confidential information in any form (written, oral, electronic, and/or verbal) except as properly authorized within the scope of the Employee's employment with STET/HMPS; and
- ◆ Employee will not otherwise misuse or misappropriate STET/HMPS' confidential information.
- ◆ Employee will prevent unauthorized use of confidential information and immediately report the misuse or any accidental disclosure of confidential information to their immediate supervisor.

Employee understands that if he or she has any doubt as to whether any information is confidential or whether any information should be disclosed, Employee shall request clarification from his or her immediate supervisor.

Employee understands that confidential information remains confidential both in and outside the workplace, and agrees not to discuss such information with any individual or organization that does not have a valid business reason to have access to this information. Employee acknowledges that they are subject to workplace confidentiality as a condition of employment and that failure to comply with the obligations contained in this Confidentiality Agreement will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and may also be subject to federal and state law repercussion(s).

I have read the information above and agree to the confidentiality requirements specified in this document.

Name	
Signature	
Date	

PLEASE COMPLETE AND SIGN THIS FORM AND RETURN IT TO YOUR PRINCIPAL/IMMEDIATE SUPERVISOR WHO WILL FORWARD THE ORIGINAL TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT.

NOTE: PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MAKE A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.

PUBLIC ACCESS FORM OPTION

Name (print)	
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The Public Information Act allows employees, public officials, and former employees and officials to elect whether to keep certain information about them confidential. Unless you choose to keep it confidential, the following information about you may be subject to public release if requested under the Texas Public Information Act.

Therefore, please indicate whether you wish to allow public release of the following information:

YES NO

PUBLIC ACCESS:

If **YES**, please provide updated information.

Address:

Phone number, including personal cell:

Personal email address:

Information that reveals if you have family members. **YES NO**

Signature	
Date	

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NOTE: PLEASE FEEL FREE TO MAKE A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS.

Computer Use, Electronic Communication, and Data Management

EMPLOYEE AGREEMENT FOR ACCEPTABLE USE OF THE ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM

You are being given access to the District's electronic communications system. Through this system, you will be able to communicate with other schools, colleges, organizations, students and people through the Internet and other electronic information systems/networks. You will have access to an abundance of websites, databases, educational programs, libraries, and computer services. With this opportunity comes responsibility. It is important that you read this policy and ask questions if you need help in understanding it. Inappropriate system use will result in the loss of the privilege of using this educational and administrative tool. Please note that the Internet is a network of many types of communication and information networks. It is possible that you may run across some material you might find objectionable. While the District will take reasonable steps to restrict access to such material, it is not possible to absolutely prevent such access. It will be your responsibility to follow the rules for appropriate use.

RULES FOR APPROPRIATE USE

- The account is to be used only for educational and administrative purposes. Limited personal use of the system is permitted if the use: imposes no tangible cost to the district, does not unduly burden the district's computer or network resources, has no adverse effect on job performance or on a student's academic performance.
- Downloading of video or audio streams for personal use is strictly prohibited. Video or audio streams may be downloaded for educational and school business use only.
- You will be held responsible at all times for proper use and the District may suspend or revoke your access if you violate the rules.
- Remember that people who receive email from you with a school address might think your message represents the school's point of view. Electronic mail transmissions and other use of technology resources are not confidential and can be monitored at any time to ensure appropriate use.

INAPPROPRIATE USES

- Using the system for any illegal purpose.
- Downloading or using copyrighted information without permission from the copyright holder.
- Posting messages or accessing materials that are abusive, obscene, sexually oriented, threatening, harassing, damaging to another's reputation, or illegal.
- Wasting school resources through improper use of the computer system.
- Gaining unauthorized access, restricted information, or resources.

CONSEQUENCES FOR INAPPROPRIATE USE

- Suspension of access to the system.
- Revocation of the computer system.
- Other disciplinary or legal action, in accordance with the District policies and applicable laws.

PERSONAL USE OF ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Electronic media includes all forms of social media, such as text messaging, instant messaging, electronic mail (e-mail), Web logs (blogs), electronic forums (chat rooms), video-sharing Websites (e.g., YouTube), editorial comments posted on the Internet, and social network sites (e.g., Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok, etc). Electronic media also includes all forms of telecommunication such as landlines, cell phones, and Web-based applications. As role models for the district's students, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not acting as district employees. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of electronic media as they are for any other public conduct. We acknowledge that all employees have a First Amendment right to comment in a professional and appropriate manner on matters of public concern. We caution you that while your rights are protected, if it unreasonably and negatively affects your ability to do your job, STET/HMPS may take appropriate action due to any inability you have to perform your job. Therefore, any employee's use of electronic media that will interfere with an employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. If an employee wishes to use a social network site or similar media for personal purposes, the employee is responsible for the content on the employee's page, including content added by the employee, the employee's friends, or members of the public who can access the employee's page, and for Web links on the employee's page. The employee is also responsible for maintaining privacy settings appropriate to the content.

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

- The employee may not set up or update the employee's personal social network page(s) using the district's computers, network, or equipment.
- The employee shall limit use of personal electronic communication devices to send or receive calls, text messages, pictures, and videos to breaks, meal times, and before and after scheduled work hours; unless there is an emergency or the use is authorized by a supervisor to conduct district business.
- The employee shall not use the district's logo or copyrighted material of the district without written consent and district approval.
- An employee may not share or post, in any format, information, videos, or pictures obtained while on duty or on district business unless the employee first obtains written approval from the employee's immediate supervisor. Employees should be cognizant that they have access to information and images that, if transmitted to the public, could violate privacy concerns.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas educators, even when communicating regarding personal and private matters, regardless of whether the employee is using private or public equipment, on or off campus.

These restrictions include:

- Confidentiality of student records.
- Confidentiality of health or personnel information concerning colleagues, unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.
- Confidentiality of district records, including educator evaluations and private email addresses.
- Copyright law.
- Prohibition against harming others by knowingly making false claims.

PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

STET/HMPS prohibits the use of personal electronic devices to perform district duties. Such devices include but not limited to laptops, iPads/tablets and USBs. Exceptions are made upon district approval. STET/HMPS will not be responsible for any stolen or damaged personal property.

COPYRIGHTED MATERIALS

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

DISTRICT EMAILS

District emails will be activated for new employees by the IT Department upon the request and approval of the Human Resources Department. Should any changes need to be made to emails, such requests must be emailed to the Human Resources Department for approval. Upon an employee's resignation or termination, emails will be deactivated by the IT Department upon the request and approval of the Human Resources Department, Dean of Instruction, and/or the Superintendent. District emails are solely for the use of business related purposes and remain the property of STET/HMPS.

VIRTUAL/DISTANCE LEARNING

In accordance with TEA regulations, STET/HMPS will provide virtual/distance learning upon necessity. This platform will be conducted either from a classroom or a location other than the school building, as approved by the Superintendent. In providing this type of instruction, educators and other staff will be using various methods of technology to ensure students are receiving adequate lessons and education. All staff conducting virtual/distance learning or in-class instruction, will be expected to abide by the following:

- The employee shall limit communications to matters within the scope of the employee's professional responsibilities (e.g., for classroom teachers, matters relating to class work, homework, and tests; for an employee with an extracurricular duty, matters relating to the extracurricular activity).
- The employee is prohibited from knowingly communicating with students through a personal social network page. Upon approval by the Superintendent, the employee must create a separate social network page ("professional page") for the purpose of communicating with students. The employee must enable administration and parents to access the employee's professional page.
- The employee shall not communicate directly with any student between the hours of 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. An employee may, however, make public posts to a social network site, blog, or similar application at any time.
- The employee does not have a right to privacy with respect to communications with students and parents.
- The employee continues to be subject to applicable state and federal laws, local policies, administrative regulations, and the Texas Educators' Code of Ethics including: Compliance with the Public Information Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including retention and confidentiality of student record; Copyright law; Prohibitions against soliciting or engaging in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student.
- Upon request from administration, an employee will provide the phone number(s), social network

site(s), or other information regarding the method(s) of electronic media the employee uses to communicate with one or more currently-enrolled students.

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

I understand that my computer use is not private and that the District may monitor my activity on the computer system.

I have read the District's electronic communications system policy and administrative regulations and agree to abide by their provisions. In consideration for the privilege of using the District's electronic communications system and in consideration for having access to the public networks, I hereby release the District, its operators, and any institutions with which they are affiliated from any and all claims and damages of any nature arising from my use of, or inability to use, the system, including, without limitation, the type of damages identified in the District's policy and administrative regulations.

Employee Name	
Employee Signature	
Date	

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Assignment of School District Property

EMPLOYEE AGREEMENT FOR ASSIGNMENT AND USE OF SCHOOL DISTRICT PROPERTY

Any and all school district property assigned is for the sole use of district related educational and administrative purposes. Property may include but not limited to desktop computers, laptops, printers, cell phones, USBs, keys, uniforms, etc. All employees issued school district property will be expected to sign out for such property and are expected to keep property in good working condition as you will be held financially responsible for any lost or damaged property.

Upon termination of employment whether voluntary or involuntary; all school district property must be returned within 10 days from the last date of employment. Failure to return such property may be considered theft of school district property and reported to the appropriate local authorities. In addition, an employee may be subject to payroll deduction of the cost of unreturned assigned school district property.

I have read the District's assignment of school district property. I acknowledge that failure to return any assigned school district property may result in payroll deduction of the cost of the assigned school district property or may be considered theft of school district property and reported to the appropriate local authorities.

Employee Name	
Employee Signature	
Date	

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information that will help with questions and pave the way for a successful year. Not all district policies and procedures are included. Suggestions for additions and improvements to this handbook are welcome and may be sent to the **Human Resources Department**.

This handbook is neither a contract nor is it intended to alter the at-will status of non-contract employees in any way. Rather, it is a guide and a brief explanation of district policies and procedures related to employment. These policies and procedures can change at any time. The changes shall supersede any handbook provisions that are not compatible with the change. For more information, employees may refer to the policy codes that are associated with the handbook topics, confer with their principal or call the Human Resources Department.

In compliance with H.B. No. 912, the South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc. (STET) offers all STET School Board Policies online at www.hmmps.net.

At each school in the district, the board shall make a copy of the board's employment policies available for inspection at a reasonable time on request.

A copy of the board's employment policies will be provided upon request.

VISION STATEMENT

TOMORROW'S EDUCATION TODAY

- !• Mission Possible, Everybody Can Learn
- !• School, Homes and Community Working Together
- !• Education Through Space-Age Technology

South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc./HMPS maximizes the education potential and the experience of continuous learning by every student within the school and community environment. It includes instruction in all forms of human potential: aesthetic, ethical, intellectual, physical and technological. With this concept of education in mind, STET/HMPS assumes the responsibility for providing a well-organized, flexible and varied program of classroom and out-of-classroom activities. Since students differ in interests, attitude and abilities, parents have various aspirations for their children; the learning process needs to allow for the personal growth of individuals and families.

Our schools empower students to become competent, confident, productive, and responsible young adults who will possess the competencies, skills and attitude to succeed in an educational environment and in life as a member of the workforce for the twenty-first century.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc./HMPS is to provide the highest quality education possible to all students. To the full extent of their individual abilities, students will be provided the opportunity to develop the capability to think logically, independently, and creatively, and to communicate effectively. The district will promote the worth and dignity of each individual child to prepare each child to become a productive and responsible member of society.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The TEAM of STET/HMPS, Board Members, administrators, teachers, staff and parents, in partnership with community and public educational agencies, is committed to provide the resources and opportunities for all students to achieve educational excellence.

District goals and objectives are as follows:

1. Professional development - learning opportunities for all employees.
2. Technology - current in all technological changes, advances, and applications.
3. Academic excellence - focus on comprehension, critical thinking, application, and problem solving.
4. Communication- clear, concise, and accurate exchange of information, and understanding and implementation of policy.
5. Parental involvement- participation of parents as partners in the education of their children.
6. Learning environment- safe, efficient, state-of-the-art facilities and resources.

Public Education Mission, Goals, and Objectives

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

- OBJECTIVE 1: Parents will be full partners with educators in the education of their children.
- OBJECTIVE 2: Students will be encouraged and challenged to meet their full educational potential.
- OBJECTIVE 3: Through enhanced dropout prevention efforts, all students will remain in school until they obtain a diploma.
- OBJECTIVE 4: A well-balanced and appropriate curriculum will be provided to all students.
- OBJECTIVE 5: Educators will prepare students to be thoughtful, active citizens who have an appreciation for the basic values of our state and national heritage and who can understand and productively function in a free enterprise society.
- OBJECTIVE 6: Qualified and highly effective personnel will be recruited, developed, and retained.
- OBJECTIVE 7: Texas students will demonstrate exemplary performance in comparison to national and international standards.
- OBJECTIVE 8: School campuses will maintain a safe and disciplined environment conducive to student learning.
- OBJECTIVE 9: Educators will keep abreast of the development of creative and innovative techniques in instruction and administration using those techniques as appropriate to improve student learning.
- OBJECTIVE 10: Technology will be implemented and used to increase the effectiveness of student learning, instructional management, staff development, and administration.

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

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

GOAL 2: The understanding of mathematics.

GOAL 3: The understanding of science.

GOAL 4: The understanding of social studies.

Education code 4001, 4002

Instructional Goals and Objectives

The District shall endeavor to maintain an educational program that will help each student to develop personal knowledge, skills, and competence to maximum capacity, and to learn behavior patterns, which will make each student a responsible member of society. In terms of their individual abilities, all students should achieve:

1. Competence in fundamentals of reading, writing, and arithmetic in the early elementary grades, accompanied by studies in higher mathematics, science, history, free enterprise system, English, and other languages in the higher grades. These should be accompanied by a wide variety of optional courses. Skills in the logical processes of research, analysis, evaluation, and problem solving. Competence and motivation for continuing self-evaluation, self-instruction, and adaptation to a changing environment. Competence in reading, communication, and other language art skills according to grade level and individual ability.
2. Knowledge of the fundamental economic structure and processes of the American system, of the contribution of free enterprise, and of the opportunities for individual participation and success in the system. Occupational skills needed to enter and advance in the economic system or academic preparation for acquisition of technical or professional skills through post-high school training. Competence in the application of economic knowledge to practical economic functions, such as planning and budgeting for the investment of personal income, calculating tax obligations, financing major purchases, and obtaining desirable employment.
3. Knowledge about the United States and Texas systems of government and their political subdivisions. Competence in judging the merits of comparative political systems and ideologies with emphasis on democratic institutions, the American heritage, the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship, and the comparative merits of candidates for political position. Skill for communicating with public officials at different levels of government. Skill for participating in the processes of public and private political organizations and in influencing decisions made by such organizations.
4. Knowledge about the requirements of personal hygiene, nutritional consumption, and physical exercise essential to the maintenance of personal health. Knowledge of the dangers to health from addiction to harmful substances or consumption of harmful materials. Skill in sports and other forms of recreation, which will permit life-long enjoyment of physical exercise. Competence in recognizing and preventing environmental, ecological, and health problems. Knowledge and experiences to provide information and develop skills and values needed to perform daily activities in a safe manner free from injury or other losses.
5. Knowledge of the arts, music, literature, drama, and other aesthetic expressions of various cultures. Competence in the critical evaluation and appreciation of diverse cultures.
6. Knowledge of basic psychological, sociological, and cultural factors affecting human behavior. Skills in interpersonal and group relations and information of ethical and moral standards of behavior. Competence for adjusting to changes in personal status and social patterns. Skills for coping with stress and pressure.

Development of a self-image that builds self-concepts of a positive nature.

7. Competence and skill in creative and responsible use of leisure time.

State Board of Education Policy 3101.1, as amended.

Montessori Goals

1. Respect the uniqueness of each person.
2. Preserve and nurture the innate capacity of students so they can reach their full potential as contributing world citizens.
3. Offer individually paced academic instruction and activities.
4. Provide curricula for concept development and skill acquisitions in prepared classrooms.
5. Focus on learning-by-doing.
6. Engage students in purposeful and collaborative learning.
7. Ensure students use inner discipline, concentration, and task completion for lifelong critical thinking and discovery.
8. Work in concert with students and their families.

CHARTER HOLDER BOARD

2021-2022

Chairman	Alim U. Ansari
President	Hassan Ahmad, Ph. D.
Vice President	Randall Summers
Secretary	James O. Hayes, CPA
Member	Patricia Quesada, Ph. D.
Member	Aurora Saenz
Member	Omar Al-Qudah, Ph. D

CENTRAL OFFICE

Superintendent of Schools	Alim U. Ansari
Chief Financial Officer	James O. Hayes, CPA
District Dean of Instruction	Yolanda Cantu
Senior Accountant	Cristina Torres
Human Resources Coordinator	Jenilee Farias
PEIMS Coordinator	Tammy Garza
Facilities Manager	Tahir Mehmood
Child Nutrition Program Supervisor	Jackie Flores
Administrative Assistant	Jessica Hernandez
Special Ed. Coordinator/Diagnostician	Ludivina Vasquez
Language Arts/Bilingual Coordinator	Lizet Valenciana
ELA/District Testing Coordinator	Telisa Munoz
Accountant	Yasin Ansari
Payroll and Benefits Specialist	Isis Montes
Business Office Specialist	Tiffin Brinkman
Business Office Clerk	Diana Salinas
Human Resources Clerk	Belinda Mendoza
Child Nutrition Clerk	San Juanita Lugo
Receptionist	Lizette Gonzalez
Organic Farmer	Michael Palladini
Gardener	Eliseo Ramirez Herrera
Custodian	Maria Briones

DIRECTORY AND ADMINISTRATORS

<p>STET/HMPS CENTRAL OFFICE 2402 E. Business 83 Weslaco, TX 78596 (956) 969-3092 (Office) (956) 969-8614 (Fax)</p>	<p>Alim U. Ansari, Superintendent</p>
<p>Horizon Montessori I 320 N. Main St. McAllen, TX 78501 (956) 631-0234 (956) 668-1404 (Fax)</p>	<p>Patricia Masso, Principal Emmy Diaz, Instructional Officer</p>
<p>Horizon Montessori II 1222 W. Sugarcane Drive Weslaco, TX 78596 (956) 969-0044 (Elem.) (956) 969-3500 (M.S.) (956) 969-0065 (Fax)</p>	<p>Jaime Garcia, Principal Michelle Gutierrez, Assistant Principal</p>
<p>Horizon Montessori III 2802 S. 77 Sunshine Strip Harlingen, TX 78550 (956) 423-8200 (956) 423-8207 (Fax)</p>	<p>Ana Smith, Principal</p>
<p>Horizon Montessori IV (Pearland) 2319 N Grand Blvd Pearland, Texas 77581 (832) 930-3328</p>	<p>Ashley Gabrysch, Principal</p>
<p>Title IX Coordinator Jenilee Farias Human Resources Coordinator 2402 E. Business 83 Weslaco, Texas 78596 (956) 969-3092</p>	<p>ADA/Section 504 Coordinator Ludivina Vasquez Special Ed. Coordinator/Diagnostician 2402 E. Business 83 Weslaco, Texas 78596 (956) 969-3092</p>

EMPLOYMENT

Equal Employment Opportunity

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

Employees with questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, or military status should contact the Human Resources Department and/or the Superintendent. Employees with questions or concerns about discrimination on the basis of a disability should also contact the Human Resources Department.

In accordance with Title IX, STET/HMPS does not discriminate on the basis of sex and is required not to discriminate on the basis of sex in its educational programs or activities. The requirement not to discriminate extends to employment. Inquiries about the application of Title IX may be referred to the district's Title IX Coordinator.

The district designates and authorizes the following employee as the Title IX Coordinator for employees to address concerns or inquiries regarding discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment: Jenilee Farias, 2402 E. Business 83, Weslaco, Texas 78596, email: jenilee.farias@hmeps.net or at Central Office phone number (956) 969-3092. Reports can be made at any time and by any person by mail, email, or phone. During district business hours, reports may be made in person.

The district designates and authorizes the following employee as the ADA/Section 504 Coordinator for employees for concerns regarding discrimination on the basis of a disability: Ludivina Vasquez, Special Education Coordinator/Diagnostician at (956) 969-3092.

Job Vacancies

Job vacancies are posted on our website at www.hmeps.net. Vacancies will also be posted on Region One for vacancies in the Rio Grande Valley and on Region Four for our Pearland positions. STET/HMPS will also use other employment recruitment platforms as deemed necessary.

Personnel Records and Requirements

Most district records, including personnel records, are public information and must be released upon request. Employees may choose to have the following personal information withheld as per Texas Government Code Section 552.024 (Public Access Information Act).

- Address
- Phone number, including personal cell phone number
- Emergency contact information
- Information that reveals whether they have family members

The choice to not allow public access to this information may be done upon hire. To change an existing choice, an employee may submit a written request to the Human Resources Department. New or terminated employees have 14 days after hire or termination to submit a request. Otherwise, personal information can be released to the public until a request to withhold the information is submitted.

Upon hire, official transcripts will be required from each college or university. In order for transcripts to be official, it must come directly from the college/university to STET/HMPS or issued to a student in a sealed envelope. The envelope must remain unopened otherwise it will invalidate the official transcript.

Any misstatement, falsification, or omission of information on employment applications, resumes, transcripts, or on any other forms, requested or not, will be grounds for refusal to hire or if hired, termination, regardless of the time elapsed before discovery.

Searches and Alcohol and Drug Testing

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

First Aid and CPR Certification

Nurses, physical education teachers, coaches, and athletic trainers must maintain and submit to human resources proof of current certification in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED). Certification must be issued by the American Red Cross, the American Heart Association, or another organization that provides equivalent training and certification.

Workload and Work Schedules

Professional employees

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

Classroom teachers will have planning periods for instructional preparation, including conferences. The schedule of planning periods is set at the campus level but must provide at least 450 minutes within each two-week period in blocks not less than 45 minutes. Teachers and librarians are entitled to a duty-free lunch period of at least 30 minutes. Paraprofessionals will supervise students during these lunch periods. The district may require teachers to supervise students during lunch one day a week when no other personnel are available and during state assessment dates. Please note, modifications and changes can be made due to special circumstances such as pandemics, natural disasters, etc.

Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees

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

Remote Work

In order to allow the District to meet its goals to provide quality instruction for its students and function during mandatory class/school closures due to COVID-19 or any other unforeseen natural disasters, staff may be required or assigned to perform duties remotely in order to maintain key functions of the district.

Remote work will be reviewed and approved on a case-by-case basis by the Human Resources Department. At this time, remote work is offered *only* for COVID-19 related issues such as pending test results, positive cases, and quarantines including district-imposed quarantines. Remote work is not available for all positions and will be evaluated by HR and the immediate supervisor. Upon the assessment of remote work, HR will send the employee a memorandum documenting the COVID-19 case, the approval or denial of remote work, the return to work procedures, and guidelines and procedures for remote work, if applicable.

If an employee is not approved for remote work or unable to perform remote work, the employee will be subject to the district's leave policies.

Certification and Licenses

Professional employees whose positions require State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) certification or professional license are responsible for taking actions to ensure their credentials do not lapse. An employee may be demoted or terminated if the individual does not hold a valid certificate or fails to fulfill the requirements necessary to extend a temporary certificate, emergency certificate, probationary certificate, or permit within the given deadline provided by the district or Alternative Certification Program (ACP). Professional employees are also required to obtain Bilingual Education Supplemental or English as a Second Language Supplemental certifications depending on their assignment within the academic year. If such requirement is not met, the individual's employment status may be affected. An individual's employment may also be affected if SBEC suspends or revokes certification because of an individual's failure to comply with criminal history background checks. Contact the Human Resources Department if you have any questions regarding certification or licensure requirements.

Notification of Parents Regarding Qualifications

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

Texas law requires that parents be notified if their child is assigned for more than 30 consecutive days to a teacher who does not hold an appropriate teaching certificate. This notice is not required if parental notification under ESSA is sent. Inappropriately certified or uncertified teachers include individuals serving with an emergency permit (including individuals waiting to take the TExES/ExCET exam) or individuals who do not hold any certificate or permit. No later than the 30th instructional day after the date of assignment the superintendent or designee will send a written notice to parents. Information relating to teacher certification will be made available to the public upon request.

Recertification of Employment Authorization

At the time of hire, all employees must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form (Form I-9) and

present documents to verify identity and employment authorization. STET/HMPS is a participant of E-Verify, a web-based system that allows enrolled employers to confirm the eligibility of newly hired employees to work in the United States. Employees whose immigration status, employment authorization, or employment authorization documents have expired must present new documents that show current employment authorization. Employees should file the necessary application or petition sufficiently in advance to ensure that they maintain continuous employment authorization or valid employment authorization documents. Contact the Human Resources Department if you have any questions regarding reverification of employment authorization.

Performance Evaluation

Evaluation of an employee's job performance is a continuous process that focuses on improvement. Performance evaluation is based on an employee's assigned job duties and other job-related criteria. All employees will participate in the evaluation process with their assigned principal/supervisor at least annually. T-Tess evaluations will be completed for certified teachers and all other employees will be evaluated with the district's approved internal rubric evaluations. Reports, correspondence, and memoranda also can be used to document performance information. All employees will receive a copy of their written evaluation, have a performance conference with their principal/supervisor, and get the opportunity to respond to the evaluation.

Staff Development

Staff development activities are organized to meet the needs of employees and the district. Staff development for instructional personnel is predominantly campus-based, and related to achieving campus performance objectives, addressed in the campus improvement plan, and approved by a campus-level advisory committee. Staff development for non-instructional personnel is designed to meet specific licensing requirements and continued employee skill development. An outline of your gained knowledge will be requested, one week upon return and he/she may be asked to present and share with their co-workers. This allows for growth and maximizing our resources. Staff will be expected to comply with continued education as per license and district requirements. Certificates and/or proof of continued education must be submitted to the principal/supervisor and the Human Resources Department upon completion.

Part-Time Employees

Part-time employees are personnel employed on a regular basis for less than one-half time of the normal work schedules for that position. Part-time employees are not eligible for group insurance coverage or supplemental insurance and may not participate in the cafeteria plan. Part-time employees are not eligible to be members of the Texas Retirement System (TRS).

Temporary Employees

Temporary and seasonal employees may be hired in situations where additional staff is required. A temporary employee is defined as one who assumes duties on a full-time or part-time basis in a position for a temporary period. Individuals performing these duties will not be eligible for group insurance coverage or supplemental insurance and may not participate in the cafeteria plan. They will not receive state or local leave and are not eligible to be members of the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS). The campus/department needing a temporary position must submit a Temporary Employee Request form to the Human Resources Department.

Reassignment and Transfers

All personnel are subject to assignment and reassignment by the superintendent or designee when the superintendent or designee determines that the assignment or reassignment is in the best interest of the district. Reassignment is a transfer to another position, department, or facility that does not necessitate a change in the employment contract. Campus reassignments must be approved by the principal at the sending and receiving campus except when reassignments are due to enrollment shifts or program changes, the superintendent has final placement authority. Extracurricular or supplemental duty assignments may be reassigned at any time

unless an extracurricular or supplemental duty assignment is part of a dual-assignment contract.

Employees who object to a reassignment may follow the district process for employee complaints. An employee with the required qualifications for a position may request a transfer to another campus or department. A written transfer form must be completed and signed by the employee and the employee's principal. A teacher requesting a transfer to another campus before the school year begins must submit their request during the month of May. Requests for transfer during the school year will be considered only when the change will not adversely affect students and after a replacement has been found. All transfer requests will be coordinated by the Human Resources Department and must be approved by the sending principal, receiving principal and superintendent.

Outside Employment and Tutoring

Employees are required to disclose in writing to the Superintendent any outside employment that *may create a potential conflict of interest with their assigned duties and responsibilities or the best interest of the district*. Employees who wish to accept outside employment or engage in other activities for profit must submit a written request to their principal/supervisor. Approval for outside employment will be determined by the Superintendent on a case by case basis and based on whether outside employment interferes with the duties of the regular assignment. **Teachers are not allowed to privately tutor their students for pay during the school year; however, tutoring during the summer months is acceptable.**

Employee Involvement

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

Breaks for Expression of Breast Milk

STET/HMPS supports the practice of expressing breast milk and makes reasonable accommodations for the needs of employees who express breast milk. A place, other than a multiple user bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from other employees and the public where the employee can express breast milk will be provided. A reasonable amount of break time will be provided when the employee has a need to express milk. For nonexempt employees, these breaks are unpaid and are not counted as hours worked. Employees should meet with their supervisor to discuss their needs and arrange break times.

Safety

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

1. Observe all safety rules.
2. Keep work areas clean and orderly at all times.
3. Immediately report all accidents to their principal/supervisor.
4. Only operate equipment or machines for which they have training and authorization.

While driving on district business, employees are required to have a valid drivers' license and must abide by all

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

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

Pandemic Protocol

STET/HMPS is committed to ensuring the safety of all employees, students and visitors during times of pandemic, natural disasters, and/or catastrophic events. Seeing as how such events are unpredictable and sometimes unforeseen, additional guidelines and protocols will be developed and adopted at the time of need to ensure adaptability, compliance and overall safety. Guidelines, protocols and policies will be sent out by the Human Resources Department to all applicable staff.

As of date, STET/HMPS will allow any individual who wishes to voluntarily use a face mask to do so. Safety guidelines provided by CDC, TEA, and local health departments will continue to be adhered to such as washing of hands, the use of sanitation stations, social distancing, the regular sanitizing of school equipment and property, etc.

Upon the confirmation of a confirmed case, the Human Resources Department in conjunction with designated personnel, will begin an investigation, conduct trace contacting of close contacts, communicate with the respective county for additional guidance, implement individual, class, partial or entire school closures upon necessity, request necessary documentation, and submit required documentation and reports to the respective county and TEA. *For any student or staff member who has tested positive to be able to return to campus in-person must either test negative or receive clearance from a physician and provide corresponding documentation.*

If a quarantine is imposed resulting in a class, partial or entire school closure, principals/campus administration staff will contact close contacts while protecting the identity of person(s) due to privacy and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) laws. Official letters regarding the case and closure will be disseminated to parents and staff and approved staff will receive remote work memorandums. For remote work, please see Remote Work policy. For additional protocols or COVID-19 related inquiries, please contact the Human Resources Department.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Salaries, Wages, and Stipends

Employees are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and a pay structure established for each position. The district's pay plans are reviewed by the administration each year and adjusted as needed. All district positions are classified as exempt or nonexempt according to federal law. Professional and

administrative employees are generally classified as exempt and are paid monthly salaries. They are not entitled to overtime compensation. Other employees are generally classified as nonexempt and are paid based on hourly wages or salary and receive compensatory time or overtime pay for each hour worked beyond 40 in a workweek.

All employees will receive notice of work and campus calendars through the district's website. Employees who perform extracurricular or supplemental duties may be paid a stipend in addition to their salary according to the district's extra-duty pay schedule. Employees should contact the Payroll Department or the Human Resources Department for more information about the pay schedules or their own pay.

All employees will be expected to clock in and out each day or be expected to complete a timesheet, as requested. Any employee found tampering or forging time will be subject to disciplinary action, including up to termination as this is a serious offense and will not be tolerated.

Paychecks

All professional employees are paid on the twenty-eighth of each month. Non-exempt employees will be paid on a bi-monthly basis. All employees will be required to enroll in direct deposit. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that they have provided the Human Resources Department with their correct address and contact information.

An employee may obtain their electronic payroll statement (check stub) which contains detailed information including deductions, withholding information, and the amount of leave accumulated through the Ascender Employee Portal. Contact the Payroll/Benefits Department if you have questions about your payroll statement or for access.

Payroll Deductions

Automatic payroll deductions for the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS) and federal income tax are required for all full-time employees. Medicare tax deductions also are required for all employees hired after March 31, 1986. Child support/spousal maintenance and delinquent federal education loan payments will be deducted as mandated by law. Temporary and part-time employees who are not eligible for TRS membership must have their Social Security contributions deducted.

Other payroll deductions employees may elect include deductions for the employee's share of premiums for health, dental, life, vision insurance, annuities, higher education savings plans or other supplemental insurances.

Overtime Compensation

The district compensates overtime for nonexempt employees in accordance with federal wage and hour laws. Only nonexempt employees (hourly employees and paraprofessional employees) are entitled to overtime compensation. Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees are not authorized to work beyond their normal work schedule without advance approval from their principal/supervisor. A nonexempt employee who works overtime without prior approval will be subject to disciplinary action.

Compensatory Time

Compensatory time otherwise known as "comp time" is accumulated when employees are compensated with

time off for overtime hours in lieu of overtime pay. The following applies to nonexempt employees upon approval:

- Employees CANNOT accumulate more than 40 hours of compensatory time within the duty year.
- Compensatory time MUST be used in the duty year for which it is earned.
- Use of compensatory time may be at the employee's request with supervisor approval as workload permits. An employee must complete a compensatory form for approval by principal/supervisor and submitted to the Benefits/Payroll Department for process.
- An employee MUST use compensatory time before using available paid leave (e.g., state, local leave).
- Compensatory time will only be paid out upon resignation or termination if applicable.

Employees should contact the Payroll/Benefits departments for further information and policies.

Approved Travel and Travel Expense Reimbursement

Before any travel expenses are incurred by an employee, the employee's principal/supervisor and the Superintendent must give approval for travel. Superintendent will give approval for travel by employee's own personal vehicle or company vehicle. For approved travel, employees will be reimbursed for mileage and other travel expenditures according to the current rate schedule authorized by the board of trustees. Employees should provide hotels with a tax exemption form. *State tax must be removed from hotel bills.* Employees must submit receipts to be reimbursed for expenses other than mileage.

Health and Life Insurance

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

1. Employees who are active, contributing TRS members.
2. Employees who are active, contributing TRS members and who are regularly scheduled to work at least 10 hours per week.

TRS retirees and employees who are not contributing TRS members that are regularly scheduled to work less than 10 hours per week are not eligible to participate in TRS-ActiveCare.

The insurance plan year is from September 1 through August 31. New employees must complete enrollment forms within the first 30 days of employment. Current employees can make changes to their insurance coverage during open enrollment or when they experience a qualifying event (e.g., marriage, divorce, birth). Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, employee cost, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees by the insurance carrier and/or the Benefits Department. Employees should contact the Benefits Department for more information.

Supplemental Insurance Benefits

Employees can enroll in supplemental insurance programs at their own expense upon hire or during open enrollment. The supplemental plan year is from June 1 through May 31. Premiums for these programs can be

paid by payroll deductions. Employees should contact the Benefits Department for more information.

Cafeteria Plan Benefits (Section 125)

Employees may be eligible to participate in the Cafeteria Plan (Section 125) and, under IRS Regulations, must either accept or reject this benefit. This plan enables eligible employees to pay certain insurance premiums on a pretax basis (i.e., disability, accidental death and dismemberment, cancer and disease, dental, and additional term life insurance). A third-party administrator handles employee claims made on these accounts.

New employees must accept or reject this benefit during their first month of employment. All employees must accept or reject this benefit on an annual basis and during the specified time period. Insurance products purchased through Section 125 may only be cancelled or dropped during the annual open enrollment period.

Workers' Compensation Insurance

The district, in accordance with state law, provides workers' compensation benefits to employees who suffer a work-related illness or are injured on the job. Benefits may help pay for medical treatment and make up for part of the income lost while recovering. Specific benefits are prescribed by law depending on the circumstances of each case. The employee does not need to miss work to be entitled to medical benefits.

All work-related accidents or injuries must be reported immediately to the principal/supervisor. An incident report as well as a First Injuries Report must be completed by the employee and submitted to the Benefits Department within the first day of injury. Employees who are unable to work because of a work-related injury will be notified of their rights and responsibilities under the Texas Labor Code.

Employees receiving worker's compensation benefits may also be eligible for other leave benefits such as family and medical leave (FMLA), state personal leave, local leave, assault leave, temporary disability leave, if applicable. However STET/HMPS is not required to hold a job open for an indefinite period of time and will decide on a case-by-case basis that a particular position must be filled because of a legitimate business concern without violating state and/or federal law.

Unemployment Compensation Insurance

Employees who have been laid off or terminated through no fault of their own may be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits under the Texas Unemployment Compensation Act. Employees are not eligible to collect unemployment benefits during regularly scheduled breaks in the school year or the summer months if they have reasonable assurance of returning to service. Employees with questions about unemployment benefits should contact the Human Resources Department.

Teacher Retirement

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

Employees who plan to retire under TRS should notify the Payroll Department as soon as possible.

Information on the application procedures for TRS benefits are available from TRS at Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 1000 Red River Street, Austin, TX 78701-2698, or call 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. TRS information is also available at www.trs.state.tx.us.

LEAVES AND ABSENCES

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

Leave of Absence

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

Employees must follow district and department or campus procedures to report or request any leave of absence and complete the appropriate leave request form which can be obtained from the Human Resources Department.

Excessive Absences

The district's operation depends on consistent attendance by all of its employees. **An employee's principal/supervisor reserves the right to deem absences excessive and reserves the right to address employees of such absences through conferences and/or disciplinary action, including termination.**

An absence is considered excessive if it occurs after the employee's earned leave balance is depleted and is not protected by any state or federal law or otherwise approved by the Superintendent and/or Board. An absence may also be considered excessive if the employee is absent more than 10 days within a calendar year period unless the absences are protected by state or federal law or otherwise approved by the Superintendent and/or Board.

State Personal Leave Days

By the Texas Education Code requirements, STET/HMPS will provide all employees with five days of paid personal leave each year. Leave will be pro-rated for employees hired after their respective work calendar start date. This leave is not extended to sporadic or temporary employees. There is no limit on the year-to-year accumulation of state personal leave, which is transferable to other districts and education service centers (ESCs). While this leave is transferable, this type of leave is not paid out to employees by STET/HMPS upon resignation or termination. **When an employee separates from employment before the last duty day of the school year, the employee's final paycheck will be reduced by the amount of state personal leave the employee used beyond his or her pro rata entitlement for the school year.**

State days may be used for personal business, vacation, illness, emergency or other reasons. An employee may not be able to use more than 5 consecutive state days unless approved by the principal/supervisor and/or superintendent. Days may not be requested on standardized testing days, days scheduled for end-of-semester or end-of-year exams, the day before or after a holiday/break, or on professional development days. **If such days are requested, the principal/supervisor will review case-by-case and reserves the right to deny approval and/or implement disciplinary action if absence was not approved.**

Local Leave Days

Full-time employees are eligible to receive five local leave days. Leave will be pro-rated for employees hired after their respective work calendar start date. These days are not accumulated and will not roll over for the next school year as they will be “lost” if they are not used. This type of leave will not be paid out to employees by STET/HMPS upon resignation or termination. Days may not be requested on standardized testing days, days scheduled for end-of-semester or end-of-year exams, the day before or after a holiday/break, or on professional development days.

Professional employees will be docked \$40 per day for each full day used and \$20 per day for each half day used. Paraprofessional and auxiliary employees will be docked \$20 per day for each full day used and \$10 per day for each half day used.

Family Medical Leave Act

Leave Entitlements

The federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) provides eligible employees with 12 weeks of unpaid, job protected leave in a 12-month period and continued health care benefits in cases of family or medical emergency. An employee must meet all of the following criteria:

- Employed at a site where at least 50 employees work within a 75-mile radius.
- Employed by the district for at least 12 calendar months (the 12 months do not need to be consecutive).
- Worked 1,250 hours in the 12 months preceding the commencement of leave.

Qualifying events for FMLA are as follows:

- The birth of a child or placement of a child for adoption or foster care;
- To bond with a child (leave must be taken within one year of the child’s birth or placement);
- To care for the employee’s spouse, child, or parent who has a qualifying serious health condition;
- For the employee’s own qualifying serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee’s job;
- For qualifying exigencies related to the foreign deployment of a military member who is the employee’s spouse, child, or parent. (An eligible employee who is a covered service member’s spouse, child, parent, or next of kin may take up to 26 weeks of FMLA in a single 12-month period to care for the servicemember with a serious injury or illness).

Use of Paid Leave

Employees may choose, or an employer may require, use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA. If an

employee substitutes accrued paid leave for FMLA, the employee must comply with the employer's normal paid leave policies. FMLA may also run concurrently with temporary disability leave, compensatory time, assault leave, and absences due to a work-related illness or injury.

The district will designate the leave as FMLA, if applicable, and notify the employee that accumulated leave will run concurrently.

Benefits and Protections

While employees are on FMLA, employers must continue health insurance coverage as if the employees were not on leave. Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to the same job or one nearly identical to it with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms and conditions.

Requesting Leave

Employees are responsible for contacting the Human Resources Department if they feel they have a qualifying event. Generally, employees must give 30-days' advance notice of the need for FMLA leave. If it is not possible to give 30-days' notice, an employee must notify the employer as soon as possible and, generally, follow the employer's usual procedures.

Employees do not have to share a medical diagnosis, but must provide enough information to the employer so it can determine if the leave qualifies for FMLA protection. Sufficient information could include informing an employer that the employee is or will be unable to perform his or her job functions, that a family member cannot perform daily activities, or that hospitalization or continuing medical treatment is necessary. Employees must inform the employer if the need for leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified.

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

Employer Responsibilities

The Human Resources Department will determine if an employee meets the criteria and requirements. If so, the Human Resources Department will notify the employee if he or she is eligible and will provide a notice of rights and responsibilities under FMLA. The employee will be expected to submit a medical certification form from a qualified health care provider within 15 days of receiving it. Other forms that will be required will be a Request Leave Form and a Fitness for Duty Form. At this time, HR will provide additional documentation as deemed necessary and will review in detail FMLA protocol, available leave, intermittent and/or reduced-schedule leave, return to work requirements, American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and any other applicable guidelines as this policy is simply a summary.

The Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008 (GINA) prohibits employers and other entities covered by GINA Title II from requesting or requiring genetic information of an individual or family member of the individual, except as specifically allowed by this law. To comply with this law, we ask that employees and health care providers do not provide any genetic information in any medical certification. "Genetic

information,” as defined by GINA, includes an individual’s family medical history, the results of an individual’s or family member’s genetic tests, the fact that an individual or an individual’s family member sought or received genetic services, and genetic information of a fetus carried by an individual or an individual’s family member or an embryo lawfully held by an individual or family member receiving assistive reproductive services.

An employee who is absent more than 10 workdays because of personal or family illness must submit a medical certification from a qualified health care provider confirming the specific dates of the illness, the reason for the illness, and- in the case of personal illness the employee's fitness to return to work.

Combined Leave For Spouses

Eligible spouses who work for the same employer are limited to a combined total of 12 workweeks of leave in a 12-month period for the following FMLA-qualifying reasons:

- the birth of a son or daughter and bonding with the newborn child,
- the placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care and bonding with the newly-placed child, and
- the care of a parent with a serious health condition.

Eligible spouses who work for the same employer are also limited to a combined total of 26 workweeks of leave in a single 12-month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness (commonly referred to as “military caregiver leave”) if each spouse is a parent, spouse, son or daughter, or next of kin of the servicemember. When spouses take military caregiver leave as well as other FMLA leave in the same leave year, each spouse is subject to the combined limitations for the reasons for leave listed above.

Intermittent Leave

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

Fitness for Duty

An employee that takes FMLA due to the employee’s own serious health condition shall provide, before resuming work, a fitness-for-duty certification from the health care provider. If certification of the employee’s ability to perform essential job functions is required, STET/HMPS shall provide a list of essential job functions (e.g., job description) to the employee to share with the health care provider.

Failure to Return

If, at the expiration of FMLA, the employee is able to return to work but chooses not to do so, the district may require the employee to reimburse the district’s share of insurance premiums paid during any portion of FMLA when the employee was on unpaid leave. If the employee fails to return to work for a reason beyond the employee’s control, such as a continuing personal or family serious health condition or a spouse being unexpectedly transferred more than 75 miles from the district, the district may not require the employee to reimburse the district’s share of premiums paid.

While an employee may have job protection under FMLA, if it is discovered that the employee has violated policies and procedures that are grounds for termination, in accordance with the employee handbook, the employee will be subject to those consequences and will not have their position restored as the termination was based on misconduct and not on the premise of having taken FMLA.

Enforcement

Employees may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer. FMLA does not affect any federal or state law prohibiting discrimination or supersede any state or local law or collective bargaining agreement that provides greater family or medical leave rights. For additional information: 1-866-4US-WAGE (1-866-487-9243) TTY: 1-877-889-5627 www.wagehour.dol.gov

Assault Leave

This type of leave provides extended income and job protection to any STET/HMPS employee who is injured as a result of a physical assault suffered during the performance of his or her job. The maximum period of leave is two years from the date of assault to recuperate. Entitlement to such leave is contingent if the medical certification demonstrates several indicators including that the job could not be done because of the injury, returning to work would worsen the injury, or additional days would facilitate the healing process. An employee's ability to perform his or her job while complying with the doctors restrictions ends the assault leave and intermittent absence for follow-up doctor visits or other therapy does not qualify as assault leave.

An assault under the law requires an action that is purposeful or reckless. An injury is treated as an assault if the person causing the injury could be prosecuted for assault or could not be prosecuted because of the person's age or mental capacity renders the person not responsible.

Upon the request of this type of leave, STET/HMPS will assign the employee assault leave and will begin an investigation to determine if the incident meets the criteria for assault leave. If the investigation shows there is an injury which entitles the employee to assault leave, the employee remains on paid leave for recuperation until release to return to work by his or her doctor. The employee will also be provided a notice of their rights to take such leave. If it is determined that the incident was not an assault, STET/HMPS may change the assault leave status and use the employee's accrued paid leave or deduct pay if paid leave is not available. Such type of leave may run concurrently with worker's compensation, if applicable. For further information regarding assault leave and how pay is calculated, employee's should contact the HR or Payroll departments.

Temporary Disability Leave

Certified Employees

Any full-time employee whose position requires certification from the State Board of Educator Certification (SBEC) is eligible for temporary disability. The purpose of temporary disability leave is to provide job protection to full-time educators who cannot work for an extended period of time because of a mental or physical disability of a temporary nature. Full-time educators would be eligible for at least 180 calendar days of unpaid leave. STET/HMPS is not required to continue to contribute to health insurance premium unless this leave runs concurrently with paid leave or FMLA. A full-time educator may request to be placed on temporary

disability leave or be placed on leave. Pregnancy and conditions related to pregnancy are treated the same as any other temporary disability. This type of leave is granted per incident as one continuous block of time and cannot be taken intermittently or on a reduced-schedule basis.

Employees must request approval for temporary disability leave. The leave request must be accompanied by a physician's statement confirming the employee's inability to work and estimating a probable date of return. If disability leave is not approved, the employee must return to work or be subject to termination procedures.

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

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

Military Leave

Any employee who is a member of the Texas National Guard, Texas State guard, a reserve component of the U.S. Armed Forces, or a state or federally authorized Urban Search and Rescue Team is entitled to receive up to 15 days of paid leave per fiscal year for military training or duty ordered or authorized by proper authority without loss of any accumulated leave with the district. STET/HMPS will follow all guidelines provided by the Texas Government Code, Texas Education Code, and the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA).

Jury Duty

Upon receipt of a jury summons, an STET/HMPS employee must notify his/her principal/supervisor. All regular employees will be paid the full amount of their regular pay provided the employee gives the original jury summons to the Payroll department in a timely fashion. Some jury assignments are not continuous and jurors are released for significant periods of time in which you shall return to work.

Compliance with a Subpoena

Employees will be allowed to comply with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative proceeding. Employees will not be subject to discharge, discipline or any other penalty for complying with a subpoena. However, an employee may use any available paid leave for such days.

Truancy Court Appearance

A "permanent" employee will be allowed to miss work and permitted to attend a truancy court hearing as a parent or guardian or any court-appointed guardian ad litem. An employee may use any available paid leave.

Religious Observance

Federal law does not include special leave provisions for religious holidays or observance. However, federal law does require districts, including STET/HMPS, to reasonably accommodate an employee's request for absence to participate in religious observances. Accommodations such as changes to work schedules or granting of leave will be reviewed and granted, unless they pose an undue hardship to the district. Each request for leave for religious observance must be submitted to the principal/supervisor, which in turn may be submitted to the Human Resources Department for final review. The employee may use any accumulated personal leave for this purpose. Employees who have exhausted applicable paid leave may be granted an unpaid day of absence.

Funeral Leave

In the event of a death in the immediate family, an employee will be given one (1) paid day to attend the funeral. If the funeral location is at least 100 miles away from STET/HMPS, the employee will receive one (1) paid day to travel to the location and one (1) paid day to return. If the funeral location is less than 100 miles from STET/HMPS, the employee may extend the funeral leave as unpaid leave. "Immediate family" is defined as:

- | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Husband | 8. Wife |
| 2. Father | 9. Mother |
| 3. Brother | 10. Sister |
| 4. Son | 11. Daughter |
| 5. Father-In-Law | 12. Mother-In-Law |
| 6. Brother-In-Law | 13. Sister-In-Law |
| 7. Grandmother | 14. Grandfather |

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT AND WELFARE

Standards of Conduct

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

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

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

All district employees should perform their duties in accordance with state and federal law, district policies and procedures, and ethical standards. Violation of policies, regulations, or guidelines may result in disciplinary action, including termination. Alleged incidents of certain misconduct by educators, including having a criminal record, must be reported to SBEC no later than the seventh day the superintendent first learns of the incident.

The Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, adopted by the State Board for Educator Certification (TAC Title 19, Part 7, Chapter 247, Rule §247.2), which all district employees must adhere to, is reprinted below:

Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators

Statement of Purpose

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

Professional Standards

1. Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices and Performance

- Standard 1.1** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district, educational institution, educator preparation program, the Texas Education Agency, or the State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC) and its certification process.
- Standard 1.2** The educator shall not knowingly misappropriate, divert, or use monies, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.
- Standard 1.3** The educator shall not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.
- Standard 1.4** The educator shall not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.
- Standard 1.5** The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or to obtain special advantage. This standard shall not

restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents of students, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.

- Standard 1.6** The educator shall not falsify records, or direct or coerce others to do so.
- Standard 1.7** The educator shall comply with state regulations, written local school board policies, and other state and federal law.
- Standard 1.8** The educator shall apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications.
- Standard 1.9** The educator shall not make threats of violence against school district employees, school board members, students, or parents of students.
- Standard 1.10** The educator shall be of good moral character and be worthy to instruct or supervise the youth of this state.
- Standard 1.11** The educator shall not intentionally or knowingly misrepresent his or her employment history, criminal history, and/or disciplinary record when applying for subsequent employment.
- Standard 1.12** The educator shall refrain from the illegal use or distribution of controlled substances and/or abuse of prescription drugs and toxic inhalants.
- Standard 1.13** The educator shall not consume alcoholic beverages on school property or during school activities when students are present.

2. Ethical Conduct Toward Professional Colleagues

- Standard 2.1** The educator shall not reveal confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.
- Standard 2.2** The educator shall not harm others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system.
- Standard 2.3** The educator shall adhere to written local school board policies and state and federal laws regarding the hiring, evaluation, and dismissal of personnel.
- Standard 2.4** The educator shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities.
- Standard 2.5** The educator shall not discriminate against or coerce a colleague on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, gender, disability, family status, or sexual orientation.
- Standard 2.6** The educator shall not use coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions or colleagues.
- Standard 2.7** The educator shall not retaliate against any individual who has filed a complaint with the SBEC or who provides information for a disciplinary investigation or proceeding under this chapter.

3. Ethical Conduct Toward Students

- Standard 3.1** The educator shall not reveal confidential information concerning students unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law.
- Standard 3.2** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly treat a student or minor in a manner that adversely affects or endangers the learning, physical health, mental health, or safety of the student or minor.
- Standard 3.3** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly misrepresent facts regarding a student.
- Standard 3.4** The educator shall not exclude a student from participation in a program, deny benefits to a student, or grant an advantage to a student on the basis of race, color, gender, disability, national origin, religion, family status, or sexual orientation.
- Standard 3.5** The educator shall not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in physical mistreatment, neglect, or abuse of a student or minor.
- Standard 3.6** The educator shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student or minor.
- Standard 3.7** The educator shall not furnish alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child or knowingly allow any person under 21 years of age unless the educator is a parent or guardian of that child to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs in the presence of the educator.
- Standard 3.8** The educator shall maintain appropriate professional educator-student relationships and boundaries based on a reasonably prudent educator standard.
- Standard 3.9** The educator shall refrain from inappropriate communication with a student or minor, including, but not limited to, electronic communication such as cell phone, text messaging, email, instant messaging, blogging, or other social network communication. Factors that may be considered in assessing whether the communication is inappropriate include, but are not limited to:
- (i) The nature, purpose, timing, and amount of the communication;
 - (ii) the subject matter of the communication;
 - (iii) whether the communication was made openly or the educator attempted to conceal the communication;
 - (iv) whether the communication could be reasonably interpreted as soliciting sexual contact or a romantic relationship;
 - (v) whether the communication was sexually explicit; and
 - (vi) whether the communication involved discussion(s) of the physical or sexual attractiveness or the sexual history, activities, preferences, or fantasies of either the educator or the student.

Dress and Grooming

All employees will comply with set dress and grooming guidelines which are minimum standards for professional dress, appearance and appropriate for the educational workplace environment. The dress and grooming of District employees shall be clean, neat, in a manner appropriate for their assignments, and in accordance with any additional standards established by their assignments, and in accordance with any additional standards established by their principal/supervisor and approved by the Superintendent. Since STET/HMPS employees serve as role models for the students and as representatives of our organization, dress and grooming policies have been implemented to instill an image of professionalism. Such policies are to also promote employee safety, comfort and a professional impression on our students and our community by portraying a positive image of our organization and mission. With this in mind, such policies are not imposed to discriminate or infringe on freedom of speech as HMPS feels there is an appropriate time and place for such.

STET/HMPS reserves the right to determine at its discretion what is and is not appropriate workplace attire and to address issues as they arise. Consistent with these roles, all employees, volunteers and substitutes shall dress professionally and appropriately. Employees will also be expected to dress appropriately and professionally on staff development days as they are considered work days.

Certain staff are provided district-issued uniforms and are required to wear the uniform while on duty. All employees are prohibited from wearing uniforms or any clothing with a district logo while off duty, except for commuting to and from work.

ATTIRE AND GROOMING FOR MEN	ATTIRE AND GROOMING FOR WOMEN
The following <u>are permissible</u> for men:	The following <u>are permissible</u> for women:
✓ Collared shirts, polo style shirts, sport shirts. Shirt tails should be tucked in.	✓ Dressy blouses and shirts
✓ Neatly-trimmed mustaches/beards and sideburns	✓ Knee length dresses and skirts
✓ Hair shall be neatly groomed	✓ Dressy capris
	✓ Ear piercings in a reasonable amount
✓ Dress shoes, casual shoes, boots, canvas shoes	
✓ Dressy slacks	
✓ Undergarments should be worn at all times.	
✓ Professional jeans for campus/central on approved days only. (Must not be faded or torn).	
The following <u>are prohibited</u> for men:	The following <u>are prohibited</u> for women:
Plain, collarless t-shirts of any color	Clothing that is strapless, having spaghetti straps, bare midriff, cut-out blouses, or having provocative/low-cut necklines

Muscle shirts or sleeveless t-shirts	Dresses/skirts that are more than 2” above the knee cap, with slits on the side, rear or front exposing 2” above the knee cap
Piercings on body or ears	Leggings in lieu of pants (including spandex); yoga style pants
sleeveless shirts and/or sleeveless blouses	
warm-ups and windbreaker suits	
shorts (Unless approved for sport activities/physical education classes. If approved by principal/supervisor, must be dressy and appropriate). *See exceptions	
low-rise pants	
See-through, translucent apparel	
Distracting hairstyles and/or hair color	
Flip flops, slippers, sandals without a backstrap, or croc style shoes	
Attire shall not be tight/binding	
Tattoos or body art shall not be visible	
Exceptions:	
Physical Education staff must wear appropriate attire approved by the principal/administration during the physical education period(s).	
Auxiliary employees in maintenance, custodial, food service and positions requiring uniforms must abide by such guidelines or as specified by immediate supervisor.	

Harassment, Discrimination, Retaliation

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

Harassment of a coworker or of a student motivated by race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or age is a form of discrimination and is prohibited by law. The term harassment includes repeated unwelcome and offensive slurs, jokes, or other oral, written, graphic or physical conduct relating to an individual’s race, color, religion, national origin, disability or age that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment.

Employees who believe they have been harassed, discriminated or retaliated against are encouraged to

promptly report such incidents to the campus principal/supervisor and/or the Human Resources Department. If the campus principal is the subject of a complaint, the employee should report the complaint directly to the superintendent. **The district's Title IX Coordinator's name and contact information is listed in the Equal Employment Opportunity section of this handbook.**

Harassment of Students

Sexual and other harassment of students by employees are forms of discrimination and are prohibited by law. Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and district employees are prohibited. Employees who suspect a student may have experienced prohibited harassment are obligated to report their concerns to the campus principal or other appropriate district official. **Any district employee who suspects or receives direct or indirect notice that a student or group of students has or may have experienced prohibited conduct based on sex, including sexual harassment, of a student shall immediately notify the district's Title IX coordinator, the ADA/Section 504 coordinator, or superintendent and take any other steps required by the district.**

All allegations of prohibited harassment or abuse of a student will be reported to the student's parents and promptly investigated. An employee who knows of or suspects child abuse must also report his or her knowledge or suspicion to the appropriate authorities, as required by law.

Sexual Harassment

Employee-to-employee

Sexual harassment of a co-worker is a form of discrimination and is prohibited by law. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct under the following conditions:

- Submission to such conduct is explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment.
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for employment decisions.
- The conduct unreasonably interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Employees who believe they have been sexually harassed by another employee are encouraged to come forward with complaints to their principal/supervisor and/or the Human Resources Department. STET/HMPS will promptly investigate all allegations of sexual harassment and will take prompt appropriate disciplinary action against employees found to have engaged in conduct constituting sexual harassment of other employees.

Employee-to-student

Sexual and other harassment of students by employees is a form of discrimination and are prohibited by law. Sexual harassment of students includes any welcomed or unwelcomed sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other oral, written, physical or visual conduct of a sexual nature. Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between district employees and students are strictly prohibited. Other prohibited conduct includes the following:

- Engaging in sexually oriented conversations for the purpose of personal sexual gratification.
- Telephoning students at home or elsewhere and engaging in inappropriate social relationships.

- Engaging in physical contact which would reasonably be construed as sexual in nature.
- Enticing or threatening students to get them to engage in sexual behavior in exchange for grades or other school-related benefits.

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

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

All employees are required by state law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect, as defined by Texas Family Code §26.001, to a law enforcement agency, Child Protective Services (CPS), or appropriate state agency (e.g.: state agency operating, licensing, certifying, or registering a facility) within 48 hours of the event which led to the suspicion. Alleged abuse or neglect involving a person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child (including a teacher) must be reported to CPS. **As a STET/HMPS district requirement, all educators will be required to complete online training provided by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) on an annual basis during professional development days.**

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

Reports to CPS can be made online at <https://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx> or to the Texas Abuse Hotline (800-252- 5400). State law specifies that an employee may not delegate to or rely on another person to make the report.

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

An employee's failure to make the required report may result in prosecution as a Class A Misdemeanor. The offense of failure to report by a professional may be a state jail felony if it is shown the individual intended to conceal the abuse or neglect. In addition, a certified employee's failure to report suspected child abuse may result in disciplinary procedures by SBEC for a violation of the Educators Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators.

Employees who suspect that a student has been or may be abused or neglected should also report their concerns to the campus principal. Employees are not required to report their concern to the principal before making a report to the appropriate agencies. Reporting the concern to the principal does not relieve the employee of the requirement to report to the appropriate state agency.

In addition, employees must cooperate with child abuse and neglect investigators. Interference with a child abuse investigation by denying an interviewer's request to interview a student at school or requiring the presence of a parent or school administrator against the desires of the duly authorized investigator is prohibited.

Sexual Abuse and Maltreatment of Children

As an employee, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused or otherwise maltreated. If providing distance/virtual learning, please remain diligent in identifying and reporting suspicions of child abuse and neglect that may surface while providing this platform of instruction.

Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Maltreatment is defined as abuse or neglect. Anyone who suspects that a child that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility under state law for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect following the procedures described above in *Reporting Suspected Child Abuse*.

Reporting Crime

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

Fraud and Financial Impropriety

All employees should act with integrity and diligence in duties involving the district's financial resources. The district prohibits fraud and financial impropriety, as defined below. Fraud and financial impropriety includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Forgery or unauthorized alteration of any document or account belonging to the district.
2. Forgery or unauthorized alteration of a check, bank draft, or any other financial document.
3. Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, or other district assets, including employee time.
4. Impropriety in the handling of money or reporting of district financial transactions.
5. Profiteering as a result of insider knowledge of district information or activities.
6. Unauthorized disclosure of confidential or proprietary information to outside parties.
7. Unauthorized disclosure of investment activities engaged in or contemplated by the district.
8. Accepting or seeking anything of material value from contractors, vendors, or other persons providing services or materials to the district.
9. Destroying, removing, or inappropriately using records, furniture, fixtures, or equipment.
10. Failing to provide financial records required by state or local entities.
11. Failure to disclose conflicts of interest as required by policy.
12. Any other dishonest act regarding the finances of the district.

Conflict of Interest

Employees are required to disclose to their principal/supervisor any situation that creates a potential conflict of interest with proper discharge of assigned duties and responsibilities or creates a potential conflict of interest with the best interests of the district. This includes the following: A personal financial interest, a business interest, any other obligation or relationship, or non-school employment. An employee with a substantial interest in a business entity or interest in real property must disclose the interest to the district prior to the award of a contract or authorization of payment. This is done by filing an affidavit with the Senior Accountant/Superintendent. An employee is also considered to have substantial interest if a close family member (e.g., spouse, parent, child, or spouse's parent or child) has a substantial interest.

Gifts and Favors

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

Associations and Political Activities

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

An individual's employment will not be affected by membership or a decision not to be a member of any employee organization that exists for the purpose of dealing with employers concerning grievances, labor disputes, wages, rates of pay, hours of employment, or conditions of work. Use of district resources including work time for political activities is prohibited.

The district encourages personal participation in the political process, including voting. Employees who need to be absent from work to vote during the early voting period or on election day must communicate with their principal/supervisor prior to the absence and must use any available leave.

Alcohol and Drug-Abuse Prevention

STET/HMPS is committed to maintaining an alcohol-and drug-free environment and will not tolerate the use of alcohol or illegal drugs in the workplace and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities on or off school property. Employees who use or are under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs as defined by the Texas Controlled Substances Act during working hours may be terminated.

Tobacco and E-Cigarette Use

State law prohibits smoking, using tobacco products, or e-cigarettes on all district-owned property and at school-related or school-sanctioned activities, on or off school property. This includes all buildings, playground areas, parking facilities, and facilities used for athletics and other activities. Drivers of district-owned vehicles are prohibited from smoking, using tobacco products or e-cigarettes while inside the vehicle

Criminal History Background Checks

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

Employee Arrests and Convictions

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

1. Crimes involving school property or funds
2. Crimes involving attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle any person to hold or obtain a position as an educator
3. Crimes that occur wholly or in part of school property or at a school-sponsored activity
4. Crimes involving moral turpitude. Moral turpitude includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - a. Dishonesty
 - b. Fraud
 - c. Deceit
 - d. Theft
 - e. Misrepresentation
 - f. Deliberate violence
 - g. Base, vile, or depraved acts that are intended to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of the actor
 - h. Drug- or alcohol-related offenses
 - i. Acts constituting abuse under the Texas Family Code

Possession of Firearms and Weapons

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

Visitors in the Workplace

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

or her to the building office or contact the administrator in charge. Visitors of employees are not allowed during instructional time or during office work hours. **STET/HMPS also reserves the right to deny visitors in the workplace during pandemics and other natural disaster cases for safety and precautionary measures.**

Assignment of School District Property

Any and all school district property assigned is for the sole use of district related educational and administrative purposes and is expected to be maintained and cared for.. Property may include but not limited to desktop computers, laptops, printers, cell phones, keys and uniforms. Upon termination of employment whether voluntary or involuntary; all school district property must be returned within 10 days from the last date of employment. Failure to return such property may be considered theft of school district property and reported to the appropriate local authorities. In addition, an employee may be subject to payroll deduction of the cost of unreturned assigned school district property.

Phone Use

School telephones are to be used for school business only. Personal long distance calls charged to the school are not allowed. Personal cellular phone use is prohibited during working hours. If the employee has to make an emergency call, then the principal/supervisor should be notified; emergency phone calls are allowed in the office.

Personal Business

No employee of STET/HMPS. is to conduct personal business during business hours. This includes soliciting business from employees or students/parents and use of cell phones or company phones in order to conduct business unrelated to STET/HMPS. Any employee that violates this regulation will be subject to disciplinary action including termination.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Bad Weather Closing

The district may close schools because of bad weather or emergency conditions. When such conditions exist, the superintendent will make the official decision concerning the closing of the district's facilities. In the event that school is delayed for a one or two hour postponement, personnel should follow the listed procedures.

1. Food service, custodians and maintenance personnel shall report to work as directed by their principal/supervisor.
2. Aides, clerical, teachers and central office personnel will report at the adjusted start time.
3. Campus administrators will report at the normally scheduled time.

When it becomes necessary to open late, to release students early, or to cancel school, district officials will post a notice on the district's website, social media platforms, and notify the following television stations:

- KGBT-TV (CBS)
- KRGV-TV (ABC)

Staff members are required to notify their campus administrator in the event of any extenuating circumstances that would prevent them from adhering to the above procedures.

Emergencies

All employees should be familiar with the safety procedures for responding to emergencies, including a medical emergency. Employees should locate evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas and be familiar with shelter in place, lockout, and lockdown procedures. Emergency drills will be conducted to familiarize employees and students with safety and evacuation procedures.

Fire extinguishers are located throughout all district buildings. Employees should know the location of the extinguishers nearest their place of work and how to use them.

Name and Address Changes

It is important employment records be kept up to date. Employees must notify the Human Resources Department if there are any changes or corrections to their name, home address, home telephone number, marital status, emergency contact, or beneficiary. A copy of the employee's social security card is required for all name changes. Forms to process a change in personal information can be obtained from the school website or from the HR Department.

Purchasing Procedures

All requests for purchases must be submitted to the Purchasing Department on an official electronic requisition form with the appropriate approval signatures. No purchases, charges, or commitments to buy goods or services for the district can be made without a Purchase Order number issued by the STET/HMPS Accounts Payable Department. The school district will not reimburse employees or assume responsibility for purchases made without authorization. Additionally, employees are not permitted to purchase supplies or equipment for personal use. Contact STET/HMPS Purchasing Department for additional information on purchasing procedures. Only the Superintendent or assigned designee may sign contracts or negotiate grants.

District Mail

All district mail will be opened by designated staff. No personal mail or packages are to be mailed or received through the district mail.

Building Use

Employees who wish to use district facilities after school hours must follow established procedures. The Superintendent or designee is responsible for scheduling the use of facilities after school hours. Contact the Superintendent to request the use of school facilities and to obtain information on fees charged.

Parking on School Property

STET/HMPS is not responsible for any damage or theft to vehicles parked on school district property.

Grievance Policy

South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc.
108802 (Local Policy)

PERSONNEL-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS: Employee Complaint/Grievances

GUIDING PRINCIPLES INFORMAL PROCESS

The Board encourages employees to discuss their concerns and complaints through informal conferences with their principal or other appropriate administrator.

Concerns should be expressed as soon as possible to allow early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level.

DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH BOARD MEMBERS

Employees shall not be prohibited from communicating with a member of the Board regarding District operations except when communication between an employee and a Board member would be inappropriate

because of a pending hearing or appeal related to the employee.

FORMAL PROCESS

If an informal conference regarding a complaint fails to reach the outcome requested by the employee, he or she may initiate the formal process described below by timely filing a written complaint form.

Even after initiating the formal complaint process, employees are encouraged to seek informal resolution of their concerns. An employee whose concerns are resolved may withdraw a formal complaint at any time.

The process described in this policy shall not be construed to create new or additional rights beyond those granted by law or Board policy, nor to require a full evidentiary hearing or "mini-trial" at any level.

The District shall inform employees of this policy.

NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES FREEDOM FROM RETALIATION

Neither the Board nor any District employee shall unlawfully retaliate against an employee for bringing a concern or complaint.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST

Complaints alleging a violation of law by a supervisor may be made to the Superintendent or designee. Complaints alleging a violation of law by the Superintendent may be made directly to the Board or designee.

COMPLAINTS

In this policy, terms "complaint" and "grievance" shall have the same meaning. This policy shall apply to all employee complaints, except as provided below.

EXCEPTIONS

This policy shall not apply to:

1. Complaints alleging discrimination, including violations of Title IX (gender), Title VII (sex, race, color, religion, national origin), ADEA (age) or Section 504 (disability)
2. Complaints alleging certain forms of harassment, including harassment by a principal and violations of Title VII.
3. Complaints concerning retaliation relating to discrimination and harassment
4. Complaints concerning instructional materials
5. Complaints concerning a commissioned peace officer who is an employee of the District

FILING

Complaint forms and appeal notices may be filed by hand-delivery, fax, or U.S. Mail. Hand-delivered filings shall be timely filed if received by the appropriate administrator or designee by the close of business on the deadline. Fax filings shall be timely filed if they are received on or before the deadline, as indicated by the date/time shown on the fax copy. Mail filings shall be timely filed if they are postmarked by U.S. Mail on or before the deadline and received by the appropriate administrator or designated representative no more than three days after the deadline.

RESPONSE

At Levels One and Two, "response" shall mean a written communication to the employee from the appropriate administrator. Responses may be hand delivered or sent by U.S. Mail to the employee's mailing address of record. Mailed responses shall be timely if they are postmarked by U.S. mail on or before the deadline.

DAYS

"Days" shall mean District business days, unless otherwise noted. In calculating time lines under this policy, the day a document is filed is "day zero." The following business day is "day one."

REPRESENTATIVE

"Representative" shall mean any person who or an organization that does not claim the right to strike and is

designated by the employee to represent him or her in the complaint process.

The employee may designate a representative through written notice to the District at any level of this process. If the employee designates a representative with fewer than three days' notice to the District before a scheduled conference or hearing, the District may reschedule the conference or hearing to a later date, if desired, in order to include the District's counsel. The District may be represented by counsel at any level of the process.

CONSOLIDATING COMPLAINTS

Complaints arising out of an event or a series of related events shall be addressed in one complaint. Employees shall not bring separate or serial complaints arising from any event or series of events that have been or could have been addressed in a previous complaint

When two or more complaints are sufficiently similar in nature and remedy sought to permit their resolution through one proceeding, the District may consolidate the complaints.

UNTIMELY FILINGS

All time limits shall be strictly followed unless modified by mutual written consent.

If a complaint form or appeal notice is not timely filed, the complaint may be dismissed, on written notice to the employee, at any point during the complaint process. The employee may appeal the dismissal by seeking review in writing within ten days from the date of the written dismissal notice, starting at the level at which the complaint was dismissed. Such appeal shall be limited to the issue of timeliness.

COSTS INCURRED

Each party shall pay its own cost incurred in the course of the complaint.

COMPLAINT FORM

Complaints under this policy shall be submitted in writing on a form provided by the District.

Copies of any documents that support the complaint should be attached to the complaint form. If the employee does not have copies of these documents, they may be presented at the Level One conference. After the Level One conference, no new documents may be submitted by the employee unless the employee did not know the documents existed before the Level One conference.

A complaint form that is incomplete in any material aspect may be dismissed, but may be refilled with all the required information if the refilling is within the designated time for filing a complaint.

AUDIO RECORDING

As provided by law, an employee shall be permitted to make an audio recording of a conference or hearing under this policy at which the substance of the employee's complaint is discussed. The employee shall notify all attendees present that an audio recording is taking place.

LEVEL ONE

Complaint forms must be filed:

1. Within 15 days of the date the employee first knew, or with reasonable diligence should have known, of the decision or action giving rise to the complaint or grievance; and
2. With the lowest level administrator who has the authority to remedy the alleged problem. In most circumstances, employees on a school campus shall file Level One complaints with the campus principal; other District employees shall file Level One complaints with their immediate supervisor.

If the only administrator who has authority to remedy the alleged problem is the Superintendent or designee, the complaint may begin at Level Two following the procedure, including deadlines, for filing the complaint form at Level One.

If the complaint is not filed with the appropriate administrator, the receiving administrator must note the date and time the complaint form was received and immediately forward the complaint form to the appropriate

administrator.

The appropriate administrator shall investigate as necessary and hold a conference with the employee within ten days after receipt of the written complaint. The administrator may set reasonable time limits for the conference.

The administrator shall provide the employee a written response within ten days following the conference. The written response shall set forth the basis of the decision. In reaching a decision, the administrator may consider information provided at the Level One conference and any other relevant documents or information the administrator believes will help resolve the complaint.

LEVEL TWO

If the employee did not receive the relief requested at Level One or if the time for a response has expired, the employee may request a conference with the Superintendent or designee to appeal the Level One decision.

The appeal notice must be filed in writing, on a form provided by the District, within ten days of the date of the written Level One response or, if no response was received, within ten days of the Level One response deadline.

After receiving notice of the appeal, the Level One administrator shall prepare and forward a record of the Level One complaint to the Level Two administrator. The employee may request a copy of the Level One record.

The Level One record shall include:

1. The original complaint form and any attachments.
2. All other documents submitted by the employee at Level One.
3. The written response issued at Level One and any attachments.
4. All other documents relied upon by the Level One administrator in reaching the Level One decision.

The Superintendent or designee shall hold a conference within ten days after the appeal notice is filed. The conference shall be limited to the issues presented by the employee at Level One and identified in the Level Two appeal notice. At the conference, the employee may provide information concerning any documents or information relied upon by the administration for the Level One decision. The Superintendent or designee may set time limits for the conference.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide the employee a written response within ten days following the conference. The written response shall set forth the basis of the decision. In reaching a decision, the Superintendent or designee may consider the Level One record, information provided at the Level Two conference, and any other relevant documents or information the Superintendent or designee believes will help resolve the complaint.

Recordings of the Level One and Level Two conferences, if any, shall be maintained with the Level One and Level Two records.

If the employee did not receive the relief requested at Level Two or if the time for a response has expired, the employee may appeal the decision to the Board.

The appeal notice must be filed in writing, on a form provided by the District, within ten days of the date of the written Level Two response or, if no response was received, within ten days of the Level Two response deadline. The Superintendent or designee shall inform the employee of the date, time, and place of the Board meeting at which the complaint will be on the agenda for presentation to the Board.

The Superintendent or designee shall provide the Board the record of the Level Two complaint. The employee may request a copy of the Level Two record.

The Level Two record shall include:

1. The Level One record.
2. The written response issued at Level Two and any attachments.
3. All other documents relied upon by the administration in reaching the Level Two decision.

LEVEL THREE

If at the Level Three hearing the administration intends to rely on evidence not included in the Level Two record, the administration shall provide the employee notice of the nature of the evidence at least three days before the hearing.

The District shall determine whether the complaint will be presented in open or closed meeting in accordance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and other applicable law.

The presiding officer may set reasonable time limits and guidelines for the presentation including an opportunity for the employee and administration to each make a presentation and provide rebuttal and an opportunity for questioning by the Board. The Board shall hear the complaint and may request that the administration provide an explanation for the decisions at the preceding levels.

In addition to any other record of the Board meeting required by law, the Board shall prepare a separate record of the Level Three presentation. The Level Three presentation, including the presentation by the employee or the employee's representative, any presentation from the administration, and questions from the Board with responses, shall be recorded by audio recording, video/audio recording, or court reporter.

The Board shall then consider the complaint. It may give notice of its decision orally or in writing at any time up to and including the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. If the Board does not make a decision regarding the complaint by the end of the next regularly scheduled meeting, the lack of a response by the Board upholds the administrative decision at Level Two.

South Texas Educational Technologies, Inc.
108802 (Local Policy)

PERSONNEL-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS: EXHIBITS

The forms on the following pages are provided to assist the District in processing employee complaints/grievances.

Exhibit A: Employee Complaint Form - Level One - 2 pages

Exhibit B: Response to Level One Complaint - 1 page

Exhibit C: Level Two Appeal Notice - 1page

Exhibit D: Response to Level Two Appeal -1page

Exhibit E: Level Three Appeal Notice - 1page

Exhibit F: Board's Response to Level Three Appeal - 1 page

EXHIBIT A

EMPLOYEE COMPLAINT FORM - LEVEL ONE (Page 1 of 2)

To file a formal complaint, please fill out this form completely and submit it by hand delivery, fax, or U.S. Mail to the appropriate administrator within the time established in DGBA (LOCAL). All complaints will be heard in accordance with DGBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) or any exceptions outlined therein.

1. Name _____

2. Address _____

Telephone number () _____

3. Position _____ Campus/Department _____

4. If you will be represented in voicing your complaint, please identify the person representing you.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone number () _____

5. Please describe the decision or circumstances causing your complaint (give specific factual details):

6. What was the date of the decision or circumstances causing your complaint?

7. Please explain how you have been harmed by this decision or circumstance:

EMPLOYEE COMPLAINT FORM - LEVEL ONE (Page 2 of 2)

8. Please describe any efforts you have made to resolve your complaint informally and the responses to your efforts:

With whom did you communicate?

On what date?

9. Please describe the outcome or remedy you seek for this complaint:

Employee signature

Signature of employee's representative

Date of filing

Complainant, please note:

A complaint form that is incomplete in any material way may be dismissed, but may be re-filed with all the required information if the re-filing is within the designated time for filing a complaint.

Attach to this form any documents you believe will support the complaint; if unavailable when you submit this form, they may be represented no later than the Level One conference. *Please keep a copy of the completed form and any supporting documentation for your records.*

EXHIBIT B

RESPONSE TO LEVEL ONE COMPLAINT

Date _____

Name of Complainant

Address of Complainant

Dear _____

Having considered the complaint we discussed in our Level One conference on
(date), I have decided on the following response:

[Note: When preparing the letter, include only one of the following sentences.]

For the following reasons, I am unable to provide the remedy you seek:

I will take the following actions to grant the remedy you seek for your complaint:

Although I am unable to provide the full remedy you seek for your complaint, I will take the following actions to provide a partial remedy:

(signature of supervisor, principal, or other appropriate administrator)

Complainant, please note:
To appeal this response, you must file a written notice of appeal with the appropriate administrator within the time limit set in DGBA (LOCAL). The necessary forms are available at _____ during regular business hours.

EXHIBIT C

LEVEL TWO APPEAL NOTICE

To appeal a Level One decision or the lack of timely response after Level one conference, please fill out this form completely and submit it by hand delivery, fax, or U.S. Mail to the Superintendent or designee within the time established on DGBA (LOCAL). Appeals will be heard in accordance with DGBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) or any exceptions outlined therein.

1. Name _____

2. Address _____

Telephone number () _____

3. Position _____ Campus/Department _____

4. If you will be represented in voicing your complaint, please identify the person representing you.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone number () _____

5. To whom did you present your complaint at Level One?

Date of Conference _____

Date you received a response to the Level One Conference _____

6. Please explain specifically how you disagree with the outcome at Level One:

7. Attach a copy of your original complaint and any documentation submitted at Level One.

8. Attach a copy of the Level One response being appealed, if applicable

Employee signature

Signature of employee's representative

Date of filing _____

EXHIBIT D

RESPONSE TO LEVEL TWO APPEAL

Date _____

Name of Complainant)

Address of Complainant

Dear _____

Having considered the appeal you presented at Level Two on

(date), I have decided on the following response:

[Note: When preparing the letter, include only one of the following sentences.]

I am unable to grant your appeal and have instructed (name) to find a resolution in keeping with the remedy you seek.

Although I am unable to fully grant your appeal, I have instructed (name) to take the following actions as a partial remedy to your complaint.

(signature of Superintendent or designee)

Complainant, please note:

To appeal this response, you must file a written notice of appeal with the appropriate administrator within the time limits set in DGBA (LOCAL). The necessary forms are available at _____ during regular business hours.

EXHIBIT E

LEVEL TWO APPEAL NOTICE

To appeal a Level Two decision or the lack of timely response after Level Two Conference, please fill out this form completely and submit it by hand delivery, fax, or U.S. Mail to the Superintendent or designee within the time established on DGBA (LOCAL). Appeals will be heard in accordance with DGBA (LEGAL) and (LOCAL) or any exceptions outlined therein.

1. Name _____

2. Address _____

Telephone number () _____

3. Position _____ Campus/Department _____

4. If you will be represented in voicing your complaint, please identify the person representing you.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone number () _____

5. To whom did you present your appeal at Level Two?

Date of Conference _____

Date you received a response to the Level Two Conference _____

6. Please explain specifically how you disagree with the outcome at Level Two:

7. Do you want the Board to hear this appeal in open session? _____
Please be aware that the Texas Open Meetings Act may prevent the Board from granting a request for open session.

8. Attach a copy of your original complaint and any documentation submitted at Level One and a copy of your Level Two appeal notice.

9. Attach a copy of the Level Two response being appealed, if applicable

Employee signature _____

Signature of employee's representative _____

Date of filing _____

EXHIBIT F

BOARD'S RESPONSE TO LEVEL THREE APPEAL

Date _____

Name of Complainant)

Address of Complainant

Dear _____

Having heard the representation of your appeal at Level Three, the Board took the following action at its meeting on _____ (date):

{Note: When preparing the letter or announcing the decision at the Board meeting, include only one of the following sentences.}

We have denied the appeal and have upheld the decision made by the Superintendent (or designee) at Level Two.

We have granted the appeal and have instructed the Superintendent to find a resolution in keeping with the remedy you seek.

We have we partially denied and partially granted the appeal and have instructed the Superintendent as follows:

Sincerely,

President of the Board of Trustees

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Employees may be terminated, demoted, or suspended for just cause which may be generally described as any conduct, action, or inaction, arising from, connected with, or impacting on the employee's work, whether on or off duty, that is inconsistent with the employee's obligations to the employer; or conduct reflecting a disregard of the employer's interests, policies or procedures. Just cause includes, but is not limited to, inefficiency, unacceptable performance, incompetence, misconduct, negligence, insubordination, or conviction of a felony or misdemeanor under the provisions of the Criminal Offender Employment Act.

Although impossible to cite an all-inclusive list of actions, which constitute just cause, examples include but are not limited to:

1. Falsification of documents.
2. Threatening, assaulting, or abusive behavior towards a principal, student, employee, guest or customer of STET/HMPS.
3. Sexual harassment of an employee, student, or guest of STET/HMPS on or off campus which may explicitly or implicitly affect an employee's performance or unreasonably interferes with a person's employment or academic endeavors.
4. Jeopardizing the safety or health of an employee (including oneself) student, guest or customer of STET/HMPS.
5. Dishonesty or intentional fabrication of events.
6. Negligent, incompetent, inefficient or unacceptable performance of duties.
7. Willful disregard of reasonable directives or policies or a defiant attitude of noncompliance toward regulations, directives or policies applicable to an employee.
8. Conduct that interferes with the efficient operation of STET/HMPS.
9. Inability or unwillingness to perform the duties required of a position.
10. Possession or use of alcohol or illicit drugs, reporting to work under their influence, or being under their influence while on the job.
11. Possession of drug paraphernalia or stolen property.
12. Conviction or admission of a felony or certain misdemeanors.
13. Careless, negligent, improper, unauthorized, or malicious use of or theft of, property, equipment, or funds.
14. Abuse of privileges.
15. Failure to report for work or to timely report justifiable reason for absence to the department head or campus administrator.
16. Repeated tardiness or poor attendance.
17. Misconduct which adversely affects the interest or reputation of STET/HMPS or its employees.
18. Any repetition of offenses which resulted in a reprimand, warning, demotion, notification of unacceptable performance or suspension.
19. Job abandonment.

Dismissal of Non-Contract “At-Will” Employees

As defined by the Texas Workforce Commission, employment at will means that absent a statute or an express agreement (such as an employment contract), either party in an employment relationship may modify any of the terms or conditions of employment, or terminate the relationship altogether, for any reason, or no particular reason at all, with or without advance notice.

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

Resignations

A classified employee who desires to terminate services with STET/HMPS should submit a signed resignation statement to the appointing authority 2 weeks prior to the date of termination. Professional employees should give 30 days notice prior to the date of termination. Upon receiving a resignation, STET/HMPS reserves the right to make a resignation effective immediately prior to the 2 weeks or 30 days.

If the employee is not available to sign or refuses to sign a statement, the principal should note such on the employee record and forward for processing. Employee’s must contact the Benefits Department for insurance coverage questions and inquiries. If an employee's separation from STET is less than 5 working days, seniority and other such employment privileges may be reinstated with approval from the Superintendent. Employees may not appeal a resignation of voluntary termination even if the action was in lieu of termination.

Exit Procedures and Interviews

Exit interviews will be scheduled for employees who have resigned from the district. If an employee is unable to attend the interview or resigns with no advance notice, an Exit Questionnaire will be sent electronically to the individual which provides the district with feedback on his or her employment experience.

Separating employees are asked to provide the district with a forwarding address, email address and phone number. All district keys, books, property including intellectual property, and equipment must be returned upon separation from employment. The district may withhold the cost of any unreturned items from the final paycheck.

Reports to the Texas Education Agency (TEA)

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

1. Any form of sexual or physical abuse of a minor or any other illegal conduct with a student or a minor
2. The possession, transfer, sale, or distribution of a controlled substance
3. The illegal transfer, appropriation, or expenditure of school property or funds
4. An attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle the individual to a professional position or to receive additional compensation associated with a position
5. Committing a crime on school property or at a school-sponsored event

6. Violating assessment instrument security procedures

The superintendent is also required to notify TEA when a certified employee resigns and there is evidence the educator engaged in the conduct listed above.

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

Reports Concerning Court-Ordered Withholding

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

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

STUDENT ISSUES

Equal Educational Opportunities

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

Questions or concerns about discrimination of students on any of the basis listed above should be directed to the administrator of the campus or the superintendent.

Student Records

Student records are confidential and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use. Employees should take precautions to maintain the confidentiality of all student records.

The following people are the only people who have general access to a student's records:

1. Parents: Married, separated, or divorced unless parental rights have been legally terminated and the school has been given a copy of the court order terminating parental rights.
2. The student (if 18 or older or emancipated by a court).
3. School officials with legitimate educational interests.

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

Parent and Student Complaints

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

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

Administering Medication to Students

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

Psychotropic Drugs

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance. District employees are prohibited by state law from doing the following:

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

Student Discipline

Students are expected to follow the classroom rules, campus rules, and rules listed in the Student Handbook and Student Code of Conduct. Teachers and administrators are responsible for taking disciplinary action based on a range of discipline management strategies that have been adopted by the district. Other employees that have concerns about a particular student's conduct should contact the classroom teacher or campus principal. Teachers must file a written report with the principal or another appropriate administrator when they have knowledge that a student has violated the Student Code of Conduct. A copy of this report will be sent by the principal or administrator to the student's parents within 24 hours. For additional information, see the student-parent handbook.

Student Attendance

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

Bullying

All employees are required to report student complaints of bullying, whether it is physical, emotional, verbal and/or

cyber to the principal/supervisor immediately. A failure to report may impair the district's ability to investigate and address the prohibited conduct and may result in disciplinary action.

