

HICKORY PUBLIC SCHOOLS



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK 2014-2015



www.hickoryschools.net

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

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Welcome to Hickory Public Schools

This handbook addresses the resource needs of employees for up-to-date information on issues that affect employment with the school district. References to numerous Hickory Public Schools Board of Education policies are included throughout the Employee Handbook as part of this resource process, but are not intended to cover those policies and procedures in detail. All employees of Hickory Public Schools have a duty to understand and comply with applicable laws, policies, and procedures.

Policies contained in this handbook may not be complete versions of the policy as formally adopted by the Hickory Board of Education. Please familiarize yourself with these policies. If you have specific questions, contact the appropriate department at the central office. For the complete text of all Board policies, please refer to the [School Board Policies](http://www.hickoryschools.net) at www.hickoryschools.net.

Hickory Public Schools policies and procedures, whether or not contained in this handbook, are not an employment contract nor are they terms of an employment contract. The school district's employees (other than employees in positions covered by North Carolina General Statute 115C-325, or employees who have specific employment contracts) are all employees at will. This means the employee or the school district has the right to terminate the relationship at any time, with or without reason. Nothing in this handbook is intended to create an employment contract. Each employee is required to sign the Hickory Public Schools Confirmation of Receipt of Employee Handbook Notification acknowledging the associated duty to familiarize him/herself with district policies and procedures. Revisions to the handbook will be made as necessary. We believe the information in this handbook to be accurate at the time of publication. All employees should be alert to changes in policies and/or procedures implemented during the year. Proposed policies are available for public comment before adoption. Changed policies and/or procedures are placed on the website when adopted/approved.

This Employee Handbook is not all inclusive. For additional references for individual cases, questions or concerns, please contact the Personnel Department. Please accept our best wishes for a great year and we appreciate your dedication to the students of Hickory Public Schools.

VISION STATEMENT

By connecting with and engaging each member of the learning community, Hickory Public Schools will ensure a high quality education for all students preparing them to become responsible, productive citizens in the 21st century.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Hickory Public Schools is to develop within each learner the skills to be a responsible citizen and have a lifelong love of learning. This commitment requires the active involvement of learners, parents, staff, and community.

SCHOOL CONTACT INFORMATION

Jenkins Elementary (K-5)

3750 N. Center Street
Hickory, NC 28601
Phone: 828-327-3491
Fax: 828-327-3590
Principal: John Black

Longview Elementary (PreK-5)

737 12th Street SW
Hickory, NC 28602
Phone: 828-485-0975
Fax: 828-485-0981
Principal: Judy Jolly

Oakwood Elementary (PreK-5)

366 4th Street NW
Hickory, NC 28601
Phone: 828-322-1340
Fax: 828-322-4980
Principal: Ryan McCreary

Southwest Elementary (PreK-5)

1580 32nd Street SW
Hickory, NC 28602
Phone: 828-324-8884
Fax: 828-345-6226
Principal: Jenny White

Viewmont Elementary (PreK-5)

21 16th Avenue NW
Hickory, NC 28601
Phone: 828-324-7049
Fax: 828-327-4619
Principal: Jeffrey Hodakowski

Northview Middle (6-8)

302 28th Avenue NE
Hickory, NC 28601
Phone: 828-327-6300
Fax: 828-327-6367
Principal: Stephanie Dischiavi

Grandview Middle (6-8)

451 Catawba Valley Boulevard SE
Hickory, NC 28602
Phone: 828-328-2289
Fax: 828-328-2992
Principal: Dr. Vanessa Howerton

Hickory High (9-12)

1234 3rd Street NE
Hickory, NC 28601
Phone: 828-322-5860
Fax: 828-326-7101
Principal: Dr. Ann Stalaker

Hickory Career & Arts Magnet High (7-12)

409 8th Avenue NE
Hickory, NC 28601
Phone: 828-328-6738
Fax: 828-328-8539
Principal: Teresa Carroll

HICKORY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The Hickory Board of Education recognizes the trust and accountability it owes citizens, staff, parents and students in the manner in which it transacts the business of the school district. To fulfill its mission, the Board endeavors to conduct itself in accordance with the Board's Code of Ethics.

Members of the Hickory Board of Education

WARD 1

Julie Correll
4825 1st Street Court NW
Hickory, NC 28601
juliecorrell73@gmail.com

WARD 2

Sallie D. Johnson
335 6th Street NW
Hickory, NC 28601
salliedjohnson@gmail.com

WARD 3

VACANT

WARD 4

Margaret Pope
129 3rd Avenue SW
Hickory, NC 28602
map129@charter.net

WARD 5

Reginald Hamilton, Chair
2306 6th Avenue NW
Hickory, NC 28601
reginald53@embarqmail.com

WARD 6

Amy Monroe
945 19th Avenue NW
Hickory, NC 28601
thadmonroe@charter.net

AT-LARGE

Charlotte Williams, Vice-Chair
LRU, 110 Lineberger, Box 7273
Hickory, NC 28603
williamsc@lr.edu

BOARD ATTORNEY

Jeffrey T. Mackie
P.O. Drawer 1470
Hickory, NC 28603
jeff.mackie@sigmonclark.com

The mission of the Board of Education of the Hickory City Schools
To serve as the primary advocate for the success of all children in our public schools.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES STAFF

PHONE: (828) 322-2855

FAX: (828) 322-1834

The purpose of this publication is to provide information that addresses the questions and concerns of employees of the Hickory Public Schools. If the information you need is not found in this handbook, the school principal or secretary may be able to assist you. The Administrative Services staff also is available to answer your questions. A listing of the staff members with their areas of responsibility follows.

Superintendent's Office

Dr. Walter H. Hart, *Superintendent*
Mary Duquette, *Executive Assistant*
Sandi Fotheringham, *Volunteer Coordinator*
Sandy Mathewson, *Personnel Assistant*
Tracy Sigmon, *Personnel Officer*
Beverly Snowden, *Public Information Officer*

Board Policy
Liaison with Board of Education
Partners in Education
Personnel
Public Relations and Communications

School Operations
Student Teachers
Teacher Recognition Programs
Volunteers

Accountability

Shawn Clemons, *Director*
Claudine Abernathy, *Secretary*

Benchmark Assessments Data Disaggregating EVAAS
K-2 Assessments
My Data First
NC State Report Card
PEP's
State/Local Testing

Business and Finance

Adam Steele, *Finance Officer*
Kathy Carpenter, *Payroll Specialist*
Chantel Causby, *Finance Secretary*
Denise Franklin, *System Operator/Accounts Payable*
Chuck Gragg, *State Purchasing/E-Procurement*
Marla Patton, *Employee Benefits Coordinator*

Accounts Payable
Audit
Budget
Employee Benefits

Payroll
Property Acquisition/Disposition
Purchasing
Workers Compensation

Child Nutrition

Rebecca Allen, *Director*
Tina Pottorff, *Supervisor/Nutritionist*
Rhonda Davis, *Bookkeeper/Secretary*

Child Nutrition Programs

Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Denise Patterson, *Chief Academic Officer*
Ginger Robertson, *Secretary*
Jennifer Griffin, *Curriculum Specialist*

Accreditation
Challenger Oversight
Initial Licensure Program
Instructional Technology
K-12 Curriculum
Little Read
Media Advisory
NC Falcon

New Teacher Orientation
NW RESA
Professional Development
SEA System
Teaching
Fellows
Textbooks
Title II

Exceptional Children's Services

Amanda Byrd, *Director*
Beverly Walker, *Secretary*
Tamra Jenkins, *Behavior Specialist*
Hollie Price, *Lead Program Specialist*

Academically/Intellectually Gifted
Early Intervention Services
Exceptional Children's Programs
Homebound Services

Partnership for Children
Pre-Kindergarten
Ready Schools

Facilities

Adam Huckabee, *Director*
Pat Annas, *Secretary*

Asbestos Training
Capital Building Projects
Custodial Supervision
Maintenance of Grounds

Maintenance of All Buildings
Maintenance of Energy Control Systems
Security

Custodial Office

Dwight Teague, *ARAMARK*

Grounds

John Worley, *Grounds Supervisor*
John Chapman, *Groundskeeper*
Andrew Peterson, *Groundskeeper*
Tim Ward, *Groundskeeper*

Maintenance

Terry Huff, *Supervisor*
Derek Clark, *General Maintenance*
Larry Conger, *General Maintenance*
John Forquer, *Plumber*
Jason Holcomb, *General Maintenance*
Michael Lockee, *Electrician*
Bill Marshburn, *HVAC Technician*

Federal Programs

Timothy Sims, *Director*
Andrea Trent, *Secretary*
Betty Cadavid, *ESL Education Interpreter*
Nola Vang, *ESL Education Interpreter*
Trina Williams, *CTE Coordinator*

Community Advisory Council
Career Technical Education
Drivers Education
ESL Programs
Field Trips
Race to the Top

School Calendar
SIG - HCAM
School Improvement Plans
Title I, Title III, Title IX
WIA/STAY

Student Services

Angela Simmons, *Director*
Joyce Jarrett, *PowerSchool Coordinator*

Attendance
Back Pack Food Programs/PORCH
Chemical Hygiene
Child Fatality
Christmas Bureau
Core Placements
Counselors
Credit Recovery/APEX
Discipline Incidents/Alternate to Suspension
Dropout Prevention
504
Foster Care

McKinney-Vento (Homeless)
NCVPS
Olweus/Bullying Prevention
Parent Link
Parent Portal
PowerSchool/PowerTeacher/SchoolNet
Promotion/Retention
Restraint/Seclusion Training
School Safety
School Health Programs
Social Workers/ACE Teams
Watch D.O.G.S

Technology

Jeff Tice, *Director*
Terri Hall, *Instructional Technology Specialist*
Wayne Alexander, *Computer Technician*
Brian Arroyo, *WAN Engineer*
Rick Cook, *Computer Technician*

E-rate
One-to-One Initiative
Technology Inventory

Technology Professional Development
Wireless

CODE OF ETHICS FOR NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATORS

Adopted by the State Board of Education June 5, 1997

PREAMBLE

The purpose of this Code of Ethics is to define standards of professional conduct.

The responsibility to teach and the freedom to learn, and the guarantee of equal opportunity for all are essential to the achievement of these principles. The professional educator acknowledges the worth and dignity of every person and demonstrates the pursuit of truth and devotion to excellence, acquires knowledge, and nurtures democratic citizenship. The educator strives to maintain the respect and confidence of colleagues, students, parents and legal guardians, and the community, and to serve as an appropriate role model. The educator exemplifies a commitment to the teaching and learning processes with accountability to the students, maintains professional growth, exercises professional judgment, and personifies integrity.

To uphold these commitments, the educator:

I. COMMITMENT TO THE STUDENT

- A. Protects students from conditions within the educator's control that circumvent learning or are detrimental to the health and safety of students.
- B. Maintains an appropriate relationship with students in all settings; does not encourage, solicit, or engage in a sexual or romantic relationship with students, nor touch a student in an inappropriate way for personal gratification, with intent to harm, or out of anger.
- C. Evaluates students and assigns grades based upon the students' demonstrated competencies and performance.
- D. Disciplines students justly and fairly and does not deliberately embarrass or humiliate them.
- E. Holds in confidence information learned in professional practice except for professional reasons or in compliance with pertinent regulations or statutes.
- F. Refuses to accept significant gifts, favors, or additional compensation that might influence professional decisions or actions.

II. COMMITMENT TO THE SCHOOL AND SCHOOL SYSTEM

- A. Utilizes available resources to provide a classroom climate conducive to learning and to promote learning to the maximum possible extent.
- B. Acknowledges the diverse views of students, parents and legal guardians, and colleagues as they work collaboratively to shape educational goals, policies, and decisions; does not proselytize for personal viewpoints that are outside the scope of professional practice.
- C. Signs a contract in good faith and does not abandon contracted professional duties without a substantive reason.
- D. Participates actively in professional decision-making process and supports the expression of professional opinions and judgments by colleagues in decision-making processes or due process proceedings.
- E. When acting in an administrative capacity:
 1. Acts fairly, consistently, and prudently in the exercise of authority with colleagues, subordinates, students, and parents and legal guardians.
 2. Evaluates the work of other educators using appropriate procedures and established statutes and regulations.
 3. Protects the rights of others in the educational setting, and does not retaliate, coerce, or intentionally intimidate others in the exercise of rights protected by law.
 4. Recommends persons for employment, promotion, or transfer according to their professional qualifications, the needs and policies of the LEA, and according to the law.

III. COMMITMENT TO THE PROFESSION

- A. Provides accurate credentials and information regarding licensure or employment and does not knowingly assist others in providing untruthful information.
- B. Takes action to remedy an observed violation of the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators and promotes understanding of the principles of professional ethics.
- C. Pursues growth and development in the practice of the profession and uses that knowledge in improving the educational opportunities, experiences, and performance of students and colleagues.

SECTION .0600 – CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND CONDUCT FOR NORTH CAROLINA EDUCATORS

16 NCAC6C.0601 – THE PURPOSE AND APPLICABILITY OF THE RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR EDUCATORS

The purpose of these rules is to establish and uphold uniform standards of professional conduct for licensed professional educators throughout the State. These rules shall be binding on every person licensed by the SBE, hereinafter referred to as “educator” or “professional educator,” and the possible consequences of any willful breach shall include license suspension or revocation. The prohibition of certain conduct in these rules shall not be interpreted as approval of conduct not specifically cited.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115C-295.3; Eff. April 1, 1998.

16 NCAC6C.0602 – THE STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT FOR NC EDUCATORS

(a) The standards listed in this Section shall be generally accepted for the education profession and shall be the basis for State Board review of performance of professional educators. These standards shall establish mandatory prohibitions and requirements for educators. Violation of these standards shall subject an educator to investigation and disciplinary action by the SBE or LEA.

(b) Professional educators shall adhere to the standards of professional conduct contained in this Rule. Any intentional act or omission that violates these standards is prohibited.

- (1) Generally recognized professional standards. The educator shall practice the professional standards of federal, state, and local governing bodies.
- (2) Personal conduct. The educator shall serve as a positive role model for students, parents, and the community. Because the educator is entrusted with the care and education of small children and adolescents, the educator shall demonstrate a high standard of personal character and conduct.
- (3) Honesty. The educator shall not engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation in the performance of professional duties including the following:
 - (A) statement of professional qualifications;
 - (B) application or recommendation for professional employment, promotion, or licensure;
 - (C) application or recommendation for college or university admission, scholarship, grant, academic award, or similar benefit;
 - (D) representation of completion of college or staff development credit;
 - (E) evaluation or grading of students or personnel;
 - (F) submission of financial or program compliance reports submitted to state, federal, or other governmental agencies;
 - (G) submission of information in the course of an official inquiry by the employing LEA or the SBE related to facts of unprofessional conduct, provided however, that an educator shall be given adequate notice of the allegations and may be represented by legal counsel; and
 - (H) submission of information in the course of an investigation by a law enforcement agency, child protective services, or any other agency with the right to investigate regarding school-related criminal activity; provided, however, that an educator shall be entitled to decline to give evidence to law enforcement if such evidence may tend to incriminate the educator as that term is defined by the Fifth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution.

- (4) Proper remunerative conduct. The educator shall not solicit current students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator in a private remunerative capacity. An educator shall not tutor for remuneration students currently assigned to the educator's classes, unless approved by the local superintendent. An educator shall not accept any compensation, benefit, or thing of value other than the educator's regular compensation for the performance of any service that the educator is required to render in the course and scope of the educator's employment. This Rule shall not restrict performance of any overtime or supplemental services at the request of the LEA; nor shall it apply to or restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens of minimal value offered and accepted openly from students, parents, or other persons in recognition or appreciation of service.
- (5) Conduct with students. The educator shall treat all students with respect. The educator shall not commit any abusive act or sexual exploitation with, to, or in the presence of a student, whether or not that student is or has been under the care or supervision of that educator, as defined below:
- (A) any use of language that is considered profane, vulgar, or demeaning;
 - (B) any sexual act;
 - (C) any solicitation of a sexual act, whether written, verbal, or physical;
 - (D) any act of child abuse, as defined by law;
 - (E) any act of sexual harassment, as defined by law; and
 - (F) any intentional solicitation, encouragement, or consummation of a romantic or physical relationship with a student, or any sexual contact with a student. The term "romantic relationship" shall include dating any student.
- (6) Confidential information. The educator shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information regarding students or their family members that has been obtained in the course of professional service, unless disclosure is required or permitted by law or professional standards, or is necessary for the personal safety of the student or others.
- (7) Rights of others. The educator shall not willfully or maliciously violate the constitutional or civil rights of a student, parent/legal guardian, or colleague.
- (8) Required reports. The educator shall make all reports required by Chapter 115C of the North Carolina General Statutes.
- (9) Alcohol or controlled substance abuse. The educator shall not:
- (A) be under the influence of, possess, use, or consume on school premises or at a school-sponsored activity a controlled substance as defined by N.C. Gen. Stat. § 90-95, the Controlled Substances Act, without a prescription authorizing such use;
 - (B) be under the influence of, possess, use, or consume an alcoholic beverage or controlled substance on school premises or at a school-sponsored activity involving students; or
 - (C) furnish alcohol or a controlled substance to any student except as indicated in the professional duties of administering legally prescribed medications.
- (10) Compliance with criminal laws. The educator shall not commit any act referred to in G.S. 115C-332 and any felony under the laws of the United States or of any state.
- (11) Public funds and property. The educator shall not misuse public funds or property, funds of a school-related organization, or colleague's funds. The educator shall account for funds collected from students, colleagues, or parents/legal guardians. The educator shall not submit fraudulent requests for reimbursement, expenses, or pay.
- (12) Scope of professional practice. The educator shall not perform any act as an employee in a position for which licensure is required by the rules of the SBE or by Chapter 115C or the North Carolina General Statutes during any period in which the educator's license has been suspended or revoked.
- (13) Conduct related to ethical violations. The educator shall not directly or indirectly use or threaten to use any official authority or influence in any manner that tends to discourage, restrain, interfere with, coerce, or discriminate against any subordinate or any licensee who in good faith reports, discloses, divulges, or otherwise brings to the attention of an LEA, the SBE, or any other public agency authorized to take remedial action, any facts or information relative to actual or suspected violation of any law regulating the duties of persons serving in the public school system, including but not limited to these Rules.

History Note: Authority G.S. 115C-295.3; Eff. May 1, 1998.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND PERFORMANCE FOR TEACHERS

The Board of Education is dedicated and committed to providing all teachers with opportunities and resources to further their growth as professional educators. To that end, the performance of every teacher is assessed and the teacher is provided with constructive feedback through a formal evaluation and review process targeted to enhance professional growth. In addition, it is the Board's expectation that all teachers, regardless of their years of experience, are capable of and must adhere to certain minimum professional standards of conduct and performance as set forth in this policy.

Therefore, all teachers employed by the Hickory Board of Education shall comply with and adhere to the following professional standards of conduct and performance:

1. Adhere to the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators. [Standard 1: Teacher demonstrates leadership; element e]
2. Comply with all Board policies regarding appropriate and/or prohibited behavior with students including electronic communications with students directly or through the internet. [Standard 1, element d]
3. Direct all complaints regarding the work environment to the appropriate supervisors and/or file grievances instead of acting to undermine or diminish the authority of co-workers and supervisors [Standard 1, element c]
4. Avoid confrontations with co-workers, including but not limited to, engaging in actions or conversations which the teacher knows or should know will result in actual disruption. [Standard 1, element b and Standard 1, element c]
5. Manage students' classroom behavior to minimize disruption to the educational environment and refer students, when necessary, to the administration for disciplinary action. [Standard 1, element a]
6. Respond to all parent inquiries, complaints and/or concerns in a timely and professional manner. [Standard 2, element e]
7. Comply with all administrative directives in a timely and professional manner, including written directives regarding specific issues or behaviors. [Standard 5, element c, Standard 1, element d, and Standard 1, element e]
8. Perform all assigned and/or accepted extracurricular and non-instructional duties in a timely and professional manner. [Standard 1, element d, and Standard 1, element e]
9. Participate in and complete any required professional development activities. [Standard 1, element b, Standard 1, element c and Standard 5, element b]
10. Participate in all required staff meetings and student academic meetings, including required meetings for students with special needs, in a professional manner. [Standard 1, element d, Standard 5, element b, and Standard 2, element d]
11. Complete and transmit all required reports and other documentation in a timely and professional manner. [Standard 1, element d, Standard 5, element a, Standard 5, element c, and Standard 1, element e]
12. Arrive at school each day at an appropriate time designated by the principal ready and prepared to complete all assigned duties. [Standard 1, element a, Standard 1, element b, Standard 1, element c, and standard 1, element e]

The failure or unwillingness of a teacher to comply with the professional standards of conduct and performance listed herein may result in contract non-renewal or disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment. In all matters concerning a teacher's compliance with this policy, consideration shall be given to the impact on the education of a student or a group of students and on the overall educational environment of the school.

Employees shall notify the Superintendent if they are arrested for, charged with or convicted of a criminal offense (including entering a plea of guilty or nolo contendere) other than a minor traffic violation (i.e., speeding, parking or a lesser violation). Notice must be in writing, must include all pertinent facts and must be delivered to the Superintendent no later than the next scheduled business day following the arrest, charge or conviction, unless the employee is hospitalized or incarcerated, in which case the employee must report the alleged violation within 24 hours after his or her release. Upon judicial action in the matter, the employee must report the disposition and pertinent facts in writing to the Superintendent no later than the next business day following adjudication. Failure by an employee to provide timely notice as described above may lead to disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal.

Statutory Authority: G.S. 115C-47 (1), (4), (9), (12), and (18); G.S. 115C-325 (e)(3); 16 NCAC

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND PERFORMANCE FOR CLASSIFIED SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

The Board of Education is dedicated and committed to providing all employees with a positive work atmosphere that gives employees opportunities to excel in the workplace. To achieve this goal, it is the Board's expectation that all employees are capable of and must adhere to certain minimum standards of conduct and performance as set forth in this policy.

Therefore, all classified employees of the Hickory Board of Education shall comply with and adhere to the following standards of conduct and performance:

1. Comply with all Board policies, including those regarding appropriate and/or prohibited behavior with students and electronic communications with students.
2. Direct all complaints regarding work environment to the appropriate supervisors and/or file grievances instead of acting to undermine or diminish the authority of co-workers and supervisors.
3. Avoid confrontations with co-workers, including but not limited to, engaging in actions or conversations which the employee knows or should know will result in actual disruption.
4. Comply with all administrative directives in a timely and professional manner, including written directives regarding specific issues or behaviors.
5. Perform all assigned and/or accepted extracurricular and non-instructional duties in a timely and professional manner.
6. Participate in and complete any required professional development activities required by the Board, Superintendent or supervisor.
7. Attend and participate in all required staff meetings and other required meetings.
8. Complete and transmit all required reports and other documentation in a timely and professional manner.
9. Dress appropriately for job duties and in accordance with school district policy and supervisor's directives.
10. Arrive at school each day at an appropriate time designated by the principal, ready and prepared to complete all assigned duties.
11. Maintain a courteous and professional attitude when working with other staff members, students, parents, and visitors
12. To exercise proper care and maintenance of school property.
13. To attend to the safety and welfare of students and if required by the position, provide adequate supervision of students.

The failure or unwillingness of an employee to comply with the standards of conduct and performance listed herein is insubordination and may result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from employment. In all matters concerning an employee's compliance with this policy, consideration shall be given to the impact on the overall workplace and/or educational environment.

Employees shall notify the Superintendent if they are arrested for, charged with or convicted of a criminal offense (including entering a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*) other than a minor traffic violation (i.e., speeding, parking or a lesser violation). Notice must be in writing, must include all pertinent facts and must be delivered to the Superintendent later than the next scheduled business day following the arrest, charge or conviction, unless the employee is hospitalized or incarcerated, in which case the employee must report the alleged violation within 24 hours after his or her release. Upon judicial action in the matter, the employee must report the disposition and pertinent facts in writing to the Superintendent no later than the next business day following adjudication. Failure by an employee to provide timely notice as described above may lead to disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal.

Statutory Authority: G.S. 115C-47 (1), (4), (9), (12), and (18); G.S. 115C-325(e)(3)

ASBESTOS INFORMATION

Since the dangers of asbestos have become apparent, Hickory Public Schools has worked to eliminate the threat to our children and staff. All friable asbestos known to exist was removed in 1983 and buildings were properly marked. Each school now has an Asbestos Management Plan, which is available in the principal's office or at the Office of the Superintendent. Schools are thoroughly inspected every three years, and plans forwarded to the North Carolina Department of Human Resources, Division of Health Services. Hickory Public Schools maintenance staff is trained in the handling of asbestos-related situations and regularly checks school buildings.

ATTENDANCE

All employees are expected to be present during all working hours. Absences without prior approval, chronic absences, habitual tardiness, or abuses of designated working hours are all considered neglect of duty. These actions will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal, and may result in immediate dismissal.

Unexplained absences or leaving the job site without authorization will not be tolerated and will be considered sufficient cause for discharge. The supervisor may require, at any time, a statement from a medical doctor or other acceptable proof that the employee was unable to work.

All non-exempt staff are required to scan in each day and to scan out at the end of the day. Non-exempt staff are also required to scan in and out for lunch, medical appointments, or other personal reasons. However, employees taking less than one-half hour for lunch are not required to scan out if the employee remains "on call" or "is required to work" during this time. Scanning in and/or out for another employee is strictly prohibited and may result in immediate dismissal.

Work Schedule

The length of the school day for licensed staff will be a minimum of seven hours and thirty minutes and will continue until professional responsibilities to the student and school are completed. Administrative meetings, curriculum development, pupil supervision, assigned duties, parent conferences, group or individual planning and extra-curricular activities may require hours beyond the stated minimum.

Working hours for all employees nonexempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), including teacher assistants, school secretaries, child nutrition staff, administrative office staff, janitorial, and maintenance personnel, shall conform to federal and state regulations. Supervisors will make every effort to avoid circumstances that require non-exempt employees to work more than 40 hours per week. For purposes of FLSA compliance, the work week for school district employees will be 12:00 P.M. midnight Saturday until 11:59 P.M. on Saturday.

In accordance with FLSA and the Hickory Board of Education policy, non-exempt staff will follow the working hours as designated by the principal and/or supervisor. Employees taking less than one-half hour for lunch are not required to scan out if employee remains 'on call' or 'is required to work' during this time. Non-exempt employees who are completely relieved of duties during lunch break or leave campus for personal reasons are required to scan out for lunch. Supervisors should inform employees if they are required to be on duty during their lunch break. No other breaks will be scheduled or permitted except for reasonable restroom breaks. Lunch breaks may not be skipped in order to leave work early. A copy of FLSA and any administrative procedures established by the Superintendent will be available to employees in the Personnel Office.

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that overtime hours are authorized, recorded, and properly documented for compensatory time off or overtime pay in accordance with the established record-keeping forms and instructions. Non-exempt employees working beyond the normal workweek without specific approval, and supervisors who permit this, will be subject to disciplinary action.

Non-exempt employees may volunteer to work at school-related activities, provided the work is clearly at the employee's option, without coercion, and is in a different capacity from the employee's regularly assigned duties. Employees may not volunteer to perform the same type of services that they are employed to perform for the school system. Such work will be treated as regular work and subject to hourly compensation and overtime rules.

BLOODBORNE PATHOGENS

The purpose of this policy is to limit occupational exposure of employees to blood and other potentially infectious body fluids and materials that may transmit bloodborne pathogens and lead to disease or death.

All employees who could be “reasonably anticipated” as the result of performing required job duties to face contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials are covered by the OSHA Bloodborne Pathogens Standard and by this policy. Universal precautions shall be in force at all times: **In dealing with the cleaning or decontamination of any blood or body fluid, all blood, body fluid, and potentially infectious material shall be handled as if infected.**

The Board shall ensure that:

- A. All elements of the Chemical Hygiene Plan, including but not limited to exposure determination, work practice standards, hepatitis B vaccination procedures, training requirements, and record keeping are met.
- B. All employees have access to a copy of Hickory Public Schools *Bloodborne Pathogens Policy and Chemical Hygiene Plan*. This policy is reviewed and updated annually.

An employee who suspects that he/she has a work-related blood or body fluid exposure may request to be tested at Hickory Public Schools’ expense, provided that the suspected exposure poses a significant risk of exposure as defined in the rules of the NC Health Services Commission.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GBRAA

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES | EMPLOYEE SAFETY

Hickory Public Schools strives to provide a secure environment for all students and employees. All efforts are made to protect students' and employees' rights and to control communicable diseases.

All decisions regarding the employment status of employees with communicable diseases will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GBRAA

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No employee of the Board of Education of the Hickory City Administrative School Unit, nor anyone acting on behalf of the employee, shall be financially interested, or have any personal beneficial interest, either directly or indirectly, in the purchase of, or contract for, any materials, equipment, services or supplies, nor in any firm, corporation, partnership or association furnishing any such supplies, material, services or equipment to the Board of Education or anyone authorized to act or contract on its behalf; nor shall any employee, or anyone acting on his/her behalf, accept or receive, directly or indirectly, from any person, firm or corporation to whom any contract may be given or awarded, by rebate, gift or otherwise, any money or anything of value whatsoever, or any promise, obligation or contract for future reward or compensation.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAG

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

The Board recognizes that the principals, assistant principals, teachers and substitute teachers must be permitted to use appropriate measures to control the behavior of students who are entrusted to their care on a daily basis.

However, the Board has determined that the administration of corporal punishment is not appropriate or desirable means of controlling or altering student behavior. Therefore, the Board hereby prohibits the administration of

corporal punishment by principals, assistant principals, teachers, substitute teachers, any other school system personnel, student teachers or volunteers.

Corporal punishment is all forms of physical punishment including, but not limited to, spanking, paddling or hitting with any object, slapping, pinching and other physical contact used for the purpose of disciplining students.

Notwithstanding this prohibition from administering corporal punishment, school personnel may use reasonable force to control the behavior of students or to remove persons from the scene in those situations when necessary:

- (1) To quell a disturbance threatening injury to others;
- (2) To obtain possession of weapons or other dangerous objects on the person, or within the control, of a student;
- (3) For self-defense; or
- (4) For the protection of persons or property.

Reference: Board of Education Policy JDA

CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

The Board seeks to provide a safe learning and working environment for students and staff. Accordingly, as a condition of employment, a criminal record check is conducted on each newly hired employee, including substitutes and independent contractors, and rehired employees who have a break in public school service. Applicants must accurately answer questions with regard to criminal history or record; and must consent in writing to a national criminal record check. Failure to consent will void an application. Information obtained through criminal background checks will be kept confidential by Hickory Public Schools.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GBDA and GDCA

DRUG, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO FREE WORKPLACE

The Board is committed to providing its students and employees with a school and work environment that is free of alcohol and/or illegal drug use, including the abuse of prescription drugs. It is the policy of this Board that a drug-free, alcohol-free, and tobacco-free workplace shall be maintained and that employees perform their tasks safely and efficiently without the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol.

The Board prohibits employees from the unlawful manufacture, sale, distribution, dispensing, possession, transportation, purchase, or being under the influence of any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana, anabolic steroids, alcohol, counterfeit substances, designer drug or any other controlled substance. Further, the Board prohibits employees from being impaired by the excessive use of prescription or nonprescription drugs. However, this policy is not violated by an individual's proper use of a drug lawfully prescribed for the individual employee by a licensed health-care provider.

This policy shall govern each employee before, during, or after school hours while the employee is on any property owned or leased by the Board, at any time during which the individual employee is acting in the course and scope of his or her employment with the Board, and at any time that the employee's violation of this policy has a direct and adverse effect upon his or her job performance.

Employees shall notify the Superintendent of any arrest, criminal charge, conviction, guilty plea, or plea of no contest for a violation of any criminal illegal drug and/or alcohol statute within five (5) calendar days after the arrest, charge, conviction, plea, or disposition, including those convictions or pleas resulting in a prayer for judgment continued or a deferred prosecution. Notice shall be in writing and shall include all pertinent facts. Upon judicial action in the matter, the employee must report the disposition and pertinent facts in writing to the Superintendent no later than the next business day following adjudication.

Categories of individuals affected by the drug testing policy include:

1. All individuals involved in the operation of vehicles owned by the Board (includes Hickory buses titled to Catawba County Board of Education.)
2. Any individual operating a vehicle owned by the Board that is involved in an accident (includes school buses assigned to Hickory Public Schools, but owned by Catawba County Board of Education).
3. Any employee identified by a supervisor or principal as meeting the criteria for “reasonable suspicion” of drug or alcohol use.
4. Any employee involved in any work related accident resulting in an injury requiring medical attention.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAN

EMERGENCY CLOSINGS

In the case of an emergency, Parent Link will be used as the emergency notification system for all Hickory Public Schools employees and students. Once an official decision is made, a call will be sent to each staff member and student with information concerning any closures or delays. The information will also be posted on the HPS Facebook page and the HPS website.

School days may be on a one, two, or three hour delay depending on the road safety for buses. Staff members will report following the delay schedule. If a staff member is scheduled to arrive early to monitor students, etc., the staff member should report accordingly. Custodial, grounds, and maintenance personnel will need to report as soon as they safely can since they are part of the first response team for inclement weather and will need to assist with clearing walkways, parking lots, and driveways of ice and snow.

If school is closed Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, students may attend school on the Saturday of that week. Saturday make-up days will be half days for students. Staff members will be dismissed after all students have arrived safely at home.

Students and staff will be notified as soon as a decision is made. Non-student workdays and Saturdays will be the first priority for all snow make-up days.

EMPLOYEE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The Hickory Public Schools Board of Education recognizes the importance of incorporating current technology tools, including new methods of electronic communication, into the classroom to enhance student learning. It further recognizes the importance of employees, students and parents engaging, learning, collaborating and sharing in digital environments as part of 21st century learning. The Board strives to ensure that electronic communication tools incorporated into the school curriculum are used responsibly and safely. As practicable, the Board will provide access to appropriate social media tools and Board approved technologies for use during instructional time and for school-sponsored activities.

The Board acknowledges that school employees may engage in the use of social media during their personal time. School employees who use social media for personal purposes must be mindful that they are responsible for their public conduct even when not acting in their capacities as school system employees. All school employees, including student teachers and independent contractors, shall comply with the requirements of this policy when using electronic social media for personal purposes. Any employee who has been found by the Superintendent to have violated this policy may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

Student Communication

Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times. All electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the school system must be school-related and within the scope of the employees' professional responsibilities, unless otherwise authorized by this policy. School personnel may use only school-controlled or superintendent/designee approved technological resources and social media tools to communicate directly with students or to comment on student matters through use of the Internet. An employee seeking to use a social media website for school-related purposes must have prior written approval from the superintendent or designee. The use of electronic media for communicating with students and parents is an extension of the employee's workplace responsibilities. Accordingly, the Board expects employees to use professional judgment when using social media or other electronic communications. Employees are prohibited from knowingly communicating non-school related content directly with current students through social media tools . A non-school related posting on a social media site that is intended for a particular student will be considered a form of direct communication with that student in violation of this policy. However, an employee may use social media tools to communicate with a student about non-school related content to the extent the employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting. 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, sport or religious organization.

Personal Use

The Board respects the right of employees to use social media as a medium of self-expression on their personal time. As role models for the school system's students, however, employees are responsible for their public conduct even when they are not performing their job duties as employees of the school system. Employees will be held to the same professional standards in their public use of social media and other electronic communications as they are for any other public conduct. Further, school employees remain subject to applicable state and federal laws, Board policies, administrative regulations and the Code of Ethics for North Carolina Educators, even if communicating with others concerning personal and private matters. If an employee's use of social media interferes with the employee's ability to effectively perform his or her job duties, the employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. Employees are responsible for the content on their social media sites, including content added by the employee, the employee's friends or members of the public who can access the employee's site, and for Web links on the employee's site. Employees shall take reasonable precautions, such as using available security settings, to restrict students from viewing their personal information on social media websites and to prevent students from accessing materials that are not age-appropriate. School employees are prohibited from accessing social networking websites for personal use during instructional time or with school system technological resources.

Posting to Social Media Sites

Employees who use social media for personal purposes must be aware that the content they post may be viewed by anyone, including students, parents and members of the community. Inappropriate content posted by others on an employee's social media site, as well as links that contain inappropriate content, must be removed upon discovery, when possible, by the employee. Employees shall observe the following principles when communicating through social networking sites:

1. Employees shall not post confidential information about students, employees or school system business.
2. Employees shall be cognizant of the connections they have with students through the use of social media tools to ensure that the relationship and content shared is professional and appropriate.
3. Employees shall not knowingly allow students access to their personal social networking sites that discuss or portray sex, nudity, alcohol or drug use or other behaviors associated with the employees' private lives that would be inappropriate to discuss with a student at school.

4. Employees may not knowingly grant students access to any portions of their personal social networking sites that are not accessible to the general public.
5. Employees shall be professional in all internet postings related to or referencing the school system, students and other employees.
6. Employees shall not use profane, pornographic, obscene, indecent, lewd, vulgar or sexually offensive language, pictures or graphics or other communication that could reasonably be anticipated to cause a substantial disruption to the school environment.
7. Employees shall not use the school system's logo or other copyrighted material of the system without express, written consent from the Board.
8. Employees shall not post identifiable images of a student or student's family without permission from the student and the student's parent or legal guardian.
9. Employees shall not use internet postings to libel or defame the Board, individual Board members, students or other school employees.
10. Employees shall not use internet postings to harass, bully or intimidate other employees or students in violation of policy 1710/4021/7230, Prohibition Against Discrimination, Harassment and Bullying, or state and federal laws.
11. Employees shall not post inappropriate content that negatively impacts their ability to perform their jobs.
12. Employees shall not use internet postings to engage in any other conduct that violates Board policy and administrative procedures or state and federal laws.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAMA

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYMENT

It is the policy of the Hickory Public Schools not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, disability, national or ethnic origin, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, sexual orientation, or military service in its education programs or employment policies.

Inquiries regarding compliance may be directed to Ms. Angela K. Simmons, Student Services Director, Mr. Timothy Sims, Federal Programs Director, Hickory Public Schools, 432 Fourth Avenue SW, Hickory, NC 28602, or the Director of the Office for Civil Rights, Department of Health, Education and Welfare, Washington, DC.

FUNDRAISERS

Fund raising activities should not be a primary focus for student organizations. However, student organizations may need to raise funds to support their primary programs and projects.

All student organizations are forbidden to solicit funds or goods, or to engage in the sale of products or services for any school project without prior approval from the principal. Any fund raising project sponsored by a student organization, which involves the community, must also obtain the prior approval of the Board of Education.

Each club, or student organization, may engage in two fund raising activities annually. If a club or student organization needs additional funds beyond what is raised as a result of its two approved fund raisers, the advisor may submit a request for an additional fund raiser which reports the results of the first two fund raisers, explain why the first two fund raisers were unsuccessful in meeting the organization's budget, and provide information why additional funds are needed.

This fund raising policy does not include the charging of admission to school sponsored events such as athletics, dances or performances or the selling of school publications or advertising space in publications.

Reference: Board of Education Policy JKB

GRIEVANCES – EMPLOYEES

The Hickory Public School Board of Education encourages the administration to actively attempt to resolve differences and to reduce the potential sources of conflict between employees and administrators. It is usually more effective for an employee and his/her immediate supervisor to resolve potential conflicts through open and informal communication. Open, effective channels of communication among all employees, administrators and the Board shall be established and maintained.

Any employee who has a grievance against the school district or against another employee within the district shall have the opportunity for an orderly presentation and impartial review of the grievance. An employee will be permitted representation, at employee's expense, at any formal step in the grievance process. The policy addresses both formal and informal grievances, the right to representation, procedures and timelines, confidentiality, bypassing rights and release time.

A grievance must be filed as soon as possible but no longer than 30 days after disclosure or discovery of the facts giving rise to the grievance. For a grievance submitted after 30 days which claims a violation, misapplication or misinterpretation of state or federal law, including discrimination, the Superintendent or designee will determine whether the grievance will be investigated after considering factors such as the reason for the delay; the extent of the delay; the effect of the delay on the ability of the school district to investigate and respond to the complaint; and whether the investigation of the complaint is necessary to meet any legal obligations. However, employees should recognize that delays in reporting may significantly impair the ability of the school district to investigate and respond effectively to such complaints.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAE

HARASSMENT, BULLYING, DISCRIMINATION OF STAFF/STUDENTS PROHIBITION

The Hickory Public Schools Board of Education acknowledges the dignity and worth of all students and employees and strives to create a safe, orderly, caring and inviting school environment to facilitate student learning and achievement. The Board will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment or bullying in any of its educational or employment activities.

Anyone who believes he/she has been the victim of harassment, bullying and/or discrimination should report the incident to the school principal or to his/her immediate supervisor or to the Superintendent. There will be an immediate investigation of the incident.

Any violation of this policy is serious, and school officials shall promptly take appropriate action. Employees are required to report any actual or suspected violations of this policy. An employee who does not promptly report possible harassment, bullying or discrimination shall be subject to disciplinary action.

Reference: Board of Education Policy JCDAD/GAEA & JCDAE/GAEAA

HEALTH EXAMINATION CERTIFICATE

All public school employees upon initial employment, and those who have been separated from public school employment for more than one school year, including superintendents, supervisors, principals, teachers, and any other employees in the public schools of the state, shall file in the Office of the Superintendent before assuming his/her duties, a certificate from a physician licensed to practice medicine, certifying that said person does not have tuberculosis in the communicable form, or other communicable disease, or any disease, physical or mental, which would impair the ability of that person to perform effectively his/her duties. The physician must use the examination form supplied by Hickory Public Schools. The local school board or Superintendent may require any person to take a physical examination when deemed necessary.

HOMEBASE ACCEPTABLE USE

HomeBase users will keep their usernames and passwords private. Users will not share passwords with other staff members. Students are never to be given access to confidential information in HomeBase. The user will log off of or lock HomeBase when leaving the computer. HomeBase users will comply with all FERPA guidelines limiting access to personal student information.

IDENTIFICATION BADGES

The Hickory Public Schools Identification Badge system is a measure instituted to ensure the safety of our schools and students. Your badge will immediately identify you as an employee of the system and will let others know that you belong in all HPS facilities and at school-sponsored events. All licensed and classified employees of the Hickory Public Schools are issued an official, photo-identification badge. It is the property of the system and is to be returned when you leave employment with the Hickory Public Schools.

You are expected to wear this badge while at work and when visiting any facility within the Hickory Public Schools.

KEY MANAGEMENT

The purpose of this policy is to regulate the use of keys and access control key cards/fobs in Hickory Public Schools to provide a safe and secure environment. All keys, cards and fobs are the property of Hickory Public Schools and will be signed for when distributed. By signing, you are agreeing to the following: 1) to not give or loan the key to others; 2) to not make any attempts to copy, alter, duplicate, or reproduce the key; 3) to use the key for authorized purposes only; 4) to safeguard and store the key securely; 5) to immediately report lost or stolen keys; and 6) to produce or surrender the key upon official request. A fee reflecting the cost of changing any and all locks affected will be assessed if a key is lost, stolen or not returned.

PERSONNEL FILES

The Superintendent shall maintain in his office a personnel file for each employee that contains any complaint, commendation, or suggestion for correction or improvement about the employee's professional conduct, except that the Superintendent may elect not to place in a teacher's file (i) a letter of complaint that contains invalid, irrelevant, outdated, or false information or (ii) a letter of complaint when there is no documentation of an attempt to resolve the issue. The complaint, commendation or suggestion must be signed by the initiating person and will be placed in the employee's file only after five days' notice to the employee. Any denial or explanation relating to the complaint, commendation or suggestion by employee will be placed in the file.

Removal of Information

Any employee may petition the Hickory Public Schools Board of Education to remove any information from his/her personnel file that he/she deems invalid, irrelevant or outdated. The Board may order the Superintendent to remove that information if it finds the information is invalid, irrelevant or outdated. Personnel files for each employee are maintained in the Personnel Department.

File Review

Every employee may have access to his/her own personnel file (with the exception of pre-employment data) during working hours, provided reasonable notice is given to the Personnel Department. Any employee wishing to review his/her personnel file should call the Personnel Department to schedule an appointment.

Reference: G. S. 115C-307(e); 115C-325 (b); 115C-319, 320 and 321; Board of Education Policy GAKA

POLITICAL ACTIVITIES BY STAFF

It is the policy of the School Board to maintain strict neutrality in political campaigns and elections. Teachers and other staff members should be careful about expressing opinions that might bring charges of using pressure or influence. Unacceptable uses include, but are not limited to the following: violating copyright laws, reposing (forwarding) personal communications without the author's prior consent, using threatening or obscene material, distributing material protected by trade secrets, utilizing the network for commercial purposes, and providing political or campaign information.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GARB

PROFESSIONAL ATTIRE

The Board believes that professional attire and appearance are essential to the establishment of an effective educational environment. Therefore, an employee's appearance should not disrupt or distract from the educational process and should reflect the professionalism of the Hickory Public Schools. As a minimum standard, the following shall be considered unacceptable to the professional appearance of employees in the Hickory Public Schools: body alterations or modifications that are distracting or a discredit to the system (i.e. tattoos, brands, piercing [other than the ears]; denim blue jean pants except as specifically authorized by principals and administrators on occasional, special-event days; clothing that reveals undergarments and/or cleavage; tank tops, bare midriffs; flip-flops; sweat pants, sweat shirts and/or wind suits. Exceptions to this policy include: 1) those positions which have specified separate expectations of attire such as child nutrition, transportation, housekeeping and maintenance and 2) the supervisor's approval of variations for professional appearance under certain circumstances such as: culturally or ethnically-based clothing, field trips; spirit days; class or team days; or work days. If a supervisor determines that an employee's appearance is inappropriate, she or he will counsel the employee regarding the appropriate appearance consistent with this policy. Failure to follow the supervisor's directive shall subject the employee to disciplinary action that may include a written warning, suspension without pay, or dismissal, all in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes pertaining to classified and certified personnel.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAO

RESIGNATIONS

Classified Employees

A classified employee is required to submit a written resignation notice at least **fourteen (14) calendar days** prior to the effective date. Failure to provide sufficient notice will be made part of the employment record, does not reflect positively, and may harm future reemployment possibilities.

Licensed Employees

The Superintendent is authorized to accept resignations from employees on behalf of the Board. Once a resignation is accepted by the Superintendent, it may not be withdrawn by the employee. When it becomes necessary for a licensed employee to cancel his/her contract or terminate employment, a written resignation notice should be received at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the effective date in accordance with General Statute 115C-325(0). In addition to jeopardizing future reemployment possibilities, failure to provide a timely notice may constitute grounds for license revocation. An employee resigning during the summer months must provide a notice of at least thirty (30) days prior to start date for employees for the next school year.

Resignation and Leave Balances

Following a resignation, the distribution of leave balances is as follows:

1. When an employee resigns and is immediately rehired in another North Carolina school system, sick leave, annual leave, bonus leave and personal leave balances must be transferred to the hiring school system. The resigning employee must contact the Finance Department and request the transfer of leave balances.

2. When an employee resigns and is not immediately rehired in another North Carolina school system, the sick leave and personal leave are kept in a “bank” for 60-63 months (based on the employees’ months of service) and payment is made for annual leave days. Reinstatement of sick and personal days must follow the provisions of G.S.115c-336.
3. With the exception of immediate rehire in another North Carolina school system, payment is made to the employee for annual leave days and bonus leave days.

Reference: Public Schools of North Carolina Benefits and Employment Policy Manual; G.S. 115C-336 sections 3, 4 and 5

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SCHOOL EMPLOYEES

For students to succeed, all school employees must approach their responsibilities conscientiously, always remembering that the ultimate responsibility of the school system is to provide students with the opportunity to receive a sound basic education.

All school employees shall:

1. be familiar with, support, comply with and, when appropriate, enforce board policies, administrative procedures, school rules and applicable laws;
2. attend to the safety and welfare of students, including the need to provide appropriate supervision of students;
3. demonstrate integrity, respect and commitment to the truth through attitudes, behavior and communications with others;
4. address or appropriately direct any complaints concerning school employees, the school program or school operations; and
5. support and encourage good school-community relations in all interactions with students, parents and members of the community.

Employees shall notify the Superintendent if they are arrested for, charged with or convicted of a criminal offense (including entering a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*) other than a minor traffic violation (i.e., speeding, parking or a lesser violation). Notice must be in writing, must include all pertinent facts and must be delivered to the Superintendent no later than the next scheduled business day following the arrest, charge or conviction, unless the employee is hospitalized or incarcerated, in which case the employee must report the alleged violation within 24 hours after his or her release. Upon judicial action in the matter, the employee must report the disposition and pertinent facts in writing to the Superintendent no later than the next business day following adjudication. Failure by an employee to provide timely notice as described above may lead to disciplinary action up to, and including, dismissal.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAMB; Adopted: October 22, 2012

SCHOOL CALENDAR

The Hickory Public Schools Board of Education annually adopts a school calendar. The calendar may be adjusted for inclement weather or other emergency situations. The district calendar may be found on the HPS website at www.hickoryschools.net.

SCHOOL HOURS

School Hours for Students:

Elementary Schools	8:30 am – 3:00 pm
Middle Schools	7:35 am – 2:20 pm
Hickory High School	7:35 am – 2:25 pm
Hickory Career & Arts Magnet	9:00 am – 4:00 pm
Preschool:	
Longview	8:30 am – 3:00 pm
Oakwood	8:30 am – 3:00 pm
Southwest	8:30 am – 3:00 pm
Viewmont	8:30 am – 3:00 pm
Hickory High	7:35 am – 2:25 pm

School Hours for Teachers: (exclusive of staff meetings)

Elementary Schools	7:50 am – 3:20 pm
Middle Schools	7:25 am – 2:55 pm
Hickory High School	7:20 am – 2:50 pm
Hickory Career & Arts Magnet	8:15 am – 4:15 pm

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Hickory Public Schools Board of Education believes that all employees are entitled to work in school-related environments that are free of sexual harassment. The Board Policy, GAEA, addressing sexual harassment includes definitions of sexual harassment. Examples of sexually harassing conduct include, but are not limited to, deliberate, unwelcome touching of a sexual nature or that takes on sexual connotations; suggestions or demands for sexual involvement accompanied by implied or overt promises of preferential treatment or threats; pressure for sexual activity; continued or repeated offensive sexual flirtations, advances or propositions; continued or repeated verbal remarks about an individual's body; sexually degrading words used toward an individual or to describe an individual; or the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures.

Anyone who believes he or she has been sexually harassed should report the incident(s) to his or her immediate supervisor or the Superintendent. Where members of the Board, the Superintendent, or any senior staff members are involved, the employee should report such acts to the Board attorney. An immediate investigation of the claims will take place and upon evidence of sexual harassment, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken.

Any employee who witnessed or who has reliable information or reason to believe that an individual may have been sexually harassed, must report the offense immediately to the principal. In addition, any supervisor who receives a sexual harassment complaint, or has reason to believe an employee is being sexually harassed shall notify the Superintendent immediately. Any employee or supervisor who fails to report promptly allegations or claims of sexual harassment may be subject to disciplinary action.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAEAA

STAFF-STUDENT RELATIONS

The relationship between staff and students should be one of cooperation, understanding and mutual respect. The staff has the responsibility to provide an atmosphere conducive to learning and to motivate each student to perform to his or her capacity. The staff is expected to model the behavior expected of students in staff-student relationships.

All employees are prohibited from dating, courting or entering into a romantic or sexual relationship with any student enrolled in the school system regardless of the student's age. Employees engaging in such inappropriate

conduct will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal, and may be subject to criminal action.

Any employee, who has reason to believe that another employee is inappropriately involved with a student, as described above, is required to report this information to the superintendent immediately upon suspecting such behavior. An employee who fails to inform the superintendent of a suspected inappropriate relationship between an employee and a student may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. For the purposes of this policy, the term “employees” includes independent contractors and school safety officers but does not include student employees.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAF/JP

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Funds may be available for reimbursement of expenses incurred while attending professional development activities, but are not guaranteed. These reimbursements are governed by state regulations and require the **prior approval** of the principal (or other budget manager). Each employee is responsible for his or her own request for reimbursement. If prior approval for reimbursement is granted, requests for reimbursement must be filed within thirty (30) days after the travel period ends and be submitted to the principal or budget manager along with receipts. Employees will be responsible for unauthorized costs and any additional expenses incurred for personal preference or convenience.

TUTORING FOR PAY

The Board believes that by maintaining a high quality instructional staff and providing for a rich, varied curriculum, the need for individual tutoring is minimized. Principals and teachers will make every effort to help a student with his/her difficulties at school as a part of their usual and customary duties and responsibilities. These services shall be provided free of charge and shall be limited to the teachers’ normal work day.

Any teacher may enter into an agreement with parents for tutoring for a fee. The fee should be mutually agreed upon between the parent and the teacher. Principals, administrators, or the Board shall not be involved in establishing fees for tutoring services, are not a party to tutoring contracts between parents and teachers, and will not be liable for any disputes or claims that arise out of such contracts.

Teachers who tutor under an agreement with parents for a fee shall be prohibited from the following:

- tutoring a student who is assigned to that teacher during the current school year;
- tutoring during the regular work day;
- tutoring on school property; or
- using school supplies owned by the Hickory Public Schools.

The superintendent may establish additional rules or procedures for the purpose of eliminating potential conflicts of interest.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GBRGB

USE OF HPS PROPERTY

Employees are advised that property belonging to Hickory Public Schools, or to any individual school, may not be used for private or personal purposes. Such property includes (but is not limited to) telephones for long-distance calls; computers and printers; projectors; copy machines; vehicles; postage meters; stamps; tools; lawn mowers; gasoline; custodial supplies; and any other item, product, or material that has value. Misappropriation or misapplication of the private or personal use of items of this sort may lead to disciplinary action and/or prosecution. *Any employee who has a question should contact the Superintendent.*

USE OF ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION CAPABILITIES

The Hickory Public Schools Board of Education recognizes that technology and the Internet provide staff members the resources from thousands of computers and millions of individual people all over the world. Staff members may have access to email, information and news, advertisements, discussion groups, and university and government libraries around the world. Hickory Public Schools' email and Internet capabilities have been established to enable staff members to more efficiently perform their duties, to support research and education, and to extend the resources of the Hickory Public Schools.

Hickory Public Schools networks are to be used in a responsible, efficient, and legal manner and must be in support of the educational objectives and student behavior guidelines of the Hickory Public Schools. Transmission of any material in violation of any federal or state regulation is prohibited. To that end, all uses of electronic transmission capabilities must support the goals and educational philosophy of the school district. Employees should be aware that there is no reasonable expectation of privacy with regard to their use of, and transmission of information over, district-owned computers and computer networks. The school district reserves the right to monitor such use and transmission and to take appropriate disciplinary action if it can be reasonably determined that an employee has violated acceptable use standards.

Security on any computer system is a high priority, especially when the system involves many users. Attempts to log into the system as any other user or share a password will result in cancellation of user privileges. If a security problem is identified, notify the Technology Director. Network administrators may review files and communications to maintain system integrity and insure that users are using the systems responsibly. Users should not assume that files stored on district servers and hard drives of computers will always be private.

Disclaimer: Hickory Public Schools will not be responsible for any damages suffered, including the loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, service interruptions, or inaccurate information. The user accepts personal responsibility for any information obtained or delivered via the network, including the prohibited sharing of personal information such as home address, checking account, and credit card information.

Security: All employees are responsible for safeguarding information by keeping passwords private, changing passwords regularly to protect data, and choosing passwords that are not easily recognizable. For your protection, log off your account when leaving the computer. Comply with FERPA guidelines limiting access to personal student information. <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

Reference: Board of Education Policy IFAB

USE OF TECHNOLOGY

The Hickory Public Schools Board of Education provides its students and staff access to a variety of technological resources. The Board intends that students and employees benefit from these resources while remaining within the bounds of safe, legal and responsible use. Accordingly, the Board establishes this policy to govern student and employee use of school system technological resources. This policy applies regardless of whether such use occurs on or off school system property, and it applies to all school system technological resources, including but not limited to computer networks and connections, the resources, tools and learning environments made available by or on the networks, and all devices that connect to those networks.

Expectations for Use of School Technological Resources

Responsible use of school system technological resources is use that is ethical, respectful, academically honest and supportive of student learning. Each user has the responsibility to respect others in the school community and on the Internet. Users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. Employees must sign a

statement indicating that they understand and will strictly comply with these requirements. Failure to adhere to these requirements will result in disciplinary action, including revocation of user privileges. Willful misuse may result in disciplinary action and/or criminal prosecution under applicable state and federal law.

Rules for Use of School Technological Resources

1. School system technological resources are provided for school-related purposes only. Acceptable uses of such technological resources are limited to responsible, efficient and legal activities that support learning and teaching.
2. Under no circumstance may software purchased by the school system be copied for personal use.
3. Students and employees must comply with all applicable laws, including those relating to copyrights and trademarks, confidential information, and public records.
4. No user of technological resources, including a person sending or receiving electronic communications, may engage in creating, intentionally viewing, accessing, downloading, storing, printing or transmitting images, graphics (including still or moving pictures), sound files, text files, documents, messages or other material that is obscene, defamatory, profane, pornographic, harassing, abusive or considered to be harmful to minors.
5. The use of anonymous proxies to circumvent content filtering is prohibited.
6. Users may not install or use any Internet-based file sharing program designed to facilitate sharing of copyrighted material.
7. Users of technological resources may not send electronic communications fraudulently (i.e., by misrepresenting the identity of the sender).
8. Users must respect the privacy of others. School employees must not disclose on school system websites or web pages or elsewhere on the Internet any personally identifiable, private or confidential information concerning students (including names, addresses or pictures) without the written permission of a parent or guardian or an eligible student, except as otherwise permitted by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Users also may not forward or post personal communications without the author's prior consent.
9. Users may not intentionally or negligently damage computers, computer systems, electronic devices, software, computer networks or data of any user connected to school system technological resources.
10. Users may not create or introduce games, network communications programs or any foreign program or software onto any school system computer, electronic device or network that do not support the educational goals of the school system.
11. Users are prohibited from engaging in unauthorized or unlawful activities, such as "hacking" or using the computer network to gain or attempt to gain unauthorized or unlawful access to other computers, computer systems or accounts.
12. Users are prohibited from using another individual's ID or password for any technological resource without permission from the individual.
13. Users may not read, alter, change, block, execute or delete files or communications belonging to another user without the owner's express prior permission.
14. Employees shall not use passwords or user IDs for any data system for an unauthorized or improper purpose.
15. If a user identifies a security problem on a technological resource, he or she must immediately notify a system administrator.
16. Teachers shall make reasonable efforts to supervise students' use of the Internet during instructional time.
17. Views may be expressed on the Internet or other technological resources as representing the view of the school system or part of the school system only with prior approval by the superintendent or designee.

Reference: Board of Education Policy IFBGA

USE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS

The use of tobacco products is prohibited 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in all Hickory Public Schools' buildings, buses and other vehicles, and on school grounds. The prohibition applies to all students, staff, employees, visitors, guests, patrons, and vendors and their agents. A staff member shall not smoke or use smokeless tobacco at school functions while in direct supervision of students. According to G.S. 115C-407, a tobacco product is defined to include cigarettes, cigars, blunts, bidis, pipes, chewing tobacco, snuff, and any other items containing or reasonably resembling tobacco or tobacco products, including electronic cigarettes.

The consequences of a violation of this policy shall be a verbal warning by the immediate supervisor for a first offense; a written warning with a copy placed in the employee's personnel file for a second offense; and satisfactory participation in a tobacco-addiction rehabilitation program for a third offense.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GAF

VISITORS/VOLUNTEERS

Visitors

While the Board welcomes visitors to the schools, the paramount concern of the Board is to provide a safe and orderly learning environment in which disruptions to instructional time are kept to a minimum. The Superintendent and each principal shall establish and enforce reasonable rules to address this concern.

1. All school visitors during the school day must report immediately to the administrative office at the school to request and receive permission to be in the school. Each principal shall ensure that signs are posted in the school to notify visitors of this requirement.
2. School visitors are expected to comply with all school rules and school board policies.
3. Persons who are subject to Policy KMB, Registered Sex Offenders, must comply with the provisions of that policy.

When visitors to the school are disruptive to the educational environment and demonstrate unusual, threatening, or dangerous behavior, the principal or designee has the authority to order visitors to leave school property. If the disruptive visitor fails to comply with a request to leave school grounds, the principal shall notify law enforcement and may result in the filing of trespass charges or other charges as appropriate against the offending individual.

Volunteers

Volunteers (i.e. students' parents/guardians, members of the community, area businesses) are seen as extensions of the school staff. They contribute their time, talent, and resources through meaningful interactions with students, without compensation. Instructional programs are enhanced by school volunteers who serve at the will and pleasure of school administrators and staff members.

The following are procedures to be followed for the screening and supervision of volunteers, other than employees of the Hickory Public Schools.

Screening of school volunteers ensures the safety and well-being of the students and helps to identify individuals who may pose an unacceptable risk to the students. All school volunteers will be required to submit an application and the level of screening will be determined based on the tasks assigned to the school volunteer. All school volunteers are expected to be professional and dependable in their volunteer activities.

Reasonable background inquiries and checks are required for any volunteers (to include interns, student teachers, tutors or similar roles) who have unsupervised contact with students. Prior to the usage of any volunteer in a role which may allow unsupervised contact with students, the school principal will check appropriate references and shall also submit a signed release form by the prospective volunteer to the HPS Personnel Department. The signed form must include appropriate personal information to allow the district to complete an in-state criminal record check, and sufficiently detailed information to enable the district to investigate any out-of-state or federal arrests or convictions. New or updated forms and rechecks will be required annually for each successive year.

Reference: Board of Education Policy KMA, Appendix to Policy KMA

WEB PAGE DEVELOPMENT

Consistent with Technology Responsible Use policy, and in an effort to further the school system's objectives, the Board of Education encourages the use of the Internet as a means of providing accessible, accurate and timely information for employees, students, parents, and others in the community. The Internet affords the school system the opportunity to communicate with its communities by posting pertinent system and school information online. In addition to the school system's official website, individual schools and departments may create system-related school websites. The policy provides the standards that must be followed for development of all system-related websites. Failure to comply with this policy may result in the removal of a web page or website from the Internet.

Administration and Editorial Control

All employees responsible for creating, developing, maintaining, editing or approving a system-related website shall act legally, responsibly, and ethically in providing education resources and information to support the mission and curriculum of the school system. Such persons shall abide by the generally accepted rules of website etiquette, board policy and regulations established by the superintendent.

Personal Websites

The school system is not responsible for personal websites or web pages created or maintained by students, employees, parents, groups or organizations. Personal websites or web pages are not considered system-related websites or web pages and are not covered by the provisions of this policy. The superintendent may use any means available to request the removal of personal websites or web pages that substantially disrupt the school environment or that utilize school system or individual school names, logos or trademarks without permission.

Reference: Board of Education Policy IFBGC

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Salary Administration

All employees are required to complete the paperwork for employment and benefits. **Failure to complete the paperwork may negate or delay an employee's eligibility status for benefits and result in a delay in receiving the first or subsequent paychecks.**

Pay day for employees will be the last working day of each calendar month.

- Part-time and hourly-paid HPS employees, including those who work in more than one position, will receive paychecks at the end of each month based on the number of hours actually worked. Therefore, pay for these employees always runs two weeks behind.
- A base supplement of 7 percent of state base pay is provided by Hickory Schools to all teachers. One-half of the supplement is included in the November check and one-half in the June check.
- A 2 percent performance-based supplement is available to all teachers based on school and teacher performances.
- Classified employees' step increases are not guaranteed each year. If an error is found, salary adjustments will be made for current school year only.
- To be eligible for a step increase, employees must complete six months of service (on the job or using paid leave) during the preceding school year. Disability does not count toward service credit.

Direct Deposit

- Direct deposit is mandatory for all new employees.
- Direct deposit receipts will not be printed. Employees may view their paycheck information (paystubs) online, by visiting [Employee Portal](#). Instructions for logging in to the employee portal may be obtained online. Any questions should be directed to the Payroll Office at 322-2855.

Installments

The option for ten-month teachers to choose to be paid in twelve payments rather than ten is available. Teachers choosing this option must submit the proper form to the finance office prior to the 1st day of school (forms available online). Once this option has been taken, it will remain in effect until revoked by the employee in writing (form available online) or if the employee goes in out of pay status for any reason.

State Employees' Credit Union Summer Cash Account

Ten and eleven month employees may choose to enroll in the State Employees' Credit Union (SECU) Summer Cash Account as a structured method to save for summer payroll checks. The Summer Cash Account is available to all SECU members who work less than 12 months per school year. During the working months, a payroll deduction is made from the employees' check and forwarded to the SECU and deposited in their Summer Cash Account. Funds from the Summer Cash Account (including the interest that is earned on their savings) will be automatically transferred into the requested SECU checking or share account in the non-working month(s). Additional information and questions regarding the SECU Summer Cash Account should be directed to any of the SECU branches.

Longevity Pay

Principals, assistant principals and classified, regular full-time and part-time (20 hours or more a week) are eligible for yearly longevity payments after completing ten years of State of North Carolina service. **As of the 2014-15 school year, teachers and instructional support no longer earn longevity benefits. The NC General Assembly incorporated these funds in to the salary schedules to provide higher salaries at each step.** Longevity payment is calculated according to a scale based upon annual state salary and years of qualifying service and is paid during the anniversary pay period.

<u>Years of State Service</u>	<u>Longevity Pay Rate</u>
10 to 14 years	1.50 %
15 to 19 years	2.25%
20 to 24 years	3.25%
25 or more years	4.50%

INSURANCE

Benefits listed are subject to change. The information provided in this handbook is intended to be general in nature and for illustrative purposes only. The plan document and summary plan description for each plan serves as the legal authorities for that plan.

State Health Plan

IT IS THE EMPLOYEES RESPONSIBILITY TO SIGN UP FOR THE STATE HEALTH PLAN AND OTHER BENEFITS WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THE DATE OF THEIR HIRE LETTER WITH HICKORY PUBLIC SCHOOLS. THIS IS IN ACCORDANCE TO POLICY AND PROCEDURES SET BY THE BENEFIT PLANS. PLEASE UNDERSTAND YOUR BENEFITS WILL BE FORFIETED AND YOU WILL NOT BE ELIGIBLE AGAIN UNTIL THE NEXT ANNUAL OPEN ENROLLMENT. ALSO, WAITING PERIODS MAY APPLY.

All permanent full-time employees of the Hickory Public Schools are eligible for group insurance. Employees may elect to have their spouse and/or children covered by the same plan by paying a set monthly premium. **Children up to age 26 are eligible for coverage.** The additional premium is collected by payroll deduction one month in advance and is handled as a pre-tax salary reduction.

Health Insurance is provided to all permanent, full-time employees by the State Health Plan and is currently administered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina. The insurance provides coverage for hospital and medical expenses. For comprehensive information visit the State Health Plan web site (<http://www.shpnc.org>). The annual enrollment period for health insurance is determined by the State Benefits Office. Claims under the State Health Plan should be filed as soon as possible after services are received. It is the employee's responsibility to file claims. Claims may be filed by medical professionals. If needed, claim forms are available on the State Health Plan web site.

Affordable Care Act or Health Reform begins January 1, 2015. The State Health Plan meets the HCR requirements, and enrolled employees will not be subject to the individual mandate tax penalty.

High Deductible Health Plan: Section 35.16 of SL 2014-100 (SB 744 Appropriations Act) establishes a new health benefit eligibility category for nonpermanent full-time employees to comply with the Affordable Care Act.

North Carolina General Statute 135-45.12(d)(4) states that an employee who is paid for less than 12 months in a year and who terminates employment and is not employed by another State-covered employer under the Plan at the beginning of the next work year, will refund the former employer the amount the employer paid for the employee's coverage on the Plan during the non-paycheck months.

Hickory Public Schools, in partnership with the State Health Plan, has implemented a new benefits enrollment system for state health insurance. This new system replaces the paper forms used in the past and will be accessible from any computer with Internet access which is available 24/7 to view current benefit information, get information on benefit offerings, view information on different benefit topics, enroll, and make changes to benefits.

How to enroll or make changes online?

- Go to <https://hickoryschools.hrintouch.com>
 - Once you are logged in, simply follow the step by step instructions to enroll or make changes to your benefits. You can also view the [Instructions for Completing Your Benefit Enrollment Online](#) for detailed information on how to enroll or make changes.

You must keep your address current with the State Health Plan through the eBenefitsNow online process. For assistance, you may call customer service at 1-855-859-0966. The website address is <https://hickoryschools.hrintouch.com>.

For questions regarding the online application, please call 1-866-239-1055 for assistance. For questions regarding insurance benefits, please contact the Finance Department or the NC State Health Plan's customer service at 1-888-234-2416.

NC HealthSmart Wellness Programs

The NC HealthSmart Wellness Programs are online tools to help employees manage their personal health. Visit www.shpnc.org and click on NC HealthSmart. The NC HealthSmart web site includes:

1. Health Risk Assessment (HRA) survey
2. Personal Action Plan based on your HRA results
3. Lifestyle improvement programs
4. Health information references for any health or medical question

Cafeteria (Flexible) Benefits

Hickory Public Schools permanent full-time employees are offered a cafeteria (flexible) benefits plan. **This plan offers employees an opportunity to save money by paying for non-reimbursed medical expenses, dependent care expenses, dental, supplemental hospital, cancer insurance, and vision insurance with pre-tax dollars. Supplemental disability insurance, long term care and whole life insurance are offered only on an after-tax basis.** The plan year for the Cafeteria (Flexible) Benefits program is August 1 through July 31 of each year and enrollment periods are in the spring of each year. Once enrolled, **NO** changes in coverage options may be made during the plan year for pre-tax coverage unless there is a qualifying event. 403b and 457 retirement savings plans are also offered thru our third-party administrator. Additional information is available from your Plan Benefit Descriptions booklet or the Finance Department.

Unemployment Insurance

Public school employees are entitled to unemployment insurance. Benefit amounts are based on a percentage of a person's earnings, up to the allowable maximum. Generally, 10-month employees by statute are not considered unemployed during the summer months or when school is not in session. The Division of Employment Security determines unemployment eligibility and it is the claimant's responsibility to ensure that he/she provides truthful and accurate information during the application process. It is advisable to contact the Division of Employment Security for information regarding rights and responsibilities.

Worker's Compensation

All public school employees are entitled to receive Workers' Compensation under the North Carolina Workers' Compensation Act. Employees must have suffered an accidental injury or contracted an occupational disease in the course of employment to be eligible for medical payments, compensation for lost salary, or death benefits under this program.

When an employee is injured on the job, he/she must ensure that the immediate supervisor has knowledge of the injury **immediately** following the accident. The employer's Report of Injury to Employee (Form 19) **must be** completed and signed by the employee's supervisor and forwarded to the Benefits Office immediately. Employees will be given a list of approved medical facilities to be used for their **first** or **initial** visit. Any employee involved in any work related accident resulting in an injury requiring medical attention shall be drug tested within 24 hours after the accident.

If an injury requires medical attention, **an employee must be seen first or initially by a medical doctor at a medical facility approved by our Workers' Compensation Carrier.** Failure to use such a facility may result in delayed payment to the doctor and may result in the employee being responsible for full payment of any and/or all medical bills. Any treatment needed after the **first** or **initial** visit can only be **authorized by our Worker's Compensation Carrier.**

Hickory Public Schools has an early return to work program which provides work for employees who are injured on the job, and are placed on restricted work duty by a physician.

Episode of Violence

Any permanent full-time employee who suffers an injury and is disabled while engaged in the course of his or her employment may receive full salary if the injury or disability arose from an episode of violence and the employee did not participate in or provoke the violence. The employee meets the definition of permanence by having been in full payroll status for six (6) consecutive months. The salary can continue for one year, the continuation of the disability, or the time during which the employee is unable to engage in his or her employment because of the injury, whichever period is shorter. While receiving regular salary under this provision, the employee is not eligible to receive weekly salary benefits under Workers' Compensation. However, the employee may receive medical, hospital, drug and related expense payments from Workers' Compensation if applicable. The employee is not required to use any paid leave (sick, annual, personal, etc.) if the approved absence is due to an episode of violence. An employee who has experienced an episode of violence must complete the same forms as in a Workers' Compensation claim. Refer to the Workers' Compensation section.

Liability Insurance

Excess Professional Liability coverage is provided to all employees up to \$1 million per occurrence with a \$1 million aggregate. Coverage for consultation with an attorney regarding violation of professional or employment related right is provided at \$2,500 per claim, subject to a \$5,000 aggregate per employee, per policy year. Reasonable and necessary attorney's fees and costs incurred by an employee arising from a criminal proceeding alleging a criminal act was committed within the professional activities of an employee are covered up to \$50,000. Employee must be found "not guilty" of all criminal charges. Liability Insurance for Public School Employees is provided to all employees, including volunteers of public and charter schools. There is no enrollment process, nor is there a fee or premium charge to employees.

Information on how to file a claim and other questions is available at www.professionalliabilitync.com. For additional information or questions, contact Eileen Townsend, Department of Public Instruction, 919-807-3522, eileen.townsend@dpi.nc.gov.

MISCELLANEOUS BENEFITS

401(k)

All full-time employees are eligible to participate in the 401(k) program administered by the State of North Carolina through Prudential Retirement. Contact the Benefits Office for information and enrollment forms. Information may also be obtained from the Prudential Retirement web site at www.retirement.prudential.com/cws/ncplans or call 1-866-627-5267 or email ncplans@prudential.com.

Social Security

All employees participate in the social security system. Contributions are made by both employees and employer. Benefits may include retirement income, pensions, disability payments, and survivor's insurance. The tax rate for contributions is determined annually.

RETIREMENT BENEFITS & SUPPLEMENTAL RETIREMENT PLAN

Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System

All permanent full-time employees are required to join the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System. Eligible employees contribute 6 percent of their gross salary (pre-tax) to the Retirement System. Hickory Public Schools may make a contribution as established by the North Carolina General Assembly for each permanent full-time employee.

Employees Hired On or Before July 31, 2011

After five (5) years of creditable service, an employee hired prior to August 1, 2011, is considered "vested" and may be eligible for benefits from the retirement system. Full, unreduced retirement benefits may be received at age 65 with five years of service; age 60 with 25 years of service, or at any age with 30 years of service. Reduced benefits may be received at age 50 with 20 years of service or age 60 with five years of service.

If an employee was hired before October 1, 2006, and meets the age and service requirements for full or reduced retirement, the employee may be eligible for free health insurance depending on the plan selected. For employees first hired on or after October 1, 2006:

- Full coverage as retired employees requires 20 or more years of retirement service credit.
- Employees with 10 years but less than 20 years of retirement service credit will be eligible for coverage under the Plan on a partially contributory basis (50/50).
- Retired teachers, State employees and members of the General Assembly with less than 10 years of retirement service credit are eligible for coverage under the Plan on a fully contributory basis if first hired on or after Oct 1, 2006.

Employees Hired On or After August 1, 2011

This summer, the NC General Assembly reduced the creditable service requirement for vesting for active employees hired on or after August 1, 2011 to five (5) years from the previous ten (10) years of creditable service.

Retirement Effective Dates

All retirements are effective the first day of the month. Licensed employees are asked to sign a resignation form and to give a 30 calendar day notice, so as to provide a smooth transition. Classified employees are asked to sign a resignation form and to give a 14 calendar day notice. Principals and administrators are asked to sign a resignation form and to give a 60 calendar day notice.

Beneficiaries

It is extremely important that permanent full-time employees designate beneficiaries with the retirement system. If the beneficiaries are not on file upon death, benefits transfer to the employee's estate. Change of retirement beneficiaries is possible at any time prior to retirement and under certain option provisions after retirement. If an employee has less than ten (10) years of service, the beneficiary(ies) can be changed through ORBIT, the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System's secure Web site. If an employee has more than ten (10) years of service, the beneficiary (ies) must be changed by completing Form 2RC "Designating Beneficiary(ies) for Retirement System Contributions" and Form 2DB-"Designating Beneficiary(ies) for the Death Benefit".

Refund of Retirement Contributions

Employees who are involuntarily terminated or resign after five or more years of Retirement System membership may withdraw their retirement contributions, plus any interest they have earned. Persons who voluntarily resign with less than five years of membership in the Retirement System may withdraw only the funds they contributed. All retirements are effective the first day of the month. *For more information, contact the Finance Department or the Retirement System, 1-877-627-3287.*

Death Benefit

A death benefit between \$25,000 and \$50,000 is payable to a designated beneficiary after an employee has completed one year (365 days) as a contributing member of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System. The amount paid is determined by the employee's annual salary. Employee retirement contributions are also paid to the designated beneficiary. The death benefit remains in place for 180 days following an employee's resignation.

ORBIT

Online Retirement Benefits through Integrated Technology is provided by the North Carolina Retirement System. Active employees may register and gain access to current account information through ORBIT. For more detailed information, visit the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System's web site at www.myncretirement.com.

Disability

The Disability Income Plan of North Carolina provides short- and long-term disability benefits at the employer's expense for permanent employees who are members of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System, and who meet certain state requirements. The short-term disability benefits are available to disabled employees with at least one year of contributory retirement service. Short-term disability benefits begin on the 61st day of disability and provide monthly income equal to 50 percent of one-twelfth of the annual base salary and longevity, normally for up to 12 months, with a maximum of \$3,000 per month.

After exhausting short-term disability benefits, employees with at least five years of contributory retirement service and disability certification by a state medical review board may become eligible for long-term disability income benefits. These benefits provide monthly income equal to 65 percent of one-twelfth of the annual base salary and longevity up to \$3,900 per month. Long-term disability benefits continue until the end of the disability or the earliest date a person becomes eligible for unreduced retirement benefits.

Benefits from the disability income plan are subject to certain offsets for benefits received from other programs. *The Retirement System, Division of the Office of the State Treasurer, can provide more information at 1-877-627-3287 or email nc.retirement@nctreasurer.com.*

Full-time public school employees injured in the course of employment through an episode of violence are entitled to full salary during disability for up to one year. *The Business & Finance Office can provide additional information.*

LEAVES AND ABSENCES

Hickory Public Schools' employees are encouraged to utilize available leave benefit options when necessary. However, employees should carefully consider the impact that their absence(s) will have on the overall instructional program and upon the achievement of students. Even the best substitute cannot provide the high level of service provided by the regular employee. Every employee absence diminishes the overall quality of the instructional program.

In addition, unused accumulated sick leave and/or annual vacation leave can significantly enhance an employee's financial entitlements at retirement or upon separation from employment with the school district.

Short-Term Leaves of Absence

A leave of absence for a period of up to ten (10) workdays will be considered a short-term leave of absence. A short-term leave of absence may be with or without pay.

Long-term leave of absence

A leave of absence for a period exceeding ten (10) workdays will be considered a long-term leave of absence. A long-term leave of absence may be with or without pay. Hickory Public Schools requires the employee to use available paid leave before going on leave without pay.

Continuous Leave of More Than 10 days (Paid or UnPaid)

An employee must comply with the notice and verification requirements as provided in policy GCRB, for continuous leave of more than 10 days. The requirements include contacting the Human Resources Department to request approval of a leave (paid or unpaid) and completion of all FMLA forms.

Reference: Board of Education Policy GBRH/GBRI

Annual Leave

Permanent full-time and part-time employees who work at least 20 hours per week earn vacation (annual) leave. To earn vacation leave in a given month, employees must be working or on paid leave during half or more of the work days in that month. Eligible part-time permanent employees earn leave equal to their percentage of full-time employment. (*An employee working in two or more part-time positions may not earn more than the benefits allowed for one full-time position.*) State regulations and local policies govern when vacation leave may be taken. In addition, supervisors must approve use of annual leave. Unused vacation leave can be accumulated and a maximum of 30 days carried forward to the next fiscal year, which begins on July 1. On June 30 of each year, any accumulated days of vacation leave in excess of 30 days are converted to sick leave days. Vacation leave will be transferred when employees transfer among local educational agencies, and may be transferred to state agencies if they are willing to accept the leave (employee must inform Personnel/Payroll if he/she is being employed by another unit); otherwise, employees leaving the public schools will be paid for up to 30 days of accumulated leave. In case of death, the employee's estate will receive payment for any accumulated vacation leave up to 30 days. Annual leave may be taken in one-half days or whole days, but must be accrued before it can be used. The rate of earning is based on the length of State service as follows:

<u>Years of State Service</u>	<u>Days of Leave earned per month of employment</u>
Less than 5 years	1.17
5 but less than 10 years	1.42
10 but less than 15 years	1.67
15 but less than 20 years	1.92
20 years or more	2.17

- Any compensatory time accrued **must** be taken before using annual leave on workdays or other arranged use of annual leave days. Compensatory time cannot be used in lieu of the 10 required annual leave days specified in the calendar.

Sick Leave

Permanent employees who are working or on paid leave for half or more of the work days in a monthly pay period earn sick leave at the rate of one day per month (*eight hours maximum*). Eligible permanent part-time employees earn sick leave equal to their percentage of full-time employment. Sick leave may be used in one-half days or whole days and may be granted for: (1) personal illness, injury, or other temporary disability; (2) illness in the employee's immediate family (*spouse, children, parents, and dependents living in employee's household, and step relationships* that necessitates the employee's attendance; (3) death in the immediate family (*spouse, children, parents, brothers, sisters, grandparents and grandchildren, step, half, and in-laws*); and (4) medical appointments. Sick leave may be accumulated indefinitely and is transferable among local school systems. Sick leave also may be transferred to a state agency, community college, or technical institute if they will accept it.

Extended Sick Leave

Teachers are provided up to 20 days each year of extended sick leave, less the required substitute deduction as established by the State Department of Public Instruction (currently \$50 per day whether a substitute is used or not), for prolonged *personal* illness. This leave may be used after all available sick leave and vacation leave has been exhausted, but it cannot be accumulated. Extended sick leave is separate from regular sick leave. All extended sick leave must be approved by the Superintendent.

Voluntary Shared Leave

The purpose of voluntary shared leave (donated leave) is to provide economic relief for employees who are likely to suffer financial hardship because of a prolonged absence or frequent short-time absences, caused by a serious medical condition. The serious medical condition must be documented by a medical doctor, and follow the definition and guidelines as set forth in the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993.

Permanent full-time and part-time employees are eligible to receive donated leave. The employee must exhaust all available leave before using donated leave. Employees who are approved by the Superintendent to receive donated leave may receive annual leave or up to 5 sick leave days from any employee in their own school system. With the approval of the Superintendent, annual leave and/or sick leave may be received from an immediate family member in any school system. For more information, contact the Payroll Department.

Holidays

Holidays are determined by the State Board of Education. The local board of education determines when holidays are scheduled in the school calendar. The Hickory Public Schools develops and adopts calendars each year that include the appropriate holidays.

Paid holidays are granted only to employees who are in the position on the day on which the holiday is scheduled or in pay status for one-half or more of the workdays of the month. Temporary employees are not entitled to paid holidays.

SPECIAL LEAVES WITH PAY

Jury Duty: When permanent school employees are absent from work to serve on a jury, no deduction is made from their regular salaries. Employees are entitled to their regular compensation plus any fees received for jury duty.

Court Attendance by Duty or Subpoena: Full-time or part-time public school employees retain full salary for absences from school due to court attendance related to their official duty.

Court Attendance for Personal Reasons: Full-time or part-time public school employees who are absent for appearance in court as plaintiffs, defendants or witnesses for personal matters, even if subpoenaed, will not be entitled to receive any salary payment for those days, unless they are using appropriate earned leave.

Military Leave

Leave with pay is granted to members of reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces for certain periods of active duty training and for state military duty. Leave with pay is extended to full- or part-time permanent school employees, not to exceed 15 working days during the deferral fiscal year (October 1 through September 30), for annual training and military maneuvers.

Reference: Public Schools of North Carolina Benefits and Employment Policy Manual, Section 10; Board of Education Policies GBRH/GBRI & GBRID.

Personal Leave

Classroom teachers and school media specialists earn personal leave at the rate of .20 days for each full month of employment, not to exceed two days per year. Personal leave may be accumulated without any applicable maximum until June 30 of each year. A teacher may carry forward to July 1 a maximum of five days of personal leave; the remainder of the teacher's personal leave shall be converted to sick leave on June 30.

Personal leave may be used only upon the authorization of the teacher's immediate supervisor. A teacher shall not take personal leave on the first day the teacher is required to report for the school year on a required teacher workday, on days scheduled for State testing, or on the day before or the day after a holiday or scheduled vacation day. On all other days, if the request is made at least five days in advance, the request shall be automatically granted subject to the availability of a substitute teacher, and the teacher cannot be required to provide a reason for the request.

Eligible employees using accrued personal leave will receive full salary less the required substitute deduction, except for using personal leave on non-protected teacher workdays. Eligible employees using accrued personal leave on non-protected teacher workdays shall receive full salary. If no substitute is hired when a teacher takes personal leave, LEAs shall refund the \$50 deduction.

Parental Involvement Leave

Parental involvement leave is a special leave with pay. Full-time employees are eligible for up to four hours of paid leave each fiscal year to promote the employees' involvement in their children's education. This leave may be used to meet with the teachers of an employee's children, step-children, or children over whom the employee has custody. Employees also may use this leave to attend academic school functions in which their children are participating.

Parental Involvement Leave shall be taken at times mutually agreed upon by the employee and his/her supervisor and may require a written request 48 hours in advance (*substitute monies are not available for Parental Involvement Leave*). Leave not taken in a fiscal year will be forfeited.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) allows eligible employees to take 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for their own serious medical condition or that of an immediate family member. In addition the FMLA allows eligible employees to take the same job-protected leave for the birth of a child or the placement of a child with the employee through adoption or foster care. Employers must maintain any employer-paid health benefits while the employee is on FMLA leave. During any period of unpaid FMLA leave, the employee is responsible for any premium payments normally deducted from their paycheck for extended benefits. It is the

employee's responsibility to make necessary arrangements through the Finance Department to continue these benefits. FMLA may be applied retroactively.

Eligibility for FMLA Leave

To be eligible for FMLA benefits, an individual must be employed by Hickory Public Schools for at least 12 months (not necessarily consecutive), and work at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of FMLA leave.

1. If an employee is eligible for FMLA leave, he/she may take a total of 12 weeks of FMLA leave during any 12-month period for the following reasons:
 - the birth and care of a newborn child,
 - the placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care,
 - to care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition,
 - the employee's own serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the functions of his/her job, or
 - a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent is on active duty in the armed forces or has been notified of an impending call or order to active duty).

If an employee is eligible, he/she may take up to 12 weeks of FMLA leave during any 12-month period for any one or more of the previously listed eligible reasons. The FMLA leave year is a rolling twelve-month period measured forward from the date the employee first takes FMLA leave after completion of any previous FMLA leave year. Leave may be taken intermittently or on a reduced-leave schedule when medically necessary for treatment related to a serious health condition or when related to a qualifying exigency arising out of active duty service.

2. Additionally, if an employee is eligible for FMLA leave, he/she may take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave during a single 12-month period to care for a spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin who is a service member suffering from serious injury or illness incurred while on active duty. During the single 12-month period, an eligible employee is entitled to a combined total of 26 weeks of FMLA leave.

Exhausting Other Leave

Hickory Public Schools requires an employee to use available paid leave during the twelve (12) week FMLA leave period before taking leave without pay. Accrued sick leave will be used when FMLA leave is taken because of serious health conditions.

Notice of Need for FMLA Leave

The employee must provide at least 30 days advanced notice before FMLA leave is to begin, if the need for leave is foreseeable. Notice should be in writing and given to the employee's immediate supervisor. If 30 days notice is not practical under the circumstances, or the need for leave is not foreseeable, the employee must give notice as soon as practicable. The employee must tell his/her supervisor whether he/she needs continuous or intermittent leave, or a reduced schedule.

Medical Certification

Any leave request based on a family member's or employee's own serious health condition must be supported by certification from a health care provider. The employee must provide a copy of the certification to the Personnel Department in a timely manner. It is the employee's responsibility to provide the appropriate medical certification within fifteen (15) days of the absence.

The employee may also be asked to report periodically on his/her status and intent to return to work while on FMLA

leave. The employee will also be required to furnish a fitness for duty certificate prior to being restored to employment if FMLA leave is taken for personal serious illness.

Process for requesting Family Medical Leave

Employee should submit letter to his/her Supervisor requesting leave of absence including medical certification. The letter should be submitted at least thirty (30) days in advance of the beginning of the requested leave if the need is foreseeable. In emergency situations, the appropriate forms and documentation shall be submitted as soon as is reasonably possible. For employee's own serious health condition, the employee's doctor must complete the "U.S. Department of Labor Form" WH-380-E. Forms are available on the Hickory Public Schools website http://www.hickoryschools.net/departments/human_resources/resources/.

An employee may apply for a medical leave to care to care for the employee's **immediate** family member with a serious health condition. The employee's immediate family member's doctor must complete the "U.S. Department of Labor Form" WH-380-F. Forms are available on the Hickory Public Schools website http://www.hickoryschools.net/departments/human_resources/resources/.

Parental Leave

All full-time permanent or part-time permanent employees may take a leave of absence without pay for up to twelve (12) calendar months to care for a newborn child, a newly adopted child or a child placed in foster care. Hickory Public Schools may determine when the leave will begin or end, based on a consideration of the welfare of the students and the need for continuity of service.

Benefits under the Family and Medical Leave Act are available to eligible employees requesting Parental Leave. The employee's doctor must complete the "U.S. Department of Labor Form" WH-380-E. Forms are available on the Hickory Public Schools website http://www.hickoryschools.net/departments/human_resources/resources/.

Military Caregiver Leave

An employee who is the spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin of a member of the Armed Forces can take up to 26 weeks of job-protected **unpaid** leave in a single 12 month period to care for the service member if the service member is recovering from a serious injury or illness sustained in the line of active duty. This also applies to veterans if the veteran was on active duty within five (5) years of the date the veteran needs care. The leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary. The service member's doctor must complete the "U.S. Department of Labor Form" WH-385. Forms are available on the Hickory Public Schools website http://www.hickoryschools.net/departments/human_resources/resources/.

Qualifying Exigency Leave

An employee can take up to 12 weeks of job-protected **unpaid** leave in a 12-month period because of any "qualifying exigency" arising out of the fact that an employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent has been notified of an impending call to active duty or has been deployed to a foreign country as a member of the Armed Forces. This applies to **any** member of the Armed Forces whether Reservists, National Guard or Regular Armed Forces.

Eligible employees may take qualifying exigency leave for any of the following reasons:

- 1 short term deployment;
- 2 military events and related activities;
- 3 childcare and school activities;
- 4 financial and legal arrangements;
- 5 counseling;
- 6 rest and recuperation;
- 7 post-deployment activities;
- 8 additional activities; or
- 9 care for a military member's parent who is incapable of self-care when the care is necessitated by the member's covered active duty.

Supporting documentation maybe needed for approval of leave. An employee may apply for a Qualifying Exigency leave by completing the “U.S. Department of Labor Form” WH-384. Forms are available on the Hickory Public Schools website http://www.hickoryschools.net/departments/human_resources/resources/.

Reference: NC Benefits and Employment Policy Manual, Board Policy GBRICA

OTHER LEAVES *WITHOUT* PAY

Leave of Absence

Public school employees may be granted leaves of absence without pay for periods determined by the local administrative unit. This leave should be requested in writing at least thirty (30) days prior to the requested leave to ensure timely handling of the request and must comply with regulations adopted by the local school system. Employees will not be approved a leave without pay on student days, unless the situation is extreme or an emergency. If the leave is approved, the employee may retain medical insurance provided the employee pay both the employer’s and the employee’s portions of the insurance premium. *The Finance Department and the Human Resources Department will assist with the proper procedures for applying for a leave of absence.*

Reference: NC Benefits and Employment Policy Manual, Board Policy GBRICA

LICENSURE AND EVALUATION INFORMATION

Licensure ensures that students in our school system are served by educators with the knowledge and skills to deliver a sound educational program. Certified employees of the Hickory Public School System are required to hold the appropriate license for the subject, grade level, and/or area of assignment. It is important to note that the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction dictates licensure requirements, and our school system must comply with the regulations established by the state.

Obtaining a License

All certified employees are required to file for a license within 30 days of employment. Salary placement may be at the bottom of the teacher scale (or even at the substitute teacher rate) until a completed licensure application packet has been evaluated by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

Teachers with questions pertaining to their licensure requirements and status should contact the Human Resources Department.

License Renewal Guidelines

State law requires all employees in licensed positions to hold appropriate licensure for their subject, grade level or professional assignment. The maintenance of a valid license in the area of assignment is the responsibility of the employee. Personnel who hold licenses which expire during a particular year must furnish documentation to the Personnel Department of completion of the required renewal credits, Praxis Test scores, semester hours of coursework, etc. In addition, the holder of the expiring license must provide information on whether or not he/she has been convicted of a felony or crime other than a minor traffic offense since his/her first NC license was issued.

Recent state legislation has changed the number of Continuing Education Units (CEUs) required for licensure renewal from 15 over a five-year period to 7.5 over the same time span for licensed employees who have a license expiration date of June 1, 2011 or later. The following is a breakdown of the required 7.5 renewal credits:

- **1 renewal credit in their academic subject areas** (aligned to Standard 3 or 4)
- **1 renewal credit addressing literacy** (aligned to Standard 3)
- **5.5 general credits (not to include years of experience)** at the discretion of the LEA. (Hickory Public Schools require one renewal credit in technology.)

(*Includes employees in the following areas: Teachers of students in grades Pre-K through 12, Art, Music, PE, Counselors, Social Workers, Media Specialists, Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Curriculum Facilitators, Curriculum Specialists, Exceptional Children's Teachers, English as a Second Language, Advanced Learner Teachers, etc.)

Teachers completing the National Board Certification process earn all 7.5 credits. Those who are in the ten year national board renewal cycle may earn two credits (one for academic content and one for literacy).

School administrators must also earn 7.5 renewal credits during each five-year renewal cycle with three renewal credits that align in the areas of instructional, human resources, and managerial leader, and one renewal credit in technology.

Renewal credit cannot be accepted in increments of less than .5 units. **PRIOR APPROVAL** is **REQUIRED** to earn renewal credit for all activities which are offered by any entity other than Hickory Public Schools.

Renewal credit may be obtained through the following activities:

- college or university credit;
- earning National Board for Professional Teaching Standards certification (7.5 units of renewal credit);
- completing National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification renewal (1 ceu in content and 1 ceu in literacy);
- completion of activities that meet the following criteria (one unit of renewal credit per ten clock hours):
 - The activity shall be accomplished in a minimum of 10 clock hours over time with on-the-job

- application, feedback, and follow-up.
- The activity shall have identified goals and objectives that are designed to increase knowledge or skills and align with the expectations of the North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards.
 - The activity shall include focused content and instruction that are sequenced to develop specified competencies.
 - The activity shall be developed by instructional personnel approved by the sponsoring school unit or employer.
 - The activity shall include a focused evaluation designed to gauge the change in learner knowledge or skill and to guide the development of future programs.

Experience credit is no longer awarded for renewal purposes. Renewal credit can no longer be obtained through independent study.

Disclosure of Criminal Convictions

Effective with five-year licenses, the holder of the expiring license must provide information on whether he/she has been convicted of a felony or crime other than a minor traffic offense since the first N.C. license was issued. The state-mandated form providing this information must be completed and on file for the license extension to be valid.

National Board Certification

CEU credit is earned for the completion of National Board Certification. Teachers may choose to use the CEU's for the current renewal cycle or "bank" them for the next renewal cycle. In order to receive credit, the teacher submits a copy of the congratulatory letter from NBPTS to the Personnel Office and indicates if the renewal credits are to be applied to the current renewal cycle or the next renewal cycle. Teachers may not use a portion of the NBPTS CEU credit for the current renewal cycle and "bank" a portion for the next cycle. Completion of the process for National Board Certification is acceptable to complete renewal requirements for an individual's next renewal cycle, even if the individual does not achieve national certification.

Professional Development

HPS employee participation in professional development is managed through the SEA System, a computer database. Directions for using the SEA system can be found on the professional development page of the HPS website and at: <http://www.seasystem.net/cgi-bin/hps/>

Employees wishing to receive CEUs and / or reimbursement for professional development must complete the SEA system process as listed:

- By submitting a proposal through the SEA system prior to attending professional development.
- Completing the series of follow-up surveys after the professional development event.

After fully completing the SEA System process, CEU credits from in-district activities will be posted to the CEU database (link found on main HPS webpage) and professional development reimbursement requests will be processed.

Employees must submit a **certificate of participation** to the district professional development coordinator for all out-of-district professional development activities (conferences, workshops, college coursework) for the CEUs to be posted.

CEUs from professional development activities will be posted within approximately 45 days of the ending date of the professional development event. In order to manage the data flow into the SEA System and the CEU database, credits from any in-district professional development event will be entered up to a six month time period.

NOTE: CEU credits for in-district activities will be forfeited after six months if the SEA System process is not followed.

EVALUATIONS

Evaluation Process

Evaluation of licensed employees is a mandated duty and responsibility of the administration. The Superintendent is authorized to establish procedures for evaluating licensed employees. All teachers and other licensed staff shall be evaluated according to any rules and regulations established by the Superintendent and any rules and regulations required by law or by the North Carolina State Board of Education. School principals or other evaluators may supplement the evaluation process as appropriate.

Each person employed by the Hickory Public Schools and defined as a “teacher” by G.S. 115C-325(a)(6) shall be evaluated at least annually in accordance with law. A copy of the summative evaluation shall be placed in the employee’s personnel file.

Classified employees will be evaluated at least annually and may be evaluated at any time. Classified employees may be placed on an action plan to improve the employee’s performance and will also constitute a warning to the classified employee that the employee must improve his or her performance in order to continue working for the school system.

Performance Growth Plans

An individual Growth Plan will be developed and reviewed at least annually. An Improvement Plan, which includes Monitored Growth Plan, Directed Growth Plan or Mandatory Improvement Plan, refers to any written strategy designed to help an employee improve or gain greater competence.

North Carolina General Statute 115C-333 and Board of Education Policy GBIA require an Improvement Plan for any licensed employee who receives a rating of below standard, unsatisfactory, developing or not demonstrated on any function of the employee’s performance evaluation, unless the Superintendent recommends dismissal, demotion or non-renewal of the employee.

If, in an observation report or year-end evaluation, a teacher receives a rating that is below proficient or otherwise represents unsatisfactory or below standard performance on any standard that the teacher was expected to demonstrate, the principal may place the teacher on a mandatory improvement plan as defined in G.S. 115C-333(b)(1). If at any time a teacher engages in inappropriate conduct or performs inadequately to such a degree that such conduct or performance causes substantial harm to the educational environment, and immediate dismissal or demotion is not appropriate, then the principal may immediately institute a mandatory improvement plan regardless of any ratings on previous evaluations. The principal shall document the exigent reason for immediately instituting such a plan. The mandatory improvement plan shall be developed by the principal in consultation with the teacher. The teacher shall have five instructional days from receipt of the proposed mandatory improvement plan to request a modification of such plan before it is implemented, and the principal shall consider such suggested modifications before finalizing the plan. The teacher shall have at least 60 instructional days to complete the mandatory improvement plan.

Any teacher, other than a teacher assigned to a school designated as low-performing, who has been placed on a mandatory improvement plan has a right to be observed by a qualified observer in the area or areas of concern identified in the mandatory improvement plan. The affected teacher and the principal shall jointly choose the qualified observer within 20 instructional days after the commencement of the mandatory improvement plan. The qualified observer shall draft a written report assessing the teacher in the areas of concern identified in the mandatory improvement plan. The report shall be submitted to the principal before the end of the mandatory improvement plan period.

Upon completion of a mandatory improvement plan, the principal shall assess the performance of the teacher a second time. The principal shall also review and consider any report provided by the qualified observer. If, after the second assessment of the teacher and consideration of any report from the qualified observer, the superintendent or superintendent’s designee determines that the teacher has failed to become proficient in any of the performance

standards identified as deficient in the mandatory improvement plan or demonstrate sufficient improvement towards such standards, the superintendent may recommend that the teacher be dismissed or demoted under G.S. 115C-325.

The results of the second assessment produced shall constitute substantial evidence of the teacher's inadequate performance.

Beginning teachers must be rated "Proficient" on all North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards on the most recent Teacher Summary Rating Form in order to be eligible for the Standard Professional 2 License. Probationary teachers must receive a rating of "Proficient" on all North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards on the most recent Teacher Summary Rating Form before being recommended for career status.

Beginning Teacher Program

Hickory Public Schools recognizes that first-year teachers face many challenges as they make the transition from college students to classroom teachers. To ensure that new professionals have the support they need to become the best teachers possible, Hickory Public Schools provides a comprehensive orientation to help reach that goal.

New Teacher Orientation consists of three (3) days of pre-service workshops that provide an introduction to Hickory Public Schools, its culture, expectations, resources, policies and procedures. First-year teachers are also provided opportunities to work one-on-one with mentor teachers. The initial workshops are followed by a series of monthly seminars in which timely topics are presented and discussed in detail.

Only classroom teachers are required to participate in the BT program. Participation in the BT program is required of teachers with fewer than three years of appropriate experience in their area of initial licensure. Individuals with three or more years of appropriate experience (as determined by the Licensure Section) are not required to serve in the BT program. Out-of-state applicants are not subject to BT program requirements if their North Carolina license is based on reciprocity or completion of an NCATE-approved education program and they have three or more years of appropriate experience. Other out-of-state applicants participate in the BT program, regardless of their years of experience.

A Year I, Year II and Year III beginning teacher (BT) in Hickory Public Schools is assigned a Mentor/Support Team consisting of the principal/supervisor (or designee) and a career status "mentor" usually from their same subject area or grade level. A minimum of six consecutive months of participation is required per school year for the "year" to count toward fulfillment of the BTP requirement.

Beginning teachers must be rated "Proficient" on all five North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards on the most recent Teacher Summary Rating Form in order to be eligible for the Standard Professional 2 License. Probationary teachers must be rated as "Proficient" on all five North Carolina Professional Teaching Standards on the most recent Teacher Summary Rating Form in order to be recommended for career status.

Questions about the teaching license of the BT Program should be directed to your mentor, principal, the Human Resource Department, or the Chief Academic Officer.