



NEWINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Office of Human Capital Development

# Employee Handbook

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# ***INTRODUCTION TO THE NEWINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

## **Welcome to the Newington Public Schools**

**From the Assistant Superintendent of Schools, Office of Human Capital Development**

The Office of Human Capital Development (HCD) is committed to providing outstanding service to all current and future district employees. Newington Public Schools believes its employees are its single greatest asset and that organizations improve when it focuses on people.

In order to support a culture of excellence in the district, the Office of HCD has made it a priority to:

- Find the right people through recruitment and selection;
- Support and grow staff through onboarding, professional development and performance management;
- Reward excellence through compensation and competitive benefits; and
- Continuously reevaluate organizational and staff needs for improved efficiency and effectiveness.

## **About This Handbook**

This handbook should serve as a general reference during your employment with the Newington Public Schools. It is not intended to be a definitive source of information on all the terms and conditions of your employment.

The information contained in this handbook is subject to revisions based on changes in the law or Board of Education (BOE) policies and procedures or regulations. The contents of this handbook are meant to serve as guidance and do not constitute the terms of a contract of employment or a guarantee of continued employment. There are no promises in this handbook regarding work assignments, work schedules, specific working conditions

or length of employment. While it is not the intention of NPS to change the policies and practices contained in this handbook without good reason, the school district's administration reserves the right to review, revise, delete, and interpret the policies and procedures described in this handbook at its discretion, subject to any legal restrictions. If such changes should occur, the district will notify employees.

Many district policies and regulations have been referenced and/or paraphrased for the sake of brevity. Employees are responsible for making sure they are fully aware of the obligations and prohibitions contained in those policies. Copies of each BOE policy is available through Central Office or on the school district's website at [https://www.npsct.org/resources/for\\_staff](https://www.npsct.org/resources/for_staff).

Lastly, the Employee Handbook is not meant to change or conflict in any way with any terms and conditions of employment contained in any collective bargaining agreement. If you are in a position that is not covered by the terms of a collective bargaining agreement, this handbook generally explains your terms and conditions of employment. If you have any questions about the contents of this handbook, please contact the Office of HCD at 860-665-8630.

## ***COMMITMENT TO FOSTERING A POSITIVE AND INCLUSIVE WORK ENVIRONMENT***

### **Culture of Appreciation and Respect**

Newington Public Schools greatly values the diversity of its workforce and the unique background, talent and perspectives that each employee possesses. Newington Public Schools believes that a diverse workforce enhances the quality of its work environment and educational system, and that each employee should be treated in a courteous and respectful manner.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Newington Public Schools is committed to the principles of equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination in all of our employment policies and practices, including recruitment, hiring, training, compensation, benefits, transfers, promotions, and all other employment conditions. As stated in our Equal Employment Policy, we make every effort to ensure that our employment policies and practices provide equal opportunities without regard to race, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, age, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity or expression, parental status, marital status, past or present service in the uniformed services of the United States, or any other legally protected basis. Employment decisions will be based on individuals' qualifications and the district's business and/or operational needs.

Please refer to the school district's complete *Equal Employment Policy* for more information.

## Individuals with Disabilities

A qualified person with a mental or physical disability must be provided the same employment opportunity as any other qualified individual. A qualified person with a disability is someone who has the knowledge, skills, and ability to perform the essential functions of a job, with or without reasonable accommodation.

Examples of reasonable accommodations include:

- Removing physical barriers to the employee's work area;
- Modifying an individual's job duties, work schedule or work environment;
- Modify how the job is normally performed;
- Providing alternative means of work communications; and
- Transferring the employee to a vacant position for which the person is qualified.

Any individual (employee or applicant) who is in need of an accommodation should contact Office of HCD at 860-665-8630

Please refer to the school district's complete *Individuals with Disabilities Policy* for more information.

## Harassment Prevention Policy and Complaint Procedure

It is the policy of Newington Public Schools to maintain a learning and work environment that is free from any form of harassment. The school district prohibits any form of harassment, including but not limited to sexual harassment, and harassment based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, sex, sexual orientation, transgender expression or identity, pregnancy, marital status, parental status, religion, age, disability, past or present service in the uniformed services of the United States, genetic makeup, or any other legally protected basis. The school district also prohibits discrimination or harassment against any individual based upon that individual's association with an individual in a protected class. In addition, the school district prohibits any form of harassment against any employee or applicant for employment, or by an employee against anyone, including anyone with whom the districts does business with, regardless of whether the victim is a member of a protected class.

Please refer to the school district's complete *Harassment Prevention Policy* for more information about what to do if you believe you have experienced harassment or witnessed harassment.

## **Resolving Workplace Issues**

Newington Public Schools believe that employees should be treated in an impartial, and consistent manner. The school district believes that problems that are not brought to the attention of a supervisor could cause a breakdown in working relationships and dissatisfaction with working conditions. The district's goal is to solve workplace issues as quickly and as equitably as possible.

Issues or concerns related to your job should be brought to the attention of a supervisor. If the issue involves your supervisor, you should bring it to the attention of the Assistant Superintendent of Schools or his designee in the Office of HCD. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue in a prompt and fair manner.

Please note that each collective bargaining agreement has its own grievance procedure that outlines the process to resolve certain workplace issues.

## **Suggestions and Open Communication**

Newington Public Schools is always seeking ways to improve the work environment, processes, productivity, or educational services. If you have an idea or recommendation for improvement, please share it with a supervisor, an administrator, or the Office of HCD. Suggestions can include ideas related to operations, safety, health, ways to enhance employee skills or productivity, employee activities, educational services—anything that will improve the district's education system, or make it a better place to work!

## **RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESS**

### **Recruitment**

Newington Public Schools strives to establish an educational environment that will attract and retain the best qualified people who will provide the best possible learning opportunities for Newington students. Toward that end, the district engages in extensive and targeted recruitment efforts in order to build and identify the largest possible pool of applicants for school district positions. Those efforts include advertising open positions on various media and Internet outlets, attending job fairs, and making other outreach efforts. In the district's continuing effort to assure equal employment opportunities, the Newington Public Schools also has developed a plan for Minority Teacher Recruitment as required under Connecticut law. In addition, the district has partnered with the Capitol Region Education Council (CREC) to enhance our minority teacher recruitment.

Please refer to the school district's complete *Recruitment & Selection Policy* for more information.

### **Application, Screening and Selection**

Newington Public Schools strives to fill each open position with the most qualified candidate available for the position. This means the candidate selected has been determined to most closely match the total position requirements. Our selection process is based on guidelines and practices that are designed to screen applicants and identify those individuals who will best contribute to the overall success of the district.

### **Application and Related Material**

All interested applicants are required to apply for open positions by using the school district's online application system which is available on the district's website at [www.npsct.org](http://www.npsct.org). In addition to completing an application,

applicants may be required to either submit related documents supporting their candidacy for employment or complete an assessment to advance in the process.

## **Applicant Screening and Interviewing**

Administrators who oversee any vacant job position will screen and select applicants to be interviewed. Internal candidates will be considered first in accordance with any applicable collective bargaining agreements.

## **Selected Candidates**

Any candidate selected for transfer, promotion or hire will be informed in writing. External offers of employment will be conditional based upon the results of background and reference checks, as well as any required pre-employment physical examination. The school district will also conduct criminal and DCF background checks on all candidates for hire, in accordance with applicable laws. All new hires will be required to submit proof of eligibility to work in the United States, consistent with federal law.

## **Employment of Relatives**

In order to prevent potential conflicts of interest, the school district has established rules for the employment of relatives of Board members and school district employees. Those rules include the following:

- Any candidates for transfer, promotion or hire must disclose the existence of any family relationship with another individual who is employed by the school district.
- Employees may not supervise or report to any family member or relative (by blood or marriage).

## **Hiring, Onboarding and Orientation**

Newington Public Schools' hiring and onboarding process is meant to be both welcoming and informative so that new employees are successful in their positions. Within the first year, employees will receive some form of training that could include an orientation, a mentor, or on-the-job training in order to better acquaint them with the school district's policies, operations and performance expectations, etc. All non-certified employees must successfully complete a probationary period as set forth in applicable collective bargaining agreements or otherwise specified.

# ***WORKING IN THE NEWINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM***

## **Employment Categories**

Proper classification of employees is essential in order to administer pay and benefit plans, and to comply with employment and tax laws. Under federal and state law, every employee who works for Newington Public Schools must be classified as either (a) exempt or (b) non-exempt. Exempt employees are salaried, and work in administrative, managerial, and supervisory positions. These employees are not eligible for overtime pay. All other employees are non-exempt and are paid for all hours they work to the nearest quarter hour, and are eligible for overtime pay.

Employee positions also are classified as either “12-month” or “10-month” positions based upon their job description and work schedule. Newington Public Schools maintains job classifications based upon performance standards, working conditions, supervisory authority, reporting arrangements, and other job-related requirements. The classifications fall into two broad categories: certified (administrator and teacher) positions, and non-certified or classified positions.

## **Job Descriptions**

Job descriptions are maintained for each job position. A job description defines essential job duties and responsibilities, required skills and abilities, and minimum qualifications. Copies of all job descriptions are available through the Office of HCD and are revised as necessary.

## **Job Postings, Assignments, Transfers and Promotions**

We recognize that employees of Newington Public Schools may wish to transfer to other positions as they become available. Vacancies will be posted internally in accordance with applicable collective bargaining agreements. Teachers may request a transfer to any position in which he or she holds a CT State certification. Transfer decisions will be based upon an assessment of the teacher's qualifications (including experience, training, knowledge, skills, abilities, and prior performance), as well as the district's organizational needs. Seniority will be determinative if qualifications are substantially equal. For non-certified positions covered by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) collective bargaining agreement, lateral transfer requests for vacant positions (where the duties are substantially similar) are awarded on the basis of bargaining unit seniority subject to the approval of the Superintendent. Employees who have not yet successfully completed their probationary period may not be eligible to be considered for vacant positions.

Promotional opportunities for newly-created positions or vacancies in positions covered by the AFSCME contract will also be posted in accordance with the collective bargaining agreement. The point-based screening process outlined in the collective bargaining agreement will be followed to determine who will be awarded the promotional opportunity.

Lastly, the school district may transfer or reassign any employee at any time based upon the district's operational needs, the needs for a disability accommodation, or for other business-related reasons.

## **Work Schedules and Breaks**

The standard business hours for Central Office is 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Each school level (elementary, middle and high school) has its own school hours. For non-exempt employees, the workweek varies from twenty (20) to forty (40) hours per week, generally between four (4) and eight (8) hours per day. Central Office and schools may operate on different schedules during the summer recess.

For teaching staff, the workday consists of the student day plus forty (40) minutes. Teachers may need to work beyond that of the normal working day to attend school-related events or activities such as the annual open house, conference days, staff meetings, and department meetings.

Each non-exempt hourly employee who works a minimum of seven hours receives an unpaid meal (lunch) break of thirty (30) or sixty (60) minutes, depending on the job position. The thirty minutes must be taken after the first two hours of the work shift and before the last two hours of the work shift. The meal break will be scheduled

with the approval of a supervisor. If for any reason work-related responsibilities prevent an employee from taking a lunch break, permission from a supervisor must be obtained. Other paid breaks may be scheduled on a daily basis with the approval of your supervisor. Additional meal breaks are provided for nonexempt employees in accordance with the AFSCME contract. Nonunion, nonexempt employees receive a 30-minute unpaid meal break each workday.

## **Overtime and Time Reporting**

### **Overtime**

Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime compensation. Non-exempt employees are eligible for overtime compensation. A reasonable amount of overtime may be required with reasonable advance notice, except in emergencies such as inclement weather. Overtime work (outside regularly scheduled hours) must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor, a manager or an administrator. Overtime hours must be submitted for payment on timesheets or through the electronic Time & Attendance system, as required.

The overtime compensation rate for approved overtime work is one and one-half (1 ½) times the eligible employee's regular hourly rate for all hours worked in excess of eight hours in a day or forty (40) hours per week. For all work on any Sunday or Holiday, the overtime rate will be two (2) times the employee's regular hourly rate, plus any applicable holiday pay.

### **Reporting of Time Worked and Time Off**

All non-exempt employees must complete either a timesheet and enter their work time into the Time & Attendance system for each bi-weekly pay period. Each non-exempt employee must record his or her own work time only, including beginning time, ending time, and unpaid meal or break times. Non-exempt employees are not permitted to start work before the scheduled start of the assigned shift or work after scheduled ending time of the shift without prior authorization from the employee's supervisor. Non-exempt employees are also not permitted by law to "volunteer" their work time. All employees must enter all absences into the district's Absence Management System (AESOP), on timesheet(s), or as required. When completing timesheets, employees must accurately reflect the reason for any absence from work.

Please refer to the school district's complete *Leaves of Absence Policy* for more information.

## Receiving Your Pay

Employees are paid on a bi-weekly basis, every other Friday. Direct deposit is available for all employees. AFSCME members are required to participate in direct deposit. If you have any questions about your pay, please contact the Business Office at 860-665-8640. Payroll information will not be released to any individual other than the employee unless written approval is received authorizing release to another person.

## Employee Records

Employee personnel records are maintained in accordance with federal and state law. You may view the contents of your personnel file upon request with reasonable notice. An employee will receive notice of any Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request in accordance with applicable laws.

It is the employee's responsibility to notify the appropriate district office(s) whenever there are any changes in home address, telephone numbers, marital status, number of dependents or children, death of a family member covered under the school district's medical insurance, beneficiary for life insurance, emergency contact(s), or any other relevant information.

## Work-Related Travel and Expenses

As stated under the *Employee Benefits* section of this handbook, Newington Public Schools encourages its employees to improve their knowledge, skills and abilities by engaging in continuing education and professional development. Staff are provided in-district professional learning opportunities throughout the school year. Any out of district professional learning requests must be approved by a supervisor prior to attendance, and must align to district, department, or building initiatives. Final approval will come from Central Office. Once approval is granted, additional action steps for attendance and/or reimbursement will be communicated at that time.

## ***PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS***

### **Guidelines for Behavior in the Workplace**

Newington Public Schools takes great pride in the quality of its educational system and expects its employees to maintain this level of quality. Clearly defined work-behavior expectations and guidelines support a culture of excellence and help to minimize conflict among employees. When situations arise that are cause for concern, appropriate action(s) will be taken.

While the district generally follows the concept of “progressive” discipline, depending on the nature of the conduct, a serious infraction could lead to suspension or termination of employment. Factors that may be considered in determining the appropriate corrective action include: the seriousness of conduct, an employee’s employment record, an employee’s willingness and ability to correct conduct, and corrective actions taken with respect to similar conduct by other employees. In all cases, corrective action will not be imposed without “just cause.”

Expected behaviors include:

- Treating fellow employees, students, parents and visitors with courtesy and respect;
- Performing job duties and assignments that meet or exceed performance expectations;
- Following instructions and directions given by supervisor or administrators;
- Knowing and complying with all State and district safety rules; and
- Complying with district policies.

Unacceptable behavior include:

- Falsification of work records, including timesheets;
- Speaking disrespectfully about other employees, students or parents;
- Violation of another employee's privacy rights;
- Engaging in any dishonest, harassing, intimidating, threatening or disruptive conduct while at work;
- Excessive absenteeism;
- Insubordination (e.g., refusing to follow a supervisor's instructions regarding job-related matters);
- Violation of any district policy or the provisions of this handbook.

## **Work Attire and Appearance**

To set an example for Newington students, all employees must present a neat, professional, business-like image and to exercise good judgment with respect to work attire and personal appearance in the workplace. In order to ensure a respectful and professional learning environment, the following guidelines apply:

- Employees cannot not wear clothing that is overly revealing or clinging, dirty, or displaying a hostile message. Ripped, torn or otherwise damaged clothing, tank tops, cut-off shorts, and flip-flops are examples of inappropriate attire.
- Footwear should be clean and conform to safety requirements.
- Hair should be neat and clean.
- Only discrete body piercings and tattoos, ones that do not create distractions or detract from a professional appearance, are permitted.

Employees who are not in compliance may be asked to leave, with an invitation to return, once the issue(s) is corrected.

# **Attendance at Work and Attendance Tracking**

## **Being Here When We Need You**

Attendance plays a vital role in the district's success. Newington Public Schools relies on its employees' commitment to being at work on time each day. Poor attendance, arriving late and/or leaving early puts added burdens on other employees.

## **Reporting Absences**

Newington Public Schools understands that situations arise when employees may need to occasionally be absent from work or be delayed. On those occasions, you must report absences in accordance with collective bargaining agreements or otherwise specified. Additionally, employees who have to leave prior to the end of their shift must sign out in accordance with building procedures. Absences other than workers' compensation or personal illness/medical appointments require a written request.

## **Returning to Work**

Employees who are out of work on a medical leave for more than three consecutive calendar days may require medical documentation indicating your ability to return to work without restrictions. Failure to provide requested medical documentation may result in a delay or denial of reinstatement.

## **Attendance Monitoring**

The Newington Public Schools monitors employee attendance. Excessive absenteeism will be addressed in pursuant to guidelines established by the Office of HCD. Not addressing such issues can be detrimental to workplace morale and productivity.

## **Inclement Weather and Emergency Closings**

Administrators, custodial and maintenance employees, and clerical employees are expected to report to work as assigned and make every reasonable effort to arrive on time whenever school is closed due to inclement weather. If severe weather conditions prevent you from reporting to work or arriving on time, you must notify your supervisor as soon as possible. If you are unable to report to work due to the severity of the weather or other emergency, your absence may be excused and will be charged accordingly. If weather is severe enough to cause travel safety concerns, the Superintendent may permit certain employees to arrive late or leave early without loss

of pay. The Superintendent also may release employees from work, or require them to stay at work in cases of emergency, for safety or other legitimate reasons.

Delayed openings and school closings are announced on the following TV stations: Channel 3 WFSB, Channel 30 WVIT, Channel 8 WTNH, and Channel 61 WTIC. In addition, each employee will be notified directly via the school district's alert system.

## **Personal and Family Relationships in the Workplace**

The school district encourages employees to refer qualified applicants for employment in Newington Public Schools, including friends and family members. However, as previously mentioned, we cannot allow any direct supervisory reporting relationships among family members or personal friends. This rule covers hires, transfers, and promotions.

Relationships of a romantic or personal nature in the workplace can interfere with the work environment. Therefore, employees who engage in a personal or romantic relationship must be careful not to display the relationship in a way that could interfere with their work, the work of others, or create an uncomfortable environment for others. Supervisors may not engage in personal or romantic relationships with employees under their supervision. If management becomes aware of the existence of any such relationship, appropriate action will be taken.

## **Performance Evaluations**

Newington Public Schools believe that every employee deserves regular and ongoing feedback regarding his or her performance. Our evaluation process is intended to provide constructive feedback and performance evaluation to enhance communication, make suggestions for improvement, and establish goals. Employees, who have ongoing or significant performance problems will have their work performance closely supervised and monitored, be provided with identifiable standards, objectives and support. More frequent, periodic performance reviews will take place to make sure progress is made or to take necessary steps to correct the deficiencies. Different performance evaluation procedures are conducted for our various employee groups.

Please refer to the school districts complete *Evaluation and Support Program Policy* for more information.

## Ethics and Conflicts of Interest

Public employees are held to higher ethical standards and are expected to conduct his or her professional and personal affairs in a manner that avoids any conflict of interest or impropriety, or the appearance of any conflict of interest.

Examples of unacceptable conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Having outside employment that interferes or conflicts with current job duties, or work schedule, including any required overtime work, or that creates a conflict of interest with the school district's business;
- Having a significant financial interest or stake in any business or contract that could influence or affect the employee's ability to perform his or her job; or
- Soliciting for money, purchases, or donations in working areas during working hours.

In order to uphold the highest ethical practice standards, as well as to comply with federal and state law, the school district encourages all employees to immediately report any conduct that they believe may be unethical or illegal, or that may constitute corruption, fraud, unethical practices, mismanagement or abuse of authority.

In accordance with state and federal law, no employee will be disciplined or otherwise penalized because the employee, or a person acting on behalf of the employee, reports, verbally or in writing, a violation or a suspected violation of any state or federal law or regulation or any municipal ordinance or regulation, unethical practices, mismanagement or abuse of authority by any employee or supervisor. This rule does not apply to employees who knowingly makes a false report.

Please refer to the school district's complete *Board's Conflict of Interest Policy* for more information.

## Outside Employment

Any employee may utilize his/her time outside of the Newington Public Schools scheduled work time for outside employment. If the employee's outside employment conflicts with the employee's performance or is in direct conflict with the school district's business, the employee will be required to eliminate the conflict or discontinue the outside employment if he/she wishes to remain with Newington Public Schools

Please refer to the school district’s complete *Outside Employment Policy* for more information.

## **Confidentiality and Individual Privacy**

Employees are expected to protect the privacy rights of students, families and co-workers, and maintain confidentiality at all times. Employees who have access to business systems, student records, personnel records or other information that is confidential in nature has an added responsibility of safeguarding information. Discussing or disclosing such confidential information about another person, misuse of information or improper filing may also be a violation of the law. In addition, all employees must comply with the requirements of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) regarding access to, and disclosure of, student educational records. More information about FERPA’s requirements is available through the District website under the “Resources for Staff” section.

Telephone numbers and addresses of employees or students cannot be provided to anyone without the approval of the Superintendent or his/her designee. Any requests for information or documents under the Freedom of Information Act should be forwarded to the Superintendent’s Office for handling.

## **Use of Telephones**

The school district’s telephone system is intended for work-related or business calls. Personal phone calls, other than calls of short duration for a specific purpose, should be limited to designated break times, except in cases of emergency or other serious situations that need immediate attention. The same discretion applies to the use of cellular phones.

## **Use of Computer Systems and Electronic Mail**

The school district’s computer network, electronic information, and communication systems are owned and maintained by the Newington Public Schools for educational or work-related business purposes. Use of those systems is subject to the school district’s Computer Use Policy. All users of the system are required to abide by the terms of that policy. There is no expectation of privacy in the use of these systems and the school district reserves the right to monitor the use of the systems or inspect materials stored on its systems.

Please refer to the school district’s *Computer Use Policy* for more information.

## Social Media

We encourage responsible participation in social networking sites, subject to existing policies concerning the use of social media during work hours and other applicable policies, including, but not limited to those concerning non-discrimination, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and copyright/fair use. We ask that you carefully consider the very public forum you are participating in and act in a way that properly represents both your professional reputation and Newington Public Schools. Some specific guidelines we ask you to consider:

- Use common sense when posting online. While these guidelines are in no way intended to limit or infringe upon your rights to comment upon the workplace, it remains good practice to never post anything that would embarrass you or Newington Public Schools, or would call your professional reputation into question.
- You are personally responsible for the content you publish online. “Content” includes personal comments, links, photographs, audio or video, and content created by other users that you choose to share or re-post.
- Special care should be taken when posting personal photographs. Remember, your social networking site is an extension of your personality and professional reputation. All photographs should be posted with the assumption that they could end up in the public realm.
- As an employee of this district, content you post should not include provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, content showing or promoting the excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol or use of drugs, or any activity students are legally prohibited from doing. Remember, even with privacy settings in place, your content could be seen by students or parents or find its way into the public realm.
- Your online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration you apply offline.
- Use your personal email addresses on social networking sites and while engaging in other off-duty social media activities. At no time, except with prior consent from the appropriate supervisor, should you claim to be speaking or issuing opinions on behalf of Newington Public Schools.
- While Newington Public Schools respects the rights of its employees to exercise their rights, employees should not make any derogatory statements about colleagues or students or other comments that would reflect badly on your professional reputation.

- Respect the privacy and rights of both colleagues and students. Confidential student or personnel information should not be posted online. Be sure not to violate any provision of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

## **Use of Bulletin Boards**

Bulletin boards located throughout the district should be used to provide information about job openings, school district news, recreational activities, legal rights, or other business or work-related information only. Bulletin boards are also available for collective bargaining unions to use. Personal notices, announcements, or notices of personal items for sale are not permitted. Unauthorized or objectionable material will be removed. Outside organizations or groups must obtain permission from the Superintendent prior to posting any materials on any school district bulletin board.

## ***BENEFITS AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE***

The school district's success is dependent on our employees' health and ability to perform their jobs in a reliable and productive manner. Newington Public Schools offers a variety of benefits to assist employees to cover expenses and promote wellbeing. For more information regarding benefits that are applicable to specific job positions, please visit the district's website at [www.npcst.org](http://www.npcst.org). You will find this information under the **Benefits Info** tab in the **Resources for Staff** webpage. Newington Public Schools continues to monitor and review the value and effectiveness of our benefits, and in so doing, it's possible for plans to change. This handbook is meant to summarize the benefits and serve as a guideline only.

### **Health and Prescription Drug Insurances**

Newington Public Schools knows how important it is for employees and their families to have affordable health care. The district offers medical and prescription drug insurance coverage to all eligible employees. Vision and dental insurance is also offered to select collective bargaining units. Employees who elect coverage will be required to contribute a monthly premium toward the cost of their medical care. The monthly premium amount may change each year, and is based upon job positions and/or negotiated bargaining agreements. Contributions to the cost of the medical coverage will be paid by payroll deduction. Collective bargaining agreements and district plan summaries will provide more specific information about medical care coverage and costs.

The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) provides for the temporary continuation of health insurance coverage at the group rate for individuals who experience certain life events such as legal separation, divorce, death of a spouse, or when a covered dependent ceases to be an eligible dependent. Employees will be provided with appropriate notices of your rights and eligibility as applicable.

## **Dependent Care Accounts**

To help lower the cost of some child/dependent care expenses, the school district offers eligible employees the opportunity to enroll in a flexible spending (Section 125) account. This account allows employees to set aside a portion of their earnings, on a pre-tax basis, for child/dependent care expenses that is automatically deposited and available for use. There is an annual enrollment period associated with this.

## **Life Insurance**

Eligible employees receive group life and accidental death/dismemberment insurance. The cost of this coverage is fully paid by the school district. The amount of coverage is set forth in the applicable collective bargaining agreements. Certified employees may purchase additional life insurance.

## **Employee Assistance Program**

We understand that many individuals go through difficult times in their personal and professional lives. In order to assist any employee through a difficult situation he/she may be experiencing, the district has established an Employee Assistance Program (EAP) through Wheeler Clinic EAP. Employees can use the services of the EAP provider to get help dealing with work or non-work-related issues such as financial difficulties, stress, mental or emotional health issues, marital or other relationship problems. Anything disclosed to the EAP provider remains strictly confidential and will not be shared with the district.

For more information, you can contact Wheeler EAP directly, at 1-800-275-3327. A link with more information is available on our website in the **Resources for Staff** section.

## **Retirement and Pension Benefits**

Noncertified employees of the Newington Public Schools will participate in the town of Newington's defined contribution retirement plan as set forth in the AFSCME contract. Certified teachers and administrators will participate in the State of Connecticut Teacher Retirement System. Any contributions to a retirement plan are deducted from your paycheck on a pre-tax basis.

In addition, the Newington Public Schools offers a 403(b) tax-sheltered retirement plan to eligible employees. This plan allows employees to deduct money from their paycheck on a pre-tax basis. Changes are allowed two times a year. Notices given by July will take effect in September, and notices given by December will take effect in January.

## Professional Development and Training

As noted earlier in the handbook, the district offers various opportunities both in district and out of district to develop and grow in their roles at Newington Public Schools. The district offers early release time for certified staff to collaborate with colleagues, monetary support for out of district conferences, online training, facilitated professional learning, and/or time off.

## Paid Holidays

The school system and district offices are closed in observance of the following holidays.

New Year's Day	Labor Day
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day	Columbus Day
President's Day	Thanksgiving and Day After
Good Friday Day	Memorial Day
Christmas Eve*	Independence Day
Christmas Day	

If a holiday falls on a weekend, you will receive either the Friday or Monday as the Holiday with pay, if eligible and scheduled to work.

*\*Can change depending on collective bargaining agreements*

## Paid Vacation

All employees benefit from scheduled time off away from work for relaxation, recreation, and rejuvenation. To provide this important benefit, the school district provides annual vacation leave plans for all regular full-time 12-month employees. Eligible employees covered by the AFSCME contract receive paid vacation based on their

length of continuous employment. Teaching staff and part-time employees are not eligible for vacation. They enjoy time off during times when school is not in session (e.g., Christmas Holiday Break, Spring Break and summer recess).

Vacation is tracked on a fiscal year basis beginning July 1 for certified administrators. For all other groups, vacation is tracked on your anniversary or credited monthly. Vacation may be taken in full day (shift) or half day increments. Please see the collective bargaining or employment agreement applicable to your job position for more specific information.

Barring emergency circumstances, AFSCME employees must provide a minimum of five (5) business days advanced notice when requesting vacation leave of five (5) days or more. A minimum of twenty-four (24) hour's-notice is required when requesting vacation leave of four (4) days or less. All requests will be considered on a first-come-first served basis and granted as agreed upon by the employee's supervisor, with seniority given preference. No vacation shall be allowed to be carried over to the following year unless a specific variance is made beforehand by the Superintendent of Schools.

## **Sick Leave**

Sick leave is for the purpose of personal illness or injury, or for medical/dental appointments that cannot be scheduled outside of regular working hours. Sick leave may also be used to care for certain family members in accordance the collective bargaining provisions and as permitted by the school district's FMLA policy or applicable collective bargaining agreement provisions. Employees on sick leave must report their status to their supervisor each day, as soon as possible, but at least one hour prior to their scheduled work time, unless such notice is not possible under the circumstances. In addition, absences must be entered into the absence management system (AESOP).

Medical certification may be required for all absences due to personal illness or injury as permitted by applicable collective bargaining agreement provisions, in accordance with the School District's Family and Medical Leave Act policy or as otherwise permitted by law.

Sick leave may be taken in full or half day increments unless otherwise noted in collective bargaining agreements. Employees may accumulate unused sick leave up to certain maximums as set forth in applicable collective bargaining agreements or as determined by State law

Employees generally may not take sick leave after the last day worked in order to extend length of service time with the school district. Upon retirement, resignation or death, employees may be reimbursed for unused sick leave in accordance with collective bargaining or employment agreement provisions.

## Family and Medical Leave

In accordance with the Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and Connecticut law covering specific school district employees, each eligible employee is entitled to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid FMLA leave in a 12-month period. Available paid leave (i.e., sick, personal, vacation) must be substituted for unpaid FMLA leave that is permitted for the type of leave taken. The following types of leave qualify as FMLA leave:

- For incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal care, or child birth, and to care for the employee's child after birth (leave must be taken within 12 months after birth);
- For adoption and foster care, and to care for the employee's child after placement of a child with the employee by adoption or foster care (leave must be taken within 12 months after placement);
- To care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent, who has a serious health condition;
- For the employee's own serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform one or more essential functions of his or her current position.
- Because of a qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is on (or has been notified of an impending call to) covered active duty in the Armed Forces (including a member of the National Guard or Reserves). Qualifying exigencies may include:
  - a) Short-notice deployment activities (if a member receives seven or fewer calendar days' notice prior to the date of deployment);
  - b) Military events and related activities;
  - c) Childcare and school activities;
  - d) Financial and legal arrangements;
  - e) Counseling activities;
  - f) Rest and recuperation activities;
  - g) Post-deployment activities; and/or
  - h) Additional activities.
- To care for the employee's spouse, parent, son or daughter, or next of kin who is a covered service member with a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform the duties of his or her office, grade, rank or rating. A covered service member includes (1) a member of the Armed Forces (including a member of the

National Guard or Reserves) (a) who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; (b) is in outpatient status; or (c) is on the temporary disability retired list for a serious injury or illness, and (2) a veteran who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy for a serious injury or illness who was a member of the Armed Forces at any time during the five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

Please see the school district's complete *Family and Medical Leave Act Policy* for more information.

## **Paid Personal / Temporary Leave**

Employees are entitled to personal or temporary leave in accordance with applicable collective bargaining or other employment agreement provisions. Advanced notice and approval are required, except in cases of emergency. Such leave may be taken in increments of one full day or half-day increments.

## **Bereavement Leave**

In the event of a death in an employee's immediate family, employees may be entitled to paid leave in accordance with collective bargaining agreements or other employment agreement provisions

## **Jury Duty Leave**

Any employee who is summoned for jury duty must notify his or her supervisor as soon as practicable. An employee must provide a copy of the Recognition of the Jury Service form to the Office of HCD with two (2) weeks of service completion. If an employee is unable to prove documentation, the leave will go unpaid. The School District will pay the difference between your regular rate of pay and the payment from jury duty service. Please note that you must return to work if you are not actively serving on jury duty.

## **Military / Uniformed Services Leave**

Newington Public Schools proudly complies with the requirements of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act of 1993 ("USERRA") and Connecticut law in its employment practices. Additional military leave provisions are set forth in the AFSCME contract.

An employee who gives advance notice and who takes a leave of absence from the school district for any period of active or training service in the Uniformed Services of the United States, is entitled to continued employment

and, after completing longer periods of service will be re-employed in accordance with federal and state law. Employees must notify their supervisor as soon as you become aware of your military leave schedule.

## **Leave Requests**

An employee who will be absent from work on a scheduled workday for any reason must notify his or her supervisor in accordance with building procedures as soon as practicable once the employee knows he or she is going to be absent. Notice should be provided according to collective bargaining agreements, unless such notice is not possible due to an extreme emergency. Employees must provide the reason for the absence or leave (e.g. vacation, personal business, personal illness or injury, taking care of family member with an illness or injury, medical appointment). Any absence that goes unreported for more than two (2) consecutive days will be seen as job abandonment and could lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Employees must provide at least thirty (30) days advance notice when the need for a leave is foreseeable based on an expected birth, placement for adoption or foster care, planned medical treatment for a serious health condition of the employee or of a family member, or the planned medical treatment for a serious injury or illness of a service member in the uniformed services of the United States, in accordance with FMLA. If thirty (30) days-notice is not practicable, such as because of a lack of knowledge of approximately when leave will begin, a change in circumstances, or a medical emergency, notice must be given as soon as practicable. While on leave, the cost of medical insurance is dependent on collective bargaining agreements or other work agreement provisions except as provided by FMLA.

## ***OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFETY AND NON-VIOLENCE***

### **The Importance of Safety at Work**

While the school district cannot guarantee to protect any employee from willful or reckless acts by third parties or other employees, preventing workplace accidents and ensuring a safe, clean, and healthy work environment for employees, students and visitors is of utmost importance for everyone who works at the Newington Public Schools. All employees are expected to comply with all applicable safety, health and security rules, regulations, policies and laws that apply to our school district.

Newington Public Schools has a strong, “Zero Tolerance” workplace safety and anti-violence policy. No employee may bring firearms, explosives, incendiary devices, martial arts equipment, or any other weapons into the workplace or any work-related setting, regardless of whether or not the individual is licensed to carry such a weapon. If you feel that you have experienced or witnessed any threats or violence in the workplace, you must immediately notify your supervisor or an appropriate administrator. Board policy prohibits retaliation against anyone who has reported workplace violence.

### **Identification Badges**

Newington Public Schools recognizes the importance of providing a safe environment for all district students and staff. To promote a safe environment, the district requires all employees, volunteers and visitors to wear a district issued, approved identification badge.

## **Accidents and Workers' Compensation**

Injuries, no matter how slight, that occur at work must be reported to the immediate supervisor so that any necessary treatment or Workers' Compensation claims can be initiated. If you cannot remain at work due to an injury, you will be paid for the balance of your scheduled shift. Medical documentation will be required prior to your return to work.

## **Occupational Safety and Health**

In accordance with the Connecticut Occupational Health and Safety Act and applicable regulations, the School District will provide a workplace for its employees that is free from recognized hazards that are causing or are likely to cause death or serious physical harm. Information and training will also be provided with respect to the potential hazards and chemical agents that employees may come in contact with at work, as well as ways employees can protect themselves from the harmful effects of these chemicals. As part of this program, you have the right to obtain Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) on any hazardous material you may come in contact with at work.

### **Bloodborne Pathogens**

One area of great importance is employee safety and health relating to Bloodborne Pathogens. The School District has developed a Universal Precautions Protocol and an Exposure Control Plan. Each employee must access the online training module that is available on our website in the Resources for Staff Section. If you have any questions, please contact your supervisor.

Please refer to the district's complete *Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens Policy* for more information.

## **School Climate and Safety Committee**

Each school building and district offices have established a Security and Safety Committee. The purpose of these committees are to increase staff and student awareness of safety and health issues and to review the adequacy of emergency response procedures. Employees should contact their building's committee with any questions or concerns.

Please see the district's *Employee Protection Policy and Employee Safety Policy* for further information.

## **Emergency Procedures and Contacts**

Whenever an employee believes that an emergency situation exists or is about to exist, he/she must immediately call 911 for fire, police or emergency medical service. In addition, the employee must notify his/her supervisor, or an administrator. The supervisor or administrator will contact the employee's family member or other emergency contact, as warranted.

In accordance with federal and state law, the school district has established lockdown procedures to ensure the safety of all employees and students to the greatest extent possible. Training and drills are conducted to support these efforts.

## **Mandated Reporting**

In accordance with Connecticut state law, all employees are required to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Mandated training on this topic is available on the School District's website, along with the required form to be completed for reporting.

## **Electronic and Video Monitoring**

As a safety measure, and in accordance with the requirements of Connecticut General Statutes, school district employees should recognize that their work activities and communications may be subject to electronic and video monitoring. Electronic equipment that may be monitored includes, but is not limited to, telephones, computer files, and e-mails. Employees should not have any expectation of privacy while using the school district's electronic equipment. Employees will not be subject to any such monitoring or recording in areas designed for the health or personal comfort of the employees or for safeguarding of their possessions, such as rest rooms, locker rooms or lounges.

## **Medical Examinations**

In accordance with Board Policy, the school district may require, at the district's expense, any employee to undergo a fitness for duty examination to evaluate the employee's ability to perform the duties of their assigned position whenever an employee's performance suggests the need for such an examination. The school district also may require an employee to undergo a medical examination pursuant to the FMLA, the Americans with Disabilities

Act, or as otherwise permitted by law. Pre-employment physical examinations are required for certain job positions.

Please refer to the school district's *Staff Health and Safety Policy* for more information.

## **Smoke Free Workplace**

In accordance with Connecticut State law and the district's policy, smoking in any school district building is strictly prohibited.

## **Alcohol and Drug Free Workplace**

Newington Public Schools is committed to maintaining a safe, healthy, and efficient work environment. Any employee who abuses drugs or alcohol, or who comes to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol presents a safety risk to his or her fellow employees, and limits our ability to provide a positive learning environment for students. Therefore, the Board has adopted a strong policy on drug and alcohol abuse. The unlawful use, consumption, possession, manufacture, distribution, purchase, sale, transfer, storage, or offer of sale of illegal drugs by any employee while on school district property, while on duty, or while operating a school district vehicle or machine is strictly prohibited. This prohibition extends to an employee's personal vehicle located on school district property or in any vehicle engaged in work-related business. No employee may be under the influence of any illegal drug or alcohol while in the workplace, while on duty, or while operating a school district vehicle or equipment.

## **Assistance for Those Who Voluntarily Seek Help**

Newington Public Schools maintains a policy of non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation with respect to recovering addicts and alcoholics, and those having a medical history reflecting treatment for substance abuse conditions. Employees are encouraged to seek assistance before their drug and/or alcohol use renders them unable to perform their essential job functions or jeopardizes the health and safety of themselves, or others. We will attempt to assist our employees through referrals to rehabilitation, EAP, appropriate leaves of absence, and other measures, to the extent that these measures do not impose an undue hardship upon our organization, and/or do not jeopardize the health and safety of co-workers or others.

## **Traffic Stops, Convictions or Arrests**

Any employee who is pulled over and issued a ticket during their work day must report this immediately to the Assistant Superintendent in the Office of Human Capital Development or his designee. Additionally, any employee who is convicted of violating any laws regarding the use of illegal drugs or is charged with a violation of any criminal law involving the use of illegal drugs must promptly (within two (2) business days), provide written notice of the conviction to the Office of HCD.

## **Legal Drugs**

Legal drugs (over-the-counter and prescription drugs) are to be used only in the manner, combination, and quantity as prescribed or directed by the employee's physician. If the employee knows or has reason to believe that his/her motor coordination skills, physical or mental ability, and/or regular work activities could be impaired while taking legal drugs, the employee shall immediately notify his or her supervisor that he or she is taking a drug which may cause such impairment to their work performance. The District may ask for a medical certification from the employee's treating physician regarding the employee's ability to safely and efficiently perform his or her job duties with or without any work restrictions. The District will make a determination whether reasonable accommodation can be made, including if the employee's job assignment should temporarily change during treatment. Employees must keep all prescribed medicine in its original container, which identifies the drug, date of prescription, and prescribing doctor.

## **Drug and Alcohol Testing**

Bus Drivers are subject to random testing for drug and alcohol use in accordance with applicable laws and Board policy. Any employee who is suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol at work will be required to undergo a medical examination, which may include a drug/alcohol test.

Please refer to the school district's *Alcohol, Drugs and Tobacco Policy* and the *Alcohol Testing for School Bus Drivers Policy* for more information.

## ***ENDING YOUR EMPLOYMENT WITH NEWINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS***

### **Resignation / Retirement**

Non-exempt employees who decide to resign or retire from employment are required to provide their supervisors with a minimum of two weeks' notice. Certified employees are required to provide a minimum of thirty (30) day-notice of resignation. Certified employees who resign during the month of August will be held to contractual obligations, or until such time a replacement is found.

Please see the school district's *Resignation of Professional Staff Members Policy* for more information.

### **Termination / Layoff**

If it becomes necessary for the school district to terminate the employment of an employee involuntarily, depending on the reason for termination, notice will be given in writing as to the date of an involuntary termination of employment. Prior disciplinary actions and conferences with supervisors may inform employees that termination of employment could result from failure to correct unacceptable behavior or performance.

If termination of employment is based on business reasons such as reorganization or reduction in work force (layoff), notice will be given as permitted by circumstances and/or as required by law and applicable collective bargaining agreements.

## **Final Compensation and Continuing Your Benefits**

Employees who are involuntarily terminated will receive their final paycheck in accordance with state law. Employees who end employment voluntarily will receive their final paycheck on the next regular payday.

Each employee who separates from employment will be provided with information about extension of health insurance benefits under COBRA, information concerning the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and about conversion of any optional life insurance or disability policies.

## **Return of Property**

On or before the last workday, exiting employees must return all school district property in their possession to their supervisor or designee, including:

- Keys, key cards and badges;
- Files, computer, and any other school district business-related information or records, whether in printed or electronic format.

## **Exit Interview Process**

Exiting employees are asked to participate in an exit interviews. These interviews are voluntary and are conducted to obtain employees' honest opinions and evaluations of their work experiences at the Newington Public Schools. No employee will be penalized in any way for declining to participate in an exit interview.

## **Rehire Eligibility**

Former employees may be considered for rehire provided that they resigned in good standing or were laid off from a job. Under no circumstance will an employee be rehired who was terminated for misconduct, poor performance, violating any school district policy or as a result of the imposition of disciplinary measures.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I acknowledge my receipt of the Newington Public Schools' Employee Handbook. I understand that this handbook is intended to serve as a guide to the school district's policies and practices and not as a contract of employment. I understand that the policies, rules and benefits described in the handbook are subject to change at any time, subject to any legal restrictions.

I understand that, should the content of this Employee Handbook be changed in any way, the school district may require an additional signature from me to indicate that I am aware of and understand any new policies, procedures, practices or conditions of employment.

I understand that my signature below indicates that I have read and understand the above statements and have received a copy of the Employee Handbook.

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Name of Employee

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Position

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Employee's Signature

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Date