**Certified Personnel**

**Employee Handbook**



**2020-2021**

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**Unicoi County Schools Guiding Tenets**

**Mission:  (What we hope to accomplish)** The mission of Unicoi County Schools is to equip students with the knowledge and skills for postsecondary and career.

**Vision:  (Our desired future)** High Level Learning through Effective Instruction

**Motto:**Investing in Students…Building Our Future

**Core Values:  (What we believe)**

* Professional interactions with ALL stakeholders
* A culture of empowerment and life-long learning
* Student-centered decisions
* Engaging, evidence-based instructional practices
* Commitment to developing confident, goal-oriented students
* Collaborative partnerships with families and the community

**Goals:  (What we strive to achieve)**

* UCS will demonstrate professionalism in ALL interactions with ALL stakeholders.
* UCS will cultivate a culture of empowerment and life-long learning.
* UCS will ensure that ALL decisions are student-centered and reflect both academic and social/emotional needs.
* UCS will promote engaging, evidence-based instructional practices.
* UCS will develop confident and goal-oriented students.
* UCS will invest in collaborative partnerships with families and the community.

**Core Competencies: (Who we are)**

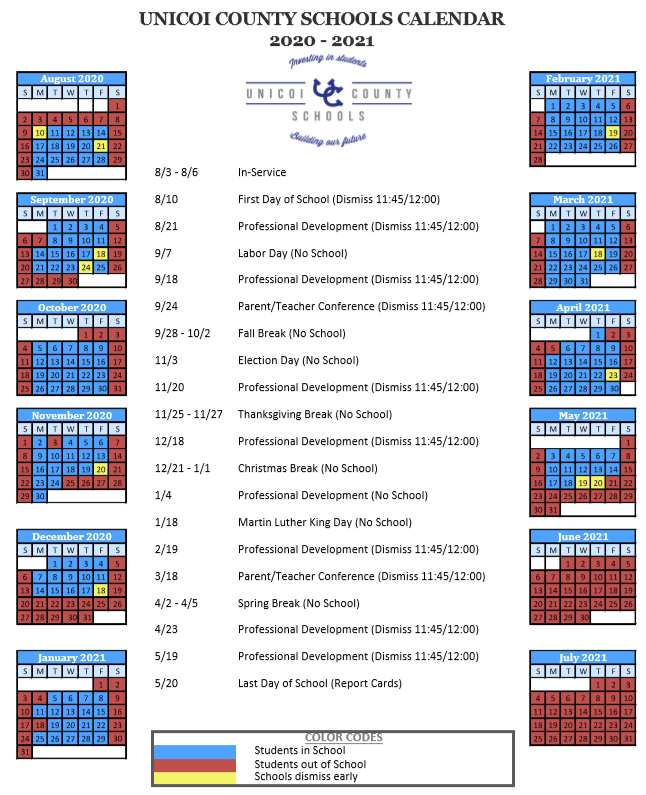
* UCS will actively sustain a culture of high expectations for ALL.
* UCS will provide a respectful environment that is responsive to the needs of each student.
* UCS will foster a mindset of growth and resiliency for our staff, students, and community.
* UCS will sustain high quality professional development opportunities that are both on-going and personalized.
* UCS understands and values the importance of the role of the family in the growth and well-being of the child.
* UCS recognizes the needs and opportunities of our community and values our role in producing prepared citizens who will advance Unicoi County.

**Key Practices:  (What we do)**

* UCS will plan and provide meaningful and challenging educational experiences.
* UCS will engage students in learning through the use of research-based best practices.
* UCS will utilize instructional technology that enhances student engagement and achievement.
* UCS will create a learning environment that values goal-setting and achievement.
* UCS will recruit, hire, and retain highly competent educators.
* UCS will provide opportunities for teacher voice and shared leadership.
* UCS will engage in open communication with families.
* UCS will pursue visible partnerships with the community.

**Guiding Questions:  (How we plan for learning)**

* What do we expect students to learn?
* How will we know when they have learned it?
* How will we respond when some students do not learn?
* How do we respond when some students already know it?

****

**BOARD MEMBERS**

The Legislature of the state of Tennessee delegates to the Board responsibility to manage and control district schools. Board members, as elected by residents of this district are as follows:

Tyler Engle – Chairman

Steve Willis – Vice Chairman

Cathy Thomas

Steve Scott

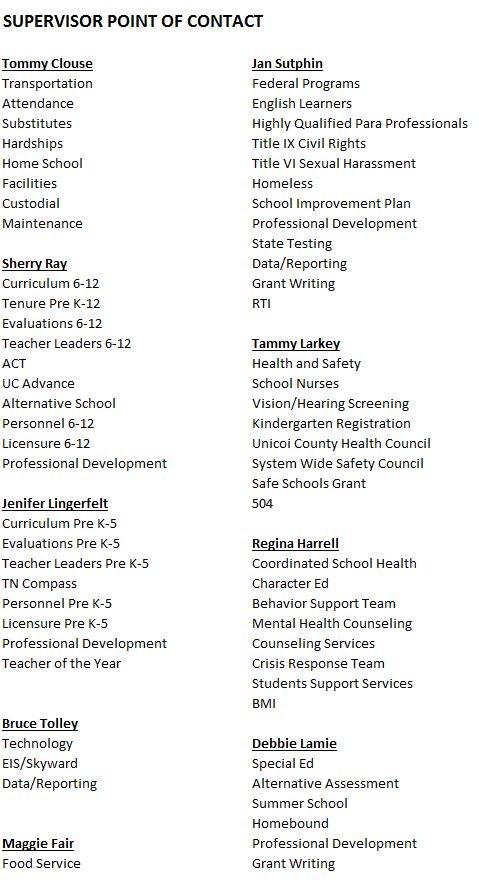
Glenn Fisher

Tammy Tipton

**BOARD MEETINGS/COMMUNICATIONS**

Regular Board meetings are held on the second Thursday at 100 Nolichucky Avenue. Meetings begin at 6:00 p.m. All regular and special meetings of the Board are open to the public unless as otherwise provided by law.

All staff members are invited to attend Board meetings. All formal communications or reports to the Board are to be submitted through building supervisors and administrators to the Superintendent in accordance with established lines of authority as approved by the Board.

****

**CIVIL RIGHTS**

Equal employment opportunity shall be afforded equally to members of all races, creeds, colors, sexes, religions, ages, national origins, and individuals with disabilities or veteran status with regard only for qualifications for the positions involved.

Jan Sutphin and Debbie Lamie are designated to coordinate compliance with these legal requirements, which include Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, and other civil rights or discrimination issues, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Mrs. Sutphin and Mrs. Lamie may be contacted at the Central Office for additional information and/or compliance issues.

**Jan Sutphin – (423) 743-1602**

**Debbie Lamie – (423) 743-1614**

**STAFF CONDUCT**

Staff is to conduct themselves at all times in a manner that conforms to Board policy and administrative procedures.

Additionally, all licensed staff is to adhere to the *Tennessee Educator's Association Code of Ethics of the Education Profession.*

***Preamble***

The educator, believing in the worth and dignity of each human being, recognizes the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, and the nurture of democratic principles. Essential to these goals is the protection of freedom to learn and to teach and the guarantee of equal educational opportunity for all. The educator accepts the responsibility to adhere to the highest ethical standards.

The educator recognizes the magnitude of the responsibility inherent in the teaching process. The desire for the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents, and of the members of the community provides the incentive to attain and maintain the highest possible degree of ethical conduct.

The *Code of Ethics of the Education Profession* indicates the aspiration of all educators and provides standards by which to judge conduct.

***Principle I - Commitment to the Student***

The educator strives to help each student realize his or her potential as a worthy and effective member of society. The educator therefore works to stimulate the spirit of inquiry, the acquisition of knowledge and understanding and the thoughtful formulation of worthy goals.

*In fulfillment of the obligation to the student, the educator -*

1. Shall not unreasonably restrain the student from independent action in the pursuit of learning.

2. Shall not unreasonably deny the student access to varying points of view.

3. Shall not deliberately suppress or distort subject matter relevant to the student's progress.

4. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or to health and safety.

5. Shall not intentionally expose the student to embarrassment or disparagement.

6. Shall not on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, marital status, political or religious beliefs, family, social or cultural background or sexual orientation unfairly;

a. Exclude any student from participation in any program.

b. Deny benefits to any student.

c. Grant any advantage to any student.

7. Shall not use professional relationships with students for private advantage.

8. Shall not disclose information about students obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.

***Principle II - Commitment to the Profession***

The education profession is vested by the public with a trust and responsibility requiring the highest ideals of professional service.

In the belief that the quality of the services of the education profession directly influences the nation and its citizens, the educator shall exert every effort to raise professional standards, to promote a climate that encourages the exercise of professional judgment, to achieve conditions which attract persons worthy of the trust to careers in education, and to assist in preventing the practice of the profession by unqualified persons.

*In fulfillment of the obligation to the profession, the educator -*

1. Shall not in an application for a professional position deliberately make a false statement or fail to disclose a material fact related to competency and qualifications.

2. Shall not misrepresent his or her professional qualifications.

3. Shall not assist entry into the profession of a person known to be unqualified in respect to character, education or other relevant attributes.

4. Shall not knowingly make a false statement concerning the qualifications of a candidate for a professional position.

5. Shall not assist a non-educator in the unauthorized practice of teaching.

6. Shall not disclose information about colleagues obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a compelling professional purpose or is required by law.

7. Shall not knowingly make false or malicious statements about a colleague.

8. Shall not accept any gratuity, gift, or favor that might impair or appear to influence professional decisions or action.

**STAFF ETHICS**

Staff members are prohibited from engaging in, or having a financial interest in, any activity that may be perceived as a conflict of interest with their duties and responsibilities as employees of the district.

This means that:

1. Staff members shall not solicit for financial remuneration from students, parents or other staff;

2. Any device, publication or any other item developed during the staff member's paid time shall be district property;

3. Staff members shall not further personal gain through the use of confidential information gained in the course of or by reason of their position or activities in any way.

Staff members are prohibited from performing any duties related to an outside job during their regular working hours or during the additional time needed to fulfill the position's responsibilities. District facilities, equipment or materials may not be used in performing outside work.

**CONTRACTS AND COMPENSATION**

Contracts for certified employees will be executed for all employees.

Salaries, including compensation for extracurricular assignments over and above the duties associated with a staff member's regularly assigned duties, will be determined in accordance with salary schedules and salary placement guidelines established by the Board and /or policies adopted by the Board which are consistent with salary schedules and salary placement.

It is the staff member's responsibility to provide all information necessary for placement on the salary schedule to the payroll office in accordance with timelines established by the district.

**SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES**

The Unicoi County School System is committed to providing a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) to all children who are eligible for special education services beginning at age three (3). Services agreed upon by the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team will be provided at no cost to the parents. Required members of the IEP team are listed below.

Children with disabilities have access to the general curriculum as well as a variety of educational programs and services provided for other students. Children with disabilities have equal opportunity for participation in nonacademic services and extracurricular activities.

**Least Restrictive Environment (LRE)**

The least restrictive environment is always the first consideration when determining educational placement. Children with disabilities are educated at their zoned school unless the IEP requires otherwise. Once a child is determined eligible for special education services, the IEP team is responsible for developing an IEP to meet the child's needs.

Each teacher serving a student with an IEP in Unicoi County is responsible for all accommodations and modifications contained within that student's IEP. It is the employee's responsibility to make sure he/she knows and understands the accommodations and modifications determined for his/her student(s). Once a modification or accommodation becomes part of the IEP, the teacher is liable for implementation within the classroom. Teachers may contact a Special Education teacher at their school for information regarding particular students.

**IEP Team Composition**

The Unicoi County School System is responsible for ensuring that the IEP team for each child with a disability includes the following:

(1) the parents of the child

(2) not less than one regular education teacher of the child

(3) not less than one special education teacher of the child, or when appropriate, not less than one special education provider of the child;

(4) a representative of the public agency (LEA), usually an administrator from the school;

(5) an individual who can interpret the instructional implications of evaluation results;

(6) at the discretion of the parent or the agency (LEA), other individuals who have knowledge or special expertise regarding the child, including related services personnel as appropriate; and

(7) the student when appropriate

\*\* Please make every effort to attend all IEP meetings. If you teach a child with a disability, it is your legal responsibility to participate in the IEP process and all decisions made therein.

**Categories of Disabilities:**

Autism Deaf-Blindness

Deafness Developmental Delay

Emotional Disturbance Functional Delay\*

Hearing Impairment Intellectually Gifted\*

Intellectual Disability Multiple Disabilities

Orthopedic Impairment Other Health Impairment

Specific Learning Disabilities Speech/Language Impairment

Traumatic Brain Injury Visual Impairment

\* These categories are not Federal categories, only recognized by the state of Tennessee.

For questions regarding Special Education, please contact:

Debbie Lamie

Supervisor of Special Education

743-1611

**DRESS CODE**

Unicoi County Schools employees are role models for students and are to dress professionally during the instructional hours. It is the system's belief that a correlation exists between appropriate attire and a positive learning environment.

Employees are to dress in a professional, modest manner and present a neat, clean appearance. Blue jeans, sweat pants, sweatshirts, t-shirts, and shorts should not be worn except on days specified by the employee's principal or supervisor. Shirts/tops that reveal the midriff or chest should not be worn. Sleeveless shirts/tops must extend to the point of the shoulder. Clothing of any sort which contains a message promoting alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or obscene or suggestive language may not be worn.

**HARASSMENT**

It is the policy of Unicoi County Schools to provide a work environment free from all forms of harassment, whether based on sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability. This policy applies to the action of supervisors, co-workers, and any other individual who comes in contact with an employee while an employee is performing his or her job duties.

Harassment is strictly prohibited on district property, including non-district property, while a staff member is at any district-sponsored, district-approved, or district-related activity or function. This includes field trips or athletic events in which students are under the control of the district or where the staff member is engaged in district business.

Harassment based upon an employee's sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability is illegal under federal and state equal employment laws because it subjects employees to unfair treatment and is not related to an employee's work performance or qualification.

Any staff member who is subject to, or knows of, harassment is directed to notify the building principal, Title IX Coordinator, or Superintendent immediately. If the complaint is not satisfactorily settled, the staff member may file a complaint directly with the Tennessee Department of Labor, Civil Rights Division, or with the U.S. Department of Labor, Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Such complaints may also be filed with the appropriate enforcement agency, in lieu of the district's complaint process, at any time, as provided by law.

Any staff member whose behavior is found to be in violation of Board policy may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal. There will be no retaliation by the district against any person who, in good faith, reports harassment.

**CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT REPORTING**

Any person with reasonable cause to believe a child is being abused or neglected must, under the law, immediately report to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services or local law enforcement.

Child abuse is defined as any physical or mental condition that is of such nature as to indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect. Staff members having knowledge or reasonable suspicion of abuse must contact the Department of Children's Services by calling **(877) 237-0004 or 1-877-54ABUSE (1-877-542-2873**), or online at <https://apps.tn.gov/carat/>. The report shall include the following:

* Child(ren) name, age, address, phone number, race, and school
* Parent/Legal Guardian name and address
* Nature of the harm or specific incident(s) that precipitated the report
* Any evidence or other information that may relate to the incident(s) of abuse or neglect

The person reporting is immune from liability and his/her identity remains confidential except when the court determines otherwise.

**SUPERVISION OF STUDENTS**

Staff members are responsible for the supervision of all students while in school or engaged in school-sponsored activities.

All teachers are expected to be in their classrooms before the arrival of students unless otherwise assigned. Under no circumstances are classrooms or other areas where students are under the supervision of assigned staff to be left unattended while students are present. Teachers who may need to temporarily leave the classroom or their assigned duties in an emergency situation while students are present are expected to contact the office to arrange for temporary coverage.

No other staff member may leave their assigned group unsupervised except as appropriate supervision arrangements have been made to take care of an emergency.

During school hours, or while engaged in school-sponsored activities, students may be released only into the custody of parents or other authorized persons.

**STAFF/STUDENT RELATIONS**

Staff members shall maintain professional relationships with students at all times by promoting a learning environment that encourages the fulfillment of each student's potential. This goal may be reached by adapting instruction to individual needs by:

1. Insisting on reasonable standards of scholastic accomplishment for all students;

2. Creating a positive atmosphere in and out of the classroom;

3. Extending the same courtesy and respect that is expected of students; and

4. Treating all students with consistent fairness.

Staff members shall use good judgment in their relationships with students beyond their work responsibilities and outside the school setting and shall avoid excessive informal and social involvement with individual students. Any appearance of impropriety shall be avoided. Any staff/student relationship deemed inappropriate may be subject to discipline up to and including dismissal.

**ABSENCES**

Staff members unable to report to work for any reason must notify their direct administrator as soon as possible to ensure appropriate substitute arrangements are made. Substitutes are assigned on a daily basis unless a longer duration is specified.

Teachers log on to the Unicoi County Subsystem located at [www.unicoischools.com](http://www.unicoischools.com) under the System Links tab to request a substitute.

**PERSONAL LEAVE**

Certified personnel shall earn personal leave at the rate of 1-1/2 days for each half-year employed for a total of three (3) days per year. Any personal leave remaining unused at the end of a year shall be credited to sick leave.

Subject to the following conditions, personal leave may be taken at the discretion of the employee:

* Except in an emergency, each employee shall give the principal at least one day's notice in writing of intent to take leave,
* The approval of the principal of the school shall be required:
  + If more than ten percent (10%) of the teachers in any given school request its use on the same day;
  + If requested during any prior established student examination period;
  + If requested on the day immediately preceding or following a holiday or vacation period.

**SICK LEAVE**

Sick leave shall be defined as illness of a staff member from natural causes or accident, quarantine, or illness or death of a member of the immediate family of a teacher, including the teacher's spouse, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, mother-in-law, father-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, brother-in-law, and sister-in-law.

Certified personnel shall earn one (1) day of sick leave for each month employed during the school year. Certified personnel shall accumulate sick leave for an unlimited number of days.

**BEREAVEMENT LEAVE**

Up to three (3) consecutive workdays of leave shall be granted in the event of the death of an employee's spouse, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law, or sister-in-law.

**PERSONNEL RECORDS**

The following personnel records shall be maintained for all employees as appropriate:

1. Employee applications and contracts;

2. Professional certificates and other documents required by state and federal laws and regulations;

3. Evaluations;

4. Cumulative information files; and

5. INS Form I-9.

The following guidelines shall be followed:

1. Information contained in personnel records shall be limited to job-related matters;

2. Employees shall be granted an opportunity to respond in writing to material placed in records;

3. Employee records are public records, except for matters deemed confidential by law, and shall be open for inspection during regular business hours;

4. Members of the public may not obtain an employee's unpublished telephone number, bank account information, social security number or driver license information except where driving or operating a vehicle is considered to be a part of the employee's duties unless release of this information is expressly authorized by the employee.

5. A record of the person inspecting and the date of inspection shall be recorded; and

6. Copies of records may be made under rules determined by the Superintendent.

All records containing medical condition information such as workers' compensation reports and release/permission to return to work forms will be kept confidential, in a separate file from personnel records.

**RESIGNATION OF STAFF**

A teacher shall give the Superintendent notice of resignation at least thirty (30) days before the effective date of the resignation. A teacher, who fails to give such notice, in the absence of justifiable extenuating circumstances, shall forfeit all tenure status. The Board may waive the thirty (30) days notice requirement and permit a teacher to resign in good standing.

The conditions under which it is permissible to break a contract with the Board are as follows:

1. The incapacity on the part of the teacher to perform the contract as evidenced by the certified statement of a physician approved by the Board;

2. The release by the Board of the teacher from the contract which the teacher has entered into with the Board.

Any teacher on leave shall notify the Superintendent in writing at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of return if the teacher does not intend to return to the position from which he/she has taken leave. Failure to render such notice may be considered a breach of contract.

**ENTERING GRADES**

Teachers are responsible for keeping student grades updated in Skyward. Grades must be entered at a minimum of every two weeks.

**PROGRESS REPORTS**

Teachers are expected to report their students' progress to the students and their parents. Progress reports are issued at the mid-way point of the first, second, third and fourth quarter grading periods indicating academic and citizenship progress to date.

Such reports may be issued at other times during the course of a grading period as deemed appropriate by teachers.

No grade of "D" or "F" should be issued without a written progress report having been sent home notifying the student and their parents of academic deficiencies.

**CONFERENCES**

Planned conferences between teachers and parents are essential to the district's efforts to further understanding and close cooperation between the home and school. Parent-teacher conferences are scheduled each fall and spring. The student may be included if the teacher or parent so desires.

Conferences should be treated as an opportunity for constructive, mutual exchange of information and ideas for the welfare and continued academic growth of the student.

Occasionally, teachers or parents may arrange for conferences outside regularly scheduled conference dates, to meet more immediate student needs. Teachers should be prepared to provide after-school or pre-school time to meet with parents as necessary.

**LESSON PLANS**

The quality of the instructional program reflects the effort invested by teachers in developing lesson plans consistent with district curriculum and appropriate to the individual needs of students. The building level principal has discretion over the required documentation to be submitted.

**MEETINGS**

Staff meetings are scheduled for the purpose of organization and communication of business that typically cannot be handled through staff bulletins, departmental or committee structure.

Staff members are expected to attend staff meetings unless prior arrangements have been made with the building principal. Staff members are expected to schedule their time accordingly to not conflict with these meetings.

**CLASS INTERRUPTIONS**

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

**TEACHING RELIGION**

Religious education is the responsibility of the home and religious institutions. Public schools are obligated to maintain neutrality in all such matters.

However, as religion influences many areas of education such as literature and history, its role in civilization may be taught when consistent with curriculum and teaching assignment. In such instances, teachers may provide information and opportunity for students to study the forms of various religions.

Though teachers may be permitted to expose students to information concerning religious beliefs, teachers may not advocate, openly or covertly or by subtlety, a particular religion or religious belief.

**GRIEVANCE AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURES**

**STFF GRIEVANCES**

Staff member grievances that a violation, misinterpretation or inappropriate application of district personnel policies and/or administrative regulations has occurred should be directed to the building principal and/or immediate supervisor for informal discussion and resolution.

If the grievance is not resolved informally, formal complaint procedures may be initiated by staff in accordance with Board policy and administrative procedures.

**STUDENT/PARENT COMPLAINTS**

The district recognizes that complaints regarding staff performance, discipline, grades, student progress, and homework assignments will be made by students and parents from time to time. Every effort will be made to ensure that complaints are handled and resolved informally and as close to their origin as possible. Students, parents and others with grievances will be encouraged to discuss their complaint directly with the staff member. All such meetings should be held in confidence and not in the presence of others.

If the grievance is not informally resolved, staff should advise the complainant that he/she may submit the matter directly to the building principal or immediate supervisor, as appropriate. The complainant will provide a written formal complaint to the Director of Schools.

When a grievance is made directly to the Board as a whole or to an individual Board member, it will be referred to the Director of Schools for appropriate building administrator follow-up.

**JURY DUTY**

When a teacher is summoned for jury duty he/she shall appear in court and specify a seven (7) day period within twelve months that he/she will be available for jury duty. The following procedures shall regulate the leave for jury duty for teachers:

1. The teacher shall present written evidence that he/she had been summoned to serve on a jury; and,

1. The teacher shall be entitled to the usual compensation, less the amount paid by the court that is to be submitted to the system.

**COURT APPEARANCES**

If an employee appears in court as a plaintiff, defendant, witness, or voluntarily appears on behalf of family or friends, personal leave or leave without pay shall be granted.

**USE OF PRIVATE VEHICLES FOR DISTRICT BUSINESS**

The use of private vehicles for district business, including the transportation of students, is generally discouraged. Staff members should use district-owned vehicles whenever possible, scheduling activities and other transportation far enough in advance to avoid any non-emergency use of private vehicles. (Please see School Board Policy 3.404)

**LIABILITY AUTO INSURANCE – SCHOOL TRIPS**

Any school system employee who wishes to transport students to and from school related functions may use their own private vehicle provided the following conditions are met:

1. The function is school related.
2. The driver is employed by Unicoi County Board of Education.
3. The driver provides a copy of a valid driver's license.
4. The driver can provide proof of automobile insurance for the vehicle to be used.
5. The driver must complete the following notice and return it with the trip request.

\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*

I, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, have agreed to use my own personal vehicle to transport students to and from a school sponsored event.

We will be traveling to and from the following location:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Location

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Trip

**I understand that by using this method of transportation, my own personal automobile insurance will be primary for purposes of this trip. The Unicoi County Board of Education's insurance policy will be held as secondary in the event of an accident.**

Attached are copies of my valid driver's license and proof of insurance.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Employee Signature

**ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORTS**

All accidents/incidents occurring on district property, school buses or during the course of school-sponsored activities, including field trips and other away events, are to be reported to the building principal immediately. The building principal will report to the Central Office.

Reports should cover property damage as well as personal injury.

A completed accident report form must be submitted to the building principal and a copy forwarded to the Central Office within 24 hours or the next scheduled district workday, as appropriate.

In the event of a work-related accident or injury resulting in a hospital admission where medical treatment other than first aid is provided, the building principal will inform the Superintendent.

If the hospital admission is for more than three (3) employees, the Tennessee Occupational Safety and Health Division (TOSHA) must be notified as required by law.

All accidents/incidents will be promptly investigated and corrective measures implemented as appropriate.

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

**PURPOSE**

To entitle employees to take reasonable leave for medical reasons, for the birth or adoption of a child, and for the care of a child, spouse, or parent who has a serious health condition.

**ELIGIBILITY**

Anyone who has been employed for at least twelve (12) months by the school district and anyone who has at least 1,250 hours of service (hours used for leave, even FMLA leave, shall not be credited for service for purposes of FMLA eligibility) during the previous twelve-month period shall be eligible to use FMLA leave.

**GENERAL PRINCIPLES**

An eligible employee shall be granted, upon request, up to twelve (12) weeks unpaid leave during a fixed calendar year for the following reasons:

1. The birth of a child;
2. the placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care;
3. a serious health condition of the employee that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job position;
4. the care of a spouse, child, or parent of the employee who has a serious health condition; and
5. any qualifying circumstances arising out of the fact that a spouse, child, or parent of the employee is on covered active duty, or has been notified of an impending call or order to covered active duty, in the Armed Forces.

Granting of leave under this policy shall be subject to, and in accordance with, the provisions of applicable federal and state laws. An employee may substitute accrued paid leave for unpaid time. Use of accrued paid leave shall run concurrently with and be counted toward the employee's total period of FMLA leave.

**MATERNITY/PATERNITY LEAVE**

1. *Relationship between FMLA leave and Tennessee Maternity Leave Act*- FMLA leave shall run concurrently with leave provided under the Tennessee Maternity Act, which affords eligible employees leave for a period not to exceed four (4) months for the adoption, pregnancy, childbirth and nursing of a newborn child.
2. *Teachers' Leave*- In accordance with state law, any teacher who goes on maternity leave shall be allowed to use all or a portion of the teacher's accumulated sick or annual leave for maternity leave purporse. In order to be eligible to use sick leave, written request of the teacher accompanied by a statement from the teacher's physician verifying pregnancy shall be submitted. Upon verification by a written statement from an adoption agency or other entity handling an adoption, a techer may also be allowed to use accumulated leave for adoption of a child. If both adoptive parents are teachers employed by the district, however, only one (1) parent is entitled to use such leave.

Spouses who are both eligible employees of the school district are limited to a combined total of twelve (12) workweeks of FMLA leave in a single twelve (12) month period if the leave is taken for birth and care of a newborn child, for placement of a child for adoption or foster care, or to care for a parent who has a serious health condition. Under certain circumstances, spouses who share leave for the birth or adoption of a child may be eligible for limited amounts of additional leave for other qualifying FMLA reasons.

**LEAVE FOR A SERIOUS HEALTH CONDITION**

Eligible employees, upon request, shall be granted up to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave when he/she is unable to work because of a serious health condition or to care for an immediate family member with a serious health condition. Granting of such leave shall be subject to the provisions of applicable federal and state laws. Employees shall contact Human Resources to determine if the reason for leave qualifies as FMLA leave. If the leave is foreseeable, the employee shall give thirty (30) days' notice. If the leave is not foreseeable, the employee shall notify Human Resources as soon as practicable—generally, either the same or next business day.

**LEAVE FOR MILITARY FAMILY MEMBERS**

1. *Qualifying Exigency Leave* - Eligible employees are entitled to up to twelve (12) workweeks of leave because of any "qualifying exigency" arising out of the fact that the spouse, son, daughter, or parent of the employee, as defined under the FMLA, is on active duty, or has been notified of an impending call to active duty, or has been notified of an impended call to active duty status in the Armed Forces. Qualifying exigencies may include:
2. Issues arising from the service member's short notice deployment;
3. military events and related activities (e.g. official ceremonies, support programs);
4. making or updating financial and legal arrangements;
5. attending counseling;
6. taking up to fifteen (15) days leave to spend time with a covered service member who is on short-term rest and recuperation leave during deployment; or
7. attending post-deployment activities.
8. *Military Caregiver Leave* - An eligible employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of a covered service member or covered veteran with a serious injury or illness is entitled to up to twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave in a "single twelve (12) month period." A covered service member is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in out-patient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness.

A covered veteran is an individual who was a member of the Armed Forces at any time during the period of five (5) years preceding the date of the medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy that has a serious injury or illness who is currently receiving medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

The calculation of this 5-year period shall not include the interval of October 28, 2009 through March 8, 2013. The "single twelve (12) month period" for leave to military caregiver leave begins on the first day the employee takes leave for this reason and ends twelve (12) months later. An eligible employee is limited to a combined total of twenty-six (26) workweeks of leave to provide care for a covered service member. The maximum of twenty-six (26) workweeks may include no more than twelve (12) workweeks of leave that is taken for the birth and care of a newborn child, for placement of a child for adoption or foster care, for care of a parent who has a serious health condition, or for the employee's own serious health condition.

**INTERMITTENT LEAVE**

Eligible employees may take FMLA leave intermittently when medically necessary to care for a seriously ill family member, or because of the employee's own serious health condition, or for the care for a newborn, a newly adopted child, or a newly placed foster care child. When a licensed employee requests foreseeable leave for planned medical treatment and the employee would be on leave for greater than 20% of the total number of working days in the period during which the leave would extend, the school may require that such employee elect either to take the leave for periods of a particular duration, not to exceed the duration of the planned medical treatment or to transfer temporarily to an available alternative position offered by the school system for which the employee is qualified, and that has equivalent pay and benefits and better accommodates recurring periods of leave.

**RESTRICTIONS**

1. Notice Requirements
2. *Employee Notice* - For foreseeable leave, the employee shall provide the director of schools with at least thirty (30) days written notice before the beginning of the anticipated leave.
3. *District Notice*- Once it has been established that the leave requested qualifies for FMLA, the director of schools/ designee shall notify the employee within three (3) business days (absent extenuating circumstances) that any leave taken pursuant to state leave statutes (paid vacation leave, personal leave, sick leave, or workers' compensation) shall run concurrently with FMLA leave. The notice may be given orally or in writing. If the notice is oral, it shall be confirmed in writing, no later than the following pay day.
4. Certification Requirement
5. The director may require that a request for leave be supported by certification issued by a health care provider with the following information:
6. the date on which the serious health condition commenced;
7. the probable duration of the condition;
8. the appropriate medical facts within the knowledge of the health care provider regarding the condition; and
9. a statement that the eligible employee is needed to care for the son, daughter, spouse, or parent and an estimate of the amount of time that such employee is needed.
10. If there is any reason to doubt the validity of the certification provided, the director of schools may require, at the expense of the school system, an opinion of a second health care provider.
11. Period Near the End of an Academic Term (Professional Employees)
12. If leave is taken more than five (5) weeks prior to the end of the term, the director of schools may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the term if the leave is at least three (3) weeks of duration and the return of employment would occur during the three (3) week period before the end of the term.
13. If the leave is taken five (5) weeks prior to the end of the term, the director of schools may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the term if the leave is greater than two (2) weeks duration and the return to employment would occur during the two (2) week period before the end of the term.

**REQUIREMENTS OF THE BOARD**

1. The employee shall be restored to the same position of employment or an equivalent position with no loss of benefits, pay, or other terms of employment.
2. The employee shall be kept under any group health plan for the duration of the leave.
3. The Board may recover the premium paid under the following conditions:
   1. The employee fails to return from leave after the period of leave has expired; and
   2. the employee fails to return to work for a reason other than the continuation, recurrence, or onset of a serious health condition or other circumstances beyond the control of the employee.

**TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES**

The district's computer systems and networks are any configuration of hardware and software. The systems and networks include all of the computer hardware, operating system software, stored text and data files. This includes electronic mail, local databases, externally accessed databases (such as the internet), CD-ROM, optical media, clip art, digital images, digitized information, communications technologies, and new technologies as they become available. The district reserves the right to monitor all technology resource activity.

The district's technology resources will be used only for learning, teaching and administrative purposes consistent with the district's mission and its goals. Commercial use of the district's system is strictly prohibited.

**E-MAIL**

Electronic mail capability among district staff exists for the purpose of enhancing communication to better perform tasks associated with their positions and assignments.

Because all computer hardware and software belong to the Board, all data including e-mail communications stored or transmitted on school system computers shall be monitored. Employees have no right to privacy with regard to any data. Confidentiality of e-mail communication cannot be assured. E-mail correspondence may be a public record under the public records law and may be subject to public inspection

**CELL PHONE USAGE**

Personal cell phones are to be used for family emergencies only during work hours. Cell phones will not be used to access the internet during work hours.

**IPADS/CHROMEBOOKS**

IPads/Chromebooks assigned by the school system should only be used for school activities. IPads/Chromebooks are owned by the school system and should be returned if a teacher leaves the employment of the system. Only school email based iTunes accounts should be used on the iPads and school-based email for Chromebooks.

**INTERNET/SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES**

1. Never identify a student on any website with a first and last name.
2. Never give the location of a student on any website.
3. Student pictures may be posted on official district or school sites with parent permission (signed Release Form for Media Recording).
4. Never post pictures of students on a website that is not district or school sponsored.
5. Never "friend" a K-12 student on a social website.
6. Never discuss school or work related topics on a social website.
7. Only use district and/or school sponsored websites for posting school content of any kind.

**STUDENT ACTIVITY FUNDS**

All monies raised or collected by and/or for school-approved student groups are to be receipted and deposited into a checking account administered by the business office. All student activity fund expenditures must be approved by the building principal.

All expenditures from the general account of student activity funds must also be approved by the school-recognized student government organization if such organization exists. Funds derived from the student body as a whole shall be expended to benefit the student body as a whole.

**CASH IN DISTRICT BUILDINGS**

Money collected by staff as a result of fund raisers or other school related purposes shall be deposited in the office. At no time are substantial amounts of money to be kept overnight or held during holidays or for long periods of time in classrooms.

**GIFTS AND SOLICITATIONS**

Staff members are to avoid accepting anything of value offered by another for the purpose of influencing his/her professional judgment.

Staff members are prohibited from accepting items of material value from companies or organizations doing business with the district. Material value is defined by law as $100 or more from a single source in a single year.

No organization may solicit funds from staff members within the schools, nor may anyone distribute flyers or other materials related to fund drives through the school without building principal approval.

The solicitation of staff by sales people, other staff or agents during on-duty hours is prohibited. Any solicitation should be reported at once to the building principal.

**TOBACCO-FREE ENVIRONMENT**

In order to protect the health of students, staff and the general public, provide a healthy working environment, and promote good health for students, tobacco use is prohibited on all district property and in district-owned vehicles.

Tobacco use is defined as the carrying or smoking of any kind of lighted pipe, cigar, and cigarette or any other smoking equipment or material or the chewing or sniffing of a tobacco product.

**DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE**

No staff member shall unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess or use on or in the workplace any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, or any other controlled substance, or alcohol.

**SPECIAL INTEREST MATERIALS**

Supplementary materials from non-school sources require building principal approval prior to their use in school. This includes educational films and all video rentals secured from or through commercial sources.

**COMMUNICABLE DISEASE/BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS/INFECTION CONTROL PROCEDURES**

The district provides for the reasonable protection against the risk of exposure to communicable disease to all staff while engaged in the performance of their duties. Infection control procedures, including provisions for handling and disposing of contaminated fluids have also been established through Board policy and administrative procedures for staff and student protection.

All staff shall comply with measures adopted by the district and with all rules set by the Tennessee Department of Health and the county health department.

Staff members have a responsibility to report to the district when infected with a communicable disease unless otherwise stated by law.

**HEPITATAS B\*/BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS TRAINING AND IMMUNIZATION**

Staff members designated as primary first aid providers, or who may otherwise incur occupational exposure to blood or other potentially infectious materials in conjunction with their assigned duties as determined by the district, will receive appropriate information and training as follows:

1. At the time of initial assignment to tasks where occupational exposure may take place;

2. At least annually thereafter and within one year of their previous training;

3. When changes such as modification of tasks or procedures or new tasks or procedures affect the staff member's occupational exposure.

Additionally, the Hepatitis B vaccination will be made available within ten days of initial assignment to all staff that has been identified by the district as having occupational exposure. Report any occupational exposure to bloodborne pathogens to the School Safety Director. Following a report of an exposure incident, the district will immediately make available to the exposed staff member a confidential medical evaluation and follow-up.

**COVID-19 GUIDELINES**

Unicoi County Schools will follow CDC, state, regional, and local health department guidelines in relation to COVID-19. Every situation will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis while keeping within the guidelines.

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**Employee Handbook**

I hereby acknowledge that my building level supervisor has discussed the content of the Unicoi County Schools Employee Handbook. The handbook is available on Unicoi County Schools system's website, [www.unicoischools.com](http://www.unicoischools.com).

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

I understand that any rules, policies and procedures described in the handbook may be modified, varied or deleted by Unicoi County Schools at any time.

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**Employee Signature**

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**Position**

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Date**