

Houston Heights High School

# **Employee Handbook**

Revision 2.5  
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Mr. Jose Zapata, Jr.  
Title IX Coordinator

Welcome!

On behalf of your colleagues, I welcome you to Houston Heights High School and wish you every success here. We believe that each employee contributes directly to Houston Heights High School's growth and success, and we hope you will take pride in being a member of our team.

This handbook is designed to acquaint you with Houston Heights High School and provide you with information about working conditions, employee benefits, and some of the policies affecting your employment. You should read, understand, and comply with all provisions of the handbook. It describes many of your responsibilities as an employee and outlines the programs developed by Houston Heights High School to benefit employees. One of our objectives is to provide a work environment that is conducive to both personal and professional growth.

No employee handbook can anticipate every circumstance or question about policy. As Houston Heights High School continues to grow, we reserve the right to revise, add, or rescind any policies or portion of the handbook. Employees will, of course, be notified of changes to the handbook as they occur.

We hope that your experience here will be challenging, enjoyable, and rewarding. Again, welcome!

Sincerely,

Erica McCready, Superintendent

### **At-Will Employment:**

The policies and procedures set forth in this employee handbook are not a binding employment contract. This handbook provides general guidelines. None of its provisions are contractual in nature. Understand that employment in the state of Texas is “at will,” meaning that employment may be terminated at any time, with or without notice, for any reason, by Employer or Employee.

No manager, supervisor, or representative other than Houston Heights High School’s Superintendent or Board President has the authority to enter into any agreement guaranteeing employment for any specific period of time or to make written or oral promises, agreements or commitments contrary to this policy. Further, any employment agreement entered into by the Superintendent or Board President will not be enforceable unless it is in writing.

### **Changes to the Employee Handbook:**

The policies and procedures found in this employee handbook may change from time to time at the sole discretion of Houston Heights High School. Houston Heights High School explicitly reserves the right to change or modify any of the provisions contained in these policies and procedures at any time, with or without advance notice. When changes occur, employees will be notified at the next staff meeting.

### **Employment Discrimination:**

The School is an equal opportunity employer. The School shall not fail or refuse to hire or discharge any individual, or otherwise discriminate against or adversely affect the employee status of any individual with respect to compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment because of the individual’s race, color, religion, sex, or national origin, nor discriminate in employment as set out above because an individual is age 40 or above, except where such actions or classifications are bona fide occupational qualifications reasonably necessary to the normal operation of the School.

### **Reassignment of Employees:**

To the extent permitted by law and policy, all employees are subject to assignment and reassignment at the sole discretion of the School Administration.

### **Code of Ethics:**

Houston Heights High School educators shall at all times conduct themselves in compliance with the SBEC Educator’s Code of Ethics which is found on the SBEC web site (TAC §247.2).

### **Employee Appearance:**

A professional instructional atmosphere is enhanced when staff is concerned about personal appearance. All staff will be neatly and professionally attired at all times. Absent specific policy, the Superintendent may prepare, communicate and implement an employee dress code.

### **Employment Applications:**

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

### **Pre-Employment:**

Employees may be required to submit to a medical test (including drug testing) as a final step to completed acceptance of employment, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

### **Pre and Post Employment Reference Checks:**

To ensure that individuals who join Houston Heights High School are well qualified and have a strong potential to be productive and successful, it is the policy of Houston Heights High School to verify the employment and personal references of all applicants.

The HR Manager will respond in writing only to those reference check inquires that are submitted in writing. Responses to such inquires will confirm only dates of employment, wage rates, and position(s) held. No employment data will be released without a written authorization and release signed by the individual who is the subject of the inquiry.

### **Conviction & Reporting of Certain Crimes:**

All applicants for employment with the School shall reveal on their application for employment any and all convictions for felonies, or misdemeanors involving moral turpitude, including those for which the employee received probation or deferred adjudication.

All employees shall notify the School Administrator in writing of a conviction of any criminal act involving a controlled substance as defined by state and Federal law, or any criminal conviction of a felony or Class A or B misdemeanor within five (5) days of such conviction. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action including loss of employment.

### **Criminal History Checks:**

Criminal history records of prospective volunteers and applicants for employment shall be obtained from a law enforcement or criminal justice data base pursuant to Texas Education Code 22.083, and reviewed prior to employment or on the commencement of volunteer service. Pursuant to that same Section, criminal history checks of employees (or volunteers whose duties are regularly performed where students are present), may be obtained at any time during employment or service.

Knowledge of a criminal history of any employee certified by the State Board for Educator Certification shall be reported to that board in writing.

Failure of any employee to disclose a conviction of a felony or misdemeanor involving moral turpitude prior to or during employment shall be grounds for discharge. Such discharge shall disqualify the employee for unemployment benefits.

### **New Hire Reporting:**

No later than 20 days after the date of the hire of a new employee, a report that contains the name, address, and Social Security number of the employee and the name, address and employer identification of the school, shall be made to Texas Employer New Hire Reporting, Operations Center, P. O. Box 149224, Austin, Texas 78714-9224, 1-888-TEX-HIRE (839-4473).

### **Immigration & Naturalization**

Within three (3) business days of employment, the school shall confirm the employment eligibility of all new hires by examination of documents establishing identity and employment authorization and completion of the I-9 Form of the Federal Immigration Service.

### **Personnel Files:**

Houston Heights High School maintains a personnel file on each employee. The personnel file includes such information as the employee's job application, resume, records of training, documentation of performance appraisals and salary increases, and other employment records.

Personnel files are the property of Houston Heights High School, and access to the information they contain is restricted. Only supervisors and management personnel of Houston Heights High School who have reason to review information in a file are allowed to do so.

Employees who wish to review their own file should contact the Human Resource Manager. With reasonable advance notice, employees may review their own personnel files. All personal files are reviewed in the presence of a school officer.

### **Personnel Data Changes:**

It is the responsibility of each employee to promptly notify Houston Heights High School of any changes in personal data. Personal mailing addresses, telephone numbers, numbers and names of dependents, individuals to be contacted in the event of an emergency, educational accomplishment, and other such status reports should be accurate and current at all times. If any personal data has changed, notify the HR Manager.

### **Post-Employment:**

An employee may be required to submit to medical testing after the employee begins working when job performance or safety issues arise, or when necessary to determine the employee's fitness to continue employment.

All medical records of the employee shall be maintained separate and apart from the employee's general personnel file and shall be considered a confidential medical record.

Tests for illegal use of drugs are not medical examinations under the ADA and are not subject to the restrictions of such examinations.

### **Lesson Plans:**

Teachers shall require and maintain lesson plans which include the following information:

1. **Objective:** A statement of what the student is expected to learn or accomplish through instruction, in the format: "The student will..."

2. **Essential Element (EE)/Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)/Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) Objective:** The Correlation of the curriculum objective with the TEA and TAAS objective. Individual classroom objectives may be generally more expansive than those provided by TEA, therefore not every objective will be matched with EE's/TEKS' or TAAS' Objective.

3. **Instructional Activities:** The outline or description of the plan to teach the concepts related to an objective, including but not limited to modeling techniques, examples to be used, methods of checking understanding, and guided practice activities.

4. **Relevancy:** Any activity or strategy planned for the purpose of establishing the relevance of the content to the learner shall be noted in the lesson.

5. **Evaluation/Homework:** The means by which student mastery of the objective is gauged. Examples of this include independent practice activities; work on projects and pop quizzes. Objectives assessed on a summative activity shall be documented in lesson plans.

Lesson plans are to be submitted to the Principal two weeks in advance to allow for review and comments.

**Late Student Work Policy:**

Teachers must accept late work within the grading cycle in which it was assigned with no more than a 20 percent penalty deduction.

If work assigned during the cycle was not completed, the student should receive an "INC," and the grade changed when the work is completed within the required time frame.

**Make-up Student Work:**

A student will be given the opportunity to make up work or quizzes/tests missed due to an excused absence, including absences for school activities. Re-teach Tutorials

Students will have the opportunity for re-teach and rework of previously graded daily assignments that result in a grade below 70. The purpose is to provide each student the opportunity to increase their mastery of specific required skills and concepts.

**Confidentiality:**

As a reminder, there are several areas of our profession that require confidentiality, both from a legal and an ethical standpoint. Personal matters, teacher assessment, student grades, and student records are critical areas where breaches of trust can be very harmful. Student records are to be discussed and/or released on a need to know basis. This includes teacher records such as graded assignments or grade books. In this regard, teacher records should not be visible to other students.

**Videos and Films:**

All video material must be approved by the school administration for use with the lesson design for which there is a correlation between the content of the video and the student expectation(s) being taught. The correlation must be documented in the lesson plan. Teachers may use only PG rated videos. Excerpts of PG-13 or R rated .movies may be used with prior written approval from school administration.

**Student Supervision:**

Teachers must supervise the halls during the passing time between classes. Be at your assigned post and visible during passing periods and when students are allowed into the building at the start of school (8:05 am). Teachers must also closely supervise their own classes. Classes and/or students are not to be left unattended. You are legally responsible for your students. Students are not to be put in the hall unsupervised.

**Weather and Other Emergencies:**

Administration will notify all students and teachers of the nature of the emergency and the actions to be taken. Students will remain with the teacher they are with at the time of the notification of an emergency. Students are to remain in that classroom until they are notified by the administration of dismissal or evacuation plans.

**Smoking:**

HHHS maintains non-smoking facilities. Therefore, no smoking is allowed inside the school or on the surrounding school property.

### **Internet Usage:**

It is imperative to ensure that all communications with students using any medium are appropriate and professional at all times.

### **Transportation of Students by Private Vehicle:**

The person transporting the student must be a responsible adult with a valid driver's license and insurance. No one should take a student from the school premises without the consent of the appropriate school administrator in charge and the consent of the parent.

### **Employee Standards & Evaluation of Performance:**

All employees are expected to adhere to the written and oral directives and instructions of their immediate and other supervisors, as well the policies, procedures and regulations of the school, including but not limited to those set out in this Employee Handbook, employment notices and agreements, Policy Manual, the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators (referenced in this Policy Manual) and all applicable state and Federal laws and regulations.

### **Attendance and Punctuality:**

To maintain a safe and productive work environment, Houston Heights High School expects employees to be reliable and to be punctual in reporting for scheduled work. Absenteeism and tardiness place a burden on other employees and on Houston Heights High School. In the rare instances when employees cannot avoid being late to work or are unable to work as scheduled, they should notify their supervisor in writing as soon as possible in advance of the anticipated tardiness or absence.

Poor attendance and excessive tardiness are disruptive. Either may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

### **Evaluations:**

The performance of employees is subject to evaluation at any time. The performance of all employees shall be evaluated at least annually.

### **Employee Discipline:**

Violations of policy, procedures, rules, regulations, directives, or laws may result in disciplinary action. Such action may begin at any of the following steps, depending on the severity of the infraction:

- Counseling or verbal reprimands
- Written reprimands
- Suspensions, with or without pay, or probation
- Written notification that your job is in jeopardy
- Dismissal

### **Compensation:**

Employee compensation shall be based upon employment agreements where applicable, or upon the approved pay schedule, as such may be amended from time to time. Employees are responsible for reviewing their own pay records and verifying their information and the appropriate amount of compensation described therein.

### **Compensation for FLSA Covered Employees:**

Non-exempt employees covered under the Fair Labor Standards Act shall not be paid less than the prevailing minimum wage. Compensation for overtime work shall be as provided by the Act. The school shall comply with all record-keeping requirements for covered employees.

**Employee Benefits:**

Employee benefits for professional employees shall include:

1. Enrollment in the Texas Retirement System
2. Health Insurance. The school pays a portion of the health benefit.
3. Life/Dental Insurance. The school pays no portion of this benefit.

**Personal Leave – Teachers:**

Personal Leave time off with pay is available to full-time educators. Educators are entitled to 5 personal leave days, which are accrued at the rate of ½ day per month from August through May. To take personal leave, educators should request advance approval from their supervisors. Requests will be reviewed based on a number of factors, including business needs and staffing requirements. If Educators take no personal leave days in a semester, they will receive a \$500 bonus per semester.

**Personal Leave - Staff:**

Personal Leave time off with pay is available to regular 12 month full-time employees. Once employees enter an eligible employment classification (12 month full-time employee), they begin to earn paid personal leave time according to the schedule. They can request use of personal leave time after it is earned.

To take personal leave, employees must request advance approval from their supervisor. Requests will be reviewed based on a number of factors, including business needs and staffing requirements.

Personal leave time off is paid at the employee’s base pay rate at the time of personal leave. It does not include overtime or any special forms of compensation such as incentives, commissions, bonuses, or shift differentials.

Personal leave cannot be carried forward from year to year unless specified in a written contract. Upon termination of employment, employees will be paid for unused personal leave time.

**Leave & Absence from Duty:**

Employees taking leave or absence from duty shall do so only in compliance with school policy and procedure and applicable laws. Failure to return to duty promptly after a leave of absence may be cause for disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

**Workers’ Compensation:**

The school shall provide workers’ compensation coverage to covered employees pursuant to the Texas Workers’ Compensation Act, and shall comply with notice, reporting and other obligations as required.

**Benefits Continuation (COBRA):**

The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives employees and their qualified beneficiaries the opportunity to continue health insurance coverage under Houston Heights High School’s health plan when a “qualifying event” would normally result in the loss of eligibility. Some common qualifying events are resignation, termination of employment, or death of an employee; a reduction in an employee’s hours or a leave of absence; an employee’s divorce or legal separation; and a dependent child no longer meeting eligibility requirements.

Under COBRA, the employee or beneficiary pays the full cost of coverage at Houston Heights High School's group rates plus an administration fee. Houston Heights High School provides each eligible employee with a written notice describing rights granted under COBRA when the employee becomes eligible for coverage under Houston Heights High School's health insurance plan. The notice contains important information about the employee's rights and obligations.

Employers shall notify the school's group health insurance plan administrator within thirty (30) days of the death, termination, the reduction of hours of a covered employee, or of the eligibility of an employee for Medicare benefits.

### **Health Insurance:**

Houston Heights High School's health insurance plan provides full-time employees and their dependents access to medical and dental care insurance benefits. Eligible employees may participate in the health insurance plan after 60 days of employment, subject to all terms and conditions of the agreement between Houston Heights High School and the insurance carrier.

A change in employment classification that would result in loss of eligibility to participate in the health insurance plan may qualify an employee for benefits continuation under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA). Refer to the Benefits Continuation (COBRA) policy for more information.

Details of the health insurance plan are described in the Summary Plan Description (SPD). An SPD and information on cost of coverage will be provided in advance of enrollment to eligible employees. Contact the Human Resources Manager for more information about health insurance benefits.

### **Paydays:**

All salaried employees are paid on the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 20<sup>th</sup> of the month. If the payday falls on a weekend or federal holiday, the payday will shift to the day before the holiday/weekend. Educators (10 - Month Employees) traditionally have their salary paid out over a 12 month period. In other words, the paycheck will remain constant during the summer.

In the event that an employee has an extended leave of absence or uses more personal leave than allowed, the pay schedule will be changed so that each paycheck includes earnings for all work performed during the current payroll period instead of being annualized. Employees will be notified before any changes are made to the standard payroll amounts.

### **Direct Deposit**

Employees are encouraged to have pay directly deposited into their bank account. Employees must provide advance written authorization to Houston Heights High School to make or change direct payroll deposits. In the event that an employee chooses to receive traditional checks, there may be a 3 day delay in the delivery of paycheck.

### **Drugs & Alcohol:**

The manufacture, distribution, possession, or use of illegal drugs or alcohol as those terms are defined in state and Federal law, is prohibited on the school premises, or as part of any school activity on or off school property. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action including loss of employment.

**Weapons:**

The possession of firearms, illegal knives, and prohibited weapons on school property or at school-related activities is prohibited by law. Violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action including loss of employment.

**Sexual Harassment:**

The Houston Heights High School prohibits sexual harassment as a form of unlawful gender discrimination.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome touching, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, stalking, “quid pro quo,” and sexually-oriented conversations, sounds, gestures, stares, remarks, and jokes. Forbidden conduct includes but is not limited to the following:

1. sexual favors made explicitly or implicitly as term or condition of hiring or continued employment;
2. sexual favors made explicitly or implicitly as basis for employment decisions affecting an employee such as promotion or reassignment;
3. sexually-oriented conversations, sounds, gestures, stares, remarks, jokes or other sexually-oriented conduct when such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Employee complaints regarding sexual harassment shall be brought in accordance with the school’s Sexual Harassment Grievance Procedure. Copies of the Procedure shall be made available to employees during working hours at the school’s administration office. It shall be the duty of the investigating officer named in the Procedure to investigate such complaints and for the school to take appropriate remedial action based upon the investigation.

Sexual harassment or abuse of students by employees is strictly forbidden. Sexual harassment and abuse of students includes touching, sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, stalking, sexually-oriented conversations, sounds, gestures, stares, remarks, and jokes. Such harassment and abuse further includes the following: telephoning students at home or elsewhere to solicit social relationships, physical contact that would reasonably be construed as sexual in nature and threatening or enticing students to engage in sexual behavior in exchange for grades or other school-related benefit.

The Houston Heights High School shall designate at least one employee to serve as a Title IX Coordinator to investigate complaints of harassment involving students. The name, office, address, and telephone number of the Coordinator shall be published to all employees and students, and the school shall adopt and publish grievance procedures that will accomplish prompt and equitable resolution of complaints involving students. All allegations of sexual harassment of students and/or abuse of students shall be referred to the Title IX Coordinator.

**Reporting Child Abuse:**

School employees that have cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person must immediately make a report to either the Child Protective Services division of the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services, or to any state or local law enforcement agency. Failure to report is a Class B misdemeanor. The information in the report must included:

1. The child’s name and address
2. The name and address of the child’s parent or guardian
3. Any other pertinent information

Professional employees must report within 48 hours of suspicion.

Any person who makes such a report or assists in the investigation of a report of child abuse or neglect in good faith, is immune from any criminal or civil liability that might otherwise be incurred or imposed. Authorized officials from the above agencies shall be permitted to conduct the required interview with the child at the School with, or without the consent of the parent or guardian. The School will fully cooperate with all Official investigations of abuse or neglect.

**Toll Free Hotline:**

The toll free number for the Department of Protective and Regulatory Services Child Abuse Hotline is 1-800-252-5400. All reports of abuse shall also be reported to the School Director or designee contemporaneous to the legally mandated reporting to the Child Protective Services.

**Extra Duty:**

Teachers may be directed to perform additional assigned duties from time to time, such as supervision of students during lunch, in the hallway and before or after school. Except as may be required under law or written agreement, no additional financial compensation is provided for such additional duties.

Arrangements for extra duty pay or stipends must be in writing, and can only be approved by the Superintendent or School Board President.

**Employee Complaints, Concerns & Grievances:**

Except for sexual harassment complaints where the immediate supervisor is the subject of the complaint, all employees shall first bring their work-related complaints or concerns to their immediate supervisor. Complaints or concerns which are not resolved at the supervisory level may be brought to the attention of the Superintendent within 15 days of the day the employee knew of or should have known of the complaint. The Superintendent shall respond to all written complaints or concerns within 10 days of the receipt of the written complaint.

Employees who are dissatisfied with the response of the Superintendent may make their complaint known in writing to the Board of Directors. The complaint shall be directed to the President of the Board of Directors, shall include a copy of the written complaint to the Superintendent, and the Superintendent's response. A copy of the complaint shall also be delivered to the Superintendent. The President of the Board of Directors shall, at the next regular meeting of the Board, provide a copy of the complaint record to all Directors. Any action of the Board of Directors regarding the complaint shall be taken in compliance with the Open Meeting Act.

**Whistleblower Grievances:**

Employees shall not suffer any adverse personnel action for having reported, in good faith, a violation of law or policy to an authority in a regulating, enforcing, investigating, or prosecuting branch of state or local government. Employees who believe that an adverse personnel action was taken in violation of this policy shall take immediate steps to have that action reviewed under the school grievance or employee complaint process. The School shall post a notice in a prominent place in the workplace as prescribed by the Attorney General advising employees of their Whistleblower rights.

**I have read and understand this Employee Handbook (version 2.5, dated September 6<sup>th</sup> 2017). I have also initialed the bottom of each page to signify that I have read each page.**

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**Name**

**Date**