



# HOT SPRINGS SCHOOL DISTRICT #14-J

## 2024-2025 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

### MISSION STATEMENT

THE HOT SPRINGS SCHOOL COMMUNITY IS COMMITTED TO CREATING A POSITIVE AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT. THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH PARENTS, STAFF, AND STUDENTS WE STRIVE TO ENSURE SUCCESS FOR OUR FUTURE LEADERS.

**HELPING EVERYONE ACHIEVE TOGETHER**

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Hot Springs School District.

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 Material contained herein may, therefore, be superseded by such Board policy, administrative regulation, negotiated agreement, or changes in state or federal law.

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

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

In this handbook, **bolded policy codes** indicate related Board policies. Please direct any questions to Superintendent Chouinard

## DISTRICT MISSION STATEMENT

The Hot Springs School community is committed to creating a positive and safe learning environment. Through collaboration with parents, staff, and students we strive to ensure success for our future leaders.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES 2024-2025

The Legislature of the State of Montana delegates to the Board responsibility for the conduct and governance of district schools. The Trustees for the 2024-2025 school year, as elected by residents of this district, are as follows:

Frederick A. DePoe Jr, Board Chairman	PO Box 615, Hot Springs, MT 59845
Julie White, Vice-Chairman	PO Box 245, Hot Springs, MT 59845
Lynette Ek	249 Far West Rd, Hot Springs, MT 59845
Amanda DePoe	PO Box 822, Hot Springs, MT 59845
Jennifer Christensen	PO Box 707, Hot Springs, MT 59845

# SCHOOL CALENDAR

2024-2025

## HOT SPRINGS SCHOOL CALENDAR

8/16 Fall Sports  
8/19 - 8/24 PIR Days  
8/26 1st Day of School

AUGUST 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

FEBRUARY 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

2/25 3rd Midterm

9/2 Labor Day  
9/3 Kindergarten 1st Day  
9/16 Tribal PIR Day  
9/30 1st Midterm

SEPTEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

MARCH 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

3/31 End of 3rd Quarter

10/17-10/18 MEA Days (PIR)

OCTOBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

APRIL 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

4/8-9 Parent/Teacher Conferences 5-8pm  
4/21 Spring Break

11/4 End of 1st Quarter  
11/12 & 13 Parent/Teacher Conferences 5-8pm  
11/27 PIR Day  
11/28-30 Thanksgiving Break

NOVEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

MAY 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

5/1 4th Midterm  
5/26 Memorial Day  
5/31 Graduation

12/5 2nd Midterm  
12/18 Christmas Concert  
12/20-1/1 Christmas Break

DECEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JUNE 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

6/5 Last Day of School

1/22 End of 1st Semester

JANUARY 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

EVENTS						
PIR DAYS - NO SCHOOL						
HOLIDAYS - NO SCHOOL						
MIDTERM / QUARTER DATES						
NO SCHOOL						
**11/27 STUDENT EARLY RELEASE						
**6/5 STUDENT EARLY RELEASE						

REQUIRED EVENTS: FALL P/T CONFERENCES, CHRISTMAS CONCERT, SPRING P/T CONFERENCES, GRADUATION

## GENERAL TERMS OF EMPLOYMENT

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT**

The Board is an Equal Opportunity Employer. The district does not discriminate on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, genetic information, sex, or veteran status, as required by law. "Sex" includes sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. The district is required by federal law, including but not limited to the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX, Section 504, and the Americans with Disabilities Act and their regulations to not discriminate against individuals in violation of these laws.

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

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

If you have questions concerning District compliance with state and federal equal opportunity employment laws, including but not limited to Title IX, contact the district's [Non-Discrimination Coordinator & Title IX Coordinator] Gerald Chouinard OR [Section 504/ADA Coordinator Alisha Pablo Title IX Coordinator Gerald Chouinard; and Age Discrimination Coordinator Gerald Chouinard at 406-741-2962. For additional information, please see **Policy 5010**

Inquiries may also be directed to the Assistant Secretary for the U.S. Department of Education.

### **HARASSMENT/DISCRIMINATION**

The Board intends that employees have a safe and orderly work environment in which to do their jobs. Therefore, the Board does not condone and will not tolerate harassment or bullying of employees, discrimination against employees, or any act prohibited by Board policy that disrupts the workplace and/or keeps employees from doing their jobs.

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

Common behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Injuring, threatening, harassing or intimidating a staff member, board member or any other person.
- Defamation of character and/or reputation.
- Yelling, shouting, and screaming; intimidating gestures toward fellow employees.
- Behind-the-back-putdowns, insulting, and unfair criticism.
- Damaging or threatening to damage another's property.



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

Any employee who believes that he or she, or any other employee or student, is being subjected to harassment or discrimination should bring the matter to the attention of the Supervisor and/or Supervisor. Complaints of sexual harassment should be brought to the District's Title IX Coordinator. The district will investigate any such concerns promptly and confidentially to the extent possible. Complaints will be addressed via the applicable grievance procedure; the district's grievance procedures can be found on the district's website <https://www.hssdmt.org> and at each District building.

No employee will be subject to any form of reprisal or retaliation for having made a good-faith complaint under this policy. For complete information concerning the district's position prohibiting harassment/discrimination, assistance in reporting and responding to alleged incidents, and examples of prohibited behaviors, employees should refer to the district's policies and related procedures. For additional information if an employee believes that he or she has been discriminated against or harassed on the basis of race, creed, religion, color, national origin, age, physical or mental disability, marital status, genetic information, or sex, please see **Policies 5010, 5012, and 5015.**

## **HIRING**

All personnel are required to sign a written contract with the district. For further information on hiring, refer to **Policy 5120.**

## **JOB RESPONSIBILITIES**

All employees receive a copy of their job description and responsibilities for review. Immediate supervisors may assign other duties as needed. Employees should ask their supervisor if they have questions regarding their assigned duties and/or responsibilities. For additional information, please refer to **Policy 5140.**

## **CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS**

Any finalist recommended to be employed in a paid or volunteer position with the district, involving regular unsupervised access to students in schools, as determined by the Superintendent, shall submit to a criminal background investigation conducted by the appropriate law enforcement agency before consideration of the recommendation for employment or appointment. Any offer of

employment or appointment will be contingent on the results of the criminal background check. This policy shall also be applied to an employee of a person or firm holding a contract with the district, if the employee is working on school property, and the employee may have unsupervised access to students.

Any requirement of an applicant or employee of a contractor to submit to a fingerprint background check will be in compliance with the National Child Protection Act and applicable federal regulations. If an applicant has any prior record of arrest or conviction by any local, state, or federal law enforcement agency for an offense other than a minor traffic violation, the facts must be reviewed by the Superintendent, who will decide whether the applicant will be declared eligible for appointment or employment. Arrests resolved without conviction will not be considered in the hiring process, unless the charges are pending. The Superintendent shall keep all criminal record information confidential as required by law. For additional information, please see **Policy 5122**.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

In certain circumstances employees may receive confidential information regarding students' or employees' medical, discipline or court records. Employees are required to keep student and personnel information in the strictest confidence and are legally prohibited from passing confidential information along to any unauthorized individual. If employees have any questions about access to confidential information, they should speak to their supervisor.

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

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

Please refer to **Policies 5223 and 5231** for additional information.

## **SALARIES AND PAYROLL DISTRIBUTION**

Checks are issued according to a schedule approved annually by the Board. Salaries for certified personnel are based on a salary schedule providing for 158 days of employment. Determination of and changes to certified employees' rank and experience are determined in compliance with the Master Agreement. Classified personnel may be paid on an hourly or salary basis, as determined by the Board.

## **BENEFITS AND LEAVE**

### **INSURANCE**

The Board provides unemployment insurance, workers' compensation and liability insurance for all employees. In addition, the Board provides group health insurance to eligible employees. Certified employees are eligible for insurance benefits as stated in the current master contract. Classified employees who are regularly scheduled to work more than 40 hours per week are eligible for group health benefits contributions. Classified employees who are not regularly scheduled to work more than 40 hours per week are eligible for group health insurance benefits at the full cost.

For more information regarding insurance benefits for employees contact Carmen Jackson.

### **SALARY DEDUCTIONS**

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

### **EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENT**

School personnel are reimbursed for travel that is required as part of their duties or for school-related activities approved by the Supervisor. The district will inform staff regarding expense reimbursement guidelines annually. For additional information, please refer to **Policies 7335, 7336**.

### **HOLIDAYS**

Holidays for certified staff are dictated in part by the school calendar. Temporary employees will not receive holiday pay. Part-time employees will receive holiday pay on a prorated basis. The district will observe all school holidays as required by statute. When an eligible employee is required to work any of the school holidays, another day shall be granted in lieu of such holiday, unless the employee elects to be paid for the holiday in addition to the employee's regular pay for all time worked on the holiday.

When a school holiday falls on Sunday, the following Monday will not be a holiday. When a school holiday falls on Saturday, the preceding Friday will not be a holiday. When a holiday occurs during a period in which vacation is being taken by an employee, the holiday will not be charged against the employee's annual leave. Please refer to **Policy 5333** for additional information.

### **LEAVE**

In order to provide the highest level of service, employees are expected to be at work and on time every day. However, when circumstances dictate, the district provides leave to its employees pursuant to Montana law, master contracts and individual contracts. Employees who must be absent should inform their immediate supervisor as soon as possible but no later than the start of the scheduled shift. Listed below is general information regarding several types of leave available to

employees. Please note that in many cases a written request, submitted for approval before leave begins, is required. **Policy 5321** contains additional information regarding the standards for leave.

### **Sick Leave and Bereavement Leave**

Certified employees will be granted sick leave according to the terms of the master contract. Administrators and classified employees shall be granted sick leave pursuant to Montana law governing public employees. Unless otherwise stated by contract, "sick leave" means a leave of absence, with pay, for an illness suffered by an employee or a member of the employee's immediate family. "Immediate family" is defined as the employee's spouse and children residing in the employee's household.

An employee who has a death in the family is eligible for up to 5 days of paid bereavement leave, which the Director has the authority to approve. Employees seeking more than 5 days of bereavement leave must apply for that leave through the Board. The Board may grant additional, unpaid leave in its sole discretion. For the purposes of bereavement leave, "family" is defined as the employee's spouse, child, parents/guardians, sibling, grandparents and spouses like relations.

### **Personal and Emergency Leave**

Certified employees will be granted personal or discretionary and emergency leave according to the terms of the master contract. Administrators will be granted personal, and emergency leave pursuant to the terms of their individual contracts, or at the discretion of the Board. Classified staff may be granted personal and emergency leave at the discretion of the Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent. Personal and emergency leave is without pay unless otherwise stated.

### **Civic Duties Leave**

Employees shall be granted leave for service on a jury, in the Legislature or in response to a subpoena in accordance with state law. Each employee who is under proper summons as a juror or witness shall collect all fees and allowances payable as a result of the service and forward the fees to the appropriate accounting office. Juror and witness fees shall be applied against the amount due to the employee from his employer. However, if an employee elects to charge his juror or witness time off against his annual leave, he shall not be required to remit his juror fees to his employer. In no instance is an employee required to remit to his employer any expense or mileage allowance paid to him by the court.

### **Military Leave**

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

### **Vacation Leave**

Administrators will be granted vacation leave pursuant to the terms of their individual contracts



and Montana law. Classified employees will be granted vacation leave pursuant to Montana law. The district, in its sole discretion, may provide cash compensation for unused vacation leave in lieu of the accumulation of vacation leave.

### **Maternity Leave**

The district will provide maternity leave to its employees pursuant to Montana law.

### **Adoption Leave**

The district may provide leave related to the adoption of a child pursuant to the terms of any master or individual contracts and the law.

## **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE (FMLA)**

### **Eligibility**

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

### **Length/Purpose of Leave**

In accordance with provisions of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA), a leave of absence of up to twelve (12) weeks during a twelve-(12)-month period may be granted to an eligible employee for the following reasons: 1) birth of a child; 2) placement of a child for adoption or foster care; 3) a serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform functions of the job; 4) to care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition; 5) because of a qualifying exigency (as the Secretary shall, by regulation, determine) arising out of the fact that the spouse or a son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on covered active duty as a member of the regular Armed Forces or is on covered active duty or is under a call or order to covered active duty as a Member of the National Guard or Reserves.

### **Servicemember Family Leave**

An eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered servicemember, who is a current member (or a member on the temporary disability retired list) of the Regular Armed Forces, National Guard, Reserves, or is a veteran who has incurred an injury or illness in the line of duty while on active duty, shall be entitled to a total of twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave during a twelve-(12)-month period to care for the servicemember. The leave described in this paragraph shall only be available during a single twelve-(12)-month period.

For additional information, please refer to **Policy 5328**.

## PERSONNEL MANAGMENT

### **EMPLOYMENT AND ASSIGNMENT**

Each certificated employee will be employed under a written contract, subject to the terms and conditions of the master contract and District policies. Renewal and non-renewal will be determined by the Board after receiving a recommendation from the Superintendent and in conformance with law.

Each classified employee will be employed under a written contract for a specified term, with a beginning and ending date. Such employees shall have no expectation of continued employment from year to year, and contracts of employment may be renewed or non-renewed each year, at the district's sole option. The district reserves the right to change employment conditions affecting an employee's duties, assignment, supervisor, or grade.

The Superintendent may assign, reassign, and/or transfer positions and duties of all staff, subject to any provisions contained in the master contract. The Superintendent will provide for a system of assignment, reassignment, and transfer of classified staff, including voluntary transfers and promotions. Nothing in this policy prevents reassignment of a staff member during a school year. For additional information, please see **Policy 5210**.

### **EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE**

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

Discipline will be reasonably appropriate to the circumstance and will include, but not be limited to, a supervisor's right to reprimand an employee and the Superintendent's right to suspend an employee, with or without pay, or to impose other appropriate disciplinary sanctions. In accordance with Montana law, only the Board may terminate an employee or non-renew employment. See **Policies 5255 and 5250 for additional information**.

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

### **EVALUATIONS**

Each non-administrative staff member's job performance will be evaluated by the staff member's direct supervisor. The evaluation process includes scheduled annual evaluations using forms applicable to the job classification and description, and day-to-day appraisals. Certified staff members shall be evaluated according to the terms stated in any master contract or pursuant to

**Policy 5222.** Employees have a right to access the evaluation instrument and right to respond in writing to the completed evaluation.

The supervisor will provide a copy of the completed evaluation to the staff members and will provide an opportunity to discuss the evaluation. The original should be signed by the staff member and filed in the staff member's personnel file. If the staff member refuses to sign the evaluation, the supervisor should note the refusal and submit the evaluation to the Superintendent. Staff members may have up to 10 working days to submit a rebuttal to the evaluation for inclusion in the file. Failure to sign an evaluation form noting receipt may subject the employee to discipline. For more information regarding evaluation of non-administrative staff, please refer to **Policy 5222**.

## **PERSONNEL RECORDS**

The district maintains a complete personnel record for every current and former employee. The employees' personnel records will be maintained in the district's administrative office. Employees and their designees will be given supervised access to their personnel records in the administrative office. Copies may be given to employees and their designees, but under no circumstances may the original file leave the administrative office. In addition to the Superintendent or other designees, the Board may grant a member of the Board access to cumulative personnel files. Counsel retained by the Board will also have access to a cumulative personnel file if necessary. Personnel records will be maintained for 10 years after the employee has left the district's employment.

No material derogatory to an employee's conduct, service, character, or personality shall be placed in the file, unless the employee has had the opportunity to review the material. The employee shall be entitled to respond to the material and to have that response placed in the file, if requested in a reasonable period of time, not to exceed 10 working days.

## **MEETINGS**

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

## **EMPLOYEE CONDUCT**

### **Absenteeism and Tardiness**

Regular and timely attendance is an essential function of each position within the district. Employees are expected to report for work on time and to notify their immediate supervisor if they must be tardy or absent. Failure to provide regular and timely attendance may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **Disrupting the Educational Process**

Any employee who participates in or encourages activities that disrupt the educational process, or the operations of the district may be subject to disciplinary action, including termination. **Policy 5255.**

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

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

### **Contact Information**

Employees are required to annually update their contact information, including phone number and physical address, at the beginning of each school. If an employee's contact information changes at any time after the beginning of the school, the employee is required to update his/her contact information to the current information. Contact Carmen Jackson to update contact information.

### **Drug-Free/Alcohol-Free Schools**

Employees must not manufacture, distribute, dispense, be under the influence of, purchase, possess, use, or attempt to obtain in the workplace or in the performance of duties, alcohol or any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana (including medical marijuana) or any other controlled substance. For purposes of this regulation, a controlled substance is one that is not legally obtainable, or one that is legally obtainable and not being used as prescribed or referenced in federal and state-controlled substance acts. Any employee who violates the terms of the district's drug-free/alcohol-free policies may be suspended, nonrenewed or terminated. Violations may result in notification of appropriate legal officials. Any employee convicted of a workplace violation of drug abuse statutes must notify his or her supervisor of the conviction within five (5) working days. For additional information, please refer to **Policy 5226.**

The use of any legally obtained prescription drug or other controlled substance (including medical marijuana) by any employee while performing their duties or while in a school facility is prohibited to the extent such use may affect the safety of the employee, co-workers, or members of the public, the employee's job performance, or the safe and efficient operation of school facilities. Employees are required to advise their supervisor if they are taking a legal prescription drug or other controlled substance (including medical marijuana) that may have adverse effects on their ability to perform their job safely and efficiently. The supervisor, in conjunction with administration, shall determine whether the employee poses a threat to his or her own safety, the safety of other employees, or significantly affects his or her job performance if using the legally obtained prescription drug or

other controlled substance (including medical marijuana) and can continue working. The district will provide reasonable accommodations as required by law for an employee who cannot safely perform his or her job duties because of use of a legally obtained prescription drug or other controlled substance (including medical marijuana).

### **Weapons**

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

### **Dress and Appearance**

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

### **Breastfeeding Accommodations**

The district will provide reasonable accommodations for breastfeeding mothers, including access to a private area to express breast milk or breastfeed an infant child, permission to bring a breast pump and any other equipment to express breast milk, access to a power source for a breast pump or any other equipment for expressing breast milk, and access to a place to store expressed breast milk safely.

### **Participation in Political Activities**

District employees may exercise their right to participate fully in affairs of public interest on a local, county, state, and national level, on the same basis as any citizen in public or private employment and within the law. Employees may, within the limitations imposed by state and federal laws and regulations, choose any side of a particular issue and support their viewpoints as they desire, by vote, discussion, or persuading others. Such discussion and persuasion, however, may not be carried on during the performance of district duties.

### **Participation in Religious Activities**

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

### **Tobacco and Marijuana Products**

The district maintains tobacco- and marijuana-free buildings and grounds, as required by Montana law. Tobacco includes, but is not limited to, vapor products, cigarettes, cigars, snuff, smokeless tobacco, alternative nicotine product or any other tobacco or nicotine innovation. Marijuana products are products that contain marijuana for use by a consumer and include but are not limited to edible products, ointments, tinctures, marijuana derivatives, marijuana concentrates, and

marijuana intended for use by smoking or vaping. Use of tobacco and marijuana products will not be allowed in any District school district buildings, grounds or vehicles, or while on duty during District-sponsored events. However, nothing prohibits an employee from using a smoking cessation product on Cooperative or district property. An employee may use a tobacco product, vapor product, alternative nicotine product, or marijuana product in a classroom or otherwise on District school property as part of a lecture, demonstration, or educational forum concerning the risks of such product with prior notice and approval of the building administrator. Please see **Policy 5226**.

### **Use of School Property/Electronic Communication System/Social Networking Pages**

Employees may not use any District facility, vehicle, electronic communication system, equipment, or materials to perform outside work. These items (including security codes and electronic records such as e-mail) are District property. Employees may not use a code, access a file, or retrieve any stored communication unless they have been given authorization to do so. Employees cannot expect confidentiality or privacy of the information in their e-mail accounts and should review **Policy 5450 and 5460** for specific information regarding use of the Internet. Authorized District personnel may monitor the use of electronic equipment from time to time, and violations of **Policy 5450 and 5460** may result in discipline up to and including termination.

The on-campus and off-campus conduct of employees may impact their ability to function professionally and effectively in the district. Given student and parent interest in and use of electronic media, this is especially true as related to employees' action on electronic social networking websites. Employees may not set up or update their personal electronic social networking websites using the district's computers, network or equipment. Employees who set up personal electronic social networking webpages on their home or personal computers are responsible for the content of their webpages, including but not limited to: content added by employees, their friends or members of the public who can access their webpages; or content that is linked to the employees' webpages.

Employees who set up personal websites or webpages do so at their own risk; however, employees are strongly encouraged to keep their personal webpages private and to prevent students and the parents of students from accessing their personal webpages.

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

### **Health, Safety and Security**

It is the intent of the district to provide a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. Employees should report any security hazard or conditions they believe to be unsafe to their immediate supervisor. The district may require the use of personal protective equipment, including but not limited to face masks, if necessary for the safety and welfare of staff and students. For information on the District's Safety Plan and Bloodborne Pathogen Control Plan, contact your immediate supervisor or see the District's *Policy Manual* and related procedures. **Policy 8301** contains more detailed information regarding these measures.



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

### **Assaults and Threats of Violence**

Employees should immediately report any threats they receive (oral or written) to their immediate supervisor and to the appropriate District official.

### **Child Abuse**

A District employee who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a student may be an abused or neglected child (which includes but is not limited to child sex trafficking and human trafficking), regardless of whether the person suspected of causing the abuse or neglect is a parent or other person responsible for the child's welfare, shall report such a case to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services and notify the building administrator that a report has been made. An employee does not discharge the obligation to personally report by notifying the Superintendent or building administrator. Any District employee who fails to report a suspected case of abuse or neglect to the Department of Public Health and Human Services, or who prevents another person from doing so, may be civilly liable for damages proximately caused by such failure or prevention and is guilty of a misdemeanor. The employee will also be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination. In the event that a DPHHS reveals information to an employee after he or she makes a report or requests that information be shared with another employee, employees receiving such information shall keep the information confidential. Please refer to **Policy 5232**.

### **Curriculum**

The curriculum established for the courses and grade levels of this district provides the flexibility necessary to meet the individual needs of students and their divergent learning rates and styles. Deviations from established curriculum, textbooks, and instructional materials are not permitted without prior building principal approval. Teachers with questions should contact the building principal. Though teaching methodology may vary, classroom instruction is expected to reflect "best practices" consistent with research on effective instruction. The district may receive and/or provide remote, offsite, and technology delivered learning programs, as provided in Montana law and set forth in District procedures.

Parents/guardians must be given at least 48-hours' notice before any "human sexuality instruction" is scheduled to occur. "Human sexuality instruction" means teaching or otherwise providing information about human sexuality, including intimate relationships, human sexual anatomy, sexual reproduction, sexually transmitted infections, sexual acts, sexual orientation, gender identity, abstinence, contraception, or reproductive rights and responsibilities. A parent/guardian may excuse a student from attending a scheduled class period, assembly, school function, or other instruction when the subject matter is related to human sexuality. Such absence is considered to be an excused absence.

Parents/guardians may also excuse their child from instruction, presentations, assemblies, guest lectures, or other educational events at the school that offend the parent's beliefs or practices. Parents/guardians must be directed to the building administrator to discuss such excusal.

### **Gifts and Solicitation**

Staff members are to avoid accepting anything of value offered by another for the purpose of influencing his/her professional judgment. No organization may solicit funds from staff members within the schools, nor may anyone distribute flyers or other materials related to fund drives through the school without building principal approval. The solicitation of staff by salespeople, other staff, or agents during on-duty hours is prohibited without building principal approval. Any solicitation should be reported at once to the building principal.

### **Grievances/Communications**

District employees shall use the Complaint Procedure to address complaints/concerns about District policies, procedures and directives that cannot be resolved informally. Employees covered by a master negotiated contract must use the grievance procedure in that contract to address alleged violations of that contract. Policy 1700 contains the District's Uniform Grievance Procedure, which applies to all grievances except for those relating to complaints/concerns involving challenges to educational material, those governed by a specified procedure in state or federal law that supersedes a uniform grievance process, and those about sexual harassment and disability discrimination. A written copy of the District's Uniform Grievance Procedure can be obtained from the Superintendent's office.

**District employees shall use the Title IX Grievance Procedure to address complaints/concerns about sex discrimination. A copy of the Title IX Grievance Procedures if available at <https://www.hssdmt.org> or at any district or school office.**

**District employees shall use the Section 504 Grievance Procedures to address complaints/concerns about disability discrimination. A copy of the Section 504 Grievance Procedures if available at <https://www.hssdmt.org> or at any district or school office.**

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment of any individual is prohibited. Sexual harassment is conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

1. Quid pro quo: An employee of the recipient conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the recipient on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient's education program or activity; or
3. "Sexual assault" as defined in 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v), "dating violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), "domestic violence" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or "stalking" as defined in 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30).

A determination of responsibility resulting from a formal complaint against an employee for engaging in sex-based harassment will result in appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.

Complaints may be submitted via the District's Title IX Grievance Procedure. Please refer to **Policies 5012 and 5015** for additional information regarding the district's prohibition against discrimination and harassment.

### **Outside Employment or Activities**

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

## **INTERACTION WITH STUDENTS**

### **ADMINISTERING MEDICATIONS TO STUDENTS**

Students who must take prescription and/or over-the-counter medication at school, on a temporary or regular basis, must provide a written request to administer medication, signed by the parent. All medications will be kept in locked storage in the office unless a student is authorized to carry medication on his/her person during the school day. Parents of students who must carry and self-administer medication must complete the Montana Authorization to Possess or Self-Administer Medication form and return it to the building office.

Teachers may be expected to assist students in remembering when a medication is scheduled to be administered. If the student refuses to take medication, teachers are expected to notify the parent whenever possible. Attempts to contact parents must be documented as to date and time. A teacher may not administer medication to a student without parental consent and an appropriate delegation by the school nurse. Delegation of certain tasks, including the administration of medication, to school employees may be made by a licensed nurse pursuant to Montana law.

Please refer to **Policy 3416**.

### **CLASS INTERRUPTIONS**

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

### **CORPORAL PUNISHMENT**

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

A staff member is authorized to use reasonable force when, in his/her professional judgment, the physical force is necessary to maintain safety for other students, school personnel, or other persons, or for the purpose of self-defense.

## **DISMISSAL OF CLASSES**

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

## **FIELD TRIPS AND SPECIAL EVENTS**

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

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

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

Staff members should contact the office for appropriate substitute and vehicle arrangements and related field trip procedures and forms.

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

## **GRADING**

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

Teachers should use a variety of communication devices, including telephone and personal conferences as well as written grade reports, to keep parents well informed. At the beginning of the grading period, students and parents are to be informed regarding the basis of the grades and the methods to be used in determining grades.

The teacher's gradebook needs to be updated for the prior week by Sunday at midnight.



Students may alternatively be evaluated based upon proficiency as set out in **Policy 2420**.

### **GRADES K-8 (STANDARDS-BASED GRADING)**

Standards-based grading (SBG) is an educational approach that focuses on assessing students' mastery of specific learning standards or objectives. SBG aims to provide a clearer picture of what students know and can do regarding specific skills and content areas. Here are the key components of SBG:

**Clear Learning Objectives:** Standards are clearly defined, outlining what students need to know and be able to do at each grade level or course.

**Focused Assessments:** Assessments are designed to measure students; proficiency in each standard. These assessments can include tests, projects, presentations, and other forms of evaluation.

**Proficiency Levels:** Instead of traditional letter grades, SBG uses proficiency levels to indicate how well students have mastered the standards. Hot Springs Elementary School uses the following identified grading levels to measure degrees of student academic performance:

- 0: Absent:** Not present for instruction.
- 1: Below:** I don't understand this.
- 2: Developing:** I am starting to understand.
- 3: Proficient:** I can do this independently.
- 4: Exceeds:** I can teach this.

The overall goal of standards-based grading is to create a more transparent, equitable, and meaningful assessment system that accurately reflects students, learning and supports their academic development.

### **HIGH SCHOOL (TRADITIONAL GRADING)**

Grades will comply with the following:

90-100	A
80-89	B
70-79	C
60-69	D
0-59	F

Grades are determined by rounding percentages to the nearest whole number. Pluses and minuses do not affect GPA and do not appear on official transcripts. A+ or A- is factored into the GPA as an A.

## **RECORDING STUDENTS**

The district may use security and surveillance video cameras on District property to ensure the health, welfare, and safety of all staff, students, and visitors to District property, and to safeguard District facilities and equipment. Employees may not audio or video record students outside of the security and surveillance recording done without prior parent permission.

## **RESUSCITATION**

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

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

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

## **STUDENT CONDUCT**

In addition to adopted Board policies governing student conduct, administrative regulations specifying student-conduct expectations have been established. These rules apply to actions which occur on district property, at any district-sponsored activity regardless of location; or when traveling to or from school for district-sponsored activities. Disregard of these rules constitutes grounds for suspension, expulsion, or other reasonable disciplinary action.

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

Student conduct rules unique to individual classrooms may also be developed by teachers. All such rules must be consistent with district policy and local building administrative regulations governing student conduct and discipline. Classroom rules and consequences are to be reviewed with students, posted in classrooms and made available to parents.

Staff members must notify law enforcement and/or the Department of Public Health and Human Services if they know or reasonably believe that allegations of bullying, harassment, or intimidation involving a student constitutes criminal activity or child abuse or neglect. Staff members must notify their supervisor or an administrator in the event that such a report has been or will be made. If a staff member has concerns about the safety of a student, the staff member must contact an administrator and/or a counselor immediately. If a staff member is concerned that a student is being bullied or harassed, the staff member must notify an administrator. If a staff member has knowledge of conduct that may constitute discrimination on the basis of race or disability, the staff



member must promptly notify the district's nondiscrimination and/or Section 504 coordinator. If a staff member has knowledge of conduct that may constitute discrimination on the basis of sex or sexual harassment, the staff member must promptly notify a District administrator and/or the Title IX coordinator.

## **VISITORS**

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

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

# ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have received a copy of the Employee Handbook issued by the District, and understand and agree that I am to review this handbook in detail and to consult District policies and procedures and with my supervisor if I have any questions concerning its contents.

I understand:

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

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Signature of Employee*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*Date*

**Return this signed form to the District Office by Monday, August 26, 2024**