

2024-2025

BENTON COUNTY SCHOOLS EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



**HOME OF
THE BLUE DEVILS
AND
THE REBELS!**

ASHLAND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ASHLAND HIGH SCHOOL
BENTON COUNTY ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL
BENTON COUNTY CAREER TECHNICAL CENTER
HICKORY FLAT ATTENDANCE CENTER

Non-Discrimination Statement

The Benton County School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, or disability in the provision of educational programs and services or employment opportunities and benefits. (Reference: MS State Board of Education Policies, Rule 84.3)

Section 504 Information

The following person has been designated as Section 504/Americans with Disabilities Act Coordinator and will handle inquiries regarding the Benton County School District's non-discrimination policies, the filing of grievances, and requests for copies of grievance procedures covering discrimination on the basis of disability. (Benton County School District Policy IDDH)

Mrs. Pamela Gray, Assistant Superintendent and SPED Director

231 Court Street Ashland, MS 38603

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Title IX Information

The following person has been designated as the Title IX Coordinator and will handle any complaints regarding Title IX issues. (Benton County School District Policy JB)

Mrs. Elynda Finley, Federal Programs Director

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Introduction

This handbook has been compiled by a committee consisting of the school principals, the superintendent, and central office administrative staff. Its purpose is to provide general information and to assist you in knowing what is expected of you as a staff member in the Benton County School District. Use this handbook, the student handbook, district policy, your personal professional knowledge, and directives from administrative staff to guide your behavior and decision making. Compliance with the regulations expressed in this handbook is mandatory. Regulations will apply to ALL staff members unless otherwise specified. Written documentation of non-compliance will be kept in a personnel file at each local school.

Student-Staff Relations

All members of the school staff must work to create a positive school climate in which learning can take place. Effective schools make instruction their primary focus. School staff should strive to create the expectation that all students can learn. Staff members should exhibit acceptance of each student as an individual with inherent potential. Students should be treated with courtesy and respect, and should never be ridiculed by staff members, nor should they be the targets for sarcasm or inappropriate remarks. Strive to treat your students in the same way you would want your children to be treated.

The Benton County School District does not condone and will not tolerate bullying or harassing behavior. Any person who feels he/she has been a victim of bullying or harassing behavior shall report the behavior to the appropriate school or district-level official.

Student-Centered Instruction

The services of men and women of integrity, high ideals, and human understanding are basic to an effective educational program. To maintain and promote these essential qualities, all employees of the district shall maintain high standards of conduct in their behavior and in their school relationships. This includes being honest, treating students and fellow staff members fairly and with courtesy, and treating fellow staff members as fellow professionals. The MDE Code of Ethics brochure has been placed at the front of your employee handbook. You are expected to read and comply with the standards outlined in the document.

Absences

Administration must notify the Superintendent's Office in the case of an administrator's absence.

Administrators are expected to be present at his/her designated site. Please be aware attendance is required on teacher workdays.

Each employee, except bus drivers, shall be credited at the beginning of each school year with seven sick days and two personal days. If the two personal days are not used during the school year, they may be changed to sick days and carried over to the next school year.

Time missed from school will be counted as either a whole day or a half day. Any time missed which is less than four hours will be counted as a half day. An absence which causes you to miss more than four hours will be counted as a full day.

Personal leave may not be taken on the first day of the school term, the last day of a school term, or a day prior to or immediately following a holiday. If a teacher is absent due to illness on the day immediately prior to or following a holiday, he/she must present a written doctor's excuse to verify the illness. If a written doctor's excuse is not presented, each day will count two days against the teacher's record.

If days are missed in excess of the number of days a teacher has been allotted, the teacher will have deducted from his/her pay the established amount of substitute compensation for the first ten days of absence. After the first ten days of absence, the teacher will have deducted from his/her pay his/her daily rate of pay.

If you must be absent from school, you must notify your principal. If you are a member of the janitorial staff, you must notify your principal first and Mr. Harold Nicholson, Maintenance Director, second to secure a replacement. **Under no circumstances should you simply not show up for work without notice.**

Students must be kept gainfully occupied during the school day; therefore, each principal will have in place a plan detailing how this will be carried out when a teacher is absent. This may involve the use of pre-prepared lesson plans or the use of substitute packets prepared by the teacher.

Asbestos

In compliance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, the Benton County School District has regular asbestos inspections of all school buildings. The inspection findings and our asbestos management plan are on file in the Office of the Superintendent and the administrative offices of each campus. They are available upon request, and a reproduction fee of twenty-five cents per page is charged for any duplication.

Cell Phones (Staff Members)

Staff members and aides are not to use cell phones during the school day except within the following guidelines:

1. An emergency situation occurs - in which case an administrator is to be notified before the call is made.

2. The teacher, aide, or other staff member needs to reach the principal, another member of the administrative staff, or school office for a valid, work-related matter.

Cell phones are not to be openly carried or displayed on the body at any time during the school day. Cell phones are to be kept silent or on vibrate so that the ring is not audible. **At no time should a teacher, aide, or other staff member be observed talking on, making a call on, or otherwise using a cell phone except as outlined above.** Those who violate this policy shall be written up and a record placed in the employee's file. Repeated violations of this policy may result in more serious disciplinary action.

The Benton County School District assumes no liability for cell phones brought on to school property, including school buses. The owner of the cell phone brings the cell phone at his/her own risk. The Benton County School District is not responsible if the cell phone is stolen, lost, damaged, or otherwise harmed.

Classroom Appearance

Each teacher is expected to maintain an attractive classroom which is orderly, safe, and conducive to learning. Bulletin boards and other classroom decorations are to be neat, attractive, and have an academic focus whenever possible. Bulletin boards are to be redone at least once each month. Displays or student work are encouraged and expected. *Please note: displaying student work with student names and grades is not acceptable.*

Staff members are to establish and enforce expectations for students in picking up and disposing of trash, keeping things orderly in the classroom, keeping their belongings off of the floor, etc. The classroom should be organized, uncluttered, and inviting. The overall school appearance is the responsibility of the administrator and should be a reflection of respect and professionalism.

Classroom Environment

The classroom environment is a vital component of student learning. It is important that the environment is one of acceptance, where students feel valued as individuals as well as contributing members of the group as a whole. Staff members are to structure their classroom environments to be responsive to the needs of students. The overall school appearance is the responsibility of the administrator and should be a reflection of respect and professionalism. The overall school environment is the responsibility of the administrator. All stakeholders are expected to be treated with the highest regard at all times. The principles and guidelines of "The Responsive Classroom" approach are as follows:

1. Social curriculum goes hand in hand with academic curriculum.
2. How students learn is as important as what they learn.
3. The greatest cognitive growth occurs through social interaction.

4. There is a set of social skills which children must learn to be successful academically and socially - cooperation, assertion, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.
5. Knowing the students we teach individually, culturally, and developmentally is as important as knowing the content we teach.
6. Knowing the families of the students we teach and inviting this participation is essential to children's education.
7. How the adults at school work together is as important as individual competence - lasting change begins with the adult community.

Staff members are encouraged to research and implement strategies to make their classrooms responsive to the needs of students. For more information, see www.responsiveclassroom.org.

Complaints and Grievances

A "grievance" is a complaint by an individual based upon an alleged violation of a person's rights under state or federal law or board policy. This includes alleged violations based on an individual's sex or disability. A "grievant" is a person or persons making a complaint. The term "days" shall mean working school days and shall exclude weekends or vacation days. The procedure shall be as follows:

Level One

1. All grievances must be presented orally to the principal or the immediate supervisor of grievant within five days of the act or omission complained of, and the principal or immediate supervisor will attempt to resolve the matter informally.
2. If the grievant is not satisfied with the action taken or the explanation given by the principal or immediate supervisor, the grievant shall, within five days after meeting with the principal or immediate supervisor, file a written complaint with the principal or immediate supervisor setting forth in detail how the grievant claims to have been discriminated against. This written statement shall contain, in addition to the above, the time, place, and nature of the alleged act of omission and the state or federal law or board policy allegedly violated. This statement must be signed by the grievant.
3. In the event the grievant does not submit to his/her principal or immediate supervisor a written statement as required, his/her failure to do so shall be deemed as an acceptance of the informal decision rendered by his/her principal or immediate supervisor.

Level Two

1. Upon receipt by the superintendent of the written notice that the grievant intends to appeal the decision of the principal or immediate supervisor, the superintendent shall notify the grievant in writing within five days and shall advise the grievant of the date and time upon which the matter will be considered by the superintendent. The superintendent shall schedule a hearing on the matter no later than ten days from the date of receipt of the written notice to appeal the decision of the principal or immediate supervisor.

2. The written statement submitted by the grievant to his/her principal or immediate supervisor in Level One shall form the basis of the grievance before the superintendent. The grievant shall submit any and all additional information on his behalf which he desires to the superintendent in writing no later than five days prior to the date upon which the matter is scheduled for hearing by the superintendent.
3. In the event that the grievant does not personally attend the hearing scheduled by the superintendent, his/her failure to attend shall be deemed as an acceptance of the decision rendered by his/her principal or immediate supervisor at Level One.
4. The superintendent shall render a written decision to the grievant within five days of the date on which the matter was heard.

Level Three

1. If the grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the grievant at Level Two or if the superintendent does not render a decision within five days, the grievant may file the grievance with the secretary of the school board.
2. If the grievance is not filed with the secretary of the board within five days of the hearing at Level Two, the grievance shall be considered resolved.
3. Within five days after the receipt of the grievance by the board secretary, the board president shall schedule a hearing before the board regarding the grievance.
4. The board shall render its decision within seven days of the hearing.
5. All employees are expected to follow the proper chain of command. If there is a concern, the immediate supervisor should be notified first. For example, at the school level, that person would be the principal.

Computer Use

Staff members are responsible for the use of the computers located in their classrooms and any computer labs used by their classes. Staff members are to allow only their students to use computers for a legitimate educational or academic purpose. Staff members will be required to use Google Classroom for K-6th grade and Canvas for 7-12. Staff members and students are not to use computers for browsing the web or for instant messaging during instructional or planning time. Staff members who have Smart Boards are not to use instant messaging with other employees on the Smart Board where students may view it. All staff must sign a computer usage policy and return to the main office.

Corporal Punishment

Reasonable corporal punishment is permitted as a disciplinary measure in order to preserve an effective educational environment which is free from disruption and is conducive to furthering the educational mission of the school board.

The following guidelines shall be adhered to:

1. Reasonable corporal punishment shall be administered as a last resort and only after less stringent measures such as counseling, parental conference, loss of privileges, etc. have failed to produce the desired results - unless the conduct of a student is of such an extreme nature that corporal punishment is the only reasonable form of discipline considering the circumstances.
2. Any corporal punishment shall be reasonable and moderate and may not be administered maliciously or for the purpose of revenge. Such factors as size, age, and condition of the student; the type of instrument to be used, and the amount of force to be used shall be considered before administering any corporal punishment.
3. Corporal punishment may be administered by a licensed teacher as long as a licensed, practicing administrator is the witness. There are no exceptions to this policy.
4. When administrators administer corporal punishment, it must be witnessed by a licensed employee. There are no exceptions to this policy.
5. A record of the corporal punishment shall be kept in the school's office. The record shall state the student's name, name of licensed staff member administering the corporal punishment, name of licensed witness, number of strokes, the date, and the reason for disciplinary action. The record shall be kept on file in the office in written or electronic form. A copy of the record shall be sent home to the parent/guardian.
6. Corporal punishment may not be administered on school property by the student's parent/guardian.
7. No other student shall be present and witness the corporal punishment of another student.
8. No student receiving special education services shall ever receive corporal punishment, per legislation. There are no exceptions.

In the event the parent/guardian notifies the school that he/she does not wish for his/her child to receive corporal punishment, the child shall be suspended in lieu of corporal punishment. The term of suspension shall be determined at the principal's discretion in keeping with the offense committed.

Discipline (Students)

Maintaining classroom order is the teacher's responsibility. Staff members should structure and manage the classroom to prevent problems by planning ahead, being highly organized, and having all materials prepared ahead of time. Students who are productively engaged and consistently supervised are much less likely to cause disruptions. **Employees are responsible for knowing the contents of the Student Handbook regarding discipline.**

Clear, reasonable rules which are appropriate to the age and grade of the students are to be established. These rules are to be clearly displayed and reviewed with the students. Rules are to be consistently and fairly enforced. Staff members are to establish age-appropriate, reasonable, and fair consequences

which will occur when students do not cooperate. An office referral should be used as a last resort. Reasonable corporal punishment shall be used only after less stringent measures such as student conferences, parent conferences, loss of privileges, etc. have failed to produce the desired results unless the conduct of a student is of such an extreme nature that corporal punishment is the only reasonable form of discipline considering the circumstances.

Discipline (Employees)

The following steps will be followed by the principal or immediate supervisor in the event of a work-related problem or issue:

1. **Counseling** - The employee and supervisor will discuss the issue and concerns. The counseling session will be designed to help the employee recognize the mistake or deficiency, accept the standard that is required, clarify the expectation and standards if necessary, and understand the consequences of failing to meet the standard. The counseling session will be documented with a memo placed in the employee's personnel file.
2. **Oral Reprimand** - An oral reprimand will be given when the counseling session did not result in a satisfactory resolution of the issue. An oral reprimand will clearly indicate the nature of the problem; cite the work standard, rule, or policy violated; and explain precisely what corrective action is expected. The employee will be notified that more serious disciplinary action is forthcoming if the situation is not corrected. The oral reprimand will be documented with an "oral reprimand" memo placed in the employee's personnel file.
3. **Written Reprimand** - A written reprimand will be given when counseling and an oral reprimand have not resulted in satisfactory resolution of the issue. The written reprimand will include a review of prior disciplinary action; cite the work standard, rule, or policy violated; place the employee on written notice that corrective action must be taken; and be based on facts and information of record. The written reprimand will be documented with a "written reprimand" memo placed in the employee's personnel file. The written reprimand along with other applicable documentation will be forwarded to the superintendent.
4. **Suspension/Demotion** - Suspension or demotion may be used when an employee has not responded to the previous steps or a more serious violation has occurred that warrants suspension for a first offense.
5. An employee suspension or demotion may only be put in place by the superintendent or school board.
6. An employee may be suspended with or without pay.
7. An employee may be suspended pending an investigation with the understanding that a final decision relative to the appropriate final disciplinary action will be made after the investigation has concluded.

8. An employee may be demoted in the form of reduction in rank, reduction in pay, or both. Demotion in rank refers to the removal of an employee from his/her present position to one of less responsibility.
9. **Termination** - If all previous steps have been unsuccessful, the employee may be terminated from employment. Certain violations may warrant immediate termination. Employee terminations will be recommended by the superintendent and acted on by the school board, will not be done in haste, and only after a thorough investigation.

For incompetence, neglect of duty, immoral conduct, intemperance, brutal treatment of a student, or other good cause, the superintendent of the school district may dismiss or suspend any licensed employee. The principal may recommend the suspension of a teacher in writing to the superintendent for the same. Before being so removed or suspended, the certified employee shall be notified of the charges against him/her and shall be advised the he/she is entitled to a public hearing upon said charges

In the event the continued presence of said employee on school premises poses a threat or danger to the health, safety, or general welfare of students, or in the discretion of the superintendent, may interfere with or cause a disruption of normal school operations, the superintendent may immediately release said employee of all duties pending a hearing if one is requested by the employee. In the event a licensed employee is arrested, indicted, or otherwise charged with a felony by a recognized law enforcement agency, the continued presence of the employee on school premises shall be deemed to constitute a disruption of the normal school day.

The school board, upon a request for a hearing by the person so suspended or removed, shall set a date, time and place for such hearing which will not be sooner than five days nor later than thirty days from the date of the request. From the decision made at the hearing, the employee shall be allowed an appeal to the chancery court. In the event the employee does not request a hearing within five calendar days of the date of the notice of discharge or suspension, it shall constitute a waiver of all rights by said employee and such discharge or suspension shall be effective on the date set out in the notice to the employee. Insubordination is one of the "other good causes" for which an employee may be dismissed.

Dress Code (Students)

Staff members are required to assist the administration in enforcing the student dress/uniform code. Staff members should be alert regarding how students are dressed, and if a violation is noted, the teacher should take action. If the violation is mild, the teacher should instruct the student to correct the situation. If the violation is more severe, the matter should be immediately brought to the attention of administration so that proper action can be taken.

Dress Code (Employees)

Employees are expected to dress in a professional manner. This reflects well on both you as a trained professional and on the school. It also sends a message to the students about the learning environment and the attitude of the employee or staff member.

1. Jeans and wind-suits may be worn only on days when special activities such as field trips are planned (with the permission of the principal). Jeans with a school shirt may only be worn on days designated by the principal and for purposes deemed appropriate by the principal.
2. Tee shirts are not to be worn unless the principal gives special permission on a designated day. Any tee shirt which is worn is to be in good taste and of appropriate appearance (not faded, appropriately loose, appropriate logo, etc.)
3. Shorts may not be worn under any circumstances.
4. Athletic attire may only be worn by coaches and PE instructors.
5. Staff members are not to wear any clothing which is excessively tight fitting, excessively large or loose fitting, or otherwise poor in taste for the professional position held. Clothing must be no more than four inches above the knee.
6. Capri pants may be worn if they meet the following criteria: loose fitting, not made of knit or other clingy fabric, and long enough to reach mid-calf.
7. Staff members are not to wear tank tops or spaghetti straps. This includes those covered by open-work lace or crocheted tops.
8. Employees may wear open-toed shoes, if they are in good taste.
9. Employees may not have visible tattoos on their person. If a teacher has a tattoo that is visible, it is to be covered with clothing or by some other means such as a band-aid, bandage, etc.
10. Employees will only wear earrings in their ears.
11. Leggings must be worn with a top that is at least four inches to the knee.

Principals are in charge of enforcing staff dress code. If the principal or his/her designee observes that a staff member is in violation of the dress code, the principal will counsel following the discipline ladder noted in this handbook.

Duty Assignments

Staff members are expected to assume reasonable duties over and above their regular teaching responsibilities. Each principal will strive to make duty assignments in a fair and equitable manner. Staff members are to be on duty at their assigned posts in a timely manner. Your first responsibility is to the students you are supervising. You are to see to their safety and welfare to every extent that is reasonably possible. Do not allow yourself to be distracted from this responsibility through other activities such as talking with other staff members, grading papers, etc.

Students are to be well-supervised during all recess and break times with the goals of maintaining safety and preventing problems. Staff members will be present at any and all assigned duty times on the playground or break area. Staff members will be visible, watchful, and alert; ensure student remain in assigned area; ensure students are not engaging in rough play that could lead to injuries or fights; get up and walk around the play or break area perimeter if needed to properly supervise activities; and intervene and prevent problems when a student's physical or emotional well-being is at stake. Bullying, harassment, aggressive behavior toward others, and/or risk-taking behaviors are not to be allowed.

If there is a problem which prevents the proper supervision of the students on the playground, the staff member will immediately report the problem to a member of the administrative staff. This may include, but is not limited to, an issue such as too many students on the playground at one time.

During inside recess as required during inclement weather, students are to be properly supervised in the classroom or break area as outlined above. Students will not be left alone at any time.

Never ignore a misbehaving student or an unsafe situation because you are not "on duty." All school staff should consider themselves "on duty" at all times when it comes to the safety and well-being of students.

Evaluations

Students in grades K-12 may earn exemptions from examinations through excellence in achievement and attendance as described below. Exemptions are calculated on a subject by subject basis which means a student may be exempt in some classes and not in others. All schools in the Benton County School District shall implement the same standards for exemptions which are as follows:

To be exempt from final exams, a student must have at least a 90 average in the class/subject and not have any unexcused absences, or the student may have a 95 average in the class/subject and one unexcused absence. Excused absences DO NOT count against exemptions.

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The Benton County School District is in compliance with the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 (P.L. 103-3) where applicable. For complete definitions and specifications of this policy, see policy GBRIA, Family and Medical Leave Act, Benton County School Board Policy Manual. An employee who wishes to take family medical leave must notify his/her immediate Human Resources Director as well as Shonkika Hamilton at the central office.

Food Service

Cafeteria prices for adults will be as follows: Breakfast - \$2.00 and Lunch - \$3.25. All staff members who eat in the cafeteria are expected and required to pay for what they eat. Under no circumstances should a staff member eat without paying the required price or take food from any of the children. The cafeteria will not accept bills larger than \$10 from staff.

Staff members will be allowed to purchase an individual item. Ice cream, milk, and water will be made available for sale in each school cafeteria. Ice cream and milk may be purchased whether you purchase a lunch tray or not.

The “Offer Versus Serve” policy will be in effect at all district cafeterias. This means that cafeteria staff must offer all food items to students, but students may choose to only be served three items. For example, if a student chooses a hamburger and milk, this will qualify as a meal as a bread and a milk qualifies as an acceptable meal according to the “Offer Versus Serve” policy. While staff members may encourage children to make healthy meal choices, they may not force a child to select or eat any particular item or punish a child for what they choose to eat or not to eat. Staff members are prohibited from taking food or particular food items away from a child as punishment.

Recipes to Success are food menus the State Child Nutrition Department has developed. These menus will be customized to meet our students’ tastes. Each student and staff member will be able to pick from the following: two entrees (choose one), two fruits (choose one or choose two fruits of a different kind and not get a vegetable), two vegetables (choose one or choose two vegetables of a different kind and not get a fruit), and three milks (choose one). Recipes to Success menus will give the students and staff choices and teach good eating habits.

Menus will be adhered to unless there are special circumstances, such as a delivery truck not running on schedule. Students may make their own selections from the Recipes to Success menu each day which comply with the “Offer Versus Serve” policy outlined above. It is the student’s choice.

Staff members, please note **the cafeteria does not allow charging for staff**. Please do not ask to charge, and always be prepared to pay for your meals. Also, please note that staff members should not come behind the serving counter and should not take any food items for themselves. Wait to be served by the cafeteria staff, and always pay for your meals.

The school district is using a family application for free and reduced lunches. Rather than completing a separate application for each child, the parent/guardian will only need to complete one application that includes all of the children in the household.

Tea is available for sale to staff members only for \$1.25. The cost includes **one refill only**. If you wish to drink more tea, you must pay another \$1.25 which will again include the first cup plus one refill only. Due to health and sanitation guidelines, you must use the cups provided by the lunchroom to get tea.

If you have questions or concerns about any food service policy or procedure, please see the cafeteria manager or Anola Stricklin, Child Nutrition Director.

Grading

Grades that students receive will be a reflection of the student's performance on a given assignment, test, or project which is directly related to the district and state curriculum and learning goals. Work will be assigned and tests administered only on material which has been taught.

Grades are to be given only on work which was graded and/or evaluated by the teacher⁴. If a teacher's aide assists the teacher with grading, the teacher is to look over the graded work to evaluate and monitor student progress. Teachers are responsible for recording grades and entering them into SAM. Students are not permitted to grade papers or record grades for the teacher.

Teachers will enter all grades into SAM. Grades will be entered **at least once per week**. At certain times of the school year, grades may need to be entered more often. Grades will be kept **updated and checked for accuracy**. Principals are charged with ensuring all teachers comply.

Grades will be averaged for the nine weeks by SAM as follows:

Homework/Classwork/Daily grades count as 40% of the nine weeks' average.

Weekly, chapter, and/or unit tests; projects; or major assignments count as 45% of the nine weeks' average.

Nine weeks' exams count as 15% of the nine weeks' average.

For semester averages, each nine weeks' average will count 50%.

Teachers will enter a **minimum of 15-20 grades in total per nine weeks for each class taught**. Fewer grades will not give a true or fair representation of the student's performance. Within those 15-20 grades, there should be 4-5 test grades per nine weeks.

*All schools will ensure teachers do not schedule several tests on the same day.

Grading Scale

The Benton County School District will adhere to the following grading scales:

Kindergarten through 3rd Grade:

- A- 90-100
- B- 80-89
- C- 75-79
- D- 70-74
- F- Below 70

NOTE: Students in grades K-3 must have a minimum score of 70 in Reading/Language Arts and Math for promotion. Students who do not meet this requirement may be recommended for promotion if their standardized assessments indicate grade level performance. Teachers must submit supportive documentation to the building administrator for approval.

4th Grade through 12th Grade:

- A - 90-100
- B - 80-89
- C - 70-79
- D - 65-69
- F - below 65
- I - Incomplete due to excessive absences or failure to turn in work

Hall Passes

Students should only be allowed to leave class when absolutely necessary. Use of the restroom should not be allowed during instructional time unless it is an emergency situation. Teachers are responsible for those students who are assigned to their classes each day. If one of your students is loitering in the hall or on campus during instructional time, you are responsible. If a student does not report to an assigned class on time and his/her name is not on the absentee list, the supervising teacher or aide is responsible for immediately notifying the principal so that the student may be located. If at all possible, only one student shall be sent from the classroom at a time. If circumstances arise that make it necessary, two students may be sent from the classroom together. No more than two students will ever be sent from the classroom at one time.

Homework

Homework will be assigned by teachers with the following guidelines:

1. To further the curriculum and learning goals of the district
2. Appropriate for the grade level of the student

3. Designed to reinforce or enrich classroom instruction
4. An extension of classwork that has already been introduced and/or taught
5. Of value in helping the student become more responsible and/or self-disciplined

The total amount of homework assigned should depend on the grade level of the student and the number and type of courses in which the student is enrolled. The amount of homework normally increases as the student moves through school. **Homework assignments shall be coordinated among the teachers of each school so students are not overloaded with work.**

Honor Roll

Each school will prepare and submit to the local paper the school's honor roll for each nine week grading period to recognize those students who have shown exceptional achievement. The guidelines are as follows:

Superintendent's List - an average grade for the nine weeks of 90 or better in all subjects.

Principal's List - an average grade for the nine weeks of 80 or better in all subjects.

Only those students who are completing work at their assigned grade level will be eligible for inclusion in the honor as outlined above. The administrator is responsible for ensuring that the honor roll is posted in the local newspaper each reporting period.

Internet

1. Never leave students alone in the room while they are accessing the internet. Be prepared to continually move around the room and monitor student internet access. You are ultimately responsible for any activity that goes on in your room or computer lab you are using. Computer screens should be situated so you can easily monitor them. Teachers will need to monitor student use through Linewize.
2. Internet use will be directed by the librarian or teacher and under the supervision of either the teacher or the teacher's aide at all times. Students will not be allowed to simply "surf" the internet. Students will be directed to specific sites or search engines for viewing or finding specific material related to the current topic of study in class.
3. Librarians or computer lab instructors will have students sign in when they begin an internet session. This should be documented in written form. The documentation should note which computer the student used, the time the session began, and the time the session ended.
4. Email and electronic communications are not to be utilized by employees to share confidential information about students or other employees unless the communication is between staff members regarding legitimate educational, academic, counseling, or disciplinary matters. Users should not expect that files stored on district servers are private.

5. The Benton County School District makes no guarantee that the functions or services provided by or through the district system will be error free or without defect. The district will in no way be responsible for any damage you may suffer, including but not limited to, loss of data or interruptions of service. The district is in no way responsible for the accuracy or quality of the information obtained through the system. The district will not be responsible for financial obligations arising through the unauthorized use of the system.
6. The following behaviors are not permitted on the Benton County School District network:
 - a. Sending or displaying offensive message or pictures
 - b. Using obscene language
 - c. Engaging in practices that harm the computer or network (e.g. loading files that may introduce a virus, doing physical damage to computer equipment, etc.)
 - d. Violating copyright laws
 - e. Plagiarizing works that you find on the internet (Plagiarism is defined as taking the ideas or writings of others and presenting them as if they were your own.)
 - f. Loading or copying software that is not properly licensed
 - g. Trespassing in others' folders, documents, or files
 - h. Intentionally wasting limited resources (e.g. disk space, printer supplies, paper, etc.)

Each employee will sign an acceptable use agreement before establishing a network account or using computers. Violations may result in a loss of access and/or disciplinary action.

Leaving Campus During the School Day

No teacher, assistant, or other staff member is to leave the school campus during the school day unless there is an emergency or unless the staff member's job description causes them to take materials to the central office or other valid places. No teacher, assistant, or other staff member is to leave the school campus to go to the bank, pick up lunch, or other such personal errands. If you must leave school during the school day for an emergency or some other unavoidable reason, you must obtain permission from the school principal and check out through the school office prior to leaving campus. Teachers nor any other staff members are to leave campus during work hours and drive around in a vehicle for the purpose of using tobacco. A principal may allow a teacher, assistant, or other staff member to leave campus with prior permission.

Lesson Plans

Each teacher is required to have weekly lesson plans for his/her classes. Lesson plans should reflect sound instructional planning and should illustrate what is going on in the classroom. They should serve as a tool for the teacher to allow him/her an opportunity to plan how the lessons will be taught, what resources will be needed, and what activities will be carried out. If you are a regular classroom teacher,

your lesson plans must show you are teaching the required skills for the subjects and levels taught. If you are a special education teacher, your lesson plans must show that IEP skills are being taught.

For each lesson, teachers will include the following: standard, brief summary of standard, brief outline of procedure, type of evaluation to be used, and an indication if the lesson is for re-teaching or enrichment. Principals will work with teachers who need extra assistance in writing effective and appropriate lesson plans. Administrators are required to use the district approved lesson planning system, EZ Planner.

Movies/Activities

All movies shown in the classroom or other activities must be pre-approved by the building principal or assistant principal. Movies must be appropriate for school viewing. Movies shown should be related to instructional or curricular goals for the class. Movies may also be shown as an occasional reward or in the event of bad weather during recess time. Use of district facilities after school hours and/or school breaks must be approved in writing by the superintendent.

Non-Renewal of Employment

It is recognized by the district that it is necessary, from time to time, to release from future employment licensed personnel when their performance fails to meet the standards established by the school board or state department of education or when their services are simply no longer needed. In the event a determination is made by the school district not to offer an employee a renewal contract for a successive year, written notice of non-renewal will be given to the licensed educators by April 8.

Any non-reemployment decision of the school district will be rationally related to a legitimate educational interest. A licensed educator who receives such a notice, shall upon request, be entitled to the following:

1. A written notice of the reasons for non-renewal with a summary of the factual basis for non-renewal.
2. An opportunity for a hearing at which matters relevant to the reasons given for the non-renewal will be reviewed. The request for said hearing must be received within seven days of the employee's receipt of the non-renewal notice. If a hearing is not requested, the decision of the school district will be final with regard to the employment of the employee.
3. A fair and impartial hearing before the school board or hearing officer selected by the school board.
4. Representation by legal counsel at the expense of the employee.

Licensed employees in the first year of employment within the district may be non-renewed without written notice or summary of the factual basis for non-renewal and are not eligible for a hearing.

Non-School Employment

Employees shall not engage at any time in any outside employment that would interfere with their effectiveness in performing their regularly assigned duties, would compromise or embarrass the school district, or would in any way conflict with their assigned duties. Employees shall not be employed or involved in any private or other public business during the hours necessary to fulfill their contractual responsibilities.

Parental Contact

Teachers are to work to establish good communication between the school and home. Teachers are expected to make every reasonable effort to communicate with each students' parents/guardians throughout the school year using notes, emails, phone calls, progress reports, letters, personal contact, and other such means. At the beginning of each school year, teachers are to send a letter of introduction home to parents/guardians. When parents/guardians come to visit the school, they are to be made to feel welcome and that their concerns are being taken into consideration. Communications should not take place only for the purpose of reporting negative comments or concerns regarding the student. Teachers are also to establish communication to express positive thoughts and comments about students. Administrators are responsible for ensuring that all stakeholders are routinely contacted. A parental contact log is expected to serve as documentation.

Periodically through the school year, events may be scheduled during after school hours which require attendance of all teachers. Teachers are required to attend open houses, parent conference nights, and other such events when they are scheduled unless an emergency arises. Do not schedule or plan other activities when important school events which will allow you to interact with parents/guardians are to be held.

Progress Monitoring

Students' progress will be continually monitored through grade appropriate progress monitoring. Currently, the school district uses TE21 Assessments. Progress monitoring will take place at least three times per school year, and assessment results will be used to drive classroom instructional practice and structure the learning environment for the best benefit of students.

Progress Reports

Progress reports shall be sent home by every teacher on every student halfway through the nine weeks' grading period. The progress reports shall be printed on the district approved form and shall be sent home on the date indicated on the school calendar. Progress reports will show the student's current grade average in each subject as well as conduct information. It is important that students be made aware of how they are doing and that parents/guardians be notified of their child's progress during the

nine weeks' grading period. Nine weeks is too long to wait to notify parents of the child's progress or lack of progress.

Purchasing

All employees must submit a requisition and obtain a purchase order PRIOR to placing an order with a vendor/other. Failure to do so will result in the expense being charged to the employee.

Recess and Break

All students in grades K-12 may be provided with a recess time or break time, at the discretion of the principal, during each school day which, weather permitting, shall take place outdoors. Research has shown that unstructured physical activity or free time has numerous benefits for students, including the following: development of social and physical skills, reduction of stress, minimization of disruptive behavior and fidgeting in the classroom, improved attention span, improved blood flow to the brain which increases cognitive function, and reduction in obesity and improved overall health. Unless special circumstances exist or a special activity break is planned, recess or break should take place after lunch - not during the morning hours.

Sack Lunches

Teachers are responsible for ordering sack lunches when they are needed. If a teacher wishes to order sack lunches for students attending a field trip, having a field day, or other such event, the sack lunches must be ordered a minimum of two weeks in advance of the date of the event. The sack lunches must be requested on the approved form. The original of the form will be given to the cafeteria manager, and a copy will be given to the principal. If the lunches will not be needed due to inclement weather or other reason, the order must be canceled no later than 6:30 AM on the day of the event. If the proper procedure is not followed, sack lunches will not be provided. You must turn in your request in writing in the time indicated so that bread, fruit, and other necessary items can be ordered for the lunches. It is absolutely necessary to plan ahead.

Safety

Staff members are responsible for assisting the principal with maintaining a safe and hazard free environment for students and staff. Staff members are to consider themselves on duty at all times regarding student safety and are to immediately notify the principal or administration if an unsafe situation is noted. This includes, but is not limited to the following: hazards, unsafe environmental conditions such as broken playground equipment, and threats made by students when the staff member has reasonable suspicion the student may do harm to another. Staff members are to be observant, attentive, and use all means at their disposal to assist the principal in maintaining a safe school environment for everyone.

Soliciting

Staff will not sell, solicit for trade, or advertise for sale merchandise or services nor organize students for such purposes without prior approval of the principal.

No individual may come into the school for the purpose of selling, soliciting for sale, or advertising goods or services to staff members or students. This includes, but is not limited to the following: Avon, Home Interior, etc. or soliciting funds for fundraising collections.

Special Education

When a student meets the requirements for comprehensive assessment, the assessment is conducted according to the procedures under IDEA. Upon completion of the assessments and other educational measures, a group of professionals and the parent of the child determine whether the child has a disability under IDEA. The group members must include the following: a special education teacher, the child's general education teacher or a teacher qualified to teach a child of the same age, and other appropriate professionals (school pathologist, psychometrist, speech-language pathologist, reading teacher, etc.)

Students receiving special education services who are resourced in a regular classroom shall be required to meet the same standards as a regular education student; however, certain accommodations and modifications may need to be made. For example, a student receiving special education services may need to have tests read aloud, may need to record lectures, may need to have assignments shortened, etc. A student receiving special education services who is in a self-contained class shall meet the objectives set forth in his/her IEP, and grades will be awarded accordingly - using the grading scale as outlined in district policy. Special education students may only be exempt from semester and/or final examinations in their self-contained classes using the same criteria outlined in the district's exemption policy.

Staff Development

Your attendance at staff development sessions is a factor considered in re-employment. The repeated failure to attend staff development or to be present at school improvement meetings without justifiable cause will be documented and placed in your personnel file. Repeated absences without justification may lead to more severe disciplinary action.

All certified staff members are expected to work on the scheduled teacher work days during the school year. The dates are published in the school calendar. You should not schedule doctor's appointments, hair appointments, or other activities on these dates. If you must miss a professional development session for an unavoidable reason, you are responsible for making arrangements with your principal

within five days after the date of the meeting to find out what was missed and study any information provided in the meeting.

Student Attendance Monitoring

Teachers and/or teacher assistants will enter student attendance information into SAM every class period within ten minutes of class time. Teachers should check with the office regarding any discrepancies in student attendance.

Substance Abuse

All employees are prohibited from being under the influence of, selling, possessing, transferring, or purchasing drugs or alcohol while on duty, on school premises, or performing school business. The use, sale, or possession of an illegal or non-prescribed drug or controlled substance while on duty is cause for immediate termination. No prescription drug will be brought on school premises by any other person than the person for whom the drug was prescribed. Prescription drugs will be used only in the manner, combination, and quantity prescribed. Any employee whose off-duty use of alcohol or illegal or non-prescribed drugs which results in excessive absenteeism, tardiness, poor work, or an accident will be subject to disciplinary procedures which may include immediate termination. Effective March 9, 1993, the Benton County School District will conduct reasonable suspicion testing of district employees.

Supervision of Students

You are responsible for supervising your students. Do not leave your students unsupervised at any time. When students are left unattended, it opens the door for many types of unacceptable behavior. If you must leave your students due to an unavoidable circumstance, arrange for another staff member to assist you.

While having students take names may be an acceptable deterrent to student misbehavior when properly used and supervised by the teacher, you are reminded that it is never acceptable to leave the students alone and allow a student to supervise other students. It is also not acceptable to punish a student based solely on another student taking his/her name. Students should not be given this much authority over their peers.

You are responsible for your students when on a field trip which includes traveling to and from the trip destination. You are to take every possible reasonable precaution to ensure the safety of the students. Do not put your students on the bus and travel to the field trip destination in a private vehicle. This leaves your students without supervision and guidance in the case of an emergency. If a special, valid circumstance exists which would require you to ride in a private vehicle, you are to obtain prior permission from your principal and plan how your students will be supervised on the bus.

Teacher Assistants

Teacher assistants play a crucial role in enhancing the educational experience of all students. They are expected to maintain a high level of professionalism and contribute significantly to student learning and performance. Their primary responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- **Instructional Support:** Teacher assistants support the classroom teacher by providing additional instruction and reinforcement to individual students or small groups. They help students who need remediation, extra instruction, or reinforcement of concepts.
- **Classroom Management:** Assistants aid in managing the classroom, ensuring that students stay on task during lessons, and offering extra help to those who are struggling with particular concepts.
- **General Duties:** While instructional support is their main focus, assistants may also help with tasks such as paperwork, bulletin boards, testing, and other non-instructional duties when they are not needed for direct educational purposes.

Teacher assistants must be adaptable and ready to perform any job duties deemed necessary and important by the principal or supervising teacher. Their role is dynamic, and they should be prepared to contribute in various ways to support the educational environment.

Supervising teachers are responsible for daily guidance, directing assistants on which students or groups need specific attention and what educational goals should be worked on.

Time Schedule

Staff members are required to report to school and sign in by the following times unless otherwise specified by the building administrator. Staff members are to be punctual and must sign in upon arrival and sign out upon leaving campus. Staff members must sign themselves in and out. This task may not be delegated to others. Staff members who are habitually tardy or do not abide by the time schedule outlined in this policy will be subject to disciplinary action as outlined in this handbook.

If you are assigned to **early duty**, you are to be at the school and signed in by 7:10 AM.

On days when an early duty is **not** assigned, staff members are to be at the school and signed in by 7:15 AM.

Teachers are required to remain at school until 3:15 PM. This is to ensure the safety of students and to ensure that all students have left campus before teachers leave. No teacher is to sign out prior to the above mentioned time unless special arrangements have been made with the principal.

Staff members who are assigned to more than one job location are required to be at the designated site on the days and times specified by the supervising administrator. You will be required to sign in and out

at each location. Any time worked after your normally scheduled hours must be approved by the superintendent.

Timely and Accurate Reporting

On occasion, teachers may be asked to provide information about their class or individual students to their principal, central office, or some other administrator. The Mississippi Department of Education requires many reports, forms, and data from the district. If schools do not provide timely and accurate information, the district cannot provide timely and accurate information to the MDE. Teachers will be held accountable for providing requested information such as class size, class schedule, attendance information, special education forms, inventory data, etc., by the date it is due and in a manner that is accurate and easily understandable.

Teachers are to complete report cards, permanent records, and inserts in an accurate, complete, and timely manner. A black ink pen should be used for writing on permanent records and inserts. Do not use whiteout on permanent records or inserts.

Tobacco

The Benton County School District is a tobacco free environment. No person shall use any tobacco product on school district property. The use of tobacco products in any form constitutes a potential health hazard to the user, and in the case of smoking, to those who are in the presence of the user.

The use of tobacco on school property is against the policies of this district and against the laws of the State of Mississippi. For purposes of this act, school property means public school buildings, buses, school campuses, school grounds, recreational areas, athletic fields, or any other property owned, used, or operated by a local school board for the administration of any public educational institution or during a school related activity. Staff members are not to leave campus during work hours and drive around in a vehicle for the purpose of using tobacco.

Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)/Response to Intervention

All school districts are required to implement an instructional intervention model designed to meet the needs of every student. Schools which use a “wait to fail” approach allow students to struggle for prolonged periods prior to having a problem diagnosed and receiving instructional intervention. The intent of the intervention process is to provide early, ongoing assessments, identify problems as they surface, and carry out corrective action to prevent failures and reduce excessive referrals into special education programs.

Schools are required under the policy to implement a model with the primary intervention consisting of a general education program based on the Mississippi Curriculum Frameworks, Common Core, or a

combination of the two (Tier 1). The model also consists of intensive interventions which may be carried out by the classroom teacher or an interventionist (Tier 2) and will be determined by the MTSS team. If the general education program and intensive interventions are not successful, an intervention may be prescribed by the MTSS team which is more intensive and is usually implemented by an interventionist or educational specialist (Tier 3).

Tier 1: Quality classroom instruction based on MS Curriculum Frameworks

Tier 2: Focused supplemental instruction

Tier 3: Intensive interventions specifically designed to meet the individual needs of students

Teachers should use progress monitoring information to (a) determine if students are making adequate progress, (b) identify students as soon as they begin to fall behind and modify instruction early enough to ensure each and every student gain essential skills. Monitoring of student progress is an ongoing process that may be measured through informal classroom assessments, benchmark assessment instruments, and large-scale assessments.

Each school must have a Multi-Tiered System of Supports team implemented in accordance with the process developed by the Mississippi Department of Education. The chairperson of the MTSS team shall be the school principal as the school's instructional leader or the principal's designee. The designee may not be an individual whose primary responsibility is special education.

Interventions will be:

- Designed to address the deficit areas;
- Research based;
- Implemented as designed by the MTSS team
- Supported by data regarding the effectiveness of interventions

After a referral is made, the MTSS team must develop and begin implementation of an intervention(s) within two weeks. No later than eight weeks after implementation of the intervention(s) the MTSS team must conduct a documented review of the interventions to determine success of the intervention. No later than 16 weeks after implementation of the intervention(s), a second review must be conducted to determine whether the intervention is successful. If the intervention(s) is determined to be unsuccessful, then the student will be referred for a comprehensive assessment.

The MTSS/RTI process should not be considered a referral for special education. The process is meant to support the classroom teacher in providing effective interventions to help students be successful in the

regular education program. Special education testing will only be considered after all other avenues have been exhausted.

Tutoring for Pay

To assure students reasonable assistance without charge from their teachers and avoid placing teachers in a position of conflict of interest, teachers shall receive no extra compensation for tutoring a student they have in class.

No tutoring for which a teacher receives a fee will be carried out on school campus during school hours.

No teacher shall use his/her official position to obtain pecuniary benefit for himself/herself other than compensation provided by law or to obtain pecuniary benefit for any relative or business with which he/she is associated.

Workers' Compensation

Every accident must be reported immediately. If you have an accident while at work, notify your supervisor immediately and complete an accident report form. All individuals must submit a current drug test along with the accident report.

When an employee is injured during the course of employment, workers' compensation insurance provides payments to the injured worker or the treating physician(s) for medical treatment, disfigurement, death benefits, and lost wages payments. The scope and amount of these payments is determined by state law. Attorneys are not required for employees to get what they are entitled to. Attorneys, when hired, typically work on a contingent fee basis, and may receive a portion of your benefits. If you report injuries immediately to your supervisor and cooperate with your treating physician and the insurance company, the system will work with you to get you healthy and back to work.

Workers' compensation insurance payments may be denied if

1. The employee tests positive for drugs and/or alcohol following the accident;
2. A pre-existing injury or non-work related injury was the cause of the accident; or
3. The claim is fraudulent.

Filing false workers' compensation claims is punishable with a substantial fine and imprisonment. Any employee who knows of a co-worker who is abusing the workers' compensation system or has filed a false workers' compensation claim should call 1-800-264-8085, extension 248. You will not be asked to identify your name and the call will not be recorded. This is an anonymous call to our insurance administrator.

