

2017-2018

Employee Handbook



School of Science and
Technology

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	6
SCHOOL INFORMATION.....	6
Mission Statement	6
Board of Directors.....	6
EMPLOYMENT	7
At-Will Employment	7
Hiring Standards.....	7
Employee Duties.....	7
Equal Employment Opportunity	7
Job Descriptions.....	8
Employment After Retirement.....	8
Compliance Coordinators	9
Student Discrimination and Harassment.....	10
Complaint Procedures: Harassment and Discrimination	11
Appeal.....	12
Violence in the Workplace	12
Immigration Law Compliance.....	12
Disability Accommodations	12
Professional Employees.....	13
Statement of Confidentiality.....	13
New Hire Reporting.....	13
Employment Applications	13
Employment Checks.....	13
Criminal History Record Information.....	13
Employee Arrests and Convictions	14
Fingerprinting.....	15
Consumer Reports	15
Health Requirements.....	16
Reassignments and Transfers	16
Extra Duties	16
School Activities	16
Work Schedules.....	16
Notification to Parents Regarding Qualifications.....	17
Staff Dress and Grooming.....	17
Performance Evaluation	18
Return of School Property.....	18
Working With the Media	19
Staff Development.....	19
Personnel Records	19
Name and Address Change.....	200
Building Use	200
Instructional Supplies	200
Communication with Parents in General	21

Parent and Student Complaints	21
Title I – Parent/Teacher Conferences	21
Parent Teacher Home Visit Program.....	211
Staff Recognition Program	211
Teacher Appreciation Week	22
Team Building Activities	22
Staff Exploration Programs	22
CLASSIFICATION, COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS	23
Employment Classification Categories.....	23
Workweek and Work Hours for Purposes of FLSA.....	24
Salaries, Wages, and Stipends	24
Wage Discrimination	24
Payroll.....	24
Annualized Compensation.....	25
Timekeeping.....	26
Minimum Wage and Overtime	26
Holiday/Summer Break Pay Schedule	27
Lost/Stolen Paychecks	27
Unclaimed Paychecks.....	27
Authorized Check Pick Up	27
Direct Deposit.....	27
Administrative Pay Corrections	27
Employee Advances	28
Deductions From Pay	28
Wage Garnishments	28
Exemption From Withholding.....	28
Change in Withholding Status	28
Wage and Tax Statements	29
Health Insurance	29
Supplemental Insurance Benefits.....	29
COBRA Coverage	29
Workers’ Compensation Benefits	30
Unemployment Compensation Insurance	35
Teacher Retirement.....	35
ATTENDANCE, LEAVE AND ABSENCES	35
Attendance.....	35
Scheduling and Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences.....	35
Leaving the Classroom	36
Tardiness	36
Attendance Records	36
Excessive Absenteeism or Tardiness	36
Absences	36
Local Leave	37
Forfeiture of Leave.....	38
Military Leave	38
Service in State Military Services.....	41

Called to Duty	41
Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)	42
Service Member FMLA Leave	42
Qualifying Exigency FMLA Leave.....	42
Maximum Amount of FMLA Leave Within a 12-Month Period.....	43
Limitations on FMLA Leave	43
Intermittent or Reduced Work Schedule Leave.....	44
Transfer to an Alternative Position.....	44
Calculating Leave Use.....	44
Request for FMLA Leave.....	44
Required Documentation for Birth, Adoption, or Health-Related FMLA Leave.....	44
Use of Paid and Unpaid Leave.....	45
Designation of Leave.....	45
FMLA Special Rules for Instructional Employees.....	45
FMLA and Workers' Compensation	47
Maintenance of Health Benefits	47
Salary Action.....	48
Performance Evaluation	48
Right to Reinstatement.....	48
Failure to Return to Work Following FMLA Leave.....	49
Requests for FMLA Leave	49
Prohibition Against Discrimination and Retaliation.....	52
Emergency Leave	52
Bereavement Leave.....	52
Jury Duty and Other Court Appearances.....	52
Voting Leave	52
Summer Leave	53
Religious Observances	54
EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS	54
Announcements.....	54
Distribution of Non-School Materials.....	54
Limitations on Content.....	54
Prior Review.....	54
Violations	55
COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES.....	55
Complaint Process – Central Office Staff.....	58
Complaint Process – District Level Staff.....	60
EMPLOYEE CONDUCT AND WELFARE	61
Texas Educator Code of Ethics.....	61
Financial Ethics	63
Standards of Conduct.....	64
Employee Discipline.....	65
Drug-Free Workplace.....	66
Possession of Dangerous Substances.....	66

Mandatory Conviction Notification.....	67
Drug and Alcohol Testing.....	67
DWI Conviction	69
Finding of Alcohol or Drug Use	69
Tobacco Use	69
Prohibition of Weapons	69
Theft.....	69
Workplace Searches and Video Surveillance	70
Employee Acceptable Use/Technology Usage	70
Employee Use of Social Media	72
Cellular and Wireless Telephone Acceptable Use	74
Conflicts of Interest	76
Gifts and Favors	77
Copyrighted Materials	77
Non-Disclosure	78
Use of Personal Vehicles	78
Employees’ Children.....	78
Solicitation and Distribution	79
Associations and Political Activities	79
GENERAL PROCEDURES	79
Workplace Safety and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Compliance.....	79
Hazard Communication Act	80
Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Statement.....	80
Exposure Control Plan for Blood-Borne Pathogens	81
Safety Plans	82
HIPAA.....	84
FERPA	84
Purchasing and Reimbursements	84
Key Security.....	85
Personal Property	85
Visitors in the Workplace	85
Bad Weather Closing.....	85
Emergencies	85
STUDENT WELFARE: REPORTING ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT	86
Purpose of Reporting Law	86
Protection for Reporting Child Abuse and/or Neglect.....	86
Photographs	87
Notifying the Parents	87
Officer/Caseworker Interviewing/Removing a Student	87
Confidentiality	87
Child Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment.....	88
GENERAL STUDENT ISSUES	88
Equal Educational Opportunities	88
Student Records	88
Lesson Plans	89

Parent and Student Complaints	89
Student Health Services.....	89
Administering Medication to Students	90
Dietary Supplements	90
Psychotropic Drugs	90
Student Conduct and Discipline	90
Student Attendance	91
APPENDIX - FORMS.....	92
Disclosure and Authorization for Consumer Reporting Agency Reports	93
A Summary of Your Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act.....	94
Drug and/or Alcohol Testing Consent Form and Policy Acknowledgement Form	97
Public Access to Employee Information: Employee Opt-Out	99

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Handbook is to provide information that will help with questions and pave the way for a successful year. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Handbook and other School policies and procedures. All questions regarding the Handbook should be directed to your Supervisor or the HR Department.

This Handbook may be revised from time to time as deemed necessary by the School. The only official and authorized version of the Handbook currently in effect may be requested from your Supervisor or from the HR Department.

Some of the subjects described in this Handbook are covered in more detail in official School policy and procedures or in benefit/plan documents. Please refer to those documents for specific information, since this Handbook only briefly summarizes those benefits and/or policies.

Please note that any written insurance/benefit plan(s), agreement(s), or other policies may be controlling over this Handbook where there is conflict.

SCHOOL INFORMATION

Mission Statement of SST Schools

The mission of the School of Science and Technology is to create a safe and healthy learning environment that nurtures, motivates, and enables our middle and high school youth to develop into mindful and responsible people who contribute to their community and to the diverse society in which we all live. Our program is characterized by the cooperative presence and unified support of caring families, businesses, as well as educational and civic groups, with whom our students will interact. Our instruction guides students through development of creative and critical thinking and learning skills, and enables them to apply these skills through cooperative and interactive instruction in the core curricular areas.

Board of Directors

Texas law grants a charter school's Board of Directors the power to govern and oversee school management. The Board is the policy-making body within the SST school system and has overall responsibility for the curriculum, annual budget, and facilities. The Board has complete and final control over school matters, within limits established by state and federal laws and regulations.

The Board meets on a regular basis at SST's Central Administration Office, located at 9321 W. Sam Houston Parkway S., Houston, Texas 77099 and may meet at other places and times deemed necessary by the Board. Special meetings may be called and held when and where necessary. In compliance with Texas open meetings laws, a written notice of regular and special meetings will be posted on the SST [website](#) and at a publicly-accessible location at the Central Office at least 72 hours before the scheduled meeting time. In emergencies, a meeting may be held with a two-hour notice in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

EMPLOYMENT

At-Will Employment

As provided in the Employee Acknowledgement and Agreement provided with this Handbook, nothing in this Handbook creates or is intended to create a promise or representation of continued employment with SST Schools. **All employees are employed at-will and may be terminated with or without cause, with or without prior notice, at any time, for any reason or for no reason. Similarly, at will employment with SST Schools is voluntary. At will employees are requested to provide two-week's notice of a resignation but are free to resign at any time, with or without cause or notice.**

Except as approved by the SST Board of Directors and subsequently memorialized in writing signed by the President of the Board, all SST Schools employees are employed at-will. Moreover except for such Board approval and written and executed memorialization, employment at-will is the sole and entire at-will employment for the duration of employment of at-will employees, and this Handbook will supersede prior handbooks, written documents, or oral representations, notwithstanding any other prior, contemporaneous or future statement or representation.

Upon hire, Employees are presented with an At-will Employment Agreement. Returning employees who work for SST Schools for at least 90 work days may be offered an extended At Will Employment Agreement. Returning Employees who have worked for SST Schools less than 90 work days will be offered a 1-year Employment Agreement.

Hiring Standards

SST believes that the quality of its professional staff greatly impacts the quality of education offered in the school. SST therefore recruits and hires those individuals who are best qualified to meet SST's educational needs. Announcements of job vacancies by position and location are posted on a regular basis to the SST's website.

Employee Duties

Each employee is expected to comply with the standards of conduct set out in this Handbook and any other policies, regulations, and guidelines that impose duties, requirements, or standards attendant to his or her status as a SST employee. Violation of SST policies, regulations, or guidelines may result in disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

Equal Employment Opportunity

It is the policy of SST Schools not to discriminate on the basis of any legally-protected classification, including race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability, age, or genetic information in its educational programs and employment practices as required by [Titles VI and VII](#) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended; [Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972](#); [Titles I and V of the Americans with Disabilities Act](#) of 1990, as amended (ADA); the [Age Discrimination in Education Act](#) of 1975, as amended (ADEA); [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), as amended; the [Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act in Education of 2008](#) (GINA); and any other legally-protected classification or status protected by applicable law. In order to provide equal employment and advancement opportunities to all individuals, employment decisions at SST Schools will be based on merit, performance, qualifications, and/or abilities. SST Schools will make reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals in compliance with the ADA, as amended.

Employees can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal. Any employees with questions or concerns about any type of discrimination in the workplace are encouraged to **bring these issues to the attention of their campus' Principal or Title IX, Section 504 Coordinator**, as may be appropriate.

Job Descriptions

SST Schools has created job descriptions to be used as tools for documenting the essential duties and requirements of and the skills needed to successfully perform the various jobs within SST Schools. It is the intent of SST Schools that these job descriptions will be accurate and uniform across campuses. Accordingly, reasonable efforts shall be undertaken to develop and maintain job descriptions for all job classifications in accordance with the following provisions:

- Job descriptions shall be developed for new positions that have been authorized by the Chief Human Resource Officer prior to initiating the hiring process.
- Job descriptions shall be reviewed and modified for current positions within a reasonable period of time following a material change in the essential duties of the position. Providing a reasonable accommodation to a qualified individual with a disability to allow the individual to perform the job, however, will not normally require preparing a new job description.
- If a new position is created in which the duties and responsibilities of the position are not reflected in a current job description (or if the essential duties and responsibilities will differ from others employed under that job description), the Chief Human Resource Officer shall be contacted to determine whether a new job description should be prepared.
- Job descriptions may not be modified without consultation with and approval from the Chief Human Resource Officer.
- Consideration of requests for accommodations from qualified individuals with a disability shall be performed by making reference to the essential job functions. Although other sections of the job description may affect the ability to perform the essential job functions, the essential job functions themselves should be found by reference to the "Duties and Responsibilities" section of the job description.
- If the consideration of a request for accommodation causes you to believe that a particular job description may not accurately reflect the essential job functions of that position, you should contact the Chief Human Resource Officer for guidance and updating of the job description, as necessary.
- Job descriptions for current positions shall be reviewed, and modified as necessary, on an annual basis or more frequently as deemed appropriate by the Chief Human Resource Officer. The Chief Human Resource Officer shall be responsible for developing and maintaining operating standards that promote compliance with the terms of this policy.

Employment After Retirement

Individuals receiving retirement benefits from the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) may be employed in limited circumstances on a full- or part-time basis without affecting their benefits, according to TRS rules and state law. Detailed information about employment after retirement is available in the TRS publication *Employment After Retirement*. Employees can contact TRS for additional information by calling 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. Information is also available on the TRS Website (www.trs.state.tx.us).

Compliance Coordinators

SST Schools has designated the following employees as Coordinators to oversee compliance with the following state and federal laws:

Title IX Coordinator

Reports of unlawful discrimination based on age, gender and/or disability and civil rights complaints, including sexual harassment and sexual misconduct are be directed to the Title IX Coordinator.

Name: Halil Celik

Position: Director of Human Resources

Address: 4241 Woodcock Dr. Suite B-206 San Antonio, Texas 78228

Telephone: (210)530-8366

Section 504 Coordinator

Reports of unlawful discrimination based on disability are to be directed to the Section 504 Coordinator:

Name: Yvette Alvarez

Position: Director of Special Programs

Address: 4241 Woodcock Dr. Suite B-206 San Antonio, Texas 78228

Telephone: (210)530-8366

Prohibition of Harassment and Discrimination

SST Schools prohibits discrimination, including harassment, on the basis of a person's race, color, gender, national origin, disability, religion, age or any other basis prohibited by law. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of SST policy. Employees should not tolerate discrimination or harassment of themselves or others and are encouraged to report claims as soon as possible to their supervisor or if the harassment involves their supervisor, to the HR Department. Failure to promptly report alleged harassment may impair SST's ability to investigate and address the claim(s).

Prohibited harassment of an employee is defined as physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct based on an employee's race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, disability, or any other basis prohibited by law, when the conduct is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that the conduct:

- Has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with the employee's work performance;
- Creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile, or offensive work environment; or
- Otherwise adversely affects the employee's performance, environment or employment opportunities.

Employees will not engage in conduct constituting discrimination or harassment. SST will investigate all allegations of such claims and take appropriate disciplinary action—up to and including termination—against employees found to engage in such acts.

Religious Discrimination Prohibited

The prohibition against discrimination on the basis of religion includes all aspects of religious observances and practice, as well as religious belief, unless SST demonstrates that it is unable to reasonably accommodate an employee's or prospective employee's religious observance or practice without undue hardship to the School's business. "Undue hardship" means more than a de minimus (minimal) cost.

SST Schools may not substantially burden an employee's free exercise of religion, unless the burden is in furtherance of a compelling governmental interest and is the least restrictive means of furthering that interest.

Sexual Harassment Prohibited

SST Schools will not tolerate sexual harassment, nor will it tolerate reprisals against any employee who makes a sexual harassment complaint. All school representatives who violate this prohibition are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome verbal, visual, or physical conduct—including sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature—when, for example:

- Submission to the conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment;
- Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions; or
- Such conduct has the purpose of affecting or unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Any Principal or supervisor who receives a complaint of sexual harassment and fails to investigate or take corrective action is subject to disciplinary action, including immediate termination.

Student Discrimination and Harassment

SST Schools prohibits discrimination, including harassment, against any student on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national origin, disability, age, academic, artistic or athletic ability, the school district the student would otherwise attend, or any other basis prohibited by law. Discrimination against a student is defined as conduct directed at a student on the above legally protected classifications that adversely affects the student. SST employees will not engage in discrimination of students nor tolerate student-to-student discrimination.

SST Schools further prohibits sexual harassment against students. Such harassment includes unwelcome verbal or physical sexual advances, including but not limited to engaging in sexually-oriented conversations, telephoning students at home or elsewhere to solicit unwelcome social relationships, physical contact that would reasonably be construed as sexual in nature, threatening or enticing students to engage in sexual behavior in exchange for grades or other school-related benefit, request for sexual favors, sexually-motivated physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct when the conduct affects the student's ability to participate in or benefit from a program or activity, or creates an intimidating, threatening, hostile or offensive educational environment. Sexual harassment of students by employees is always a violation of law and, therefore, cannot be defended on the grounds that the student may have sought or encouraged the conduct.

Romantic or inappropriate social relationships between students and school employees are prohibited. Employees who suspect a student may have experienced prohibited harassment are obligated to report their concerns to the campus Principal or other appropriate school official. All allegations of prohibited harassment of a student by an employee or adult will be reported to the student's parents and promptly investigated. An employee who knows of or has a cause to believe child abuse, neglect or maltreatment of a child must also report his or her knowledge or suspicion to the appropriate law enforcement authorities, within 48 hours as required by law. Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a criminal offense.

SST will investigate all allegations of such discrimination and will take appropriate disciplinary action against employees or students who have engaged in such acts. Retaliation against anyone involved in the complaint process is a violation of SST policy. Employees will not tolerate any form of discrimination of students, and will report any alleged acts in a timely manner. Failure to promptly report alleged discrimination may impair SST's ability to investigate and address the harassment and any employee violating this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination from employment.

Complaint Procedures: Harassment and Discrimination

SST takes allegations of harassment and discrimination very seriously and intends to investigate all official complaints. SST will take appropriate actions for all substantiated allegations. Employees who believe they are being harassed or discriminated against are requested to take the following actions:

- In the event you feel you are a victim of harassment, you should contact your supervising Campus Principal, Department Chief, or Superintendent immediately. In the event your Campus Principal, Department Chief is the alleged harasser, you should contact the next level of management immediately.
- Any employees who are uncomfortable with face-to-face interaction may write down their complaints in a memo, and submit the memo to the supervising Campus Principal, Department Chief, or Superintendent
- Campus Principals, Department Chiefs, and Superintendents are expected to contact the appropriate SST Title IX, and Section 504 Coordinator immediately upon receiving a complaint of harassment or discrimination.
- The investigation may be conducted by the Title IX coordinator or he can designate either of the following persons as he finds appropriate; the campus principal, Superintendent, cluster talent director, or the central office employee relations director, or the SST attorney.
- All complaints will be handled in a timely manner. Due to the need to investigate, absolute confidentiality may not always be possible. However, the complaint will be handled in as confidential a manner as possible. Except as required by law, under no circumstances will information concerning any employee's complaint be released by SST to any third person or to anyone within SST who is not involved in the investigation.

The purpose of this provision is to maintain impartiality and confidentiality to the extent possible. Both the reporting individual, victim and the accused have equal privacy rights under the law, and SST must respond accordingly.

Retaliation against any person who in good faith reports or complains about harassment or discrimination is unlawful and will not be tolerated. Employees who take part in any retaliatory action will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including immediate termination from employment. Unlawful retaliation may include, but is not limited to, any of the following actions as a result of an employees complaint or involvement in an investigation of harassment or discrimination:

- Demotion;
- Poor performance appraisals;
- Transfers;
- Assignment of demeaning tasks; or
- Taking any kind of adverse action against a person who complains or is involved in an investigation of sexual harassment or discrimination.

In addition to using SST's complaint process, an employee may file a formal complaint with the United States Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) or Texas Workforce Commission (TWC). Additional information may be found by visiting <http://www.eeoc.gov/employees/charge.cfm>.

After receiving a complaint of prohibited discrimination or harassment, the Campus Principal, Department Chief, or Superintendent may, but need not, require the complaining employee to prepare a written report. Oral complaints will be reduced to written form. Following completion of the investigation, the compliance coordinator or designee will prepare a written decision regarding the complaint.

Appeal

An employee who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation may appeal through the process set forth in Board Policy PG-4.6.1 (Employee Complaints and Grievances – Campus Level Staff), beginning at Level Two.

Corrective Action

SST will take prompt and effective action to end the any harassment and to deter future harassment and discrimination. This may include discipline or termination of the perpetrator or of the complainant in the case that a falsified complaint or contributory behavior was discovered to have occurred.

Both the complaining employee and the alleged wrongdoer have the right to appeal the determination of the investigation according to the terms of SST’s grievance and complaint policy. *See* “Complaints and Grievances,” p. 60 of this Handbook.

Liability for Harassment

SST accepts no liability for harassment or discrimination of any kind by an employee. SST does not consider harassing or discriminatory conduct to be within the course and scope of employment or the direct consequences of the discharge of any employee’s duties. Accordingly, to the extent permitted by law, SST reserves the right not to provide a defense or pay damages assessed against employees for harassing or discriminatory conduct in violation of SST policy.

Violence in the Workplace

Workplace violence is one of the most serious issues facing employees and employers today. Any employee who feels that his or her personal safety is at risk should contact a campus Principal or Assistant Principal immediately. SST has a “zero tolerance” policy regarding workplace violence and as such will not and cannot tolerate employees threatening or attacking other employees. Violation of SST’s zero tolerance policy will lead to immediate termination of employment.

Immigration Law Compliance

SST Schools is committed to employing only United States citizens and documented workers who are authorized to work in the United States, and does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of citizenship or national origin.

In compliance with the [Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986](#), each new employee, as a condition of employment, must complete the Employment Eligibility Verification Form I-9 and present documentation establishing identity and employment eligibility. Former employees who are rehired must also complete the form if they have not completed an I-9 with SST within the past three years, or if their previous I-9 is no longer retained or valid.

Employees with questions or seeking more information on immigration law issues are encouraged to contact the HR Department. Employees may raise questions or complaints about Immigration Law compliance without fear of reprisal.

Disability Accommodations

SST Schools is committed to complying fully with [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act](#) (Section 504) and the [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA), as amended, and ensuring equal opportunity in employment for qualified persons with disabilities. All employment practices and activities are conducted on a non-discriminatory basis. Hiring procedures have been reviewed and provide persons with disabilities meaningful employment opportunities. Pre-employment inquiries are made only regarding an applicant’s ability to perform the duties of the position. Reasonable accommodation is available to all qualifying disabled employees, where their disability affects the performance of job functions, in accordance with Section 504 and the ADA.

Qualified individuals with disabilities will not be discriminated against on the basis of disability in regards to recruitment, advertising, job application procedures, hiring, upgrading, promotion, demotion, transfer, layoff, termination, right of return from layoff, rehiring, rates of pay, or any other form of compensation and changes in compensation, benefits, job assignments, job classifications, organizational structures, position descriptions, lines of progression, seniority lists, leaves of absence, sick leave, any other leave, fringe benefits available by virtue of employment, selection and financial support for training, SST-sponsored activities including social and recreational programs, and any other term, condition, or privilege of employment.

SST Schools does not discriminate against any qualified employees or applicants because they are related to or associated with a person with a disability.

Professional Employees

Professional employees are defined as educators granted a bachelor's degree or higher from an accredited institution who hold a valid Texas Educators Certification from SBEC and/or are "Highly Qualified Teachers" under the federal law No Child Left Behind (NCLB). Professional employees also include those employees who meet the Department of Labor's guidance and definition for professional employee under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). A Professional Employee's letter of agreement is not a term contract. It is also contingent upon and subject to the employee submitting all required documentation in a timely manner and meeting all other employment requirements of SST Schools.

Statement of Confidentiality

According to the [Texas Open Records Act](#), the home addresses, home telephone numbers (including former home addresses and telephone numbers), social security numbers, and any information that reveals whether the person has family members are confidential if the individual has, in writing, opted to keep this information closed. As an employee of SST, you may indicate whether you wish this information to be released by completing the Opt-Out Form included in the Handbook Appendix. Failure to complete the form indicates that you have no objection to having this information released. You can file a new form at any time to reflect a change in your choice concerning confidentiality.

New Hire Reporting

By the 20th day after hiring a new employee, a report containing the name, address, and the name, address, and employer identification number of the school will be made to the Texas Employer New Hire Reporting Operations Center.

Employment Applications

SST relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application, as well as the accuracy of other data presented throughout the hiring process and employment. Any misrepresentations, falsifications, or material omissions in this information or data may result in SST's exclusion of the individual from further consideration for employment or, if the person has been hired, termination from employment.

Employment Checks

SST performs criminal history and fingerprinting checks as required by law, and checks applicant employment references.

Criminal History Record Information

SST is authorized by state law to obtain criminal history record information on applicants' SST intends to employ. Additionally, national criminal history checks based on an individual's fingerprints, photo, and other identification will be conducted on certain employees and entered into the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) Clearinghouse.

This database provides SST and SBEC with access to an employee's current national criminal history and updates to the employee's subsequent criminal history.

Termination or Refusal to Hire

SST will discharge or refuse to hire an employee or applicant for employment if SST obtains information through a criminal history record information review (or otherwise) that:

1. The employee has been convicted of any felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude;
2. The employee has been convicted of any offense listed in Education Code section 37.007(a); or
3. Has been convicted of an offense listed in the Code of Criminal Procedure section 62.001(5).

Additionally, the School shall discharge or refuse to hire an employee or applicant if the individual's criminal history information shows that:

- 1) The employee or applicant has been convicted of:
 - a. A felony offense under Title 5, Penal Code;
 - b. An offense on conviction of which the employee or applicant is required to register as a sex offender under Chapter 62, Code of Criminal Procedure; or
 - c. An offense under the laws of another state that is equivalent to an offense under paragraphs (a) or (b) above; and
- 2) At the time the offense occurred, the victim of the offense was under 18 years of age or enrolled in a public school.

SST may discharge an employee if it obtains information of the employee's conviction of any felony or a misdemeanor involving moral turpitude that the employee did not disclose to the School or the State Board of Educator Certification ("SBEC").

Confidentiality of Information

An employee's criminal history record information may not be released or disclosed, except when disclosure is authorized by law.

Discrimination Based on Criminal History

Except as required by state or federal law, SST Schools does not prohibit employment or refuse to consider an application for employment solely on the grounds that an applicant/employee has a prior criminal record. SST does not prohibit employment or refuse to consider an application for employment based solely on the grounds that the applicant/employee has been arrested. In accordance with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it is the policy of the School, prior to any exclusion of an applicant for employment or continued employment of an employee that has a criminal record, to conduct an individualized assessment of the criminal conduct at issue.

Employee Arrests and Convictions

An employee who is arrested for, convicted of, or receives deferred adjudication for any felony or any offense involving moral turpitude must report the arrest to Central Office Director of Employee Relations within three calendar days of the arrest. This includes any arrest, indictment, conviction, no contest or guilty pleas, or other adjudication of the employee for any of the following offenses:

- Crimes involving school property of funds;
- Crimes involving attempt by fraudulent or unauthorized means to obtain or alter any certificate or permit that would entitle any person to hold or obtain a position as an educator;
- Crimes that occur wholly or in part on school property or at a school-sponsored activity; or
- Crimes involving moral turpitude, which include but are not limited to:

- Dishonesty, fraud, deceit, theft, misrepresentation;
- Deliberate violence;
- Base, vile or depraved acts that are intended to arouse or gratify the sexual desire of the actor;
- Felony possession, transfer, sale, distribution or conspiracy to possess, transfer, sell or distribute any controlled substance defined in [Chapter 481 of the Health and Safety Code](#);
- Acts constituting public intoxication, operating a motor vehicle while under the influence of alcohol, or disorderly conduct if two or more acts are committed within any 12-month period;
- Acts constituting abuse under the Texas Family Code.

Fingerprinting

In compliance with state law, all employees and substitutes hired must complete the fingerprinting process with the SBEC/Texas DPS Clearinghouse prior to employment.

Consumer Reports

SST Schools may, at its discretion, and will, when required by law, utilize Consumer Reports – e.g., credit, criminal, employment references and Department of Public Safety reports to assist us in making employment decisions. In addition, SST may conduct annual driving record checks to verify that the drivers’ licenses and driving records of those employees required to drive SST-owned vehicles are valid and acceptable to SST’s insurance carrier.

Where required by applicable law, prior to running any of the above-mentioned checks/records, each employee will be provided any required notice form(s), and must sign an authorization form at the time of the initial job interview or prior to being extended an offer of employment. Refusal to sign such authorization is grounds for disqualification from employment with SST. Continued employment is also expressly conditioned on satisfactory results from legally authorized or required record and background checks.

In the event SST relies on a “consumer report” for an “adverse action” as defined by the [Fair Credit Reporting Act](#) and regulation – i.e., denying a job application, reassigning or terminating an employee, or denying a promotion – SST will take the following action(s):

Step 1: Before taking adverse action, the employee will be provided a pre-adverse action disclosure that includes a copy of the individual’s consumer report and a copy of “[A Summary of Your Rights Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act](#)” – a document prescribed by the Federal Trade Commission.

Step 2: After taking an adverse action, the employee will be provided notice – either orally, in writing, or electronically – that the action has been taken. This notice will include:

- The name, address, and telephone number of the Credit Reporting Agency (CRA) that supplied the report;
- A statement that the CRA supplying the report did not make the decision to take the adverse action, and cannot give specific reasons for it; and
- A notice of the individual’s right to dispute the accuracy or completeness of any information the agency furnished, and his or her right to an additional free consumer report from the agency upon request within 60 days.

The employee will be given a reasonable time period to dispute the information. However, it is ultimately the decision of SST as to the action taken.

After SST has completed its review of the checks/records, it will dispose of any consumer information and other confidential information in an appropriate manner.

Health Requirements

SST may require that an employee undergo a physical examination if at any time his or her ability to perform adequately or safely is in question.

Reassignments and Transfers

All personnel are subject to assignment and reassignment by the Superintendent. Extra-curricular or supplemental duty assignments may also be assigned or reassigned at any time.

All employees interested in transferring positions and who meet a position's minimum qualifications are encouraged to apply. Selection is based on department needs and a candidate's qualifications and performance. SST fills all job vacancies with the individual it deems most qualified for the position, and reserves the right to select candidates from outside SST. The Superintendent's criteria for approval of campus appointments and reassignments will be consistent with the school's policy regarding equal opportunity employment. Because employee salaries and/or wages may vary by geographic location, an approved out-of-district transfer may result in the modification of the transferring employee's pay rate. Transferring employees will be paid in accordance with the salary schedule approved for the receiving district.

Extra Duties

Professional and paraprofessional staff members will be assigned extra duties to ensure the proper supervision of students outside the classroom. These duties may be assigned at any time by the campus Principal or an Assistant Principal.

Professional staff members are further responsible for providing tutorial services to students who are failing or in danger of failing. Staff members are responsible for notifying the student's parents/guardians when tutorials become necessary.

School Activities

Staff members are expected to attend and participate in as many school activities as possible. Staff presence projects support and interest to the students, the school, and the community.

Staff members are also encouraged to become involved in school-related organizations, clubs, etc. Staff members must receive permission from the Principal to use school facilities for such activities. Employees should remember that no school-related activities may be scheduled the night before the TAKS/STAAR exams are administered.

Employees are required to submit ideas or requests for field trips and excursions to the Principal. The Principal may approve or deny the request.

Work Schedules

Exempt employees work minimum 8-hour days with an expected 1-hour, duty-free, lunch break. Start and end times will be scheduled, with the approval of the Superintendent or designee, by Campus Principals, Superintendents or, for Central Office staff, Department Chiefs, and the Superintendent. Exempt employees may be required to work outside their expected schedules including but not limited to extra assignments and/or after-hours, weekends or vacation-time assignments or phone calls.

Non-exempt employees will ordinarily be scheduled by the appropriate Campus Principal, or Central Office staff, Department Chief, or the Superintendent, to work 8-hour days, with 1-hour, duty-free, unpaid lunch breaks.

Teachers work 8 hours a day with a 30-minute duty-free lunch break, usually from 7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. but subject to shift changes due to individual campus start and end times set by that campus’s schedule.

Please note that these hours are not exclusive, but are simply the minimum hours that an employee is expected to be at work. Teachers may be asked to stay till 6:00 PM on staff meeting days.

Employees eligible for overtime are required to clock out at lunch and clock in when they resume work.

Notification to Parents Regarding Qualifications

SST is required by law and will provide to the parent or guardian of each enrolled student written notice of the qualifications of each teacher employed by the school. No Child Left Behind also requires that parents be notified if their child has been assigned or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who is not highly qualified.

Staff Dress and Grooming

SST Schools believes that all staff members set an example in dress and grooming for students to follow. Staff members who set a good example in dress and grooming present an image of dignity and encourage respect for authority. These factors assist SST in maintaining discipline and order.

School employees are expected to dress in a professional and appropriate manner. The Campus Principal and/or the employee’s direct supervisor are solely responsible for initially interpreting and enforcing the School’s dress and grooming standards. Complaints regarding dress and grooming requirements may be appealed as provided by Board policy.

Employees are expected to arrive to work neatly groomed and dressed, and to keep their hair neat and clean. Employee grooming and dress may not disturb, interfere with, or detract from the educational setting. “Neatly groomed and dressed” means dress and grooming standards that conform to local community and School etiquette and decorum.

Employees are expected to follow the following dress and grooming standards:

- No shorts, wind pants/shorts, or warm-ups may be worn during the school day, except for:
 - Employees assigned to physical education classes. Employees assigned to physical education classes may not, however, wear such clothing in the regular classroom.
 - Days designated by the campus administration, and field-based class activity days.
- No jeans of any color may be worn during the school day, except for:
 - Staff workdays when school is not in session.
 - Days designated by the campus administration, and field-based class activity days.
- Jewelry and Other Accessories:
 - Tattoos must be covered and hidden from view.
 - Body piercings (nose rings, eyebrow rings, tongue piercings) are prohibited.

Male Dress:

- Hair – Hair length must be kept according to the standards established in the SST student grooming code. Hair must be neatly trimmed, and no earrings may be worn.
Shirts – Men may wear open-collared shirts, either long- or short-sleeved. Acceptable styles include dress, button-down, polo, or golf shirts. Central Office employees, district office employees, principals, and other campus administrators (Assistant Principals, Deans, Head Counselors) must wear shirts and ties.

- Pants – Pants must be worn with a belt, unless the pants are designed without belt loops. Men may wear full-length slacks or pants, dress pants, Dockers, etc. Appropriate undergarments must be worn at all times.
- Shoes – Men may wear dress shoes, or casual shoes that are brown or black in color. Tennis shoes designed for athletic activities, flip-flops, or any shoes made of plastic, polyurethane, or other similar materials are not allowed. Shoes should be polished and clean. Shoes made of leather or microfiber are preferable.

Female Dress:

- Skirts and Dresses – Skirt and dress length should fall below the knee cap. Thighs should not be exposed when seated or when legs are crossed/uncrossed. Mini-skirts are prohibited. Fitted leggings and spandex-type leggings are not permitted as outerwear. However, they may be worn under a dress, skirt, or tunic top provided that the outerwear is an appropriate length (knee length). Dress culottes, skirts, and split skirts must meet the length requirements of the student dress code. These are clothes that have the appearance of a skirt in the front, but are split. Dresses and skirts should contain only small slits, and slits must not be revealing. Appropriate undergarments must be worn at all times.
- Shirts, Blouses, and Tops – All shirts must cover the back and stomach areas. Shirts and blouses must be buttoned appropriately and should not be low cut or expose cleavage. Clothing should never be see-through. Any clothing that reveals private parts, the midriff, or undergarments is prohibited. Hoodies are not allowed during school days.
- Shoes – No sandals, open-toed shoes, high heels (higher than 3 inches), slippers, flip-flops, or clogs are allowed. Chunky heels are acceptable only if lower than 3 inches. Shoes should be polished and clean. Shoes made of leather or microfiber are preferable.
- Pants/Slacks Pants and slacks must fall to ankle length. Only professional style Capri pants are acceptable during school days. Jeans, tights, and spandex are prohibited unless exceptions are made by campus administrators for special events.

Employees who desire and exemption from the dress code for religious reasons should submit their requests to their Campus Principal.

Note: Employees who violate this dress code are subject to a written warning and, for repeat violations or severe violations, disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination.

Performance Evaluation

Evaluation of an employee's job performance should be a continual process that focuses on improvement. Performance evaluation is based on an employee's assigned job duties and other job-related criteria. All employees will participate in the evaluation process with their assigned supervisor at least annually. Written evaluations will be completed on forms approved by the Superintendent or designee. Reports, correspondence, and memoranda also can be used to document performance information. All employees will receive a copy of their written evaluation, have a performance conference with their supervisor, and be given an opportunity to respond to the evaluation. Evaluation documents are confidential and may be excepted from disclosure under Texas open records laws.

Return of School Property

All materials, including but not limited to business information, files, research, records, memoranda, books, lists, computer disks, hardware, software, cell phones and other wireless devices, documents, drawings, models, apparatus, sketches, designs and any other embodiment of confidential information or intellectual property received by an employee during employment or volunteer service, and any tangible embodiments of such materials created by an employee, alone or with others, whether confidential or not, are the property of SST Schools.

Upon separation of employment with SST or cessation of volunteer services, or upon the request of SST, an individual will return to SST all such materials, including copies thereof, in the individual's possession or under the individual's

control. Such materials will be returned within 24 hours of notice of separation or upon request of SST, whichever comes first.

The cost of repairing or replacing any SST supplies, materials, equipment, or other property that is damaged (other than normal wear and tear), stolen, or lost by an employee or that is not returned to SST upon separation of employment may be deducted from the employee's wages, so long as the deduction does not take the employee's pay below minimum wage or, if the employee is a salaried employee, reduce the salary below its predetermined amount.

Any materials created by staff members for use by SST, or created on SST time, or produced using the staff or resources of SST, are considered works-for-hire and all intellectual property rights are vested exclusively in SST.

Working with the Media

The Board of Directors has designated the Superintendent as the official spokesperson for media questions. Any official statements from SST to the media are to be handled through the Director of Communications or designee.

Staff Development

Staff development activities are organized to meet the needs of employees and SST. Staff development is predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives, and addressed in the campus improvement plan, which is approved by a campus-level advisory committee. Staff development for non-instructional personnel is designed to meet specific licensing requirements and continued skill development.

Staff development may consist of work at local colleges/universities, professional memberships, workshops, in-service trainings, retreats, and conferences. Staff development does not include State Test Scoring, presenting at conferences unrelated to their job descriptions at SST, or other activities unrelated to their job descriptions at SST in which they receive payment from an outside entity for which employees must use their PTO days or engage in these activities only on non-calendar days unless it is approved by your supervisor.

Employees must submit a request to a Principal or Assistant Principal in advance of registering for development opportunities in order to be fully or partially reimbursed for participation.

Personnel Records

SST maintains a personnel file for each employee. The personnel file may include such information as the employee's job application, résumé, records of training, documentation of performance appraisals and salary increases, and other employment records.

All information in an employee's personnel file will be made available to the employee or his or her authorized representative in the same manner that public information is made available under the public information laws found in [Texas Government Code chapter 552](#). However, an employee or his or her authorized representative has a special right of access, beyond the right of the general public, to information held by SST that relates to the employee, and that is protected from public disclosure by laws intended to protect the employee's privacy interests. SST may not deny to the employee or his or her representative access to information relating to the employee on the grounds that the information is considered confidential by privacy principles under the Public Information Law. However, SST may assert, as grounds for denial of access, other provisions of the Texas public information laws or other laws that are not intended to protect the employee's privacy interests.

If SST determines that information in an employee's records is exempt from disclosure under an exception of [Texas Government Code chapter 552](#), subchapter C, other than an exception intended to protect the privacy interest of the

employee or his or her authorized representative, it will, when required, submit a written request for a decision to the Attorney General of Texas before disclosing the information. SST will release the information to the employee requesting the information in accordance with applicable law.

Employees may opt out of certain information being released in accordance with the provisions of section 552.024 of the Texas Public Information Act, Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code. Under this provision, employees of SST have the option of withholding the following information from public disclosure:

- 1) The employee's address
- 2) The employee's home telephone number
- 3) Information relating to whether the employee has family members

Other information maintained by SST regarding employees (including but not limited to employee names and work locations) is subject to public disclosure regardless of the employee's election. SST provides an employee opt-out form to make the above election. The form is included on p.88 of this Handbook.

Employment References

SST provides references regarding former employment only if SST receives written authorization and a release from the former employee. Otherwise, SST will only verify dates of employment, the position held, and rate of pay. Requests for references should be directed to the Principal.

Name and Address Change

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify SST Schools of any changes in personnel data. Employees must update their HR account with any changes or corrections to their name, home address, telephone number, marital status, W-4 information, emergency contacts. Names of dependents and beneficiary updates are to be communicated to and coordinated with the SST Benefits Department. Corrections or changes to an employee's name must be reported to the employees' District HR/Talent Department. Name changes must be consistent with and match other documentation, including driver's licenses and social security identification. Therefore, name changes will require an executed court order and a valid Social Security Card and Driver License depicting the name change.

Building Use

Requests to use school facilities should be directed to the appropriate campus Principal. A request may be granted with the Superintendent's or designee's approval.

Instructional Supplies

All instructional materials purchased by SST Schools become property of the School. Employees may not keep teacher resource materials when leaving employment with SST.

Staff members should initiate requests for supplies through the Principal's office. SST will assume no financial responsibility for teacher resource materials purchased without a properly issued purchase order.

Communication with Parents in General

Teachers and administrators are expected to notify a parent when a student performs poorly on classwork or testing or begins to misbehave at school. SST encourages teachers and administrators not to send information regarding grades, disciplinary issues, or other sensitive matters via e-mail.

Parent and Student Complaints

Parents are encouraged to discuss problems or complaints with teachers and appropriate administrators in an effort to resolve issues in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible. Complaints that cannot be resolved informally should be directed to the campus Principal. After all administrative complaint procedures are exhausted, parents and students can bring complaints to the Board of Directors for consideration.

Title I – Parent/Teacher Conferences

It is SST's policy to implement programs, activities and procedures involving parents of students in programs assisted under Title I, Part A. Parental involvement activities provided with Title I, Part A funds are planned and implemented with meaningful consultation with parents of participating children.

All teachers and administrators will be expected to work with parents to improve the performance of the child and provide information on how parents can participate in decisions relating to the education of their child. Training will be provided for all teachers and administrators involved with the implementation and oversight of Title I and associated programs.

Parent Teacher Home Visit Program

The Parent-Teacher Home Visit Program is a campus-wide model partnership between school staff and stakeholders and students and their families. This includes but is not limited to, school principals, assistant principals, teachers, engagement and support coordinators as well as counselors. Our standard delivery model structure is below.

We;

- Assign an Engagement & Support coordinator for each campus
- Conduct a mandatory teacher training every year in August
- Make at least one home visit per year
- Conduct home visits with two trained staff members
- Invite families for a dinner/breakfast at least once per quarter.
- Start home visit program at the beginning of school year.

Building a partnership with students and their families is the main purpose of the home visit in our engagement & support system.

Staff Recognition Program

Continuous efforts are made throughout the year to recognize employees who make an extra effort to contribute to the success of SST Schools at the end of each semester. SST encourages all faculty/staff members to participate in team building activities to create a positive, caring and welcoming school culture. SST School's Staff Recognition Program is designed to create a positive school environment and increase staff motivation, retention rate, and loyalty to the school system in order to better serve students for greater academic achievement, and social development.

Teacher Appreciation Week

Teacher Appreciation Week is a special week for the recognition of teachers, and may include celebrations to honor them for their special contributions in the community in general. This week is set aside to show respect for the teaching profession in general. It focuses on understanding how difficult it is to deal with young people who have very different minds, sometimes complicated personal lives and backgrounds. This week will give attention to the fact that teachers work without cessation to help children reach academic milestones, develop awareness of different cultures and cultivate personal knowledge. It is the responsibility of SST Schools to have a well-organized Teacher Appreciation Week for all staff members.

Team Building Activities

Faculty members are strongly encouraged to attend all team building activities including Thanksgiving Events, Winter break events, School Breakfast/Lunch/Dinner engagements, Cooking Classes, Sports, Camping Trips, Appreciation Events, and meetings or events sponsored by school administrators. There will be no extra payments for attending these activities.

Staff Exploration Programs

Traveling is the best educational experience. Nothing in a classroom can compare with actually seeing the world. Traveling abroad can have beneficial outcomes for employees who get the privilege. It gives staff a different perspective and a better understanding of history. It shows diversity, differences in languages and gives people insight to the rest of the world around them. Visiting a different country, learning about contrasting ways of living and thinking, and perhaps integrating these experiences into their own value systems. This research is supported by the valuable feedback given from SST School's teachers who have traveled with students to places in many different countries.

CLASSIFICATION, COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Employment Classification Categories

It is the intent of SST Schools to clarify the definitions of employment classifications as exempt or non-exempt or full time or part time, so that employees understand their employment status and benefit eligibility. These classifications do not guarantee employment for any specified period of time.

Exempt and Non-Exempt

Each employee is designated as either EXEMPT or NON-EXEMPT under federal and state wage and hour laws in accordance with applicable federal law. NON-EXEMPT employees are entitled to overtime pay under the specific provisions of federal law. EXEMPT employees are excluded from specific provisions of federal and state wage and hour laws. An employee's EXEMPT or NON-EXEMPT classification may be changed only upon written notification by SST, and in accordance with applicable federal law.

Exempt status applies to the position and not the employee. Exempt simply means the position the employee fills is exempt from the [Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#), and is not entitled to overtime compensation. Exempt employees (excluding teachers) are paid on a salaried basis, and SST generally will not deduct from a non-teacher exempt employee's salary, in accordance with FLSA, for absences of less than one full day. However, any full days of absence taken in excess of the employee's allotment/service record accumulation of sick or personal leave will result in an employee payroll deduction calculated on a pro-rated daily rate. With respect to exempt teachers, SST will not make leave and/or salary deductions for absences of less than one-half day (four hours).

Non-exempt positions are those positions that are not exempt from FLSA requirements. Non-exempt positions require SST to pay the employee overtime (time and a half) for all hours worked in excess of 40 during a workweek. The key phrase here is "hours worked." An employee may work 32 hours in a week and have 16 hours of vacation time. This would reflect as 48 hours on a paycheck, but for overtime calculation, the employee actually worked 32 hours – so overtime would not be paid. All employees in positions that are classified as non-exempt will be required to maintain a time card or record, and will be eligible for overtime pay in accordance with the appropriate Wage and Hour Laws, and as outlined in this Handbook. **Non-exempt employees may not work beyond 40 hours per week without prior written approval from the supervisor.**

SST's positions are reviewed and assigned an FLSA (exempt or non-exempt) status that is maintained on a master record by the school. Upon request, the campus Principal may provide this information to an employee.

Full-Time Employee

An individual who is employed at least 40 hours per week is considered full-time. Full-time employees are those who are not in a temporary or introductory status, and who are regularly scheduled to work SST's full-time schedule. Generally, full-time employees are eligible for SST's benefit package, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program. Employees in this status must contribute to the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS).¹

Part-Time Employee

An individual who is employed at least 20, but less than 40 hours per week, is considered part-time. Part-time employees are those who are not assigned to a temporary or introductory status, and who are regularly scheduled to work every day at a fixed part-time schedule. Part-time employees receive legally mandated benefits but, except as may be required by federal or state law, or provided at SST's discretion, are ineligible for SST's benefit programs. Part-time

¹ For purposes of health insurance benefits under the Texas Insurance Code, a full-time employee is any employee who usually works 30 hours or more per work week.

employees may contribute to TRS if eligible. Subject to state law, employees working 30 hours per week or more (whether part-time or full-time) are also eligible for the SST healthcare benefit plan offered to full-time employees.

Temporary Employee

Temporary employees are individuals hired as interim replacements to temporarily supplement the work force, such as substitutes, or to assist in the completion of a specific project. Employment assignments in this category are of a limited duration. Temporary employees retain that status unless and until notified of a change. Employment of temporary employees beyond an initially anticipated period or past completion of a specific project does not change at-will employment status. All legally mandated benefits are provided to temporary employees. Other benefits may also be available, subject to the terms, conditions, and limitations of each benefit program.

Workweek and Work Hours for Purposes of FLSA

The SST workweek begins on Monday at 12:00 a.m. and ends on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. Scheduled work hours and days may vary according to service requirements and employment classification. Generally, the scheduled work hours for SST employees will conform to the regular schedules of the schools served by SST.

Support employees will be notified of their required duty days, holidays, and hours of work for their position by their supervisor.

Salaries, Wages, and Stipends

Employees are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and an established pay structure/salary scales. SST's pay plans may be reviewed by the Board of Directors each year and adjusted as needed. All school positions are classified as exempt or non-exempt according to federal law and as discussed above.

Wage Discrimination

SST Schools prohibits and will not tolerate wage discrimination on the basis of sex. SST will comply with the mandates of the Equal Pay Act.

Retaliation against those who oppose wage discrimination on the basis of sex or otherwise engage in protected activity is prohibited and will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes retaliation against a person who reports what they believe to be wage discrimination and for any witnesses involved in the investigation. SST will promptly investigate any allegation of retaliation. SST will comply with the anti-retaliation mandates of the Equal Pay Act and Title VII.

Employees may complain about wage discrimination on the basis of sex pursuant to the terms of the SST Employee Complaint and Grievance Policy.

SST Schools will promptly and fairly investigate allegations of wage discrimination on the basis of sex. If unlawful action has occurred, appropriate corrective action will be taken. Any SST employee who engages in prohibited discrimination shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate termination.

Payroll

SST Schools pays all exempt employees on a monthly basis, and nonexempt employees twice a month with paychecks issued on the last workday of each month. The pay date schedule is posted at SST's Central Office and at all other campus facilities where employees are assigned.

Employees may be paid by check or through direct deposit of funds to savings and/or checking accounts at the employee's financial institution(s). The method of pay may be changed at any time, with or without advance notice. In

the event that a regularly scheduled payday falls on a weekend or federal/bank holiday, employees will be paid on the last day of work prior to the regularly scheduled payday.

How Your Prorated Salary is Calculated?:

The annual salary of the employees who begin working after the first day of the school calendar will be prorated. For payroll purposes the term “contract year” refers to the number of working days for each job category, regardless of whether a contract is actually signed for that position. For instance, if you are required to work only when school is in session (students are attending), you work 180 days (nine months). If your position requires your presence on planning days also, you work 190 days (10 months).

When you are hired you are given an annual salary based on a complete contract year. **If you begin working after the beginning of the school year calendar**, your salary will be prorated based on the number of days you will actually work.

For your information this is the formula we will use to prorate your salary. You will be sent the blank figures when the Payroll Department completes the calculations.

- A. Your annual salary is _____.
- B. Your position is _____ days.
- C. Your daily rate of pay is _____ (A divided by B).
- D. You will work _____ days (based on your beginning date).
- E. You will earn _____ (C multiplied by D).
- F. This will be divided equally by _____ checks (number of checks remaining in the contract year).
- G. Your gross pay per check will be _____ (E divided by F).

Your pay will also be prorated if there is some change in your status or job during the year. We will calculate your total earnings based on the number of days on the previous salary plus the number of days on the current (new) salary. The amount already paid will be subtracted, and the remainder will be divided by the number of checks left in the contract year.

Payday is the last working day of the month. In addition, those on a semi-monthly schedule are paid on the 15th of the month (or the Friday before if the 15th falls on the weekend).

Note for Certain Exempt Employees

Exempt employees who are hired before August 15 will be paid equal paychecks over an eleven- or thirteen-month basis, depending on the employee’s election. This applies only to those employees hired before August 15 of any given year.

Annualized Compensation

SST pays all exempt employees over a 10-month or 12-month period, depending on the position and regardless of the number of months employed during the school year. Exempt employees will be paid in equal monthly payments, beginning with the first pay period of the school year. Exempt employees who separate after the last day of instruction will continue to receive paychecks through the end of the summer. For purposes of healthcare and other benefits, an exempt employee who works a 10-month schedule but does not elect to be paid over 12-months will have the employee’s premium contributions deducted over the prior 2-month period to cover premiums for the 11th and 12th month.

SST pays all non-exempt employees an “annualized salary” over a 12-month period. By paying an annualized salary, employees are able to receive regular income each month, including those times when school is not in session and when employees are not asked to perform any work. Annualized compensation also allows SST to deduct any premiums for benefits from an employee’s monthly earnings even during summer months, which is an added convenience.

All non-exempt employees are expected to work according a set schedule of days and/or hours as set forth in each employee's employment agreement and the SST calendar. If an employee does not work these expected days or hours, because of arriving late to work, leaving early, or other absence, SST may first make a corresponding deduction from any accrued paid leave. SST may also make occasional deductions from pay for willful absence or tardiness if an employee, without authorization, fails to work his or her expected schedule. Such a deduction will not affect SST's duty to pay earned overtime, and the employee's wages will never drop below minimum wage. Questions regarding annualized pay for non-exempt employees may be directed to the campus administrators.

If a Non-Exempt Employee does not work the days and hours provided in their work schedule, SST will first deduct from any paid leave that employee has. This deduction from the employee's Paid Time Off (PTO) bank (See this Handbook p.44) will be automatic even if the employee has not requested to use PTO. Once all accrued paid leave has been exhausted, SST will deduct any missed hours/days accordingly.

Timekeeping

Federal and state laws require SST Schools to keep an accurate record of time worked in order to calculate employee pay and benefits. Time worked is all the time actually spent on the job performing assigned duties. Employees are not to estimate future hours and include them on their time card.

Nonexempt employees should accurately record the time they begin and end their work, as well as the beginning and ending time of each meal period. They should also record the beginning and ending time of any split shift or departure from work for personal reasons. This work log should be recorded as it takes place – not several hours or days later. Overtime work must always be approved before it is performed.

In accordance with Board Policy, all employees should regard coming to work on time, working their shift as scheduled, and arriving and leaving at the scheduled time as essential functions of their jobs.

The School has established the following policies for employee attendance:

- 1) Employees should arrive to work and be at their assigned duty station at their scheduled start time.
- 2) Employees should remain at their duty station unless the needs of the job require being elsewhere or as authorized by their supervisor, except during authorized breaks.
- 3) Employees should take only the time normally allowed for breaks as authorized by their supervisor.
- 4) Non-salaried/Non-exempt employees should leave promptly at the end of their scheduled workday, unless given prior authorization from their supervisor to work past that time.
- 5) Employees should call in and personally notify a supervisor if they will be absent or tardy, unless a verifiable emergency makes it impossible to do so.
- 6) In addition to any time-clock or time-recording system SST may implement, time keeping for Non-exempt employees must be done weekly and manually using SST's approved time sheets provided by the Principal.

Altering, falsifying, tampering with time records, or recording time on another employee's time record may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

Minimum Wage and Overtime

Employees not exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act will be paid minimum wage and receive compensation for overtime under the conditions specified in the FLSA. Under no circumstances should a non-exempt employee work "off the clock" or outside of the employee's approved work schedule.

Advance approval from a supervisor is required for any overtime work. Exceptions are granted for advanced approval if the overtime is in support of unforeseeable or emergency circumstances and approval is obtained within one working day of the event.

SST does not offer compensatory time, but may reduce work hours in a workweek such that actual work time during the workweek does not exceed 40 hours.

Holiday/Summer Break Pay Schedule

Paychecks issued throughout the school year that are not handled through direct deposit will be sent to the employee's supervisor for pickup.

Lost/Stolen Paychecks

Lost or stolen paychecks should be reported to the Payroll Department immediately. The Payroll Department will issue a stop payment on the lost or stolen check. Only after receiving confirmation from the school's financial institution that a check has been stopped will a new check be issued.

Unclaimed Paychecks

If an employee fails to pick up a paycheck, the employee's supervisor will immediately return the paycheck to the Payroll Department. The Payroll Department will attempt to contact the employee to forward payment. In the event the employee does not collect the check within 90 calendar days, the paycheck will be cancelled, but the wages will still be recorded. The employee will be required to present proper identification to SST before the check will be reissued. In the event that the unclaimed paycheck is not claimed for a period of one year from its date of issuance, the paycheck "escheats" to the State of Texas pursuant to the Texas Property Code. After such time, the employee will need to contact the Unclaimed Property Division of the Texas State Comptroller's Office for instructions on retrieving deposited wages.

Authorized Check Pick Up

SST will release a paycheck to a third party, including a spouse, who is authorized in writing by the employee to receive the paycheck. Written authorization must be provided to the Payroll Department prior to any paycheck being released.

Direct Deposit

All faculty and staff are strongly encouraged to take advantage of the many advantages of direct deposit. In addition to being efficient and convenient, direct deposit is the most reliable method of receiving pay. Employees must authorize Direct Deposit online through their TEAMS Employee Service Center account. A notification period of one pay period is necessary to activate this service. Terminated employees with Direct Deposit will receive a paper check for their final paycheck within six calendar days of termination or otherwise in accordance with the Texas Payday Act.

Administrative Pay Corrections

In the event of an error in payment, the employee should contact his or her supervisor as soon as possible. The supervisor will then contact the Payroll Department and send the necessary paperwork to correct the matter. When the Payroll Department receives the correction, a determination will be made as to how the error is to be corrected – either through a manually created paycheck or in the individual's subsequent paycheck. Any questions concerning how or when corrections will be made should be directed to the appropriate supervisor and/or the Payroll Department.

Employee Advances

It is against SST policy to issue payroll advances to employees.

Deductions from Pay

SST Schools will deduct from an employee's paycheck that which is allowable under state and federal law. Generally, optional deductions, if any, may only be made from pay as long as the resulting wage does not fall below the FLSA minimum wage.

All optional deductions from an employee's paycheck must be approved by the employee in writing.

Deductions Required by Law

The following deductions are required by law and are withheld from every paycheck; no written authorization is required:

- Federal Income Tax Withholding (based on IRS Form W-4)
- Medicare
- Social Security (for non-TRS eligible employees only)
- Teacher Retirement System (TRS – two deductions):
 - Retirement (federal exempt) – employee retirement account (6.4%)
 - Insurance– active member contribution to retirees' health insurance program (0.65%)
- Insurance coverage (optional)

Social Security/Medicare Taxes

The amounts withheld are based upon a tax rate set by law and are applied up to a certain specified amount of annual earnings. SST is liable for an amount equal to the amount of tax paid by the employee at the time the wages are paid.

Federal Withholding Income Tax

Federal income tax will be withheld from each employee's paycheck. The amount is shown on the paycheck stub under the heading "Federal Withholding." The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) requires that deductions be made based on an employee's gross earnings in accordance with established withholding tax tables in effect at the time of withholding. The classification used to determine the amount of tax withheld is taken from the Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate (Form W-4). The withheld tax is forwarded to the IRS, and the employee is given credit toward payment of their individual income tax.

Wage Garnishments

An involuntary assignment of wages – also called a garnishment – requires that SST Schools deduct certain amounts from an employee's wages in order to repay the employee's debts, such as child support and court-ordered wage garnishments. SST will only make such deduction from an employee's paycheck upon receipt of official notice and/or paperwork from a court or governing body.

Exemption from Withholding

If an employee wishes to claim an exemption from withholding he or she must fill out the qualifying section of the W-4 form. If the Payroll Department determines that the employee does not qualify for an exemption based upon the qualifying statement in the W-4, exemption status may be denied.

Change in Withholding Status

Employees must file a revised W-4 form in order to change withholding status. The Payroll Department will not make changes in an employee's withholding status based upon a verbal or email request. Please note that in accordance with

IRS guidelines, if marital status is not checked, the default Single will be entered and if allowances are not completed, the default zero (0) will be entered.

Wage and Tax Statements

All employees will receive a Wage and Tax Statement (Form W-2) from SST showing their annual earnings and the amounts deducted for Social Security, Medicare, and federal income taxes. Additional earnings and deductions that may be included, if applicable, are social security tips, allocated tips, advance earned income credit, and dependent care benefits. W-2 forms will be prepared by the Payroll Department and distributed on or before January 31st of each year.

Health Insurance

Health insurance coverage is available to TRS eligible SST employees. SST's contribution to employee insurance premiums is determined annually by the Board of Directors. An employee may pay a group rate to add his or her spouse, children, or other eligible family members to an insurance policy.

Detailed descriptions of insurance coverage, prices, and eligibility requirements are provided to all employees in a separate booklet, the SST Schools Benefits Summary and benefit plan documents.

Supplemental Insurance Benefits

In addition to the Life Insurance provided to eligible TRS employees by SST, employees may also at their own expense, enroll in supplemental insurance programs for Dental, Vision, Short Term and/or Longer Term Disability, Group Life, Cancer, and Accidental Death and Dismemberment insurance benefits. SST **will not** pay premiums for these programs by payroll deduction. Employees are responsible for all premium payments for supplemental insurance benefits. Questions regarding optional supplemental benefit programs should be directed to the campus Principal.

COBRA Coverage

In accordance with the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1985 ("COBRA"), SST will continuation coverage under any group health insurance plan established after July 1, 1986, to the following qualified beneficiaries for the stated period of time:

- To the employee for 18 months after a termination (other than for gross misconduct) or reduction in hours. An employee providing notice of being disabled under Title II or XVI of the Social Security Act before the end of the initial 18 months of coverage shall be offered up to 29 months of continuation coverage.
- To dependents of the covered employee for 36 months after the employee becomes eligible for Medicare benefits.
- To dependents of the covered employee for 36 months after the employee's death or the divorce or legal separation of the employee from a spouse.
- To a dependent child for 36 months after the child ceases to be a dependent under the terms of the plan.

Employees and dependents that are covered by the group health plan at the time of the qualifying event are eligible to continue coverage. If a qualifying event is either: (a) the divorce of an employee; or (b) a child becoming ineligible for coverage, the eligible participants must notify the Benefits or Payroll Department in writing. The Benefits or Payroll Department will then give written notice to the participants of the continuation option. If the qualifying event is the employee's death, Medicare eligibility, or termination of employment (or reduction of hours), the Benefits or Payroll Department will give written notice to the participants of the continuation option.

Eligible participants have 60 days to give written notice to the Benefits or Payroll Department of a desire to continue coverage. The election must specify names of covered individuals and the reason for and the date of the qualifying event.

As long as the premium is paid on a timely basis, the participants' coverage will continue unless:

- The benefit time period expires;
- A continued participant has coverage under any other group health plan, which does not contain an exclusion for any preexisting condition of the participant;
- Coverage ceases for failure to pay the premium;
- A continued participant becomes entitled to Medicare benefits; or
- SST no longer provides group health coverage for its employees.

Benefits for continued participants will be the same as those for active employees. Rates will be based upon the rates for active employees, without SST's contribution. If SST changes benefits or rates, the continued participants will receive the new benefits and a new rate.

A service fee of 2% of the premium may be added to the premium and is payable by the continued participant to SST on a monthly basis. An extra premium of 50% may be added for participants who extend coverage from 18 to 29 months. The participant is responsible for the premium payment.

Workers' Compensation Benefits

In accordance with state law, SST Schools provides workers' compensation benefits to employees who suffer a work-related illness or personal injury due to accidents arising out of their employment with SST. These benefits are paid for entirely by SST and help pay for medical treatment and make up for part of the income lost while recovering. All work-related illnesses, accidents, or injuries should be reported immediately to the appropriate supervisor and the Superintendent or designee.

Employees who suffer a work-related injury or illness, and who must be off work due to such injury or illness, will be governed by applicable provisions of the [Workers' Compensation Act](#) (the "WCA") and the [Family and Medical Leave Act](#) (the "FMLA") federal regulations.

An employee receiving workers' compensation wage benefits may elect to receive accrued paid leave benefits, whether or not such employee is on family and medical leave. If such an election is made by the employee, SST will pay the difference between the weekly income benefit received under workers' compensation, and the employee's regular weekly compensation, and will charge leave proportionately.

An employee whose accumulated leave is exhausted prior to or during an absence for a work-related injury or illness will be placed on an unpaid leave of absence. Except while on family and medical leave, the employee will be responsible for full payment, in advance, of all premiums for insurance benefits during such leave of absence.

Upon release from workers' compensation for regular or accommodated duty, the employee must submit a written request for reinstatement of employment. The request must be accompanied by a physician's statement certifying the employee's fitness to return to work. If the release is for an accommodated-duty position, the return to work will be coordinated by the Benefits or Payroll Department.

Except as required under the temporary disability law, an employee released from workers' compensation will be considered for a position for which the employee is qualified, provided such a position is available. If no position for which the employee is qualified is available at the time the employee requests reinstatement, the employee will be

considered for a subsequent vacancy. Failure of an employee to report to SST upon release from workers' compensation leave within three days, or refusal to accept an offered position, will constitute resignation.

Mandatory Requirements

Workers' Compensation Insurance covers all employees during the time they are on the job.

- Covered injuries and illnesses may be physical or mental and specific or cumulative.
- An injury is considered job-related when it arises out of and in the course and scope of employment.
- The activity that caused the injury must also be an activity that is in the course and scope of employment.

Denial of Workers' Compensation Insurance Benefits

Except as otherwise required by state law, injuries not covered by Workers' Compensation Insurance include those where the employee:

- Was intoxicated on alcohol or drugs.
- Was in the process of committing a felony (and has been convicted).
- Was participating in a social or recreational activity off-duty that was not directly related to his or her work.
- Was commuting to or from work unless doing so under the direct control/orders of SST on SST -related business.
- Caused the injury intentionally, or committed suicide.
- Was "horsing around" or fighting on the job.
- Violated a SST safety policy or procedure.

If SST denies a Workers' Compensation Insurance claim:

- The employee may contest the decision in accordance with the provisions of the Workers' Compensation laws of the State of Texas.
- All costs incurred by the employee in contesting a denial of the claim will be the sole responsibility of the employee.
- SST is not obligated to make any commitments or statements pertaining to its liability concerning an employee's injury or illness.

Reporting Requirements

Any employee suffering an injury or illness that is work related is responsible for immediately reporting that illness or injury – no matter how minor – to his or her campus Principal and/or supervisor. The employee should not attempt to make any medical decisions on his or her own.

The Principal and/or supervisor will assist the individual immediately to obtain all the details of the incident and the identities and contact information of any witnesses, if necessary.

All appropriate incident forms must be completed and submitted to SST's insurance carrier within 24 hours of the incident. Additionally, in the event of an accident, the employee will be required to participate in a post-accident drug and alcohol test within 24 hours of the accident.

Employees desiring information about SST's position on the Workers' Compensation Insurance claim will be informed only that SST and/or its insurance carrier is conducting an investigation. All questions and claims regarding workers' compensation should be referred to the HR Department. An employee receiving workers' compensation wage benefits will be placed on FMLA leave, if applicable.

Request for Leave

Any employee whose job-related injury or illness will prevent him or her from reporting to work within one week following the initial incident should contact his or campus Principal or supervisor during the first week of the absence. Workers' Compensation Insurance leave may be granted for situations in which there is a physician's written statement indicating that a leave of absence is required.

The physician's statement must provide adequate details, acceptable to SST, regarding the nature of the injury and any physical limitations, as well as disability and the anticipated length of absence from work. SST may, at its discretion, require another medical opinion by a physician appointed at SST's expense. SST also reserves the right to select the physician to examine and treat the injury or illness, to seek additional medical opinions, and to deny benefits where there is insufficient evidence that the illness/injury arose out of or occurred in the course of employment.

If a leave of absence is needed in the case of a legitimate Workers' Compensation Insurance injury or illness, the employee will be paid according to the state schedule, and will remain on leave until released by a physician's statement.

Fraudulent Claims for Workers' Compensation

Filing a false or fraudulent claim is a violation of law and SST policy, and can result in disciplinary employment actions, including termination of employment.

Return to Work Policy

Upon expiration of a Workers' Compensation absence, and prior to returning to work, the employee must obtain a physician's release and provide it to the HR Department or the employee's supervisor.

Potential employment following such Workers' Compensation absence will be determined based on the type of leave for which the employee qualifies. All employees qualifying for leave under the FMLA or USERRA will be placed in a like or comparable position upon their release to return to work or as otherwise required by law. Employees returning within the Extended Leave period, defined below, may return to a previously vacated position, at SST's discretion and subject to availability, upon release to return to work. If the position is unavailable, the employee may be assigned to a substantially similar position or another suitable position for which the employee is qualified, subject to availability. If no position is available, the employee's name may be placed on the substitute roster, if any, and the employee may be considered for a subsequent vacancy along with other applicants. Employees exceeding the 30 day Extended Leave period will have been considered to have resigned and/or separated from employment due to unavailability to work, but will be able to reapply for any vacancies, subject to qualifications and availability of job openings.

Extended Leave and Absence Control Policy

"Extended Leave" is defined as any non-FMLA or non-[Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act](#) (USERRA) leave of absence, taken after any and all accrued personal, sick or vacation leave, if any, has been exhausted, regardless of reason, between one and 30 calendar days in length. This includes a leave of absence while on Workers' Compensation. Employees on Extended Leave remain at-will and may return to work, at SST's discretion and subject to availability, and subject to applicable state and federal law. Such employees may be placed in the job position vacated, in a substantially similar position or another suitable position for which the employee is qualified, if any is available. Following the maximum 30 calendar days of Extended Leave, unless the employee's absence falls under the protection of the FMLA, USERRA or other state or federal law, an employee will have been considered to have resigned and/or separated from employment due to unavailability for work. Any employee so separated will be eligible for rehire, and will be able to apply for any vacancies that may exist at any given time, depending upon qualifications and availability of job openings.

Early Return to Work Program

SST is committed to providing a safe workplace for its employees. Preventing workplace injury is our primary goal. If an Employment Related Injury, as hereinafter defined, should occur, SST's policy is to provide opportunities for every employee to remain at work or to return to work as soon as medically possible following such an injury by providing temporary transitional work assignments. This provision does not replace or modify any employee rights under the [FMLA](#) or [Americans with Disabilities Act](#) (ADA) or other federal or state law.

SST's Early Return to Work (RTW) program will provide transitional work for employees who are restricted from performing some or all of their regular duties for a temporary period due to an Employment Related Injury. The RTW program applies to all SST employees. The goals of the program are to:

- Create positive workplace morale through communication and support for the injured worker;
- Minimize the potential for re-injury or permanent disability;
- Reduce medical and disability costs; and
- Increase productivity by decreasing lost work time.

Early Return to Work Qualifying Terms and Definitions

- The employee must have a temporary disability due to an "Employment Related Injury" which is defined as an injury or occupational disease, which arises out of the course and scope of employment and is a compensable injury or illness, as defined under the [Texas Workers' Compensation Act](#) (the "TWCA").
- "Physician" means a doctor of medicine, osteopathic medicine, optometry, dentistry, podiatry, or chiropractic who is licensed and authorized to practice as defined in the Texas Workers' Compensation Rules ([Texas Labor Code, Title 5, Subtitle A](#)).
- "RTW" is a temporary Modified Duty position to which an employee is assigned when he or she is unable to return to his or her regular position following an Employment Related Injury. The RTW position temporarily addresses the restrictions placed on an individual by the employee's treating Physician. The employee will receive their regular pay during the Early Return to Work period.
- RTW Eligibility: To be eligible for participation in the RTW Program, an employee must provide a written statement (Form TWCC-73) from his or her treating physician that he or she is: (1) temporarily unable to perform his or her essential duties, following an employment related injury or illness; and (2) capable of carrying out work of a lighter or modified nature from his or her regular duties and is expected to return to his or her regular duties within 90 calendar days.

Early Return to Work Procedure

Once notified of an on-the-job injury or illness, the employee's campus Principal, supervisor or designee must complete a First Report of Injury (TWCC-1) for Workers' Compensation and inform the employee in writing of the Return to Work Program. The employee must be seen and evaluated by his or her physician to determine if the employee is able to return to work, and if so, with or without restrictions. At the time of the evaluation, the employee must inform the physician of the Return to Work Program, and provide him or her with a copy of the employee's regular job description that identifies the essential functions of the job and its requirements.

When the employee is able to return to work with restrictions, the employee's physician must complete the TWCC 73 Work Status Report, indicating the specific restrictions, and the duration of those restrictions. Clarification regarding temporary restrictions may be requested of the treating physician.

Appropriate school officials will determine if a temporary RTW assignment can be offered. It should be understood that there may be instances in which SST will not be able to offer a RTW assignment. All RTW notices are to be forwarded to HR Department. RTW placement will be based on the following criteria, if possible:

- Employees with no restrictions and a valid medical release/TWCC-73 will be returned to regular duty status.
- Employees with a valid medical release/TWCC-73, which indicates physical limitations, may be placed on regular duty status if those limitations do not impede the employee's ability to perform their regular work.
- Employees with a valid medical release/TWCC-73, which indicates physical limitations that would prevent the employee from performing their regular duties, may be placed in other work assignments within the campus where their regular duties are performed, if accommodations can be made. If SST cannot accommodate the physical restrictions on the medical release within the campus where an employee's regular duties are performed, the employee may be placed at another campus or department that can accommodate the employee's physical limitations.

If the employee has been approved to participate in the RTW Program, he or she will be provided with a RTW (Modified Duty) job offer letter. This letter will include:

- The position offered.
- The location and duties of the position offered.
- The schedule of the position offered.
- The duration of the temporary work assignment.
- A statement that the campus/department will only assign a position/duties consistent with the employee's knowledge and skills, and will provide training if necessary.
- A statement acknowledging that the employer is knowledgeable about and will abide by the limitations under which the treating physician has authorized the return to work.

Refusal of Return to Work Offer

An employee may choose to accept or refuse the RTW (Modified Duty) job offer. However, an employee who refuses a Modified Duty job offer is subject to termination. Rejection of the job offer might also result in cancellation of income benefits under Workers' Compensation Insurance.

Duration of Early Return to Work Assignment

RTW assignments are temporary in nature. All job accommodations will cease when an employee receives a valid release for regular duties from his or her Physician. A RTW with Modified Duty offer will be extended for an initial period not to exceed 90 calendar days. The duration of approved time will be based upon the information provided by the employee's physician. If the employee is unable to return to work at full duty after the initial approved time, he or she may request a continuation of RTW Modified Duty not to exceed a total of 90 calendar days in a Modified Duty capacity.

An employee requesting an extension of Modified Duty, beyond the originally approved amount of time in the RTW with Modified Duty offer letter, must submit documentation to the HR Department from his or her treating physician. This document should include what limitations continue to exist, and the probable duration of those limitations.

If an employee is unable to return to work at full duty after 90 calendar days, he or she may request a continuation of Modified Duty not to exceed a total of 180 calendar days in a Modified Duty capacity. Approval beyond 90 calendar days will be based upon the assessment of the employee's ability to return to full duty within the immediate future. An employee requesting an extension beyond 90 calendar days must submit updated information from his or her treating Physician.

An employee who is unable to return to his or her regularly assigned duties at the end of the RTW Modified Duty agreement may elect to terminate his or her employment with SST. Provided the employee has exhausted any entitlements under the FMLA, an employee who is unable to return to work at the end of the RTW Modified Duty agreement may be terminated in accordance with the "**Extended Leave and Absence Control**" section of this Handbook.

If the employee believes that the condition is a qualifying disability and that he or she is a qualified individual with a disability under the ADA, he or she may request and pursue accommodations under the ADA.

Unemployment Compensation Insurance

SST employees who have been laid off or terminated through no fault of their own may be eligible for unemployment compensation benefits under the [Texas Unemployment Compensation Act](#). Employees are not eligible to collect unemployment benefits during regularly scheduled breaks in the school year or the summer months if they have an at-will agreement or reasonable assurance of returning to service. Employees with questions about unemployment benefits should contact the HR Department.

Teacher Retirement

Employees should refer retirement questions to TRS. TRS eligibility is established by state law and regulation. Employees who plan to retire under TRS should notify the Teacher Retirement System as soon as possible. Information on the application procedures for TRS benefits is available from TRS at Teacher Retirement System of Texas, 1000 Red River Street, Austin, Texas 78701-2698, or call 800-223-8778 or 512-542-6400. TRS information is also available on the Web (<http://www.trs.state.tx.us>).

ATTENDANCE, LEAVE AND ABSENCES

Attendance

SST Schools expects regular and prompt attendance from all its employees in accordance with SST's Board Policy governing attendance. Excessive absences and tardiness puts an unfair burden on co-workers, and will be a significant factor in an employee's continued employment, performance appraisals, salary reviews and advancement opportunities.

Employees are expected to:

- 1) Arrive to work and be at their assigned duty station at their scheduled start time.
- 2) Remain at their duty station unless the needs of the job require being elsewhere or as authorized by their supervisor, except during authorized breaks.
- 3) Take only the time normally allowed for breaks as authorized by their supervisor.
- 4) Non-salaried/Non-exempt employees should leave promptly at the end of their scheduled workday, unless given permission by their supervisor to work past that time.
- 5) Call in and personally notify a supervisor if they will be absent or tardy, unless a verifiable emergency makes it impossible to do so.

Scheduling and Attending Parent-Teacher Conferences

Parents are the first educators and must be treated with respect. Teachers are responsible for attending and conducting all Parent Open House Meetings unless approved in writing by a Principal.

Individual parent conferences must be scheduled during non-instructional hours. Teachers are expected to call parents of students who are at risk of failing starting the third week of school after benchmarks. Teachers are expected to make positive phone calls to parents. Parent-Teacher conferences are not to be scheduled during instruction time. Teachers are also expected to call parents to invite them to "Parent Nights."

Leaving the Classroom

Students must be supervised at all times – it only takes a second for something to happen. If it is necessary to leave the classroom, a teacher must notify the school office or another teacher immediately. It is the teacher's responsibility to ensure their class is supervised and covered at all times if he or she cannot be in a scheduled class for any period of time.

All employees must obtain authorization from the campus Principal when leaving the school during scheduled work hours.

Tardiness

Employees are required to notify their campus Assistant Principal or supervisor no later than one hour before the start of the school day on any day that the employee suspects that he or she may be late in reporting to his or her assigned campus unless it is medically impossible for the employee to do so. Notification by a friend, spouse or other relative is not acceptable, unless the employee is physically unable to make the notification personally. If, for some reason, the Assistant Principal or supervisor cannot be reached, the employee is responsible for contacting the campus main office. **NOTE:** It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the school is notified in a timely manner so that a substitute can be scheduled. When an employee is absent, an absence form must be submitted to the Payroll Department for payroll purposes.

Excessive tardiness will result in corrective action as stipulated for absences, up to and including the possibility of termination. Assistant Principals must notify the Principal regarding excessive tardiness.

Attendance Records

Supervisors are responsible for maintaining accurate attendance records for all employees under their supervision. Accurate attendance records are valuable and necessary tools for performance appraisal, discipline, overtime pay calculations and determination of salary continuation during absences.

Excessive Absenteeism or Tardiness

Excessive absenteeism or tardiness constitutes grounds for disciplinary action up to, and including, termination. Excessive absenteeism, tardies, and/or leaving work prior to designated time may result in:

- Disciplinary probation.
- Denial of pending or future promotion.
- Production of medical certification of reason or reasons for absences and/or tardies.
- Any other appropriate disciplinary measure, including termination of employment.

Absences

Regular attendance on the job is very important to the proper functioning of SST, and is therefore a condition of continued employment. It is the responsibility of all employees to maintain prompt regular attendance so as to ensure the smooth functioning of their own jobs and avoid inconveniencing or disturbing other interrelated jobs.

When it is necessary for an employee to be absent, the procedures listed below will be followed:

- Employees are expected to report anticipated absences to the campus/district office/CO supervisor as soon as possible. In extreme emergencies or after one hour before school starts, continue calling the school office until you speak to someone directly.

- All absence requests are required to be entered into TEAMS Employee Service Center. Employees are required to follow any additional campus reporting procedures.

Failure of an employee to give the notification of absence to his or her supervisor in a timely manner for three or more consecutive workdays, unless prevented by circumstances beyond the employee's control, may be considered to be a voluntary resignation/job abandonment as of the last day worked in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

Each teacher is required to have a substitute folder readily accessible containing the following:

- Lesson plans;
- Alternative activities, if needed;
- Seating charts, if applicable;
- Class rolls;
- Discipline plan;
- Fire drill and disaster routes;
- Name and room number of a staff member to answer questions, as well as the names of helpful students; and
- Special instructions unique to your location or subject area.

When you return to work from an absence, it is important to see the Assistant Principal to sign an "absence from duty report" and turn in any paper work related to the absence.

Local Leave

SST Schools does not participate in State Personal Leave Program; therefore, accumulated state personal leave days from other Texas School Districts cannot be transferred in or out of the SST system.

Employees must follow established procedures for reporting and requesting any leave.

SST Schools offers Local Leave to employees for employee use at the beginning of each school year. An employee's maximum Local Leave is as follows:

Personal/Sick Day Leave (Paid Time Off)

- Non-exempt and part-time employees may earn up to seven (7) Paid Time Off (PTO) days of leave per school year.
- Exempt teachers and exempt professional employees who work 201-day calendar may earn up to eight (8) PTO days of leave per school year.
- Exempt professional employees and administrators who work 215-day calendar may earn up to ten (10) PTO days of leave per school year.

Personal/sick leave (Paid Time Off) days are earned and placed in employee's PTO bank at a rate of one-half day for each eleven (11) workdays of employment up per school year. One day of earned PTO day is equivalent to one assigned workday. However, PTO days are readily available for use. PTO days may be used for anticipated and unanticipated leave. Anticipated leave is taken at an employee's discretion and that can be scheduled in advance. Unanticipated leave is unexpected leave taken for personal and family illness, emergency, a death in the family, or active military service. This type of leave allows very little or no advance planning. Teachers will have leave reduced from their paid time off leave banks in ½ day increments, all other exempt employees in 1 day increments, and non-exempt employees in 2 - hour increments.

If an employee leaves employment with SST before the end of the work year, the cost of any unearned used leave days taken will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck.

At the end of each school year, earned unused PTO days will not roll over. Instead, employees will be compensated as stated in the Compensation Manual.

Before taking anticipated leave, an employee must submit a written request to his or her campus Principal or supervisor within five days in advance of the anticipated absence. The effect of the employee's absence on the educational program and the availability of substitutes are factors that will be considered before leave is granted. Anticipated local leave is granted on a first-come first-served basis.

Anticipated local leave may not be taken for more than three consecutive days, except in extenuating circumstances as determined by the Superintendent or Principal. Additionally, anticipated leave may not be taken under the following circumstances, absent extenuating circumstances as determined by the Superintendent or Principal:

- The day before a school holiday.
- The day after a school holiday.
- Days scheduled for end-of-semester or end-of-year exams.
- Days scheduled for state assessments (*i.e.*, TAKS or STAAR exam).
- System-wide norm-reference testing days.
- Professional or staff development days.

Central Office employees may be exempted from these circumstances except professional and staff development days.

Leave Options for Absences of Less than One-half Day (Paraprofessional and Auxiliary Employees Only)

The following leave options are available for paraprofessional and auxiliary employees upon supervisory approval:

- The employee "make-up" missed time during the same workweek as an absence rather than take paid leave.
- The employee may choose to be paid only for hours actually worked, *i.e.* docked for time missed due to absence, rather than take paid leave.

Medical Certification

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

Forfeiture of Leave

Local leave does not accumulate or roll forward from year to year, and is forfeited upon resignation, retirement, or termination from employment.

Military Leave

SST Schools is committed to protecting the job rights of employees absent on military leave. In accordance with federal and state law, it is SST's policy that no employee or prospective employee will be subjected to any form of discrimination on the basis of that person's membership in, or obligation to perform service for any of the Uniformed Services of the United States. Specifically, no person will be denied employment, reemployment, promotion, or other benefit of employment on the basis of such membership. Furthermore, no person will be subjected to retaliation or adverse employment action because such person has exercised his or her rights hereunder. If any employee believes that he or she has been subjected to discrimination in violation of this provision, the employee should immediately contact the HR Department.

Any SST Schools employee who is absent from employment due to voluntary or involuntary service in the uniformed services is entitled to certain rights and benefits under the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA) if:

1. The employee (or an appropriate officer of the uniformed service in which the employee serves) has provided written or verbal notice of such military notice to the School (unless notice cannot be given because of military necessity or is unreasonable or impossible to provide);
2. The cumulative length of the absence and all previous absences from employment with the School does not exceed five years; and
3. The employee reports to or submits an application for reemployment to the School and applies with all other applicable requirements.

Temporary (Two-Week) Military Leave

In addition to the rights and benefits provided to employees taking Extended Military Leave (as described in this Handbook), eligible employees who must be absent from their job for a period of not more than 10 working days each year in order to participate in temporary military duty are entitled to as many as 10 days unpaid military leave. All benefits will continue during an employee's temporary military leave.

All Other (Extended) Military Leave

Employees directed to participate in extended military duties in the U. S. Armed Forces that exceed 10 working days will be placed on an unpaid military leave of absence status for a period of as long as five years, except as otherwise required by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), and will be entitled to the rights and benefits described below.

Procedures For All Military Leave

The employee, or an "appropriate officer" from the employee's military service branch, will provide the employee's Principal with verbal or written notice that the employee will be engaging in military service, including, where feasible, a copy of the orders directing the military duty, unless the employee is prevented from doing so by military necessity. Employees are requested to make every effort to give notice of impending military service as far in advance as is practicable under the circumstances, and are strongly encouraged to provide notice at least 30 days prior to active military service, except where such notice is precluded by military necessity, or is otherwise impossible or unreasonable. Failure to provide advance notice may render the employee ineligible for the rights and benefits described in this Handbook.

To request a temporary or extended military leave of absence the employee should, unless prevented from doing so by military necessity, notify his or her campus's Principal, complete an Employee Change Notice (ECN) and submit the ECN form to the HR Department. The HR Department will review the ECN, collect any applicable insurance premiums from the employee, and process the employee's request.

An employee on temporary or extended military leave may elect, at his or her option, to use any accrued paid leave (vacation, sick or personal leave) available; the remainder of military leave will be unpaid.

When the employee intends to return to work, he or she must submit a timely application for reinstatement/reemployment to the HR Department within the application period set forth below. If the employee does not return to work following the conclusion of military leave, his or her campus's Principal must notify the HR Department so that appropriate action may be taken. In such event, the employee will be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

Continuation of Health Benefits

If an employee is absent from work due to military service, benefits will continue as follows:

- An employee on extended military leave may elect to continue group medical, dental, and vision insurance coverage for the employee and his or her covered dependents. If the employee is on military leave for a period not to exceed 31 days from the date the military leave of absence begins, the employee may continue

coverage under the same terms and conditions, and must pay the premium normally paid by the employee. If the military leave exceeds the 31-day period, the employee and covered dependents can continue group health insurance for up to 24 months at 102% of the overall (both employer and employee) premium rate. [COBRA](#) coverage runs concurrently with USERRA coverage for up to 18 months.

- If the employee does not elect to continue coverage while on military leave, or coverage terminates after a 24-month period, the employee and qualified dependents have the right to be reinstated in the SST health plan when reemployed, generally without any waiting periods or exclusions (such as pre-existing condition exclusions) except for service-connected illnesses or injuries.
- Employees do not accrue vacation, personal leave or sick leave while on military leave.
- With respect to SST's retirement plan, upon reemployment, employees who have taken military leave will be credited, for purposes of vesting, with the time spent in military service, and will be treated as not having incurred a break in service. Immediately upon reemployment, the employee may, at the employee's election, make any or all contributions that the employee would have been eligible to make had his or her employment not been interrupted by military service. Such contributions must be made within a period that begins with the employee's reemployment, and that is not greater in duration than three times the length of the employee's military service. Employees will receive all associated matches paid by SST for such contributions.

Reemployment

Upon an employee's prompt application for reemployment (as defined below), an employee will be reinstated to employment in the following manner depending upon the employee's period of military service:

- If the employee's period of military service was less than 91 days, he or she will be reemployed (a) in a position that the employee would have attained if employment had not been interrupted by military service; or (b) if found not qualified for such position after reasonable efforts by SST, in the position in which the employee was employed prior to military service.
- If the employee's period of military service was for 91 or more days and less than five years, he or she will be reemployed (a) in a position that the employee would have attained if employment had not been interrupted by military service or a position of like seniority, status and pay, the duties of which the employee is qualified to perform; or (b) if proved not qualified after reasonable efforts by SST, in the position the employee left, or a position of like seniority, status and pay, the duties of which the employee is qualified to perform.
- Employee returning with a service-connected disability. If, after reasonable accommodation efforts by SST, an employee with a service-connected disability is not qualified for employment in the position he or she would have attained or in the position that he or she left, the employee will be employed in (a) any other position of similar seniority, status and pay for which the employee is qualified or could become qualified with reasonable efforts by SST; or (b) if no such position exists, in the nearest approximation consistent with the circumstances of the employee's situation.

Application for Reinstatement/Reemployment

An employee who has engaged in military service must, in order to be entitled to the reemployment rights set forth above, submit an application for reinstatement according to the following schedule:

- If the employee's military service is less than 31 days (or for the purpose of taking an examination to determine fitness to perform service), the employee must report for reinstatement at the beginning of the first full regularly-scheduled working period on the first full calendar day following completion of service and the expiration of eight hours after a period allowing for safe transportation back to the employee's residence.
- If the employee's military service is for 31 days or more but less than 180 days, the employee must submit an oral or written request for reinstatement with the HR Department no later than 14 days following the completion of service, except as otherwise provided by USERRA.

- If the employee's military service is for more than 180 days, the employee must submit an oral or written request for reinstatement with the HR Department no later than 90 days following the completion of service, except as otherwise provided by USERRA.
- If the employee is hospitalized or convalescing from a service-connected illness or injury, the employee must submit an application for reinstatement with the HR Department based on the notification procedures determined by the length of service, after the time period required for the person's recovery, but the recovery period may generally not exceed two years. The two-year recuperation period begins on the date of completion of military service.

Exceptions To Reinstatement

In addition to the employee's failure to apply for reinstatement in a timely manner, an employee is not entitled to reinstatement as described above if any of the following conditions exist:

- SST's circumstances have so changed as to make reinstatement impossible or unreasonable.
- The employee's employment prior to the military service was merely for a brief, non-recurrent period, and there was no reasonable expectation that such employment would have continued indefinitely or for a significant period.
- The employee is separated from uniformed service with under other than honorable conditions – such as a dishonorable or bad conduct discharge.

Benefits Upon Reinstatement

An employee reinstated following eligible military leave will receive seniority and rights and other benefits determined by seniority that the employee had at the beginning of the military leave, plus any additional seniority and rights and benefits the employee would have attained, with reasonable certainty, had he or she remained continuously employed. In addition, an employee's time spent on active military duty will be counted toward eligibility for FMLA leave once the employee returns to his or her job with SST.

Documentation

An employee's campus Principal or supervisor will, upon the employee's reapplication for employment, request that the employee provide military discharge documentation that establishes the timeliness of the application for reinstatement and length and character of the employee's military service.

Service in State Military Services

SST will not terminate the employment of a permanent employee who is a member of the state military forces of this state or any other state because the employee is ordered to authorized training or duty by proper authority. Such an employee is entitled to return to the same employment held when ordered to training or duty and shall not be subjected to loss of time, efficiency rating, vacation time, or any benefit or employment during or because of the absence.

Called to Duty

An employee who is a member of the state military forces that is ordered to active state duty by the governor or by other proper authority under the law of this state is entitled to the same benefits and protections provided to persons performing service in the uniformed services under USERRA and to persons in the military service of the United States under the Service members Civil Relief Act under 50 App. U.S.C. 501-536, 560, and 580–594, as those laws existed on April 1, 2003.

Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

The [Family and Medical Leave Act](#) (FMLA) provides employees who meet the eligibility criteria with unpaid leave for certain family and medical reasons during a 12-month period. During this leave, employees are entitled to continue group health plan coverage as if they had continued to work. At the conclusion of the leave, subject to some exceptions, employees generally have the right to return to the same or to an equivalent position, equivalent pay, benefits and working conditions.

Employees requesting FMLA should submit their request to campus operations managers.

Employment Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for FMLA leave, an employee must have been employed by SST Schools:

- For at least 12 months (which need not be consecutive); and
- For at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave; and
- The employee must work at a worksite –
 - With 50 or more employees; or
 - 50 or more employees are located within 75 miles of the worksite.

Events That May Entitle Employees to FMLA Leave

An eligible employee will be entitled to a total of 12 workweeks of leave during any 12-month period for one or more of the following:

- Because of the birth of a son or daughter of the employee and in order to care for such son or daughter.
- Because of the placement of a son or daughter with the employee for adoption or foster care.
- In order to care for the spouse, or a son, daughter, or parent, of the employee, if such spouse, son, daughter, or parent has a serious health condition.
- Because of a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his or her position.
- Because of any Qualified Exigency (defined below) arising out of the fact that the spouse, or a son, daughter, or parent of the employee is on active duty (or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty) in the Armed Forces in support of a contingency operation.

Service Member FMLA Leave

An eligible employee may be eligible for up to 26 weeks of “Service Member Family Leave” if the employee’s spouse, child, parent (not parents-in-law), or next of kin, is a current member of the active duty Armed Forces (including National Guard or Reserves), or a member of the Armed Forces (including National Guard or Reserves) on the Temporary Disability Retired List, who is recovering from a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty, while on active duty for which he or she is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, therapy, in outpatient status, or otherwise on the Temporary Disability Retired List. (Does not include former members of the Armed Forces, former members of the National Guard and Reserves and members on the Permanent Disability Retirement List.)

Qualifying Exigency FMLA Leave

An employee may be entitled to Qualifying Exigency FMLA leave if the employee’s spouse, child, or parent is in the National Guard, is a Reservist, or is retired military and is called to active duty, or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty in support of a contingency operation as defined by federal law. The time spent in several specific activities, defined by law as “Qualifying Exigencies,” may also be considered FMLA time. (Does not include those on the Permanent Disabled Retired List or Active Duty Military). An employee may also be granted Qualifying

Exigency FMLA leave if SST and the employee agree that the leave qualifies as an exigency and agree to the timing and duration of the leave.

With respect to both Qualified Exigency and Service Member Family leave, eligible employees may take the leave intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule. However, if an employee has accrued paid leave (sick, or personal leave), he or she must substitute any qualifying paid leave for unpaid leave first. “Qualifying paid leave” is leave that would otherwise be available to employees for the purpose for which FMLA leave is taken. The remainder of the 26 workweeks of leave, if any, will be unpaid leave. Any paid leave used for an FMLA-qualifying reason will be charged against an employee’s entitlement to FLMA leave. This includes leave for disability or workers’ compensation injury/illness, provided that the leave meets FMLA requirements. The substitution of paid leave for unpaid leave does not extend the 26 workweek leave period.

Certification of Leave

The first time an employee requests Qualifying Exigency leave, SST will require the employee to provide a copy of the covered military member’s active duty orders or other documentation issued by the military that indicates that the covered military member is on active duty, or call to active duty status in support of a contingency operation, and the dates of the covered military member’s active duty service.

In addition, each time an employee first requests leave for one of the Qualifying Exigencies, SST may require certification of the exigency necessitating leave. Certification supporting leave for a Qualifying Exigency includes: appropriate facts supporting the need for leave, including any available written documentation supporting the request; the date on which the Qualifying Exigency commenced or will commence, and the end date; where leave will be needed on an intermittent basis, the frequency and duration of the Qualifying Exigency; and appropriate contact information if the exigency involves meeting with a third-party.

Post-Deployment Activities

An eligible employee may be entitled to take Qualifying Exigency leave for certain qualifying post-deployment exigencies, including reintegration activities, for a period of 90 days following the termination of the covered military member’s active duty status.

State calls to active duty are not covered unless under order of the President of the United States.

Maximum Amount of FMLA Leave Within a 12-Month Period

Except as provided above, an eligible employee is entitled up to 12 workweeks of unpaid leave during a 12-month period for any FMLA qualifying reason(s). SST utilizes a fixed 12-month “leave year” beginning on August 1 of each calendar year to determine the 12-month period in which FMLA leave is available. An employee who is eligible for Service Member Family Leave may take a maximum of only 26 weeks during a rolling 12-month period, even if the employee also qualifies for FMLA leave for a reason other than Service Member Family leave.

Limitations on FMLA Leave

Leave to care for a newborn, or for a newly placed adopted or foster child, must conclude within 12 months after the birth or placement of the child. When both spouses are employed by SST, they are entitled to a combined total of 12 work weeks of FMLA leave within the designated 12-month period for the birth, adoption, or foster care placement of a child, for aftercare of the newborn or newly-placed child, and to care for a parent (but not an in-law) with a serious health condition. Each spouse may be entitled to additional FMLA leave for other FMLA-qualifying reasons, but not more than a total of 12 workweeks per person.

If the School’s activity temporarily ceases and employees generally are not expected to report for work for one or more weeks – e.g., a school closing for Spring Break or for the Christmas/New Year holiday – those days do not count

against an employee's FMLA leave entitlement. Similarly, the time during summer vacation when the employee is not required to report to work does not count against the employee's FMLA leave entitlement.

Intermittent or Reduced Work Schedule Leave

FMLA leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule under certain circumstances. "Intermittent leave" is FMLA leave taken in separate blocks of time due to a single qualifying reason. A "reduced leave schedule" is a leave schedule that reduces an employee's usual number of working hours per workweek, or hours per workday.

For leave taken because of the employee's own serious health condition, to care for a parent, son, or daughter with a serious health condition, or military caregiver leave, there must be a medical need for leave, and it must be that such medical need can be best accommodated through an intermittent or reduced leave schedule. Leave due to a Qualifying Exigency may also be taken on an intermittent or reduced schedule basis.

When leave is taken after the birth of a healthy child or placement of a healthy child for adoption or foster care, an employee may take leave intermittently, or on a reduced leave schedule, only if SST agrees.

Transfer to an Alternative Position

If an employee requests intermittent or reduced schedule leave that is foreseeable based on planned medical treatment, SST may require the employee to transfer temporarily to an available alternative position for which the employee is qualified, and which better accommodates recurring periods of leave than does the employee's regular position.

Calculating Leave Use

When an employee takes leave on an intermittent or reduced schedule, only the amount of leave actually taken may be counted toward the employee's leave entitlement. SST must account for intermittent or reduced schedule leave using an increment no greater than the shortest period of time that it uses to account for use of other forms of leave, provided the increment is not greater than one hour.

Request for FMLA Leave

Any absence of five or more days for an illness or medical condition may be designated FMLA leave and will require appropriate documentation. Employees should request FMLA leave by notifying their appropriate campus Assistant Principal and must complete the Department of Labor's form WH-380-E (or WH-380-F as appropriate) made available from the Department of Labor or from the Principal. Completed forms should be returned to the Principal.

Employees must provide 30 days' advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When such notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable, and generally must comply with SST's call-in procedures.

Employees must provide sufficient information to determine if the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Sufficient information may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions; the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider; or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. Employees also must inform the HR Department if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified.

Required Documentation for Birth, Adoption, or Health-Related FMLA Leave

When leave is taken to care for a family member, SST will require employees to provide documentation or a statement of a family relationship (birth certificate or court document). The employee may be required to submit medical certification from a health care provider to support a request for FMLA leave for his or her or a family member's serious health condition. Medical certification forms are available from the HR Department.

If SST deems the medical certification to be incomplete or insufficient, SST will specify, in writing, what information is lacking, and the employee will have seven calendar days to cure the deficiency. It is the employee's responsibility to provide a complete and sufficient certification. Such failure to provide complete and sufficient certification, despite the opportunity to cure any deficiency, may lead to denial of FMLA leave. SST may (a) have a designated health care provider, the leave administrator or other official (but in no case the employee's direct supervisor) contact the employee's health care provider in an effort to clarify or authenticate the initial certification if SST has reason to doubt an employee's initial certification; and/or (b) require the employee to obtain a second opinion by an independent provider at SST's designation and expense. If the initial and second certifications differ, SST may, at its expense, require the employee to obtain a third, final and binding certification from a jointly selected health care provider.

During FMLA leave, SST may request that the employee provide recertification of a serious health condition, at intervals, in accordance with the FMLA. In addition, during FMLA leave, the employee must provide SST with periodic reports regarding his or her status and intent to return to work. If the employee's anticipated return to work date changes, and it becomes necessary for the employee to take more or less leave than originally anticipated, he or she must provide SST with reasonable notice (within two business days) of such changed circumstances and new return to work date. If the employee gives notice of such intent not to return to work, he or she will be considered to have voluntarily resigned.

Before an employee returns to work from FMLA leave for his or her own serious health condition, the employee will be required to submit a fitness-for-duty certification from his or her health care provider with respect to the condition for which the leave was taken, stating that the employee is able to perform the essential functions of his or her job. Where a reasonable job safety concern exists, SST may require a fitness-for-duty certification before an employee's return to work from intermittent leave.

FMLA leave or return to work may be delayed or denied if the appropriate documentation is not provided in a timely manner. Also, a failure to provide requested documentation of the reason for an absence from work may lead to termination of employment.

Use of Paid and Unpaid Leave

If an employee has accrued paid leave he or she must substitute any qualifying paid leave for unpaid FMLA leave first. Substituted paid leave will run concurrently with unpaid FMLA leave. "Qualifying paid leave" is leave that would otherwise be available to an employee for the purpose for which FMLA leave is taken. The remainder of the 12 workweeks of leave, if any, will be unpaid leave. Any paid leave used for an FMLA-qualifying reason will be charged against the employee's entitlement to FMLA leave. This includes leave for disability or workers' compensation injury/illness, provided that the leave meets FMLA requirements. The substitution of paid leave for unpaid leave does not extend the 12 work week period. During the period that an employee takes a leave of absence, including FMLA, he or she is not eligible to accrue paid time off benefits. Accruals will resume upon the employee's return to work.

Designation of Leave

SST will notify an employee that his or her leave has been designated as FMLA leave within five business days, absent extenuating circumstances. If an employee has not notified SST of the reason for the leave, and desires that leave be counted as FMLA leave, he or she must notify the HR Department within two business days of his or her return to work that the leave was for an FMLA reason.

FMLA Special Rules for Instructional Employees

Special rules may apply to certain employees of charter schools. These special rules affect leave taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule, or taken near the end of an academic term (semester) by instructional employees.

"Instructional employees" are those whose principal function is to teach and instruct students in a class, a small group, or an individual setting. This term includes not only teachers, but also athletic coaches, driving instructors, and special

education assistants, such as signers for the hearing impaired. It does not include teacher assistants or aides who do not have as their principal job actual teaching or instructing, nor does it include auxiliary personnel such as counselors, psychologists, or curriculum specialists. It also does not include cafeteria workers, maintenance workers, or bus drivers.

Failure to Provide Notice of Foreseeable Leave

If an instructional employee does not give required notice of foreseeable FMLA leave to be taken intermittently or on a reduced schedule, SST may require the employee to take leave of a particular duration or to transfer temporarily to an alternative position. Alternatively, SST may require the employee to delay the taking of leave until the notice provision is met.

Twenty Percent (20%) Rule

If an eligible instructional employee needs intermittent leave or leave on a reduced leave schedule to care for a family member with a serious health condition, to care for a covered service member, or for the employee's own serious health condition; the leave is foreseeable based on planned medical treatment; and the employee would be on leave for more than 20% of the total number of working days over the period the leave would extend, SST may require the employee to choose:

- To take leave for a period or periods of a particular duration, not greater than the duration of the planned treatment; or
- To transfer temporarily to an available alternative position for which the employee is qualified, which has equivalent pay and benefits and which better accommodates recurring periods of leave than does the employee's regular position.

"Periods of a particular duration" means a block or blocks of time beginning no earlier than the first day for which leave is needed and ending no later than the last day on which leave is needed, and may include one uninterrupted period of leave. If an employee chooses to take leave for "periods of a particular duration" in the case of intermittent or reduced schedule leave, the entire period of leave taken will count as FMLA leave.

Leave at the End of a Semester

As a rule, SST may not require an employee to take more FMLA leave than the employee needs. The FMLA recognizes exceptions where instructional employees begin leave near the end of a semester. As set forth below, SST may, in certain cases, require the employee to take leave until the end of the semester.

The school semester, or "academic term," typically ends near the end of the calendar year and the end of Spring each school year. In no case may a school have more than two academic terms or semesters each year for purposes of the FMLA.

If SST requires the employee to take leave until the end of the semester, only the period of leave until the employee is ready and able to return to work will be charged against his or her FMLA leave entitlement. Any additional leave required by SST to the end of the semester is not counted as FMLA leave; however, SST will maintain the employee's group health insurance and restore the employee to the same or equivalent job, including other benefits, at the end of the leave.

More Than Five Weeks Before the End of the Semester

SST may require an instructional employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if:

- The employee begins leave more than five weeks before the end of the semester;
- The leave will last at least three weeks; and
- The employee would return to work during the three-week period before the end of the semester.

During Last Five Weeks of the Semester

SST may require an instructional employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if:

- The employee begins leave during the last five weeks of the semester for any reason other than the employee's own serious health condition or a Qualifying Exigency;
- The leave will last more than two weeks; and
- The employee would return to work during the two-week period before the end of the semester.

During Last Three Weeks of the Semester:

SST may require an instructional employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if the employee begins leave during the three-week period before the end of the semester for any reason other than the employee's own serious health condition or a Qualifying Exigency.

FMLA and Workers' Compensation

A serious health condition may result from injury to the employee "on or off" the job. If the School designates the leave as FMLA leave, the leave counts against the employee's FMLA leave entitlement. Because the workers' compensation absence is not unpaid, neither the employee nor the School may require the substitution of paid leave. However, the School and an employee may agree, where state law permits, to have paid leave supplement workers' compensation benefits.

If the health-care provider treating the employee for the workers' compensation injury certifies that the employee is able to return to a "light duty job" but is unable to return to the same or equivalent job, the employee may decline the School's offer of a "light duty job." As a result, the employee may lose workers' compensation payments, but is entitled to remain on unpaid FMLA leave until the employee's FMLA leave entitlement is exhausted. As of the date workers' compensation benefits cease, the substitution provision becomes applicable and either the employee may elect or the School may require the use of accrued paid leave.

Maintenance of Health Benefits

During any FMLA leave, the School must maintain the employee's coverage under any group health plan on the same conditions as coverage would have been provided if the employee had been continuously employed during the entire leave period.

An employee may choose not to retain group health plan coverage during FMLA leave. However, when the employee returns from leave, the employee is entitled to be reinstated on the same terms as before taking leave without any qualifying period, physical examination, exclusion of pre-existing conditions, and the like.

Payment of Premiums

During FMLA leave, the employee must continue to pay his or her share of group health plan premiums. If premiums are raised or lowered, the employee would be required to pay the new premium rates.

Failure to Pay Premiums

Unless the School has an established policy providing a longer grace period, the School's obligations to maintain health insurance coverage cease if an employee's premium payment is more than 30 days late. In order to terminate the employee's coverage, the School must provide written notice to the employee that the payment has not been received. Such notice must be mailed to the employee at least 15 days before coverage is to cease, advising that coverage will be dropped on a specified date at least 15 days after the date of the letter unless the payment has been received by that date. Coverage for the employee may be terminated at the end of the 30-day grace period, if the required 15-day notice has been provided.

Upon the employee's return from FMLA leave, the School must still restore the employee to coverage/benefits equivalent to those the employee would have had if leave had not been taken and the premium payment(s) had not been missed. The employee may not be required to meet any qualification requirements imposed by the plan, including any new preexisting condition waiting period, to wait for an open season, or to pass a medical examination to obtain reinstatement of coverage.

Recovery of Benefit Cost

If an employee fails to return to work after FMLA leave has been exhausted or expires, the School may recover from the employee its share of health plan premiums during the employee's unpaid FMLA leave, unless the employee's failure to return is due to one of the reasons set forth in the regulations. The School may not recover its share of health insurance premiums for any period of FMLA leave covered by paid leave.

Salary Action

The length of the leave will delay any planned, but not implemented, salary increase for a period equal to an employee's leave of absence, including FMLA.

Performance Evaluation

The length of the leave will extend an employee's normal performance evaluation date by the length of the leave of absence, including FMLA.

Right to Reinstatement

On return from FMLA leave, an employee is entitled to be returned to the same position the employee held when leave began, or to an equivalent position with equivalent benefits, pay, and other terms and conditions of employment. An employee is entitled to reinstatement even if the employee has been replaced or his or her position has been restructured to accommodate the employee's absence. However, an employee has no greater right to reinstatement or to other benefits and conditions of employment than if the employee had been continuously employed during the FMLA leave period.

Moonlighting During FMLA Leave

It is the School's policy to prohibit outside employment while an employee is on a leave of absence where benefits may be maintained or received. The Superintendent and/or designee may develop a uniformly applied policy governing and permitting outside or supplemental employment during FMLA leave. If the Superintendent or designee does not develop such a procedure, the School's policy prohibiting outside employment shall apply. Employees abusing leave will lose their right to leave and may be subject to discipline or discharge.

Pay Increases and Bonuses

An employee is entitled to any unconditional pay increases that may have occurred during the FMLA leave period, such as cost of living increases. Pay increases conditioned upon seniority, length of service, or work performed must be granted in accordance with the School's policy, procedure or practice with respect to other employees on an equivalent leave status for a reason that does not qualify as FMLA leave.

Equivalent pay includes any bonus or payment, whether it is discretionary or non-discretionary. However, if a bonus or other payment is based on the achievement of a specified goal such as hours worked, products sold, or perfect attendance, and the employee has not met the goal due to FMLA leave, then the payment may be denied, unless otherwise paid to employees on an equivalent leave status for a reason that does not qualify as FMLA leave. For example, if an employee who used paid vacation leave for a non-FMLA purpose would receive the payment, then an employee who used paid vacation leave for an FMLA-protected purpose also must receive the payment.

Key Employees

The School may deny job restoration to a key employee, as that term is defined in law, if such denial is necessary to prevent substantial and grievous economic injury to the operations of the School.

Requests for FMLA Leave

An employee giving notice of the need for FMLA leave must state a qualifying reason for the leave and otherwise satisfy the requirements for notice of foreseeable and unforeseeable leave, as described below. The employee need not expressly assert rights under the Act or even mention the FMLA.

Failure to Return to Work Following FMLA Leave

If an employee does not return to work following the conclusion of FMLA leave, he or she will be considered to have voluntarily resigned. SST may recover from the employee such portion of health insurance premiums paid on the employee's behalf during any unpaid FMLA leave. Recovery may be made through deductions from any outstanding sums due to the employee, except where prohibited by federal or state law, or through legal action against the employee.

For further information or clarification about FMLA leave, please contact the HR Department.

An employee may file a complaint with the U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) by contacting them at 1-866-487-9243 or by visiting <http://www.wagehour.dol.gov>.

Requests for FMLA Leave

An employee giving notice of the need for FMLA leave must state a qualifying reason for the leave and otherwise satisfy the requirements for notice of foreseeable and unforeseeable leave, as described below.

Foreseeable Leave

An employee must provide his or her immediate supervisor at least 30 days' advance notice before FMLA leave is to begin if the need for the leave is foreseeable based on an expected birth, placement for adoption or foster care, planned medical treatment for a serious health condition of the employee or of a family member, or the planned medical treatment for a serious injury or illness of a covered service member. If 30 days' notice is not practicable, the employee must give notice as soon as practicable, generally on the same day as or next business day after the reason for the leave is known. For leave due to a qualifying exigency, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable regardless of how far in advance the leave is foreseeable.

When planning medical treatment, the employee must consult with his or her immediate supervisor and make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment so as not to disrupt unduly the School's operations, subject to the approval of the health-care provider.

Unforeseeable Leave

When the approximate timing of leave is not foreseeable, an employee must provide notice to his or her immediate supervisor as soon as practicable under the facts and circumstances of the particular case.

Compliance with School Requirements

The School may require an employee to comply with its usual and customary notice and procedural requirements for requesting leave, absent unusual circumstances. If an employee does not comply with usual notice and procedural requirements, and no unusual circumstances justify the failure to comply, FMLA leave may be delayed or denied.

Certification of Leave

The School may require that an employee's FMLA leave be supported by certification, as described below. The School shall give notice of a requirement for certification each time certification is required. At the time the School requests certification, the School must advise the employee of the consequences of failure to provide adequate certification.

Timing

In most cases, the employee's immediate supervisor will request certification at the time the employee gives notice of the need for leave or within five business days thereafter or, in the case of unforeseen leave, within five business days after the leave commences. The School may request certification at a later date if the School later has reason to question the appropriateness of the leave or its duration. The employee must provide the requested certification to his or her immediate supervisor within 15 calendar days after the School's request, unless it is not practicable under the particular circumstances to do so despite the employee's diligent, good faith efforts.

Incomplete or Insufficient Certification

The School shall advise an employee if it finds a certification incomplete or insufficient and shall state in writing what additional information is necessary to make the certification complete and sufficient. The School must provide the employee with seven calendar days (unless not practicable under the particular circumstances despite the employee's diligent, good faith efforts) to cure any such deficiency.

A certification is "incomplete" if one or more of the applicable entries have not been completed. A certification is "insufficient" if it is complete, but the information provided is vague, ambiguous, or non-responsive. A certification that is not returned to the School is not considered incomplete or insufficient, but constitutes a failure to provide certification.

Medical Certification of Serious Health Condition

When leave is taken because of an employee's own serious health condition, or the serious health condition of a family member, the School may require the employee to obtain medical certification from a health-care provider. The School may use DOL optional form WH-380-E when the employee needs leave due to the employee's own serious health condition and optional form WH-380-F when the employee needs leave to care for a family member with a serious health condition. The School may not require information beyond that specified in the FMLA regulations.

An employee may choose to comply with the certification requirement by providing the School with an authorization, release, or waiver allowing the School to communicate directly with the health-care provider.

Genetic Information

When requesting medical certification, the School shall comply with all requirements for requesting medical information under the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act ("GINA").

Authentication and Clarification

If an employee submits a complete and sufficient certification signed by the health-care provider, the School may not request additional information from the health-care provider. However, the School may contact the health-care provider for purposes of clarification and authentication of the certification after the School has given the employee an opportunity to cure any deficiencies, as set forth above. To make such contact, the School must use a health-care provider, a human resources professional, a leave administrator, or a management official. Under no circumstances may the employee's direct supervisor contact the employee's health-care provider.

"Authentication" means providing the health-care provider with a copy of the certification and requesting verification that the information on the form was completed and/or authorized by the health-care provider who signed the document; no additional medical information may be requested.

"Clarification" means contacting the health-care provider to understand the handwriting on the certification or to understand the meaning of a response. The School may not ask the health-care provider for additional information beyond that required by the certification form. The requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule must be satisfied when individually identifiable health information of an employee is shared with the School by a HIPAA-covered health-care provider.

Second and Third Opinions

If the School has reason to doubt the validity of a medical certification, the School may require the employee to obtain a second opinion at the School's expense. If the opinions of the employee's and the School's designated health-care providers differ, the School may require the employee to obtain certification from a third health-care provider, again at the School's expense.

Foreign Medical Certification

If the employee or a family member is visiting another country, or a family member resides in another country, and a serious health condition develops, the School shall accept medical certification as well as second and third opinions from a health-care provider who practices in that country. If the certification is in a language other than English, the employee must provide the School with a written translation of the certification upon request.

Recertification

The School may request recertification no more often than every 30 days and only in connection with an absence by the employee, except as set forth in the FMLA regulations. The School must allow at least 15 calendar days for the employee to provide recertification.

As part of the recertification for leave taken because of a serious health condition, the School may provide the health-care provider with a record of the employee's absence pattern and ask the health-care provider if the serious health condition and need for leave is consistent with such a pattern.

Certification—Qualifying Exigency Leave

The first time an employee requests leave because of a qualifying exigency, the School may require the employee to provide a copy of the covered military member's active duty orders or other documentation issued by the military which indicates that the covered military member is on active duty or call to active duty status in support of a contingency operation, and the dates of the covered military member's active duty service.

The School may also require that the leave be supported by a certification that addresses the information at 29 CFR 825.309(b). The School may use DOL optional form WH-384, or another form containing the same basic information, for this certification. The School may not require information beyond that specified in the regulations.

Certification—Military Caregiver Leave

When an employee takes military caregiver leave, the School may require the employee to obtain a certification completed by an authorized health-care provider of the covered service member. In addition, the School may request that the employee and/or covered service member address in the certification the information at 29 CFR 825.310(c). The School may also require the employee to provide confirmation of a covered family relationship to the seriously injured or ill service member.

The School may use DOL optional form WH-385, or another form containing the same basic information, for this certification. The School may not require information beyond that specified in the regulations. The School must accept as sufficient certification "invitational travel orders" ("ITOs") or "invitational travel authorizations" ("ITAs") issued to any family member to join an injured or ill service member at his or her bedside.

The School may seek authentication and/or clarification of the certification under the procedures described above. Second and third opinions, and recertification, are not permitted for leave to care for a covered service member.

Failure to Provide Certification

If the employee fails to provide the School a complete and sufficient certification, despite the opportunity to cure, or fails to provide any certification, the School may deny the taking of FMLA leave. This provision applies in any case

where the School requests a certification, including any clarifications necessary to determine if certifications are authentic and sufficient.

Prohibition Against Discrimination and Retaliation

SST Schools shall not interfere with an employee's rights under the FMLA, or with legal proceedings or inquiries relating to an employee's rights. Specifically, the School shall not:

- Interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of (or attempts to exercise) any rights provided by the FMLA.
- Discharge or in any other way discriminate against any person (whether or not an employee) for opposing or complaining about any unlawful practice under the FMLA.
- Discharge or in any other way discriminate against any person (whether or not an employee) because that person has:
 - Filed any charge, or has instituted (or caused to be institute) any proceeding under or related to the FMLA;
 - Given, or is about to give, any information in connection with an inquiry or proceeding relating to a right under the FMLA; and/or
 - Testified, or is about to testify, in any inquiry or proceeding relating to a right under the FMLA.

Emergency Leave

Employees may be granted up to two days of emergency leave without loss of pay or accumulated local leave for destruction of their home or domicile flood, fire, or storm, or other natural disasters. Such leave is subject to the approval of the campus Principal or Superintendent or designee. Any further leave granted will result in a deduction of the daily rate of pay or accumulated local leave, unless otherwise provided by SST.

Bereavement Leave

School employees may be absent, without loss of pay, in the event of the death of one of the following relatives of the employee or his or her spouse: husband, wife, child (including a biological, adopted, stepchild, a child for whom the employee stands in loco parentis, or foster child), father, mother, brother, sister, grandfather, grandmother, grandchildren, or any person who may be residing in the employee's household at the time of illness or death. No more than five paid bereavement leave days are available per will be used any one school year. Additional unpaid leave days may be requested and offered at the discretion of the campus Principal, Superintendent, and Department Chief.

Jury Duty and Other Court Appearances

SST will pay a non-exempt employee his or her normal daily compensation for each regularly scheduled workday on which the employee serves in any phase of jury service. Any employee selected for jury duty must notify his or her supervisor within 48 hours of the courts notice. The employee must also present documentation of jury service to his or her supervisor.

Employees will be paid while on leave to comply with a valid subpoena to appear in a civil, criminal, legislative, or administrative proceeding. Absences for court appearances related to an employee's personal business must be taken as local leave or leave without pay (if no local leave is available). Employees may be required to submit documentation of their need for leave for court appearances.

Voting Leave

Any employee who does not have two consecutive non-work hours while the polls are open on election day will be given up to two hours off with pay in order to vote, unless more time is required by state law. The employee should

notify the appropriate supervisor before Election Day if time off is needed, so that the timing of the employee's absence can be pre-arranged.

Summer Leave

SST Schools ("SST") will offer eligible staff members the opportunity to take additional vacation time under a special, voluntary, unpaid Summer Leave Program.

Eligibility

All professional employees and administrators who are 215 days calendar, as well as exempt central office employees, are eligible to participate in the Summer Leave Program.

Guidelines

- Summer Leave Program leave may be requested in weekly or daily increments only.
- All professional employees and administrators who are 215 day calendar, as well as Central Office Employees, may request up to, but no more than, six weeks (30 business days) of summer leave.
- Employee requests for summer leave should be made in writing by completing a Summer Leave Program Request Form and submitting it to the appropriate administrator, as identified below.
- All Summer Leave Program requests must be reviewed and approved by SST administrators prior to an employee taking summer leave. Approvals will be based on an assessment of overall staffing needs and scheduled projects/activities within a campus and/or department to ensure that satisfactory service may continue in the employee's absence, and will be considered on a "first come, first served" basis.
- Approved summer leave will run concurrently with other unpaid leave available to the employee.

Impact on Paycheck

Salary checks will be reduced by the amount of summer leave taken. Employees may contact the Payroll department in the central office and ask for a written calculation of the net effect of the reduction in pay.

Note: Non-exempt salaried employees will have all such unpaid leave deducted from their salary, while exempt employees will experience salary reductions only in units of a full day or week at a time, depending upon the exact nature of the absence.

Requesting Summer Leave Program Time

To request summer leave, complete the Summer Leave Program Request Form and submit it to your school principal, Superintendent, or the related executive officer in the Central Office. Request Forms should be submitted at least two (2) weeks prior to you anticipated need for summer leave. Sudden, unplanned leave requests will not be considered.

To Change, Add, or Cancel a Summer Leave Program Request

To change, add to, or cancel an authorized Summer Leave Program request, you must complete a new Request Form and submit it to Human Resources at least one (1) week before the original summer leave request would have taken effect.

Religious Observances

An employee requesting to attend a religious observance on a regularly scheduled school day may use local leave. In the event that all Personal Leave has been used, deductions from the employee's salary shall be made on the basis of the employee's daily rate of pay. SST may require advance notice prior to an employee taking leave for a religious observance.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Announcements

All written announcements, class newsletters or correspondence sent home must be approved by a Principal one day ahead of time. Only announcements concerning school activities will be accepted. No correspondence of any kind should be sent out without a Principal's signature and approval. No notices should be posted without a Principal's initials. Where appropriate, the Principal will consult the Superintendent.

Distribution of Non-School Materials

Written or printed materials, handbills, photographs, pictures, films, tapes, or other visual or auditory materials not sponsored by SST Schools, or by a SST-affiliated school-support organization will not be sold, circulated, distributed, or posted on any SST premises by any employee, or by persons or groups not associated with SST, except in accordance with this section.

SST will not be responsible for, nor will it endorse, the contents of any non-school literature distributed on any SST premises.

For purposes of this provision, "distribution" means the circulation of one or more copies of material from a source other than SST.

Limitations on Content

Non-school literature will not be distributed on SST property if:

- The materials are obscene, vulgar, or otherwise inappropriate for the age and maturity of the audience.
- The materials endorse actions endangering the health or safety of students.
- The materials promote the illegal use of drugs, alcohol, or other controlled substances.
- The distribution of such materials would violate the intellectual property rights, privacy rights, or other rights of another person.
- The materials contain defamatory statements about public figures or others.
- The materials advocate imminent lawless or disruptive action, and are likely to incite or produce such action.
- The materials are hate literature or similar publications that scurrilously attack ethnic, religious, or racial groups or contain content aimed at creating hostility and violence; and the materials would materially and substantially interfere with school activities or the rights of others.
- There is reasonable cause to believe that distribution of the non-school literature would result in material and substantial interference with school activities or the rights of others.

Prior Review

All non-school materials intended for distribution on SST campuses or other school premises will be submitted to the Superintendent or designee for prior review in accordance with the following:

- Materials will include the name of the person or organization sponsoring the distribution.
- Using the standards found at Limitations on Content, the Superintendent will approve or reject submitted materials within two school days of the time the materials were received.

Violations

Failure to comply with SST requirements regarding distribution of non-school literature will result in appropriate administrative action, including but not limited to confiscation of nonconforming materials and/or suspension of use of SST facilities. Law enforcement officials may be called when appropriate. Decisions made by the Administration may be appealed in accordance with the appropriate SST complaint policy.

COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES

SST values the views and concerns of its employees, and encourages employees to express their views and workplace concerns through appropriate informal and formal processes.

Initially, the Board encourages employees to discuss their views and concerns through informal discussions and meetings with their Supervisors, Department Chiefs, and/or Campus Principals. Employees should attempt to address their concerns as soon as possible in order to allow for early resolution at the lowest possible administrative level, and to comply with the timelines set out in Board Policy PG-4.6.1.

The purpose of this grievance procedure is to entertain employee views and to resolve employee complaints and workplace conflicts in an efficient and expeditious manner at the lowest possible administrative level. In using and applying the policy, all participants are expected to remain courteous and to adhere to the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators.

Definitions

Days. For purposes of SST’s employee complaint process, “days” shall mean school business days. In calculating timelines under these procedures, the day a document is filed is “day zero,” and all deadlines shall be determined by counting the following school business day as “day one.”

Complaint/Grievance. The terms “complaint” and “grievance” shall have the same meaning. A grievance under these procedures may include, but shall not be limited to, any of the following:

1. Grievances concerning an employee’s wages, hours, or conditions of work.
2. Notwithstanding Board Policies PG-4.14, 4.14.1, and 4.12, specific allegations of unlawful discrimination in employment on the basis of sex (including allegations of sexual harassment and/or wage discrimination on the basis of sex), race, religion, national origin, age, or disability, following completion of an investigation by the appropriate compliance coordinator or designee designated by applicable policy.
3. Specific allegations of unlawful discrimination or retaliation on the basis of the employee’s exercise of constitutional rights.
4. Specific allegations of adverse employment action in retaliation for reporting to an appropriate authority a violation of law by a School employee, Director, or Officer. Employees making such complaints must initiate a grievance under this policy within the time specified by law. Time lines for the employee and SST set out in this policy may be shortened to allow the Board to make a final decision within 60 days of the initiation of the complaint.

Grievance Rules

1. Neither the Board nor any School employee shall unlawfully retaliate against an employee for bringing a concern or complaint informally or formally.
2. Employees filing a formal grievance must utilize the School's Grievance Forms for the corresponding grievance level. The forms are available at SST Docs.
3. In compliance with the Level One Grievance Form, a grievant must specify the harm alleged by each individual named, as well as the remedy for that harm the grievant seeks. For purposes of efficiency and expediency, the School's Grievance Forms must be completed in all parts. Any Grievance Form that is incomplete in a material way may be dismissed, but may be re-filed with all the required information if the re-filing is within the designated time for filing a complaint.
4. An employee may not bring separate or serial grievances regarding the same event or action. Employee grievances addressing similar matters may be consolidated at the School's discretion.
5. A grieving employee may be represented by an attorney or advocate at any level of the grievance process.
6. The complaining employee must comply with all time limits applicable to the grievance process, unless such time limits are modified by mutual consent.
7. If the administrator addressing the complaint determines that additional time is needed to complete a thorough investigation of the complaint and/or to issue a response, the administrator shall inform the complainant in writing of the necessity to extend the response time and a specific date by when the response will be issued.
8. School grievance officials who fail to meet a time requirement, without providing written notice of an extended deadline, shall be considered to have denied the grievance as effective the date of the missed deadline.
9. The complaining employee shall present all reasonably available documents supporting their grievance at Level One.
10. Grievance officials shall have the discretion to hold conferences, conduct interviews, conduct fact investigations, review relevant records and employ other means that will aid in their decision.
11. Costs of a grievance shall be borne by the party incurring them.

Complaint Process - Campus Level Staff

The following process governs complaints filed by all campus level employees.

Informal Conferences. An employee may request an informal conference through his or her Supervisor or Campus Principal. If the employee is not satisfied with the results of the informal conference, the employee may (1) request a second informal conference with the supervising Superintendent, or (2) submit a written grievance form pursuant to Board Policy PG-4.6.1. Employees should make their concerns known as soon as possible, and attempt to reach an informal resolution prior to the expiration of five business days from the time the employee knew of or should have known of the event(s) giving rise to a complaint.

Formal Process. The formal complaint process provides all employees with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management. Once all administrative procedures are exhausted, employees can bring concerns or complaints to the Board, as outlined below.

Level One

Formal complaints must be filed within the later of (1) five business days of the time the employee knew or should have known of the event(s) giving rise to a complaint, or (2) within five business days after the date a letter is mailed or e-mailed to the employee after completion of the informal grievance process notifying the employee of

the formal grievance process. Complaints must be submitted to the supervising Campus Principal, using the School Level One Grievance Form. The grievance must be specific, referencing any law or policy alleged to have been violated and/or the dissatisfaction raised by the employee. The grievance must specify a remedy or remedies requested. The School may, upon review of the grievance, require the employee to begin the grievance process at Level Two. A decision by the School to require the employee to file at Level Two suspends the timelines under this procedure, so that the number of days between the filing of the Level One Grievance and the decision of the School to require the employee to start at Level Two shall not be considered in determining the timeliness of a grievance.

The employee's Campus Principal or other designee shall serve as the Level One Grievance Officer. Within ten business days of receipt of the written grievance, the Level One Grievance Officer will investigate the complaint and meet with the grieving employee and/or representative to consider the grievance. The Level One Grievance Officer will thereafter decide the grievance and, within ten business days of their meeting, provide a written Level One Grievance Decision to the employee.

***Note:** employees alleging adverse employment action in retaliation for reporting a violation of law by a School employee, Director, or Officer may appeal directly from Level One to Level Three, bypassing Level Two.*

Level Two

If the grievance is not resolved to the employee's satisfaction at Level One, if no written decision is received from the Level One Grievance Officer within the time allotted, or the employee is directed to do so by the School, the employee may submit a written appeal to the supervising Superintendent or designee by completing and submitting the School Level Two Grievance Form. Unless otherwise provided by applicable policy or procedure, the Level Two Grievance shall explain the employee's objections to the Level One Decision, if any, and shall be filed within ten business days of the employee's receipt of the written response of the Level One Grievance Officer or, if no response was received, within ten business days of the deadline for receipt of a Level One decision. The Level Two record shall consist of the Level One Form and the Level One Decision, if available.

The Superintendent or designee shall serve as the Level Two Grievance Officer. The Level Two Grievance Officer may, but is not required to, meet with the employee. The Level Two Grievance Officer shall review the complaint and the record, and shall issue a decision on or before ten business days of receipt of the Level Two Grievance.

Level Three

If the complaint is not resolved to the employee's satisfaction at Level Two, or if no written decision is received from the Level Two Grievance Officer within the time allotted, the employee may submit a written appeal to the Superintendent of Schools or designee using a Level Three Grievance Form. The Level Three Grievance shall explain the employee's objections to the Level Two Decision and shall be filed within ten business days of the employee's receipt of the written response of the Level Two Grievance Officer or, if no response was received, within ten business days of the deadline for receipt of the Level Two decision. The Level Three grievance record shall consist of any previously submitted Grievance Forms and, if available, the Level One and Level Two Decisions.

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall serve as the Level Three Grievance Officer. The Level Three Grievance Officer may, but is not required to, meet with the employee. The Level Three Grievance Officer shall

review the complaint and the record, and shall issue a decision on or before ten business days of receipt of the Level Three Grievance.

Level Four

A grieving employee who is dissatisfied with the Level Three Decision, or is otherwise authorized to appeal to Level Four, may submit a written appeal to the Board of Directors using the Level Four Grievance Form. The Level Four Grievance shall explain the employee's objections to the decision from the level below, and shall be filed within ten business days of the employee's receipt of the written response of the prior Grievance Officer, or, if no response was received, within ten business days of the deadline for receipt of a decision from the prior Grievance Officer. The Level Four grievance record shall consist of all previously submitted Grievance Forms and, if available, the Level One, Two, and Three Decisions.

The Board shall then consider the grievance and may, at its discretion, require the appearance of the employee and administration. The Board may subsequently take action or no action. No action by the Board supports the Decision at the level below. If the Board takes action, it may make and communicate its decision orally or in writing at any time up to and including the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. Grievances involving the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of the employee bringing the grievance, may be heard by the Directors in closed meeting. Grievances involving a complaint or charge against another School employee, Director, or Officer shall be heard in closed meeting unless an open meeting is requested in writing by the employee, Director, or Officer against whom the complaint or charge is brought.

Complaint Process – Central Office Staff

The following process governs complaints filed by all Central Office Staff.

Informal Conferences. Central Office Staff may request an informal conference through their designated supervisor. If the employee is not satisfied with the results of the informal conference, the employee may submit a written grievance form pursuant to Board Policy 4.6.2. Employees should make their concerns known as soon as possible, and attempt to reach an informal resolution prior to the expiration of five business days from the time the employee knew of or should have known of the event(s) giving rise to a complaint.

Formal Process. The formal complaint process provides Central Office Staff with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management. Once all administrative procedures are exhausted, employees can bring concerns or complaints to the Board, as outlined below.

Level One

Formal complaints must be filed within the later of (1) five business days of the time the employee knew or should have known of the event(s) giving rise to a complaint, or (2) within five business days of the date a letter is mailed or e-mailed to the employee after completion of the informal grievance process notifying the employee of the formal grievance process. Complaints must be submitted to the supervising Department Chief or designee, using the School Level One Grievance Form. The grievance must be specific, referencing any law or policy alleged to have been violated and/or the dissatisfaction raised by the employee. The grievance must specify a remedy or remedies requested. The Department Chief or designee may, upon review of the grievance, require the grievant to

begin the grievance process at Level Two. A decision by the Department Chief or designee to require the grievant to file at Level Two suspends the timelines under this procedure, so that the number of days between the filing of the Level One Grievance and the decision to require the employee to start at Level Two shall not be considered in determining the timeliness of a grievance.

The supervising Department Chief or designee shall serve as the Level One Grievance Officer. Within ten business days of receipt of the written grievance, the Level One Grievance Officer will investigate the complaint and meet with the grieving employee and/or representative to consider the grievance. The Level One Grievance Officer will thereafter decide the grievance and, within ten business days of their meeting, provide a written Level One Grievance Decision to the employee.

Level Two

If the complaint is not resolved to the employee's satisfaction at Level One, or if no written decision is received from the Level One Grievance Officer within the time allotted, the employee may submit a written appeal to the Superintendent of Schools or designee using a Level Two Grievance Form. The Level Two Grievance shall explain the employee's objections to the Level One Decision and shall be filed within ten business days of the employee's receipt of the written response of the Level One Grievance Officer or, if no response was received, within ten business days of the deadline for receipt of a decision from the Level One Grievance Officer. The Level Two grievance record shall consist of any previously submitted Grievance Forms and, if available, the Level One Decision.

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall serve as the Level Two Grievance Officer. The Level Two Grievance Officer may, but is not required to, meet with the employee. The Level Two Grievance Officer shall review the complaint and the record, and shall issue a decision on or before ten business days of receipt of the Level Two Grievance.

Level Three

A grieving employee who is dissatisfied with the Level Two Decision may submit a written appeal to the Board of Directors using the Level Three Grievance Form. The Level Three Grievance shall explain the employee's objections to the Level Two Decision and shall be filed within ten business days of the employee's receipt of the Level Two Decision or, if no response was received, within ten business days of the deadline for receipt of a Level Two Decision. The Level Three grievance record shall consist of all previously submitted Grievance Forms and, if available, the Level One and Two Decisions.

The Board shall then consider the grievance and may, at its discretion, require the appearance of the employee and administration. The Board may subsequently take action or no action. No action by the Board supports the Decision at the level below. If the Board takes action it may make and communicate its decision orally or in writing at any time up to and including the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. Grievances involving the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of the employee bringing the grievance, may be heard by the Directors in closed meeting. Grievances involving a complaint or charge against another School employee, Director, or Officer shall be heard in closed meeting unless an open meeting is requested in writing by the employee, Director, or Officer against whom the complaint or charge is brought.

Complaint Process – District Level Staff

The following process governs complaints filed by all District Level Staff.

Informal Conferences. District Level Staff may request an informal conference through their supervising Superintendent. If the employee is not satisfied with the results of the informal conference, the employee may submit a written grievance form pursuant to Board Policy 4.6.3. Employees should make their concerns known as soon as possible, and attempt to reach an informal resolution prior to the expiration of five business days from the time the employee knew of or should have known of the event(s) giving rise to a complaint.

Formal Process. The formal complaint process provides District Level Staff with an opportunity to be heard up to the highest level of management. Once all administrative procedures are exhausted, employees can bring concerns or complaints to the Board, as outlined below.

Level One

Formal complaints must be filed within the later of (1) five business days of the time the employee knew or should have known of the event(s) giving rise to a complaint, or (2) within five business days of the date a letter is mailed or e-mailed to the employee after completion of the informal grievance process notifying the employee of the formal grievance process. Complaints must be submitted to the supervising Superintendent or designee, using the School Level One Grievance Form. The grievance must be specific, referencing any law or policy alleged to have been violated and/or the dissatisfaction raised by the employee. The grievance must specify a remedy or remedies requested. The Superintendent or designee may, upon review of the grievance, require the grievant to begin the grievance process at Level Two. A decision by the Superintendent or designee to require the grievant to file at Level Two suspends the timelines under this procedure, so that the number of days between the filing of the Level One Grievance and the decision to require the employee to start at Level Two shall not be considered in determining the timeliness of a grievance.

The supervising Superintendent or designee shall serve as the Level One Grievance Officer. Within ten business days of receipt of the written grievance, the Level One Grievance Officer will investigate the complaint and meet with the grieving employee and/or representative to consider the grievance. The Level One Grievance Officer will thereafter decide the grievance and, within ten business days of their meeting, provide a written Level One Grievance Decision to the employee.

Level Two

If the complaint is not resolved to the employee's satisfaction at Level One, or if no written decision is received from the Level One Grievance Officer within the time allotted, the employee may submit a written appeal to the Superintendent of Schools or designee using a Level Two Grievance Form. The Level Two Grievance shall explain the employee's objections to the Level One Decision and shall be filed within ten business days of the employee's receipt of the written response of the Level One Grievance Officer or, if no response was received, within ten business days of the deadline for receipt of a decision from the Level One Grievance Officer. The Level Two grievance record shall consist of any previously submitted Grievance Forms and, if available, the Level One Decision.

The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall serve as the Level Two Grievance Officer. The Level Two Grievance Officer may, but is not required to, meet with the employee. The Level Two Grievance Officer shall review the complaint and the record, and shall issue a decision on or before ten business days of receipt of the Level Two Grievance.

Level Three

A grieving employee who is dissatisfied with the Level Two Decision may submit a written appeal to the Board of Directors using the Level Three Grievance Form. The Level Three Grievance shall explain the employee's objections to the Level Two Decision and shall be filed within ten business days of the employee's receipt of the Level Two Decision or, if no response was received, within ten business days of the deadline for receipt of a Level Two Decision. The Level Three grievance record shall consist of all previously submitted Grievance Forms and, if available, the Level One and Two Decisions.

The Board shall then consider the grievance and may, at its discretion, require the appearance of the employee and administration. The Board may subsequently take action or no action. No action by the Board supports the Decision at the level below. If the Board takes action it may make and communicate its decision orally or in writing at any time up to and including the next regularly scheduled Board meeting. Grievances involving the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of the employee bringing the grievance, may be heard by the Directors in closed meeting. Grievances involving a complaint or charge against another School employee, Director, or Officer shall be heard in closed meeting unless an open meeting is requested in writing by the employee, Director, or Officer against whom the complaint or charge is brought.

EMPLOYEE CONDUCT AND WELFARE

An effective educational program requires employees to exemplify integrity, high ideals, and human understanding. SST expects all professional staff members to maintain high standards in their working relationships, and in the performance of their professional duties, by:

- Recognizing the basic dignity of all individuals;
- Accurately representing their qualifications;
- Exercising due care to protect the mental and physical safety of students, colleagues, and subordinates;
- Maintain confidentiality; and
- Refraining from using his or her position or school property for partisan political or religious purposes.

Additionally, all employees are expected to act with the highest ethical standards and are subject to the following ethical codes:

Texas Educator Code of Ethics

NOTE: The term "educator" as used in this section will apply to all SST employees. All SST employees must adhere to the Texas Educator Code of Ethics. Violations will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The Texas educator will comply with standard practices and ethical conduct toward students, professional colleagues, school officials, parents and members of the community and will safeguard academic freedom. The Texas educator, in maintaining the dignity of the profession, will respect and obey the law, demonstrate personal integrity, and exemplify honesty. The Texas educator, in exemplifying ethical relations with colleagues, will extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the profession. The Texas educator, in accepting a position of public trust, will measure success by

the progress of each student toward realization of his or her potential as an effective citizen. The Texas educator, in fulfilling responsibilities in the community, will cooperate with parents and others to improve the public schools of the community.

Professional Ethical Conduct, Practices, and Performance:

- The educator will not intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the School or educational institution.
- The educator will not knowingly misappropriate, divert, or use monies, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.
- The educator will not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.
- The educator will not use institutional or professional privileges for personal or partisan advantage.
- The educator will neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or to obtain special advantage. This standard will not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.
- The educator will not falsify records, or direct or coerce others to do so.
- The educator will comply with state regulations, written School Board policies, and other state and federal laws.
- The educator will apply for, accept, offer, or assign a position or a responsibility on the basis of professional qualifications.
- The educator will not make threats of violence against School employees, School Board members, students, or parents of students.
- The educator will be of good moral character and be worthy to instruct or supervise the youth of this state.
- The educator will not intentionally or knowingly misrepresent his or her employment history, criminal history, and/or disciplinary record when applying for subsequent employment.
- The educator will refrain from the illegal use or distribution of controlled substances and/or abuse of prescription drugs and toxic inhalants.
- The educator will not consume alcoholic beverages on School property or during School activities when students are present.

Ethical Conduct Toward Professional Colleagues:

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

Ethical Conduct Toward Students:

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

Professional Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, adopted by the Professional Practices Commission, Texas Education Agency, March 1, 1998; last amended December 26, 2010.

Financial Ethics

SST prohibits fraud and financial impropriety in the actions of its Board of Directors, employees, vendors, contractors, consultants, volunteers, and others seeking or maintaining a business relationship with SST.

Fraud and financial impropriety will include but not be limited to:

- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of any document or account belonging to SST.
- Forgery or unauthorized alteration of a check, bank draft, or any other financial document.
- Misappropriation of funds, securities, supplies, or other SST assets, including employee time.
- Impropriety in the handling of money or reporting of SST financial transactions.
- Profiteering as a result of insider knowledge of SST information or activities.
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential or proprietary information to outside parties.
- Unauthorized disclosure of investment activities engaged in or contemplated by SST.

- Accepting or seeking anything of material value from contractors, vendors, or other persons providing services or materials to SST, except as otherwise permitted by law or SST policy.
- Inappropriately destroying, removing, or using records, furniture, fixtures, or equipment.
- Failure to provide financial records required by state or local entities.
- Failure to disclose conflicts of interest as required by law or SST policy.
- Any other dishonest act regarding the finances of SST.

Any person who suspects fraud or financial impropriety in SST will report the suspicions immediately to any supervisor, the Superintendent or designee, the Board President, or local law enforcement.

Reports of suspected fraud or financial impropriety will be treated as confidential to the extent permitted by law. Limited disclosure may be necessary to complete a full investigation or to comply with law. All employees involved in an investigation will be advised to keep information about the investigation confidential.

Neither the Board nor any SST employee will unlawfully retaliate against a person who in good faith reports perceived fraud or financial impropriety.

If an employee is found to have committed fraud or financial impropriety, the Superintendent or designee will take or recommend appropriate disciplinary action, which may include termination of employment and, when circumstances warrant, the Board of Directors, Superintendent, or designee may refer matters to appropriate law enforcement or regulatory authorities.

Standards of Conduct

All employees are expected to work together in a cooperative spirit to serve the best interests of SST and to be courteous to students, one another, and the public. In addition to the ethical standards outlined above, employees are expected to observe the following standards of conduct:

- Abuse of SST's leave policy.
- Alteration or falsification of school records, including grades, academic records, employee and/or student forms, or any other school information.
- Conduct in violation of any SST policy or established expectation of performance.
- Conducting personal business during business hours while on school property.
- Corporal punishment of students.
- Excessive absences and/or tardiness. Improper conduct toward students and other employees.
- Incompetence or inefficiency in the performance of duties.
- Insubordination, including the willful refusal to perform an assignment or to comply with a directive given by a supervisor. However, in the event a supervisor directs an employee to perform an illegal or immoral act/task, the employee should notify the next level of authority immediately.
- Malicious gossip and/or spreading rumors; engaging in behavior designed to create discord and lack of SST; interfering with fellow employee's job performance; willfully restricting work output or encouraging others to do the same.
- Negligence or any careless action that endangers the life or safety of another person, or damages or destroys the property of SST.
- Possession, use, or being under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants, illegal narcotics, or other controlled substances on school property or during any school function.
- Sexual misconduct.

- Theft of SST-owned property or of fellow employees; unauthorized possession or removal of any school property, including documents, from the premises without prior permission from a supervisor; unauthorized use of SST's equipment or property for personal reasons or personal profit.
- Threatening, intimidating, or coercing fellow employees on or off SST premises, at any time, for any reason.
- Unexcused absences from work.
- Unprofessional job-related conduct.
- Use of SST property for personal gain.
- Verbal and/or physical fighting on school premises or at any school related activities.
- Wasting of SST supplies or equipment.
- Willfully or with gross negligence causing the destruction or damage of SST property or the property of fellow employees, volunteers, suppliers or visitors, or students.

The preceding list is not intended to limit the type of unacceptable employee behavior. Questions regarding SST's expectations for employee conduct should be directed to the appropriate supervisor or Superintendent. Violations of these or any other standards of employee conduct may lead to immediate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

All SST employees should perform their duties in accordance with state and federal law, SST policies and procedures, and ethical standards.

Employee Discipline

SST is intent on administering equitable and consistent discipline for unsatisfactory conduct in the workplace. The best disciplinary measure is the one that does not have to be enforced and comes from good leadership and fair supervision.

SST's own best interest lies in ensuring fair treatment of all employees, and in making certain that disciplinary actions are prompt, uniform, and impartial. The major purpose of any disciplinary action is to correct the problem, prevent recurrence, and prepare the employee for satisfactory service in the future.

Although employment with SST is based on mutual consent and both the employee and SST have the right to terminate employment at-will, with or without cause or advance notice, SST **may** use progressive discipline at its discretion.

Disciplinary action may call for any of four steps: 1-informal conference, 2-verbal warning, 3-written warning, 4-suspension with or without pay, or 5-termination of employment. The progression of these steps depends upon the severity of the problem and the number of occurrences. There may also be circumstances when one or more steps are bypassed.

Progressive discipline means that, with respect to most disciplinary problems, these steps will normally be followed: a first offense may call for an informal conference, or verbal warning; a next offense may be followed by a written warning; another offense may lead to a suspension; and, still another offense may then lead to termination of employment.

SST recognizes that there are certain types of employee problems that are serious enough to justify either a suspension, or in extreme situations, termination of employment, without going through the usual progressive discipline steps.

By using progressive discipline in appropriate circumstances, SST hopes that most employee problems can be corrected at an early stage, benefiting both the employee and the school.

Drug-Free Workplace

SST Schools supports a drug-free workplace. Recognizing that a drug-free workplace is a safer and more productive place for our employees to work and for our students to be educated, SST has adopted a Substance Abuse Prevention Policy (the “Drug-Free Policy”) that applies to all employees. Please read the Drug-Free Policy, or have it read to you, then sign the verification and consent form (contained at the end of this Handbook) acknowledging that you understand it and have received a copy. Compliance with the Drug-Free Policy is a condition of continued employment with SST Schools. Your continued employment with SST will evidence your agreement to comply with the terms and provisions of the Drug-Free Policy.

SST Schools prohibits the unlawful manufacture, possession, distribution, or use of controlled substances—including alcohol illegal drugs, and inhalants—in the workplace. SST will establish a drug-free awareness program to inform employees about the dangers of drug abuse in the workplace, SST’s policy of maintaining a drug-free workplace, any available drug counseling, rehabilitation, and employee assistance programs, and the penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug abuse violation.

“Workplace” is defined to mean the site for performance of work done in connection with all assignments or duties of a person’s employment with SST Schools. This includes any school building or any school premises; any school-owned vehicle or any other school-approved vehicle used to transport students to and from school or school-sponsored or school-approved activities; or any non-school property during any school-sponsored activity, event, or function, such as a field trip or athletic event where students are under the jurisdiction or supervision of the school.

Employees who violate this prohibition will be subject to disciplinary sanctions. Such sanctions may include referral to drug and alcohol counseling or rehabilitation programs or employee assistance programs, and/or termination from employment with SST at SST’s sole discretion, and also includes referral to appropriate law enforcement officials for prosecution.

Possession of Dangerous Substances

Employees will not manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, use, or be under the influence of any of the following substances during working hours while at school or at school-related activities during or outside of usual working hours:

- Any controlled substance or dangerous drug as defined by law, including but not limited to marijuana, any narcotic drug, hallucinogen, stimulant, depressant, amphetamine, barbiturate or any “look-alike” substances.
- Alcohol or any alcoholic beverage.
- Any abuse-able glue, aerosol paint, or any other chemical substance for inhalation.
- Any other intoxicant, or mood-changing, mind-altering, or behavior-altering drugs.
- Equipment and paraphernalia related to illegal drug or substance use.

An employee need not be legally intoxicated to be considered “under the influence” of a controlled substance.

Exceptions

An employee who manufactures, possesses, or dispenses a substance listed above as part of the employee's job responsibilities, or who uses a drug authorized by a licensed physician prescribed for the employee's personal use will not be considered to have violated this policy. The drugs, both prescription and over-the-counter, are limited to one day's supply, or must be kept in the original container. When appropriate, SST may determine, by consulting a medical doctor, if the drug or inhalant produces hazardous effects that may impair an employee's ability to work safely. SST may check with prescribing physicians to see if other medications are available which would not impair the employee's ability to work safely.

Mandatory Conviction Notification

As a condition of employment, each employee will notify his or her supervisor of the employee's conviction of any criminal drug statute for a violation occurring in the workplace as defined above, or for any charge to which the employee enters a plea of guilty or nolo contendere and receives deferred adjudication. Such notification will be provided no later than five days after such conviction.

Within 30 calendar days of receiving notice from an employee of a conviction for any drug statute violation occurring in the workplace, SST will either (1) take appropriate personnel action against the employee, up to and including termination of employment, or (2) require the employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state, or local health agency, law enforcement agency, or other appropriate agency.

Drug and Alcohol Testing

Random Drug Testing

SST Schools may conduct drug tests, without a warrant, and without individualized suspicion, when the test serves special governmental needs that outweigh the individual's privacy expectation. All employees, as a condition of continued employment, have an obligation to cooperate with any SST investigation of drug or alcohol abuse in the work place. Failure to cooperate in any such investigation will result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension and/or termination.

Enforcement

Because of the importance of maintaining a drug-free workplace, SST will take the following steps to ensure that the Drug-Free Policy is being adhered to:

- If an employee is suspected of using or being under the influence of unauthorized drugs or alcohol during school hours, the employee's campus's Principal may request an immediate drug test by urine and/or blood for the employee. The request will be forwarded for approval to the Superintendent.
- Employees who are involved in an on-the-job accident that requires medical treatment or that involves damage to any property may be required to submit to a drug test, or a blood alcohol test when required.

Employee Responsibility

All fees or charges associated with drug/alcohol abuse counseling or rehabilitation will be the responsibility of the employee.

Department of Transportation (DOT) Testing Program

SST has established an alcohol and controlled substances testing program to help prevent accidents and injuries resulting from the misuse of alcohol and controlled substances by the drivers of commercial motor vehicles, including school buses, or employees performing safety-sensitive functions, including but not limited to those involving potentially dangerous equipment or hazardous substances, in an environment or premises to which children have access. The primary purpose of the testing program is to prevent impaired employees from performing safety-sensitive functions.

The following conduct constitutes violation of SST policy:

- Refusing to submit to a required test for alcohol or controlled substances.
- Testing positive for alcohol, at a concentration of 0.04 or above, in a post-accident test.
- Testing positive for any controlled substances in a post-accident test.
- Testing positive for alcohol, at a concentration of 0.04 or above, in a random test.
- Testing positive for controlled substances in a random test.
- Testing positive for alcohol, at a concentration of 0.04 or above, in a required follow-up test.
- Testing positive for controlled substances in a required follow-up test.
- Testing positive for alcohol, at a concentration of 0.04 or above, in a reasonable suspicion test.
- Testing positive for controlled substances in a reasonable suspicion test.

A test is considered positive whether the employee knowingly or unknowingly used, ingested, or inhaled alcohol and/or a controlled substance.

The Superintendent will designate campus officials who will be responsible for ensuring that information is disseminated to employees regarding prohibited driver conduct, alcohol and controlled substances tests, and the consequences that follow positive test results.

Reasonable Suspicion Testing

Principals will be specifically trained in accordance with federal regulations on how to recognize a “reasonable suspicion,” and may remove a driver from a safety-sensitive position and require testing for alcohol and/or controlled substances. The determination of reasonable suspicion will be based on specific observations of the appearance, behavior, speech, or body odors of the driver whose motor ability, emotional equilibrium, or mental acuity seems to be impaired. Such observations must take place just preceding, during, or just after the period of the workday that the driver is on duty.

The observations may include indication of the chronic and withdrawal effects of controlled substances. Within 24 hours of the observed behavior, the supervisor will provide a signed, written record documenting the observations leading to a controlled substance reasonable suspicion test.

Consequences of Positive Test Results

In addition to the consequences established by federal law, a SST employee confirmed to have violated SST’s policy pertaining to alcohol or controlled substances will be subject to school-imposed discipline, as determined by his or her campus’s Principal and the Superintendent. Such discipline may include any appropriate action from suspension without pay during the period of removal from safety-sensitive functions, up to and including termination of employment. Employees who test positive for drugs and/or alcohol use will be prohibited from performing job functions immediately and will be recommended for termination.

In cases where a driver is also employed in a non-driving capacity by SST, disciplinary action imposed for violation of alcohol and controlled substances policies will apply to the employee’s functions and duties that involve driving. Additionally, upon recommendation of the employee’s supervisor, disciplinary measures up to and including termination of employment with SST may be considered.

Consequences of Employee Refusal to Test

Any employee who refuses to submit to an alcohol/drug test without valid medical reason will be prohibited from performing job functions immediately, and will be recommended for termination.

An employee who does not produce an adequate sample (urine or breath) without a valid medical reason, or an employee who engages in conduct that obstructs the collection process will be prohibited from performing job functions immediately, and will be recommended for termination.

An employee who leaves the scene of an accident without a valid reason will be prohibited from performing job functions immediately and will be recommended for termination.

Alcohol Results Between 0.02 And 0.04

A driver tested under this policy and found to have an alcohol concentration of 0.02 or greater, but less than 0.04, will be suspended without pay from driving duties for 24 hours. Any subsequent violation may subject the driver to termination in accordance with Board policy.

DWI Conviction

School bus drivers and drivers of SST-owned vehicles who are convicted of a driving while intoxicated (DWI) offense while driving a school vehicle will be terminated. Other DWI convictions will subject employees to disciplinary action up to and including termination. This applies to conviction as a result of operating either a school-owned or personal vehicle.

Finding of Alcohol or Drug Use

Employees who are found to be in violation of SST's drug-free workplace requirements will be recommended for termination, provided that such action is not required for an employee who voluntarily admits to alcohol use or illegal drug use prior to the initiation of any drug or alcohol test (except that in the case of an alcohol/drug-related accident, the self-referral must occur prior to the accident) and obtains counseling or rehabilitation and thereafter refrains from using alcohol or illegal drugs.

Tobacco Use

Smoking and the use of tobacco by employees is prohibited on all SST-owned property, in SST-owned vehicles, and while supervising students during school-related events.

Prohibition of Weapons

[Texas Penal Code, Sec. 46.03](#), prohibits firearms, illegal knives, clubs or any prohibited weapons on the physical premises of a school, any grounds or building on which an activity sponsored by a school is being conducted, or school transportation vehicle.

Employees, visitors, and students are prohibited from bringing firearms, knives, clubs or other prohibited weapons onto School premises (*i.e.*, building or portion of a building) or any grounds or building where a school-sponsored activity takes place. To ensure the safety of all persons, employees who observe or suspect a violation of SST's weapons policy should report it to their Supervisor or the campus's Principal immediately. Any violation of this policy by a SST employee can result in immediate termination.

Theft

Theft of property, whether from SST or from a fellow employee, will not be tolerated. Employees must have a Principal's permission before removing any SST-owned material, tools or other items, including damaged goods or scrap materials from SST's premises. Any employee who violates this provision will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including immediate discharge.

Workplace Searches and Video Surveillance

Searches

SST reserves the right to conduct searches to monitor compliance with rules concerning safety of employees, security of company and individual property, drugs and alcohol, and possession of other prohibited items. **“Prohibited items”** include, without limitation, illegal drugs; alcoholic beverages; prescription drugs or medications not used or possessed in compliance with a current valid prescription; weapons; any items of obscene, harassing, demeaning, or violent nature; and any property in the possession or control of an employee who does not have authorization from the owner of such property to possess or control the property. **“Control”** means knowing where a particular item is, having placed an item where it is currently located, or having any influence over its continued placement. In addition to SST’s premises, SST may search employees, their work areas, lockers, and other personal items such as bags, purses, briefcases, backpacks, lunch boxes, and other containers. In requesting a search, SST is by no means accusing anyone of theft, some other crime, or any other variety of improper conduct.

There is no general or specific expectation of privacy in SST’s workplace, either on school premises, or while on duty. In general, employees should assume that what they do while on duty or on SST’s premises is not private. All employees and all of the areas listed above are subject to search at any time; if an employee uses a locker or other storage area at work, including a locking desk drawer or locking cabinet, SST will either furnish the lock and keep a copy of the key or combination, or else allow the employee to furnish a personal lock, but the employee must give SST a copy of the key or combination. The areas in question may be searched at any time, with or without the employee being present. As a general rule, with the exception of items relating to personal hygiene or health, no employee should ever bring anything to work or store anything at work that he or she would not be prepared to show and possibly turn over to SST’s officials and/or law enforcement authorities.

All SST employees are subject to this policy. However, any given search may be restricted to one or more specific individuals, depending upon the situation. Searches may be done on a random basis or based upon reasonable suspicion. **“Reasonable suspicion”** means circumstances suggesting to a reasonable person that there is a possibility that one or more individuals may be in possession of a prohibited item as defined above. Any search under this policy will be done in a manner protecting employee privacy, confidentiality, and personal dignity to the greatest extent possible. SST will respond severely to any unauthorized release of information concerning individual employees.

No employee will ever be physically forced to submit to a search. However, an employee who refuses to submit to a search request by SST will face disciplinary action, up to and possibly including immediate termination of employment.

Video Surveillance

In order to promote the safety of SST’s employees, students, and visitors, as well as the security of its facilities, SST may conduct video surveillance of any portion of its premises at any time. The only areas excepted from video surveillance are private areas of restrooms, showers, and dressing rooms.

Employee Acceptable Use/Technology Usage

SST’s policies regarding the acceptable use of technology and the Internet, as well as the “Employee Acceptable Use Agreement,” can be accessed at the main office of each campus. All employees are expected to read, and submit executed the “Employee Agreement Form for Technology Usage” in TEAMS Employee Service Center. Before executing this acknowledgement, employees should review the following related policies:

- SST's Acceptable Use Policy
- SST's Cellular and Wireless Telephone Acceptable Use Policy
- SST's Internet Safety Policy
- SST's Computer and Information Systems Management Policy

All technology provided by SST Schools is primarily intended for administrative and instructional purposes. Every user of SST technology is responsible for respecting and protecting the rights of other users. Use of SST's technology system is a privilege, not a right, and inappropriate use will result in cancellation of that privilege, disciplinary action (up to and including termination), and possible prosecution.

Computers

SST's electronic communications systems, including its network and access to the Internet, are primarily for administrative and instructional purposes. Limited personal use of the system is permitted if the use:

1. Does not result in any direct cost paid with State funds, or if SST's Charter Holder is reimbursed for any direct costs involved;
2. Does not relate to private commercial purposes; and
3. Involves only incidental amounts of employee time, comparable to reasonable coffee breaks during the day.

Some employees are given access to the Internet to assist them in the performance of their jobs. Employees may only access the Internet through SST's approved Internet firewall.

All SST computer resources are school property, and any information located in or on computers and e-mail/voice mail systems is also school property and will be subject to inspection by SST.

E-Mail and Voice Mail Systems

All messages sent, received, composed and/or stored on these systems are the property of SST. E-mail transmissions and other use of SST's electronic communications systems are not confidential and can be monitored at any time to ensure appropriate use.

Confidentiality

Employees will not use a password, access a file, or retrieve any stored information unless authorized to do so. Employees may not attempt to gain access to another employee's files/messages.

Privacy

All files and messages on SST computers are the property of SST. They are not the property of any employee, even if created by an employee. Anything created on the computer or Internet may, and likely will be reviewed by others. If necessary, employees will take steps to help protect the security of documents. SST has the right to monitor any and all aspects of its computer system, including, but not limited to, monitoring sites employees visit on the Internet. Employees have no expectation of privacy in anything they create, store, send, or receive on their workplace computer, the SST network, or Internet resources.

Restrictions

1. Employees are not allowed to use SST computer resources for any reason other than official school business.
2. Employees may not use e-mail or the Internet to send or receive materials, proprietary financial information, or other similar materials that violate copyright law.
3. The e-mail system may not be used to create any offensive or disruptive messages. Among those which are considered offensive are any messages that contain sexual implications, racial or gender-specific slurs, or any other comment that offensively addresses an individual's age, sexual orientation, religious or political beliefs, national origin, disability, or anything that could be construed as harassment or disparaging of others.
4. Employees should refrain from sending non-business related e-mails to other SST employees or persons outside SST.
5. SST is responsible for maintaining records of software licensing agreements for the school. In order to ensure compliance with copyright laws and software licensing agreements, and help prevent computer viruses from being transmitted through the system, employees are not permitted to install or download any software or

content, such as music, videos, or non-work related “zipped” files onto the SST computer system without prior approval from the Information Systems Director.

6. Unauthorized duplication of software, often referred to as “piracy,” is a federal crime. Employees are not permitted to make, acquire, or use unauthorized copies of computer software.

Employee Use of Social Media

While SST Schools encourages its employees to enjoy and make good use of their off-duty time, certain activities on the part of employees may become a concern if they have the effect of impairing the work of any employee or student; harassing, demeaning, or creating a hostile working or learning environment; disrupting the smooth and orderly flow of work within the School; or harming the goodwill and reputation of the School among its employees, students, or the community at large.

In the area of social media (print, broadcast, digital, and online services such as Facebook, LinkedIn, MySpace, Plaxo, and Twitter, among others), employees may use such media in any way they choose so long as such use does not produce the adverse consequences noted above. The School has established the following guidelines for employee use of social media, both on and off duty:

1. If an employee publishes any personal information about the employee, another School employee, or the School in any public medium (print, broadcast, digital, or online) that:
 - a. Has the potential effect of involving the employee, their coworkers, students, or the School in any kind of dispute or conflict with other employees or third parties;
 - b. Interferes with the work of any employee or student;
 - c. Creates a harassing, demeaning, or hostile working or learning environment;
 - d. Disrupts the smooth and orderly flow of work within the office, or the educational process of the School;
 - e. Harms the goodwill and reputation of the School among its students or in the community at large; or
 - f. Tends to place in doubt the reliability, trustworthiness, or sound judgment of the person who is the subject of the information.

The employee(s) responsible for such problems will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and potentially including termination of employment, depending upon the severity and/or repeat nature of the offense.

2. No School employee may use School equipment or facilities for furtherance of non-work-related activities or relationships without the express advance permission of the Superintendent or designee.
3. Employees who conduct themselves in such a way that their actions toward and relationships with each other interfere with or damage work relationships, disrupt the flow of work or the School’s mission, or cause unfavorable publicity in the community should be concerned that their conduct may be inconsistent with one or more of the above guidelines. In such a situation, the employees involved should request guidance from the appropriate Superintendent or designee to discuss the possibility of a resolution that would avoid such problems. Depending upon the circumstances, failure to seek such guidance may be considered evidence of intent to conceal a violation of the policy and to hinder an investigation into the matter.
4. Use of social media that involves any kind of criminal activity or harms the rights of others may result in criminal prosecution or civil liability to those harmed, or both.
5. Employees may not use the School’s computers, network, or other equipment to set up or update social network page(s).
6. Employees shall not use or display the School’s logo or other material copyrighted by the School without express written consent.
7. Employees remain subject to applicable state and federal laws, School regulations and policies, and the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, when using electronic media, regardless of whether the employee is using private or public equipment, on or off campus. The employee shall:

- a. Maintain the confidentiality of student records;
- b. Maintain the confidentiality of health or personnel information concerning colleagues, unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law;
- c. Maintain the confidentiality of School records, including staff evaluations and private e mail addresses;
- d. Respect copyright law; and
- e. Refrain from harming others by knowingly making false statements about colleagues, students, or the School system.

Use of Electronic Media with Students

A certified or licensed employee, or any other employee designated in writing by the Superintendent or designee, may communicate through electronic media with students who are currently enrolled in the School. A certified or licensed employee means a person employed in a position requiring SBEC certification or a professional license, and whose job duties may require the employee to communicate electronically with students. The term includes classroom teachers, counselors, principals, librarians, paraprofessionals, nurses, educational diagnosticians, licensed therapists, and athletic trainers. The employee must comply with the provisions outlined below. All other employees are prohibited from communicating with students who are enrolled in the School through electronic media.

An employee is not subject to these provisions to the extent the employee has a social or family relationship with a student. For example, an employee may have a relationship with a niece or nephew; a student who is the child of an adult friend; a student who is a friend of the employee's child; or a member or participant in the same civic, social, recreational, or religious organization.

An employee who uses electronic media to communicate with students shall observe the following:

1. Only a teacher, trainer, or other employee who has an extracurricular duty may use text messaging, and then only to communicate with students who participate in the extracurricular activity over which the employee has responsibility.
2. The employee shall limit communications to matters within the scope of the employee's professional responsibilities (e.g., for classroom teachers, matters relating to class work, homework, and tests; for an employee with an extracurricular duty, matters relating to the extracurricular activity).
3. The employee shall not communicate directly with any student between the hours of 10:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.
4. The employee remains subject to applicable state and federal laws, School regulations and policies, and the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators, including:
 - a. Compliance with the Public Information Act and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), including retention and confidentiality of student records.
 - b. Copyright law.
5. The employee shall not solicit or engage in sexual conduct or a romantic relationship with a student.
6. Upon request from the School, the employee shall provide the phone number(s), social network site(s), or other information regarding the method(s) of electronic media the employee uses to communicate with any currently-enrolled student(s).
7. Upon written request from a parent or student, the employee shall discontinue communicating with the student through e-mail, text messaging, instant messaging, or any other form of one-to-one communication.

An employee may request an exception from one or more of the limitations above by submitting a written request to his or her immediate supervisor.

Recommendations for “Friending” Students

One of the hallmarks of social networks is the ability to “friend” others – creating a group of individuals that share interests and personal views. The School strongly discourages teachers from accepting invitations to “friend” students within social networking sites. When students gain access into a teacher's network of friends, the student-teacher dynamic is altered and results in providing more personal information than should be shared in an educational setting.

Maintaining a professional relationship with students is important in helping to avoid the appearance of relationships that could cause bias or favoritism in the classroom.

For the protection of your professional reputation, the School recommends the following practices:

“Friends” and “Friending”

1. Do not accept students as friends on personal social networking sites. Decline any student-initiated friend requests. Friend requests from former students who no longer attend the School or who have reached the age of 18 may be accepted.
2. Do not initiate online friendships with students.

If you wish to use networking protocols as part of the educational process, please work with School administrators and technology staff to identify and use a restricted, School-endorsed networking platform.

Content

1. Your on-line behavior should reflect the highest professional standards of honesty, respect, and consideration that are used in face-to-face communications.
2. Do not post content that is defamatory or obscene. Exercise caution with regards to exaggeration, colorful language, obscenity, legal conclusions, and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
3. Be mindful of copyright protections, and avoid posting proprietary materials without proper authorization.
4. Do not discuss students or coworkers, or publically criticize School policies or personnel.
5. Do not post images that include students.

Security

1. Be cautious when installing external applications that work with the social networking site, e.g., calendar programs and games. These add-ons often pose security risks.
2. Run updated malware protection to avoid infections of spyware and adware that may be placed on your computer.
3. Visit your profile’s security and privacy settings. At a minimum, educators are encouraged to have all privacy settings set to “only friends.” “Friends of friends” and “Networks and Friends” open your content to a large group of unknown individuals, and may place your privacy at risk.

Cellular and Wireless Telephone Acceptable Use

Access to cellular and/or wireless telephone equipment and accounts is made available exclusively for instructional and administrative purposes in accordance with SST guidelines and regulations. Access to this equipment is a privilege, not a right, and can be revoked at any time.

This policy explains and defines responsible and ethical use of SST-supplied telephone equipment and accounts. All rules embodied herein are designed to guide employees in appropriate and acceptable use of this technology, and are designed to protect both the employee and SST.

You are responsible for carrying the phone at all times during duty hours, for properly charging and maintaining the phone, and for returning the phone and any/all attachments to your supervisor at the time of termination of your employment.

You are responsible for initializing and maintaining your cellular voicemail account; SST is not responsible for designating or changing your voicemail password.

You will be provided with documentation for regarding your particular cellular phone usage plan. Your cellular plan provides a fixed number of airtime minutes, varying from plan to plan, which may be used without incurring any

additional usage fees. Your plan may also include free night and weekend calls, free long distance, and/or free direct-connect radio airtime. You must review your plan with your supervisor, and acknowledge understanding of and agreement to this plan in writing in this document.

You may use your phone for both SST business and essential personal calls. However, if you exceed your standard plan airtime minutes, you will be responsible for reimbursing SST for your personal call minutes and personal directory assistance calls up to the amount of your overage.

Each month, your supervisor will provide you a copy of the usage and fee summary for your telephone. Any discrepancies on your usage summary, such as incorrect number of airtime minutes or charges for calls you did not place, must be brought to the attention of your supervisor immediately. You are to review this summary, highlight your personal calls, and return the summary to your supervisor. During each month that you exceed your plan minutes and have made personal calls, you must attach a check made payable to SST Schools when returning the summary to your supervisor. Payment for excess personal calls must be submitted within five business days from the time you are presented your monthly usage summary by your supervisor.

If you exceed your plan minutes due to excessive business use or excessive business directory assistance calls, you must attach a written justification for the excess usage to your phone statement before returning your usage summary to your supervisor.

SST prohibits using a school-provided cellular or wireless telephone to engage in the following conduct:

1. Using the cellular and/or wireless telephone equipment for illegal, inappropriate, subversive or obscene purposes or activities. Illegal activities shall be defined as activities violating local, state, and/or federal laws, including use of the phone to make “crank” calls, place false emergency calls, make terroristic threats, commit forgery or fraud, or assist in the commission of a felony. Inappropriate use shall be defined as a violation of the intended educational or administrative use of the phone. Subversive activities shall be defined as activities undermining the security of local, state or national governments, or activities intended to cause mental anguish, bodily injury or death to any citizen or group of citizens. Obscene activities shall be defined as a violation of generally accepted social standards for use of a publicly-owned and operated communications vehicle, including obscene phone calls and/or possession or transmission of any form of pornographic or erotic material, in either audible or digital formats.
2. Using the telephone and/or any attached equipment for any illicit activity, including violation of copyrights, patents, institutional or third-party copyrights, license agreements, or other contracts. Illicit activities also include transmitting or accessing information designed to aide or abet an individual or group in violating the law, including all forms of access to gang-related or organized-crime related web sites and bulletin boards if your telephone is Internet-enabled.
3. Using the telephone and/or any attached equipment to obtain and/or distribute illegally duplicated and distributed digital music, video, and/or software from copyrighted sources if you phone is Internet-enabled. This expressly prohibits accessing websites and web-rings designed to disseminate non-public domain content and entertainment including, but not limited to, MP3 audio files, movies, and executable software code.
4. Intentionally disrupting telephone or network traffic, deliberately “crashing” any network or connected system, or maliciously tampering with communications devices.
5. Damaging or destroying telephone equipment or deliberately degrading system performance, including deliberate infection of phones, computers, or servers with viruses.
6. Disclosing a voicemail password to another employee or student, or attempting to disclose or discover another employee’s voicemail password.
7. Attempting to copy SST-owned software for personal gain, attempting to install privately-owned software onto a telephone or the network, or transmitting without authorization any software via electronic mail or the Internet on an Internet-enabled phone.
8. Using the SST telephone or network resources for commercial or financial gain.

9. Stealing or vandalizing data, equipment, or intellectual property.
10. Gaining or attempting to gain unauthorized access to internal and external resources or entities, including “hacking” into external networks, web-sites, or bulletin boards via Internet-enabled phones.
11. Forging or altering electronic or voicemail messages or using an account or password owned by another user.
12. Invading or assisting others in invading the privacy of an individual or group.
13. Using the telephone to eavesdrop, record, wiretap or otherwise illegitimately and inappropriately monitor the audible conversations or data streams of other users.
14. Possessing or conveying any data in any form, audible or digital, which might be considered a violation of these rules.

No Expectation of Privacy

Cellular and/or wireless telephone equipment provided by SST to SST employees to preform job responsibilities and remain, at all times, the property of SST, subject, at any time to recovery and search by SST. SST employees required to carry and utilize such equipment have no expectation of privacy regarding information stored or obtainable through the equipment or the account through which the equipment is utilized.

Consequences for Violations

Violations of this policy will be treated like other allegations of wrongdoing at SST. Allegations of misconduct will be adjudicated according to established procedures. Sanctions for violations of this policy may include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

- Temporary or permanent revocation of access to some or all cellular or wireless telephone resources.
- Disciplinary action, up to and including termination.
- Legal action according to applicable laws and contractual agreements.

Conflicts of Interest

Employees have an obligation to conduct business within guidelines that prohibit actual or potential conflicts of interest. This section establishes only the framework within which SST wishes to operate, and is guided by applicable state and federal law governing conflicts of interest and nepotism applicable to Texas open-enrollment charter schools and nonprofit entities. The purpose of these guidelines is to provide general direction so that employees can seek further clarification on issues related to the subject of acceptable standards of operation. Contact the HR Department for more information or questions about conflicts of interest.

An actual or potential conflict of interest occurs when an employee is in a position to influence a decision that may result in a personal gain for that employee or for a relative as a result of SST’s business dealings. For purposes of this section, a relative is any person who is related by blood or marriage, or whose relationship with the employee is similar to that of persons who are related by blood or marriage.

No “presumption of guilt” is created by the mere existence of a relationship with outside firms. However, if employees have any influence on transactions involving purchases, contracts, or leases, it is imperative that they disclose to their campus Principal, the appropriate Superintendent, or an officer of SST’s Board of Directors as soon as possible, the existence of any actual or potential conflict of interest, so that safeguards can be established to protect all parties.

Personal gain may result not only in cases where an employee or relative has a significant ownership in a firm with which SST does business, but also when an employee or relative receives any benefit, including but not limited to kick-back, bribe, substantial gift, or special consideration, as a result of any transaction or business dealings involving SST.

An employee with reason to believe that an actual conflict of interest exists must bring that concern to the attention of his or her immediate Supervisor or the HR Department.

Conflict of Interest/Non-School Related Activities

Employees sponsoring non-school-related student travel or other activities in the summer or during vacation times will not take advantage of their access to students to advertise or promote student-focused activities. Employees must follow the same procedures as any other community member in advertising non-school-sponsored activities or events for profit or personal benefit.

Conflict of Interest/Outside Employment

An employee cannot engage in outside employment or activity for monetary gain that interferes with or detracts from the ability to function in his or her employment with SST.

Conflict of Interest/Tutoring

Teachers are not allowed to privately tutor SST students for pay, except during the summer months and so long as the tutoring does not occur not on school property.

Gifts and Favors

A school director, administrator, or teacher who receives a commission or rebate on textbooks, electronic textbooks, instructional materials, or technological equipment used by the school may be committing a Class B misdemeanor criminal offense.

A school officer, administrator, or teacher who accepts a gift, favor, or service given to the person or to the school that could not be lawfully purchased with funds from the state textbook fund, and that might reasonably tend to influence the person in the selection of a textbook, electronic textbook, instructional material, or technological equipment may be committing a Class B misdemeanor criminal offense.

Copyrighted Materials

Employees are expected to comply with the provisions of copyright law relating to the unauthorized use, reproduction, distribution, performance, or display of copyrighted materials (i.e., printed material, videos, computer data, web material, and programs, etc.). Federal copyright law protects “original works of authorship fixed in any tangible medium of expression...” The types of works that are protected include but are not limited to:

- Literary works;
- Musical works, including any lyrics;
- Dramatic works, including any musical accompaniment;
- Pantomimes and choreographic works;
- Motion pictures and other audiovisual works;
- Sound recording; and
- Architectural works.

If employees use a protected work in an inappropriate manner, the action constitutes an “infringement” of the [Copyright Act](#). Infringement is similar to theft, and there are both civil and criminal penalties for such action. Under what is called the [Fair Use Doctrine](#), School employees may use portions of copyrighted works without the owner’s permission if the use “serves a public purpose.” Factors to be considered in determining fair use are found at <http://www.copyright.gov/fls/fl102.html>.

Non-Disclosure

The protection of confidential business information and trade secrets is vital to the interests and the success of SST. Such confidential information includes, but is not limited to, the following examples:

- Curriculum systems;
- Instructional programs;
- Curriculum solutions;
- Student course work;
- Compensation data;
- Computer processes;
- Computer programs and codes;
- New materials research;
- Pending projects and proposals;
- Proprietary production processes;
- Research and development strategies;
- Technological data; and
- Technological prototypes.

All employees may be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement as a condition of employment. An employee who improperly uses or discloses trade secrets or confidential business information belonging to SST Schools will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and legal action, even if the employee does not actually benefit from the disclosed information. This does not include any disclosure of otherwise confidential business information or trade secrets in accordance with the [Texas Public Information Act](#) or other applicable federal or state law.

Use of Personal Vehicles

Except in emergencies and exigent circumstances, it is the policy of SST Schools to prohibit staff from transporting students in personal vehicles.

Exceptions may exist where specific programs or activities have been identified by the Superintendent of Schools in his written procedures.

These procedures shall require both program or activity exceptions approved by the Superintendent of Schools, as well as the approval of individual employee drivers by the Superintendent of Schools or his designee. At a minimum, the procedure will also require an approved Student Transportation w/Personal Car Request Form, a signed waiver from the transported student's parent or guardian, proof of a valid driver's license and vehicle and driver insurance, and Distracted Driving Guidelines Acknowledgement Form.

Employees' Children

SST's workplaces are intended to be safe and professional environments at all times. The workplace is not a place for children or babysitting. However, SST realizes that there may be emergency circumstances that will not permit an employee to leave their child unattended. Should exigent and unavoidable circumstances ever require an employee to bring their child to work, the employee must first contact his/her supervisor and obtain permission. Permission is granted or denied at the discretion of the supervisor who will consider factors including the reason or reasons for the request, the age of the child, the anticipated duration of the

child's presence (limited to one day per emergency) in the workplace, the work environment to which the child will be introduced, and possible resulting disruption to the workplace. Illness is not an acceptable reason or factor. A child brought to the workplace in unavoidable situations will be the responsibility of the employee will be accompanied by and shall be under the direct supervision of and shall remain the sole responsibility of the employee at all times to ensure minimal disruption to the work environment. While on any SST property, children of SST employees should abide by the same guidelines applicable to SST students before, during, and after normal hours of operation.

Solicitation and Distribution

Any solicitation of employees by salespersons or other employees on school property or the distribution of promotional or sales literature on school property is prohibited at all times. Commercial advertisements or sales for personal profit or non-school activities are prohibited.

Associations and Political Activities

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

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

Use of School resources, including work time for political activities, is prohibited.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

Workplace Safety and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Compliance

To assist in providing a safe and healthful work environment for employees, students, parents, and visitors, SST has established a workplace safety program. This program is a top priority for SST. Its success depends on the alertness and personal commitment of all.

SST Schools provides information to employees about workplace safety and health issues through regular internal communication channels such as supervisor-employee meetings, bulletin board postings, memos, or other written communications.

Each employee is expected to obey safety rules and to exercise caution in all work activities. Employees must immediately report any unsafe condition to the appropriate campus Assistant Principal. Employees who violate safety standards, cause hazardous or dangerous situations, or fail to report or, where appropriate, remedy such situations, may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

In the case of accidents that result in injury, regardless of how insignificant the injury may appear, employees should immediately notify the campus Assistant Principal. Such reports are necessary to comply with laws and initiate insurance and workers' compensation benefits procedures.

Hazard Communication Act

SST is concerned about the safety of all employees, and therefore will perform the following duties in compliance with the [Texas Hazard Communication Act](#):

- Post and maintain the notice promulgated by the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS) in the workplace.
- Provide an education and training program for employees using or handling hazardous chemicals under normal operating conditions or foreseeable emergencies.
- Maintain the written hazard communication program and a record of each training session to employees, including the date, a roster of the employees who attend, the subjects covered in the training session, and the names of the instructors. Records will be maintained for at least five years.
- Compile and maintain a workplace chemical list that includes required information for each hazardous chemical normally present in the workplace or temporary workplace in excess of 55 gallons or 500 pounds, or as determined by the TDSHS for certain highly toxic or dangerous hazardous chemicals. The list will be readily available to employees and their representatives.
- Update the list as necessary, but at least by December 31 of each year, and maintain the list as required by law. Each workplace chemical list will be dated and signed by the person responsible for compiling the information.
- As required by law, label new or existing stocks of hazardous chemicals with the identity of the chemical and appropriate hazard warnings, if such stocks are not already appropriately labeled.
- Maintain a legible copy of the most current manufacturer's Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for each hazardous chemical; request such sheets from the manufacturer if not already provided or otherwise obtain a current MSDS; make such sheets readily available to employees or their representatives on request.
- Provide employees with appropriate personal protective equipment.

Assistant Principals will notify employees who work in a SST building or facility of any planned pest control treatment by both of the following methods:

- Posting the sign provided by the certified applicator or technician in an area of common access the employees are likely to check on a regular basis at least 48 hours before each planned treatment.
- Providing the official Structural Pest Control Service Consumer Information Sheet to any individual working in the building, on request.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Statement

Accidents and Injuries

SST wants to reduce dangers to health and safety by creating and maintaining improved working conditions, free from recognized hazards that might cause serious physical injury.

In accordance with the [Occupational Safety and Health Act](#) (OSHA), SST maintains a log of all occupational injuries and illnesses, and asks that employees report such injuries and illnesses within 48 hours so that SST may report these occurrences within a lawful period of time to the nearest OSHA office.

As Employees of SST:

- You have the right to notify SST or OSHA about workplace hazards. You may ask OSHA to keep your name confidential.
- You have the right to request an OSHA inspection if you believe that there are unsafe and unhealthful conditions in your workplace. You or your representative may participate in that inspection.

- You can file a complaint with OSHA within 30 days of retaliation or discrimination by SST for making safety and health complaints, or for exercising your rights under the OSHA Act.
- You have a right to see OSHA citations issued to SST.
- You have the right to copies of your medical records and records of your exposures to toxic and harmful substances or conditions.
- You must comply with all occupational safety and health standards issued under the OSHA Act that apply to your own actions and conduct on the job.

As Your Employer:

- SST must post notice, informing you of the protections of the [Occupational Safety and Health Act](#), and its amendments, in your workplace.
- If a citation is issued upon SST by OSHA, the school must (1) post the citations at or near the place of the alleged violation; and (2) correct workplace hazards by the date indicated on the citation, and must certify that these hazards have been reduced or eliminated.
- SST must furnish all employees a place of employment free from recognized hazards.
- SST must comply with the occupational safety and health standards issued under the OSH Act.

If you would like more information regarding your OSHA rights or additional information, visit <http://www.osha.gov> or call 1-800-321-OSHA.

Reporting Employee Injuries

Any employee suffering an injury or illness that is work-related is responsible for immediately reporting that illness or accident – no matter how minor – to the employee’s supervisor. The supervisor must report the accident or illness to the appropriate agency.

Employees failing to report a work-related illness or accident, or delaying such report, may have their Workers’ Compensation Insurance benefits adversely affected. SST requires that once an accident or injury has been reported, an injury report must be completed within 48 hours. SST pays for lost time necessary for appointments with physicians for treatment or examinations of compensable work-related injuries.

Reporting Serious Injuries

Within eight hours after the death of any employee from a work-related incident or the in-patient hospitalization of three or more employees as a result of a work-related accident, SST will orally report the fatality/multiple hospitalization by telephone or in person to the Area Office of OSHA that is nearest to the site of the incident. If the Area Office is not reachable, SST may use the OSHA toll-free central telephone number, 1-800-321-6742.

Reporting Procedures

SST will utilize the required OSHA forms to document and log each recordable injury or illness. This information will be kept current, maintained accurately, and retained for a period of five years.

Exposure Control Plan for Blood-Borne Pathogens

OSHA has issued regulations on job exposure to blood-borne pathogens. These are viruses present in human blood and body fluids that can cause disease in humans. SST’s plan covers employees who could be “reasonably anticipated” to incur exposure to blood or other potentially infectious body fluids as a result of performing required job duties. Copies of the Exposure Plan are located in the office of each school campus and are available upon request.

The plan includes the personnel covered by the standard, the potential hazards of each job description, what measures will be taken to reduce the risk of exposure, and all forms necessary to carry out the plan. SST is committed to

providing a safe and healthy work environment for all employees, not just those covered by the standard. If you feel you are at risk, but are not among the identified people listed in the plan, you should complete the form entitled “Employee Exposure Determination Questionnaire” found in your School office and send the completed form to the Safety and Security Department. According to OSHA, “Good Samaritan” acts, such as assisting a student or co-worker with a nosebleed, would not be considered “reasonably anticipated occupational exposure.” Since most SST employees are not “occupationally exposed” to blood-borne pathogens while performing their jobs, it is important for everyone in the school setting to understand the dangers of infection and safe procedures to minimize risk. A safe and effective Hepatitis B vaccination is available to “occupationally exposed” employees at no cost. However, all employees who have a blood-borne pathogen exposure while on the job will be referred to the nearest Occupational Health Center, or to their personal physician, or to an emergency room, as appropriate.

An exposure incident is a specific eye, mouth, or other mucous membrane, non-intact skin, or parental contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. The employee should take a completed Exposure Form with them to the nearest Occupational Health Center. These forms can be obtained in your School office. Taking “universal precautions” will reduce the risk of infection. These precautions require taking routine care in handling blood and body fluids containing blood of all persons regardless of whether those persons are known to be infected with some specific disease-causing agent. Get in the habit of washing your hands with soap and running water for at least 10 seconds at regular times during the school day. All restrooms should be stocked with antibacterial soap. Disposable gloves should be worn when cleaning up blood, feces, vomit, and urine. This is to be done in addition to, not as a substitute for, hand washing. Gloves are the most widely used and basic form of personal protective equipment. Each SST campus will issue gloves to staff members. After use, the employee should contact the School office for new gloves. Gloves should be removed immediately after finishing the task. Carefully dispose of trash that contains body wastes and sharp objects. Double bag (sealed plastic bag) any paper towels or any disposable materials containing blood or body fluids before putting in the trash can. All equipment and environmental working surfaces will be decontaminated after contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials. A 1:10 solution of sodium hypochlorite or EPA-registered germicidal detergent can be used. These supplies are located with custodians on each SST campus. An emergency “spill pack” is also available in the campus’s Assistant Principal’s office. Contact the School custodian to assist in proper cleaning and disposal of waste materials.

Safety Plans

General Safety

All employees are expected to work in a safe and prudent manner abiding by all safety related school policies and procedures. A clean, safe and organized work environment is essential. Using good housekeeping practices reduces the potential for and may lessen the severity of fires, which may result in injury and/or property damage. Additionally, good housekeeping practices ensure the best use of space and create a positive and pleasing school environment for the students, staff, parents, and visitors. Each employee is responsible for the safety and care of the building and environment.

Asbestos Management Plan

SST is committed to providing a safe environment for employees. An accredited management planner has developed an asbestos management plan for each [school](#). A copy of SST’s management plan is kept in the Central Office, and is available for inspection during normal business hours.

Pest Control Treatment

Employees are prohibited from applying any pesticide or herbicide without appropriate training and prior approval of the integrated pest management (IPM) coordinator. Any application of pesticide or herbicide must be done in a manner prescribed by law and SST’s integrated pest management program.

Employees should note that pesticides are periodically applied at campus facilities. Notices of planned pest control treatment will be posted in a school building 48 hours before the treatment begins. Notices are generally located in the

main office of each campus. In addition, individual employees may request in writing to be notified of pesticide applications. An employee who requests individualized notice will be notified by telephone, written or electric means. Pest control information sheets are available from an Assitant Principal upon request.

Employees should immediately report any evidence of pest activity to school administrators.

Eye Protection

Employees who are working with hazardous chemicals should check the MSDS for the proper personal protective equipment. Safety glasses and goggles should be worn when the possibility of a splash is present.

First Aid Treatment

School nurses can provide first aid during normal school hours. School nurses are trained in Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation and the use of Automated External Defibrillator (CPR/AED). They can provide assistance with minor everyday emergencies and how to initiate treatment for chemical contaminations of the skin and eyes or those that occur by ingestion. If the school nurse is not available, the employee(s) should refer to the MSDS for specific first aid treatment or call Poison Control at 800-222-1222, or if it is life threatening, call 911.

Foot Protection

No open-toed shoes will be allowed in the area where hazardous chemicals are stored or used.

Gloves

Gloves must be worn when the potential for contact with toxic materials exist. Before gloves are used, they should be inspected for discoloration, punctures, and tears. Any gloves that show wear or defects should be disposed of and not used.

Labels

Effective hazard communication is essential in any safety program. Labels are the primary source of information concerning the hazards associated with chemicals used in the workplace. Employees will not be required to work with hazardous chemicals from unlabeled containers. Portable containers, of which the contents are known by the user, are exempt if the product will be used within a standard work shift. HAZCOM requires that all containers of hazardous chemicals entering the workplace be properly labeled. A label must show the identity of the hazardous chemical, the name and address of the manufacturers, and the appropriate warning such as toxic or corrosive. Warnings relate whether a chemical is a health or physical hazard, or both.

Physical hazards are flammable, corrosive or reactive; flammable chemicals can cause chemical burns; and reactive chemicals can cause explosions or release toxic fumes. Chemicals that are health hazards are toxic chemicals that are poisonous. Overexposure can cause acute or chronic health effects.

When a facility receives a new chemical product, a copy of the MSDS should be forwarded to the Facilities Manager.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)

The MSDS is written information that can help protect you from overexposure to chemicals in the workplace. The following steps are a general format for interpreting an MSDS.

1. **Chemical Name** – Identifies the name of the substance, what is on the label, the date the MSDS was prepared, and the name/address/phone number of an emergency contact with the manufacturer.
2. **Hazardous Ingredients** – Identifies the name of the substances in the chemical product that might be dangerous, and the safe exposure limits, such as the Permissible Exposure Limit (PEL) or the Threshold Limit Value (TLV). The common name(s) of the chemical product are also listed.
3. **Physical Characteristics** – Identifies the physical qualities of the chemical.

4. **Fire/Explosion Information** – Identifies the lowest temperatures in which the chemical could ignite. This is often called the flashpoint. It identifies if the chemical is flammable (catches fire at or below 100 degrees F) or if the chemical is combustible (catches fire above 100 degrees F).
5. **Reactivity** – Explains what happens when the chemical comes in contact with water, air, or other chemicals.
6. **Health Hazards** – Explains how chemicals may enter the body by ingestion, inhalation, and absorption. It will identify if the chemical will make a preexisting condition worse.
7. **Usage, Handling, and Storage** – Lists the proper way to clean up spills, leaks, or releases.
8. **Special Protection and Precautions** – Explains what personal protective equipment is recommended when using a particular chemical. Each workplace should have an MSDS master copy of the chemicals located at that workplace.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Each campus should provide PPE for all employees so they are able to work safely with chemicals. If a product or chemical MSDS recommends the use of PPE – such as gloves, safety glasses, or face shield – the employee should follow the PPE recommendation. If an employee feels that they do not have the proper equipment necessary, the employee should contact their Supervisor – immediately to obtain the proper equipment.

Clean Air Act

The [Clean Air Act](#) addresses chlorofluorocarbon (CFR) in the atmosphere. In conformance with Clean Air Act amendments of 1990 and the Environmental Protection Agency recovery and recycling regulations, SST uses only licensed technicians to service and replace air conditioning and refrigeration equipment.

HIPAA

The [Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act](#) of 1996 (HIPAA) established rules for protecting individual Personal Health Information (PHI). HIPAA provides individuals certain rights regarding their PHI, and requires employers and other individuals to adhere to restrictions on how PHI is disclosed. Every employee should respect the rights of others and only disclose PHI about themselves and others to those with a need to know. Disclosure of PHI without the written approval of the individual is a violation of federal law. SST complies with HIPAA requirements at all times.

FERPA

The [Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act](#) (FERPA) is the federal law that sets forth basic privacy requirements for personally identifiable information contained in educational records maintained by schools. Employees with access to student information and/or performance data will consistently and uniformly maintain the privacy and confidentiality of this information in accordance with FERPA.

Purchasing and Reimbursements

Purchasing Procedures

All purchase requests must be submitted to the Business Office on an official order (PO) form with the appropriate approval signatures. No purchases, charges, or commitments to buy goods or services on behalf of SST Schools can be made without a PO number. SST will not reimburse employees or assume responsibility for purchases made without authorization. Employees are not permitted to purchase supplies or equipment for personal use through the SST Business Office.

Reimbursement Requests

SST will honor reimbursement requests for purchases, travel, and other expenses only if the expenditure received prior administrative approval. All reimbursement requests must include original receipts. Before an employee incurs travel expenses, the employee's supervisor must give approval. For approved travel, employees will be reimbursed for

mileage and other travel expenditures according to the current rate schedule authorized by the Board of Directors and the Internal Revenue Service.

Key Security

Key security is important because of the nature and value of property on each campus. Each employee is responsible for keys issued and losses **MUST BE REPORTED IMMEDIATELY**. Keys may not be loaned or duplicated without approval from SST's Director of Facilities. Employees are required to take all reasonable precautions with the keys issued, and all keys must be accounted for at all times.

Personal Property

SST recognizes that employees may desire to display mementos pertaining to their families or bring other personal items to work. SST takes no responsibility for the safekeeping of these items. However, should any such personal property be stolen, employees should report the incident to their appropriate campus's Assistant Principal. The following guidelines should be observed:

- Safety comes first. No object can interfere with job safety as determined by the campus's Assistant Principal.
- Nothing can be displayed that is derogatory (in the opinion of the campus Principal) to any person or system of beliefs, or that is considered sexually offensive under the reasonable person standard.
- Objects that are inappropriate (in the opinion of the campus Principal) or that hinder work efforts will not be allowed and must be removed upon request.

Visitors in the Workplace

SST requires all visitors who enter upon its premises to report to the main office to display his or her driver's license or other form of photo identification. This applies to family members of employees, friends, parents, social service workers, Board members, invited speakers, maintenance and repair persons not employed by SST, vendors, representatives of news media, former students, and any other visitors.

SST may establish an electronic database for the purpose of storing information concerning campus visitors. Such database may only be used for purposes of SST's security, and may not be sold or otherwise disseminated to a third party for any purpose. SST may also verify whether any visitor to a campus is a sex offender, registered with the computerized central database maintained by the Department of Public Safety, or any other database accessible by SST.

Bad Weather Closing

SST may close because of bad weather or emergency conditions. The Superintendent and Principals will determine when it becomes necessary to open late, to release students early, or to cancel school.

Emergencies

All employees should be familiar with the evacuation diagrams posted in their work areas. Fire, tornado, and other emergency drills will be conducted to familiarize employees and students with evacuation procedures. Fire extinguishers are located throughout all district buildings. Employees should know the location of the extinguishers nearest their place of work and how to use them.

STUDENT WELFARE: REPORTING ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT

Purpose of Reporting Law

The purpose of the reporting law is to protect the child by encouraging more complete reporting of suspected child abuse and/or neglect. This purpose is accomplished by:

1. Identification of the child in peril as quickly as possible;
2. Designation of the agency, Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS), and local law enforcement to receive and investigate reports of suspected child abuse;
3. Offering, where appropriate, services and treatment.

Protection for Reporting Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Any SST officer, employee, agent or volunteer who has cause to believe that a child's physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse, neglect or other maltreatment by any person, must immediately make a report as required by law.

If a professional employee has cause to believe that a child has been or may be abused, maltreated, or neglected, he or she **MUST** make a verbal report within 48 hours after the person first suspects abuse, neglect or maltreatment. The person **MAY NOT** delegate to or rely on another person to make the report. For purposes of this reporting requirement, the term "professional" means an individual who is licensed or certified by the state or who is an employee of a facility licensed, certified, or operated by the state and who, in the normal course of official duties or duties for which a license or certification is required, has direct contact with children.

If the suspected abuse or neglect involves a person responsible for the custody, care or welfare of the child, the report must generally be made to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS). All other reports should be made to any local or state law enforcement agency, the DFPS, the Texas Education Agency (if the abuse or neglect occurred at school), another state agency near where the abuse occurred, or any agency designated by a court as responsible for the protection of children.

A report should reflect the reporter's belief that a child has been or may be abused or neglected or has died of abuse or neglect. The reporter will identify the following information, if known:

- The name and address of the child;
- The name and address of the person responsible for the care, custody, or welfare of the child; and
- Any other pertinent information concerning the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect.

Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a misdemeanor punishable by imprisonment of up to 180 days and/or a fine of up to \$2,000 ([Texas Family Code, Chapter 261](#)).

SST Schools or its agents may not suspend or terminate the employment of, or otherwise discriminate against, a professional employee who, in good faith:

- Reports child abuse or neglect to:
 - The employee's supervisor,
 - An administrator of the facility where the employee works,
 - A state regulatory agency, or
 - A law enforcement agency; or

- Initiates or cooperates with a governmental investigation or proceeding relating to an allegation of child abuse or neglect.

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services reporting website:

<http://www.txabusehotline.org/Login/Default.aspx>

Texas Department of Family and Protective Services reporting hotline: 1-800-252-5400

Photographs

Only during an on-site investigation can CPS or a law enforcement officer direct an employee to photograph alleged abuse.

Photographing will be conducted in a way that protects the privacy of the child and ensures professional conduct on the part of the employee taking the photographs. Photographs may only be taken using equipment furnished by the investigation agency.

Notifying the Parents

The CPS/DFPS or law enforcement agency conducting the investigation is responsible for notifying the parents when a child abuse report has been made concerning their child. The campus and SST staff do not ordinarily notify parents of such investigations unless CPS directs the campus or staff to do so.

Officer/Caseworker Interviewing/Removing a Student

If a member of a law enforcement agency or a CPS caseworker requests permission to interview a student on or off campus, the Principal or Principal's designee (professional employee) should verify and record the identity of the officer or caseworker making the request and determine the purpose of the interview. The Principal may also contact the supervisor of the officer or caseworker to validate the person's authority to conduct the interview.

The Principal or designee will not impede a CPS investigation; however, students should not be removed from class in order for CPS to simply check on the child or conduct counseling sessions.

If the student is to be interviewed on campus, the Principal or designee should ask the caseworker or law enforcement officer if he or she may be present with the child during the questioning to serve as an advocate for the child in the absence of a parent/guardian. If the investigator raises a valid objection to a third party's presence, documentation of the request and the response of the investigator should be recorded.

If the student is to be removed from the campus, the Principal will complete an "Acknowledgement of Student Removal/Questioning by Law Enforcement Officials" form to document the action.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is assured under Texas law for purposes of the investigation. However, the identity of the person making the report may be disclosed orally to SST's attorney and to other law enforcement officials. Neither the fact of the written or oral report nor any of its contents, including the name of the person making the report, should be revealed to anyone other than the immediate school officials (Principal, Assistant Principal, nurse, and/or counselor), CPS/DFPS and local law enforcement authorities.

This report should not be released to the parent of the child involved or to the individual upon whom the report is made. The individual about whose behavior the report was filed will be informed by CPS/DFPS that a report has been filed and both parents and the individual upon whom the report was made will have a right to receive a copy of the record made by CPS/DFPS. The name of the person making the report, however, will not be revealed to either the parents or the person against whom the report is made.

SST personnel should be aware that they must be extremely cautious about maintaining the confidentiality of both the report and the fact that the report has been filed. This is particularly important to remember in dealing with anyone who may ask for a confirmation that a report has been made. SST personnel must simply state that such reports are confidential and that it would be inappropriate to either confirm or deny the information.

Any comment or reporting could be considered a violation of confidentiality or violate the privacy rights of the individuals involved.

Child Sexual Abuse and Other Maltreatment

SST Schools has established a plan for addressing child sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children. The plan may be accessed at the Central Office or in the main office of each campus. As an employee, it is important for you to be aware of warning signs that could indicate a child may have been or is being sexually abused or otherwise mistreated. Sexual abuse in the Texas Family Code is defined as any sexual conduct harmful to a child's mental, emotional, or physical welfare as well as a failure to make a reasonable effort to prevent sexual conduct with a child. Other maltreatment of a child includes "abuse" or "neglect," as those terms are defined by [Family Code Chapter 261](#). Anyone who suspects that a child has been or may be abused or neglected has a legal responsibility under state law for reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to law enforcement or to CPS.

GENERAL STUDENT ISSUES

Equal Educational Opportunities

SST Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, gender, or disability in providing education services, activities, and programs, including vocational programs, in accordance with [Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), as amended; [Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972](#); and [Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973](#), as amended. In accordance with state charter school law and regulations, SST also does not discriminate against students based on academic, artistic or athletic ability or the school district a student would otherwise attend.

Questions or concerns about discrimination of students based on any of the reasons listed above should be directed to the Superintendent or designee.

Student Records

Student records are confidential and are protected from unauthorized inspection or use under federal law known as the Family Educational Rights & Privacy Act (FERPA). Employees should take precautions to maintain the confidentiality of all student records. The following people are the only people who have general access to a student's records:

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

Parents or students who want to review student records should be directed to the campus Principal for assistance.

Lesson Plans

Lesson plans are the most basic teaching tool, and are valuable because they tell where students are going academically, how they will get there, and when they will arrive.

All teachers are expected to write lesson plans. Lesson plans will be made available to the teacher's supervisor upon request.

There are several types of lesson plans that teachers must develop and follow:

1. Overall Yearly Plan: provides an overview of the course in conjunction with the SST Curriculum, and includes the units to be taught and the time devoted to each unit.
2. Daily Lesson Plan: a written outline of what will be taught during each class period, including concepts and objectives, time blocks, and the instructional materials needed.
3. Substitute Teacher Plan: lesson plans for substitute teachers should be carefully planned and detailed, and should be placed on the teacher's desk in plain view.

Teachers should follow the lesson plan submission format requested by their Principal and/or Central Office curriculum personnel.

Parent and Student Complaints

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

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

Student Health Services

SST's school health services supplement the efforts of parents and personal health care providers to promote, improve, and maintain student health and well-being. These school health services are not intended to replace outside health care and should not be viewed as an alternative to seeking medical attention outside of the school.

Teachers should be alert for signs of illness in their students and immediately report such signs to the school nurse and/or Principal.

The following procedure should be followed in case of serious accidents, injuries, or sudden illness:

- Administer first aid, if necessary and appropriate.
- Notify the student's parents.
- Contact the school nurse or the student's family doctor if the student's parents or emergency contacts cannot be located.
- If necessary, call an ambulance.
- Complete an incident form, and return the completed form to the Principal.

Administering Medication to Students

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

Dietary Supplements

School employees are prohibited by state law from knowingly selling, marketing, or distributing a dietary supplement that contains performance-enhancing compounds to students. In addition, employees may not knowingly endorse or suggest the ingestion, intranasal application, or inhalation of a performance-enhancing dietary supplement to any student.

Psychotropic Drugs

A psychotropic drug is a substance used in the diagnosis, treatment, or prevention of a disease or as a component of a medication. It is intended to have an altering effect on perception, emotion, or behavior and is commonly described as a mood- or behavior-altering substance.

School employees are prohibited by state law from doing the following:

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

However, a School officer or employee may:

- Make an appropriate referral under Child Find;
- Recommend that a child be evaluated by an appropriate medical practitioner, if the employee is a registered nurse, advanced nurse practitioner, physician, or certified or appropriately credentialed mental health professional; or
- Discuss an aspect of a child's behavior or academic progress with the child's parent or other School officer or employee, as appropriate.

Student Conduct and Discipline

Students are expected to follow classroom rules, campus rules, and the rules contained in the Student Code of Conduct and Student Handbook. Teachers and administrators are responsible for taking disciplinary action based on a range of discipline management procedures adopted by SST. Non-instructional employees with concerns about student behavior should contact the student's classroom teacher or the Principal.

Teachers must file a written report with the Principal or another appropriate administrator upon learning that a student has violated the Student Code of Conduct. The Principal or administrator will send a copy of this report to the student's parents within 24 hours.

Discipline should be handled by professional staff members. The staff member should confer with the student, Principal, and parents in unusual circumstances. Cooperation and understanding between parents and the school can often eliminate problems.

Student Attendance

Teachers and staff should be familiar with SST's policies and procedures for attendance accounting. Contact a Principal for additional information.

APPENDIX - FORMS

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Disclosure and Authorization for Consumer Reporting Agency Reports

SST Schools (“SST”) may request background information about an employee from a consumer reporting agency in connection with his or her employment application and for employment purposes. This information may be obtained in the form of consumer reports and/or investigative consumer reports. These reports may be obtained at any time after receipt of your authorization.

The reports may contain information bearing on an employee’s character, general reputation, personal characteristics, mode of living, and credit standing. The types of information that may be obtained include, but are not limited to the following:

- Social Security Number
- Criminal Records Checks
- Public Court Records Checks
- Driving Records Checks
- Licensing and Certification Records Checks
- Sex Offender Registration

A summary of an employee’s rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act has been provided to all employees. Employees may request more information about the nature and scope of any investigative consumer reports by contacting the HR Department.

I have carefully read and understand this Disclosure and Authorization form and the attached summary of rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act. By my signature below, I consent to the release of consumer reports and investigative consumer reports. I understand this information will be used to determine my eligibility for employment with SST.

Signature of Employee

Date

Employee’s Name (PRINT)

Summary of Your Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act on Next Page

A Summary of Your Rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act

The federal [Fair Credit Reporting Act](http://www.ftc.gov/credit) (FCRA) promotes the accuracy, fairness, and privacy of information in the files of consumer reporting agencies. There are many types of consumer reporting agencies, including credit bureaus and specialty agencies (such as agencies that sell information about check writing histories, medical records, and rental history records). Below is a summary of your major rights under the FCRA. **For more information, including information about additional rights, go to <http://www.ftc.gov/credit> or write to: Consumer Response Center, Room 130-A, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580.**

- **You must be told if information in your file has been used against you.** Anyone who uses a credit report or another type of consumer report to deny your application for credit, insurance, or employment – or to take another adverse action against you – must tell you, and must give you the name, address, and phone number of the agency that provided the information.
- **You have the right to know what is in your file.** You may request and obtain all the information about you in the files of a consumer reporting agency (your “file disclosure”). You will be required to provide proper identification, which may include your Social Security number. In many cases, the disclosure will be free. You are entitled to a free file disclosure if:
 - a person has taken adverse action against you because of information in your credit report;
 - you are the victim of identity theft and place a fraud alert in your file;
 - your file contains inaccurate information as a result of fraud;
 - you are on public assistance;
 - you are unemployed but expect to apply for employment within 60 days.
- In addition, by September 2005 all consumers will be entitled to one free disclosure every 12 months upon request from each nationwide credit bureau and from nationwide specialty consumer reporting agencies. See <http://www.ftc.gov/credit> for additional information.
- **You have the right to ask for a credit score.** Credit scores are numerical summaries of your credit-worthiness based on information from credit bureaus. You may request a credit score from consumer reporting agencies that create scores or distribute scores used in residential real property loans, but you will have to pay for it. In some mortgage transactions, you will receive credit score information for free from the mortgage lender.
- **You have the right to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information.** If you identify information in your file that is incomplete or inaccurate, and report it to the consumer reporting agency, the agency must investigate unless your dispute is frivolous. See <http://www.ftc.gov/credit> for an explanation of dispute procedures.
- **Consumer reporting agencies must correct or delete inaccurate, incomplete, or unverifiable information.** Inaccurate, incomplete or unverifiable information must be removed or corrected, usually within 30 days. However, a consumer reporting agency may continue to report information it has verified as accurate.
- **Access to your file is limited.** A consumer reporting agency may provide information about you only to people with a valid need – usually to consider an application with a creditor, insurer, employer, landlord, or other business. The FCRA specifies those with a valid need for access.
- **You must give your consent for reports to be provided to employers.** A consumer reporting agency may not give out information about you to your employer, or a potential employer, without your written

consent given to the employer. Written consent generally is not required in the trucking industry. For more information, go to <http://www.ftc.gov/credit>.

- **You may limit “prescreened” offers of credit and insurance you get based on information in your credit report.** Unsolicited “prescreened” offers for credit and insurance must include a toll-free phone number you can call if you choose to remove your name and address from the lists these offers are based on. You may opt-out with the nationwide credit bureaus at 1-888-5-OPTOUT (1-888-567-8688).
- **You may seek damages from violators.** If a consumer reporting agency, or, in some cases, a user of consumer reports or a furnisher of information to a consumer reporting agency violates the FCRA, you may be able to sue in state or federal court.
- **Identity theft victims and active duty military personnel have additional rights.** For more information, visit www.ftc.gov/credit.

States may enforce the FCRA, and many states have their own consumer reporting laws. In some cases, you may have more rights under state law. For more information, contact your state or local consumer protection agency or your state Attorney General. Federal enforcers are:

TYPE OF BUSINESS:	CONTACT:
Consumer reporting agencies, creditors and others not listed below	Federal Trade Commission: Consumer Response Center – FCRA, Washington, DC 20580 Tel: 1-877-382-4357
National banks, federal branches/agencies of foreign banks (word "National" or initials "N.A." appear in or after bank's name)	Office of the Comptroller of the Currency Compliance Management, Mail Stop 6-6 Washington, DC 20219 Tel: 1-800-613-6743
Federal Reserve System member banks (except national banks, and federal branches/agencies of foreign banks)	Federal Reserve Consumer Help (FRCH) P. O. Box 1200 Minneapolis, MN 55480 Tel: 1-888-851-1920 Website Address: http://www.federalreserveconsumerhelp.gov E-mail Address: ConsumerHelp@FederalReserve.gov
Savings associations and federally chartered savings banks (word "Federal" or initials "F.S.B." appear in federal institution's name)	Office of Thrift Supervision Consumer Complaints Washington, DC 20552 Tel: 1-800-842-6929
Federal credit unions (words "Federal Credit Union" appear in institution's name)	National Credit Union Administration 1775 Duke Street Alexandria, VA 22314 Tel: 1-703-519-4600
State-chartered banks that are not members of	Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

the Federal Reserve System	Consumer Response Center 2345 Grand Avenue, Suite 100 Kansas City, Missouri 64108-2638 Tel: 1-877-275-3342
Air, surface, or rail common carriers regulated by former Civil Aeronautics Board or Interstate Commerce Commission	Department of Transportation Office of Financial Management Washington, DC 20590 Tel: 1-202-366-1306
Activities subject to the Packers and Stockyards Act, 1921	Department of Agriculture Office of Deputy Administrator - GIPSA Washington, DC 20250 Tel: 1-202-720-7051

Drug and/or Alcohol Testing Consent Form and Policy Acknowledgement Form

I hereby agree, upon a request made under the drug/alcohol testing policy of SST Schools (“SST”), to submit to a drug or alcohol test and to furnish a sample of my urine, breath, and/or blood for analysis. I understand and agree that if I at any time refuse to submit to a drug or alcohol test under any SST policy, or if I otherwise fail to cooperate with the testing procedures, I will be subject to immediate termination. I further authorize and give full permission to have SST and/or its physician send the specimen or specimens so collected to a laboratory for a screening test for the presence of any prohibited substances under the policy, and for the laboratory or other testing facility to release any and all documentation relating to such test to SST and/or to any governmental entity involved in a legal proceeding or investigation connected with the test. Finally, I authorize SST to disclose any documentation relating to such test to any governmental entity involved in a legal proceeding or investigation connected with the test.

I understand that only duly-authorized SST officers, employees, and agents will have access to information furnished or obtained in connection with the test; that they will maintain and protect the confidentiality of such information to the greatest extent possible; and that they will share such information only to the extent necessary to make employment decisions and to respond to inquiries or notices from government entities.

I will hold harmless SST, its physician, and any testing laboratory that it might use, meaning that I will not sue or hold responsible such parties for any alleged harm to me that might result from such testing, including loss of employment or any other kind of adverse job action that might arise as a result of the drug or alcohol test, even if a SST or laboratory representative makes an error in the administration or analysis of the test or the reporting of the results. I will further hold harmless SST, its company physician, and any testing laboratory that it might use for any alleged harm to me that might result from the release or use of information or documentation relating to the drug or alcohol test, as long as the release or use of the information is within the scope of this policy and the procedures as explained in the paragraph above.

I have had an opportunity to read the **Drug-Free Workplace Policy** included in the SST Employee Handbook, and I understand that I may ask my Supervisor or the Human Resources Department any questions I might have concerning the policy. I accept the terms of the Drug-Free Workplace Policy. I also understand that it is my responsibility to comply with the Drug-Free Workplace Policy, and any revisions made to it. I further agree that if I remain with SST following any modifications to the policy, I thereby accept and agree to such changes.

This policy and authorization have been explained to me in a language I understand, and I have been told that if I have any questions about the test or the policy, they will be answered.

I UNDERSTAND THAT SST WILL REQUIRE A DRUG SCREEN TEST UNDER THIS POLICY WHENEVER I AM INVOLVED IN AN ON-THE-JOB ACCIDENT OR INJURY UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT SUGGEST POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT OR INFLUENCE OF DRUGS OR ALCOHOL.

Signature of Employee

Date

Employee's Name (PRINT)

Public Access to Employee Information: Employee Opt-Out

In accordance with the provisions of section 552.024 of the [Texas Public Information Act](#), Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code, employees of SST Schools (“SST”) have the option of withholding the following information from public disclosure:

- 1) The employee’s address
- 2) The employee’s home telephone number
- 3) Information relating to whether the employee has family members

Other information maintained by SST regarding employees (including but not limited to employee names and work locations) is subject to public disclosure regardless of the election made below.

PUBLIC ACCESS PERMITTED: I hereby elect to permit public access to my home address, telephone number, and information relating to whether I have family members in my home.

PUBLIC ACCESS DENIED: I hereby elect to deny public access to my home address, telephone number, and information relating to whether I have family members in my home.

Employee's Signature

Date

Employee's Name (PRINT)