

# PANOLA SCHOOLS

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## Personnel Handbook

2026-2027



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**DISCLAIMER:**

This handbook does not create an employment contract. Employees are terminable at-will by the school. Similarly, employees may resign their positions without penalty. No individual board member or employee has the authority to alter any employee's at-will status, or guarantee an employee's employment for a specific period of time, unless it is approved by the board of directors, is in writing, and is signed by both the employee and the chair of the board of directors.

PANOLA SCHOOLS reserves the right to amend or withdraw any or all provisions of the personnel handbook at any time with or without notice.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Welcome to PANOLA SCHOOLS**

Welcome to PANOLA SCHOOLS and to what we hope will be a long, productive, and satisfying career at one of Texas' finest public charter schools/Early College High Schools. PANOLA SCHOOLS strives to create an exciting, challenging, and rewarding work environment. We want you to build a successful relationship with PANOLA SCHOOLS and be a happy and productive member of our school community.

This employee manual was prepared to help you become familiar with PANOLA SCHOOLS and its personnel standards and procedures. Please read it carefully and if you have questions or concerns, speak with your supervisor. If you need further information or assistance please contact PANOLA SCHOOLS' Rhory Howell, Human Resources Department at (903) 693-6355.

On behalf of our PANOLA SCHOOLS' extended family, thank you for joining us. We look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Bud Worley, Superintendent of Panola Schools

## **1.2. About this Personnel Handbook**

The purpose of this personnel handbook is to provide employees with a source of information about PANOLA SCHOOLS' procedures and policies. The policies and procedures in this handbook are to serve as guidelines. Although PANOLA SCHOOLS has tried to be comprehensive, the handbook does not, and cannot, include procedures and policies which address every situation that may arise. Such a list would be limitless.

PANOLA SCHOOLS has, and reserves, the right to adopt new procedures and policies, or modify, alter, change or cancel existing policies and procedures at any time. Violation of any provision within this handbook may lead to disciplinary action up to and including discharge from employment.

Questions regarding this handbook or any of the policies/procedures should be directed to your supervisor or to the Human Resources Department.

### **1.3 About PANOLA SCHOOLS**

#### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

The Panola School Board of Trustees, faculty and staff will strive to insure an environment of safety, respect and accountability while students prepare to improve the quality of life in world communities. The school will strive to provide an equitable opportunity for students to acquire a sound academic and career focused education. The school will endeavor to make sure that students receive a strong foundation in humanities, science, mathematics, and career technology. Panola Schools will aim for Interdisciplinary curriculum to be presented in a way relevant to each student's world. Specialized support will be provided for students preparing for careers that require post-secondary training. Panola Schools will endeavor to prepare students to be full participants in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and allow graduates to enter the global labor force with marketable skills, embracing positive work ethics.

#### **HISTORY OF PANOLA SCHOOLS:**

In 1995 the Texas Legislature authorized the creation of state charter schools. These are public schools, required to meet state accreditation requirements. Charter schools are designed and managed by concerned teachers, parents, administration and community members. Once the charter is created, it is submitted to the State Board of Education for approval. The charter is granted to a 501(c) (3) non-profit Organization. The non-profit organization governing our school is Panola Schools and was created in January, 2000. The Board of Directors of Panola School is the governing body of the charter school. Panola School created a Board of Directors to create and implement the policies and procedures of the charter school. The school must conduct itself in agreement with its charter. Charter Schools are accountable to the State Board of Education and are monitored by the Texas Education Agency to insure that they meet both state and federal guidelines. Many rules and regulations that apply to public schools have been removed from charter schools, yet with this freedom there is a great deal of fiscal and student academic accountability. In 2006 Panola Schools was awarded a grant to start an Early College High School on the campus of Texas State Technical College. In conjunction with TSTC, students would be allowed to start their college career while concurrently taking high school hours. A student would be allowed to receive a two year degree while receiving a high school diploma. In 2009 Panola Schools was awarded a second Early College High School grant to start another campus on Panola College's campus. Thus, incorporating yet another opportunity for students to earn concurrent college hours while obtaining a high school diploma. PECHS and TECHS currently has an agreement with Panola College.

#### **DESCRIPTION:**

Panola Schools serve students in grades 8 through 12.

Panola Charter campus is located at 1110 FM 10 in Carthage, TX and strives to help students in an alternative educational atmosphere with emphasis on credit recovery.

Texas Early College High School is located at 3714 East End Blvd South, Marshall Texas.

Panola Early College High School is located on Panola College's campus in Carthage Texas.

Both Early College High Schools place emphasis on college readiness, allowing the students to earn college hours concurrently with high school credit.

**1.4. Acknowledgement of Receipt of Personnel Handbook**

The information contained in this personnel handbook is important and I should consult with the Superintendent or Human Resource Director/Business Manager if I have a question that is not answered in this handbook.

I acknowledge that the PANOLA SCHOOL personnel handbook does not create an employment contract or otherwise modify my at-will employment status. I understand that no one has the authority to alter an employee’s at-will status, or guarantee an employee’s employment for a specific period of time, unless it is approved by the board of directors, is in writing, and is signed by both myself and the chair of the board of directors.

I understand that PANOLA SCHOOLS may amend or withdraw any or all portions of this handbook at any time. I understand that it is my responsibility to comply with the provisions in this handbook, including any revisions, and that failure to comply may lead to disciplinary action. I further acknowledge that any revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminating existing provisions within this handbook. By remaining employed by PANOLA SCHOOLS following any modifications to this handbook I thereby accept and agree to such changes.

I acknowledge that I have read this handbook and agree to read any amendments of the handbook. I understand that I am required to sign and date this Acknowledgment of Receipt and return it to the Human Resource/Business Manager. I understand that a copy of this form will be retained in my personnel file.

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Signature of Employee

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Date

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Print Employee’s Name

## **1. STARTING YOUR JOB**

### **2.1. Accuracy of Information**

PANOLA SCHOOLS relies upon the accuracy of information contained in the employment application, as well as the accuracy of other information presented throughout the hiring process and employment. Employees are expected to provide truthful and accurate information in connection with their employment at PANOLA SCHOOLS.

Any falsification or misrepresentation in connection with application materials, or during the course of employment, is a serious offense and may lead to discharge from employment or non-selection of an applicant.

### **2.2. Employment Application & Other Forms**

New employees are asked to complete the following forms:

- a. Employment Application
- b. W-4 Employee's Withholding Allowance Certificate
- c. I-9 Employment Eligibility Form
- d. Employee Election Form to Withhold Certain Information from Public Access
- e. Acknowledgement of Receipt of Personnel Handbook
- f. Authorization for Direct Deposit
- g. Applicable Healthcare/Benefit Forms

Current employees may be required to update or execute any of the above forms. Any employee who fails or refuses to complete the above forms or to provide PANOLA SCHOOLS with requested documentation may be subject to discipline, up to and including discharge from employment.

### **2.3. Criminal History Background Checks**

A person may not be employed or serve as a teacher, substitute teacher, librarian, educational aide, administrator, or counselor unless the person has been approved by the Texas Education Agency following a review of the person's National Criminal History Record Information. Each individual serving or expected to serve in the aforementioned roles will be expected to comply and submit the necessary information for the background check. Additionally, other employees and contractors subject to criminal background checks will be required to comply and submit the necessary information for the background check.

## **2.4. New Employee Orientation**

During the first few weeks of employment, an employee must attend an orientation that will include the following subject areas:

- a. A review of this personnel manual;
- b. A tour of the campus;
- c. Receipt of credentials necessary for parking, access to the school building, keys (if applicable), and other materials as appropriate;
- d. Prevention techniques for, and recognition, of sexual abuse and other maltreatment of children.

### **3. REPORTING TO WORK**

#### **3.1. Official PANOLA SCHOOLS Office Hours**

Standard hours of operation in the administrative office areas are from 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m.

Faculty must be on campus by 7:30 a.m. Students are in session from 7:45 a.m. until 12:00 p.m.

Tutorials are from 1:00 p.m. until 2:45 p.m. Monday thru Thursday. Faculty day ends at 3:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday and No tutorials on Friday.

Friday afternoons may be used by principals for staff meetings on an as needed basis.

#### **3.2. Regular Work Schedules**

Scheduled hours for employees may vary from department to department.

All full-time, non-exempt employees generally work a Monday through Friday, unless a different schedule is approved in writing by the employee's supervisor.

Exempt employees are expected to work the hours necessary to complete their assigned work to the satisfaction of their supervisor without regard to scheduled hours and without expectation of additional compensation.

All employees are expected to be at work during PANOLA SCHOOLS' official office hours unless otherwise required or approved by the employee's supervisor.

#### **3.3. Attendance**

PANOLA SCHOOLS' employees are expected to be reliable and punctual in reporting for work each scheduled day. If an employee will be late to work or is unable to work as scheduled, the employee should notify their supervisor in advance as soon as possible.

PANOLA SCHOOLS recognizes there will be occasions when an illness or other personal event may result in an unscheduled absence. As such, PANOLA SCHOOLS has a leave policy (see Section 4.2.)

Poor attendance and/or repeated tardiness are disruptive to the operations of PANOLA SCHOOLS and may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge from employment.

## **4. TIME AWAY FROM WORK**

### **4.1. Holidays & School Breaks**

Holiday pay will be paid to full-time salaried employees (exempt and non-exempt). Holiday pay will not be paid to hourly employees (exempt or non-exempt).

PANOLA SCHOOLS will be closed during the following recognized holidays:

- a. September 7, 2026 – Labor Day
- b. October 12, 2026 - Columbus Day
- c. January 18, 2027 – Martin Luther King Day
- d. February 15, 2027 – President’s Day
- c. March 26, 2027 – Good Friday
- e. March 29 & April 26, 2027 – If not used for a bad weather day
- e. May 31, 2027 – Memorial Day

Additionally, during the following dates, PANOLA SCHOOLS will be closed for school break:

- a. November 23-27, 2026 – Thanksgiving week  
(Must complete comp time for November 23-25)
- b. December 18, 2026 – January 3, 2027 Christmas/New Year’s break
- c. March 15–19, 2027 – Spring Break

Teacher work days will be as follows:

- a. August 3-7, 2026
- b. November 23-25, 2026
- c. December 18, 2026
- d. January 4, 2027
- e. May 21 and 24, 2027

## 4.2. Personal Paid Leave/Sick Leave

- *Panola Schools does not track/honor state leave.*
- *Personal time off (PTO) should not exceed six days per school year. If the personal days are not used, they may not be accrued and used in future years. Days that are missed may not be made up.*
- *Part time employees have 3 days.*
- *Staff with greater than a 10-month work time will be granted 4 additional days to use in the summer.*
- *Emergency days may be granted by the **sick bank committee** in the event of mitigating circumstances at any time it is seen that there is a need due to illness in family or employee.*
- *Any time more than 2 consecutive days off must be approved by the superintendent.*
- *Employees must get permission of the superintendent to have personal days off the day before a holiday or the day after a holiday.*
- *Employees may not take off on state testing days for EOC or STARR at their respective campus.*

## 4.3. Family Medical Leave Act

PANOLA SCHOOLS is not covered under FMLA.

## 4.4. Bereavement Leave

In the event that a full-time employee experiences the death of an immediate family member, PANOLA SCHOOLS will provide up to three days of paid time off. An employee may request to use additional vacation or personal paid leave time if the employee has such leave available.

An immediate family member is defined as a spouse, child or step-child, parent, grandchild, grandparent, sibling, father-in-law, and mother-in-law.

## 4.5. Military Leave Of Absence

PANOLA SCHOOLS is committed to protecting the employment rights of employees serving in the uniformed services who must be absent due to military leave. PANOLA SCHOOLS will comply with applicable state and federal laws regarding an employee's absence due to service in the uniformed services.

## 4.6. Jury Duty/Court Appearance

PANOLA SCHOOLS will grant employees time off for mandatory jury duty or for court appearances as a witness when the employee must serve or is required to appear as a result of a court order or subpoena. A copy of the court order or subpoena must be supplied to the employee's supervisor when requesting time off. The employee is entitled to full pay for each day of jury duty or service as a witness up to a maximum of ten (10) days per year, in addition to any other paid leave.

However, if the employee is court-ordered or subpoenaed for court appearances as a party to any civil or criminal litigation, it shall not be compensated and the employee must arrange for time off without pay or use accrued vacation or personal leave for such appearance.

## **5. BENEFITS**

### **5.1. Health**

Health insurance is provided by Blue Cross Blue Shield through the Teacher Retirement System. Health insurance is offered to employees who work more than 10 hours a week and is actively employed and making monthly contributions to TRS.

### **5.2. Teacher Retirement System of Texas**

Full-time employees participate in the Texas Teacher Retirement System (TRS).

## **6. WAGES & EXPENSES**

### **6.1. Payday**

PANOLA SCHOOLS pays its employees on a monthly or bi-weekly basis depending on job classification. The pay cycles are as follows:

Exempt employees: Paydays will take place on the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month. If the 28<sup>th</sup> falls on a weekend then it will be paid on the Friday before.

Non-exempt employees: Paydays will take place on the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 28<sup>th</sup> of each month.

### **6.2. Direct Deposit**

Direct deposit is PANOLA SCHOOLS' preferred method of payment for all employees paid by PANOLA SCHOOLS. Direct deposit enables PANOLA SCHOOLS to facilitate the distribution of pay to employees in a safe, secure, and timely manner. To enroll in direct deposit an employee may fill out the appropriate paper work with the Human Resources Department.

An employee who prefers to receive a paper check instead of direct deposit must notify his/her supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

### **6.3. Mistake in Payroll or Expense Reimbursement**

Employees are required to immediately notify their supervisor in the event of a suspected mistake in their payroll or expense reimbursement. Failure to report an overpayment in payroll or in an expense reimbursement may result in disciplinary action.

### **6.4. Hours Worked: Exempt Employees**

All exempt employees who are compensated on a salary rather than hourly basis are paid their salary for all hours worked during the work week, regardless of the actual number of hours worked.

### **6.5. Hours Worked: Non-Exempt Employees**

Non-exempt employees will be paid at the rate of 1.5 times their regular hourly rate of pay for all time worked in excess of 40 hours in any one workweek. Overtime is never at the

employee's discretion. An employee may work overtime only after receiving authorization from the employee's supervisor. Working overtime without prior authorization may result in disciplinary action.

A non-exempt employee is never permitted to work "off the clock". While all hours will be compensated appropriately, an employee's failure to report hours accurately whether too low or too high is cause for disciplinary action. Employees should immediately report to the Superintendent any effort by a supervisor to participate, encourage, or even permit an employee to work "off the clock" in violation of this overtime provision.

## **6.6. Attendance Records**

Employee attendance records must be kept complete and accurate. Attendance records are subject to unannounced reviews to ensure proper use. Falsification of time records is a serious offense and may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge from employment.

## **6.7. Travel Expense Reimbursements**

Before an employee incurs travel expenses related to PANOLA SCHOOLS' business, the employee must submit a travel request form for approval to his/her principal/supervisor. Mileage for use of an employee's personal car will be reimbursed at the IRS's published rate of reimbursement. Employees should select moderately priced lodging convenient to their destination to minimize time and expense.

Travel expenses from approved travel must be itemized and detailed on the PANOLA SCHOOLS' travel reimbursement form. To be reimbursed, all original receipts for travel expenses must be included with the reimbursement form and submitted to the employee's supervisor.

## **6.8. Deductions in Pay**

PANOLA SCHOOLS will only deduct wages from an employee's pay under circumstances that are allowable under state and federal law. Additionally, any wages that an employee has requested and authorized in writing will be deducted. If there is a deduction that has been made that the employee believes is in error, the employee should immediately contact Human Resources. Retaliation against an employee who has questioned what he/she believes may be an incorrect deduction in pay is prohibited.

## **6.9. Purchase Orders and Reimbursements of Funds**

Before an employee can be reimbursed for any monies expended they must receive prior approval from the campus administrator, Business Manager, and Superintendent. If prior approval is not given, funds will not be reimbursed for expenditures incurred.

## **7. NON-DISCRIMINATION & ANTI-HARASSMENT**

### **7.1. Non-Discrimination**

PANOLA SCHOOLS is committed to honor the laws that prohibit discrimination based upon an applicant or employee's race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status or other protected class recognized by applicable law. Employees are prohibited from discriminating against other employees, against applicants, or against students based upon the aforementioned protected classes.

### **7.2. Reasonable Accommodation**

In the event an employee needs to request a reasonable accommodation or a variance in PANOLA SCHOOLS' stated policies and/or procedures due to the employee's disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, or the employee's sincerely held religious belief, the employee should notify his or her supervisor and/or the Human Resources Department.

### **7.3. Anti-Harassment**

PANOLA SCHOOLS is committed to creating and maintaining a work environment free of all forms of unlawful harassment. Employees are prohibited from engaging in all forms of unlawful harassment, including harassment based on race, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual harassment, and any other protected class status.

Harassment based on any of the aforementioned protected classes may include, but is not limited to, many different types of actions: verbal (e.g. derogatory comment), physical (e.g. assault), or visual (e.g. internet materials). Sexual harassment does not have to be of a sexual nature, however, and can include offensive remarks about a person's sex. Both victim and harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex. The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a supervisor in another area, a co-worker, or someone who is not an employee of the employer.

### **7.4. Reporting Discrimination and/or Harassment**

This section applies to both incidents of harassment and discrimination.

Employees should promptly report an incident of discrimination or harassment to employee's direct supervisor, HR, or the Superintendent. The employee should not assume that witnesses to the incident will know the conduct is unwelcomed; an employee should not rely on a witness to report the conduct for the employee. Informing the harasser that the conduct is unwelcomed is not a report of harassment since the harasser may not self-report the violation to management or the Human Resources Department.

If the alleged harasser is the employee's supervisor, a manager, or even one of the individuals designated to receive harassment reports, the employee does not have to directly report the incident to that individual, but instead must notify the Human Resources Department in order to ensure that the matter is promptly and appropriately addressed.

Any supervisor/manager who receives information indicating a concern about harassment or discrimination must report it to the Human Resources Department, even if the information comes from someone other than the target of the harassment or discrimination, or even if the person expressing the concern indicates that they do not wish to have the harassment or discrimination reported.

PANOLA SCHOOLS will promptly investigate any report and take appropriate remedial action. If the harassment or discrimination continues, the employee must immediately report the incident so that the matter can be reopened and addressed.

Retaliation for reporting what an employee believes to be harassing or discriminatory conduct or for participating in an investigation of alleged harassment or discrimination is prohibited. Any retaliation should be reported according to the same procedures as reporting discrimination or harassment.

Any employee engaging in any type of discrimination, harassment, and/or retaliation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. Any supervisor who has knowledge of such behavior yet takes no action to report it is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

## **8. EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS**

### **8.1 Expected Employee Conduct**

All employees are expected to:

- Meet established expectations of job performance;
- Comply with attendance policies;
- Be responsible in the performance of job duties;
- Be efficient;
- Respect the personal and property rights of all individuals one comes in contact with during the course of PANOLA SCHOOLS business;
- Follow job instructions;
- Maintain a courteous and professional demeanor.
- Maintain confidentiality per FERPA regulations.
- Employees may not bring their children or other family members to work when students are on campus.

Employees who do not adhere to these standards are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

### **8.2. Violence in the Workplace**

PANOLA SCHOOLS is committed to providing a safe workplace that is free from violence or threats of violence. Any and all acts of violence in the workplace are prohibited and subject

to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge. Additionally, any and all threats of violence, direct or indirect, serious or said in jest, are prohibited. All threats will be taken seriously and are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

Employees concerned about family violence being brought into the workplace or onto the work parking lot are encouraged to notify their supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

Any employee who receives a protective or restraining order that lists PANOLA SCHOOLS as a protected area is required to provide the Superintendent with a copy of the order and information requested by PANOLA SCHOOLS to identify the individual subject to the order.

### **8.3. Drug-Free Workplace**

PANOLA SCHOOLS is committed to maintaining a drug-free work environment and each employee is responsible for the maintenance of such an environment. The unlawful manufacture, distribution, possession, or use of a controlled substance (i.e. drugs) and/or the use of alcohol or tobacco in the workplace, or while conducting PANOLA SCHOOLS' business, are prohibited.

Additionally, an employee must notify PANOLA SCHOOLS of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace, or while conducting PANOLA SCHOOLS' business, no later than five days after such conviction. A report of a conviction must be made to the Superintendent.

Violation of this policy may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

PANOLA SCHOOLS may ask an employee to submit to a drug or alcohol test whenever it reasonably believes that the employee may be under the influence of drugs or alcohol at the work place in violation of this Drug-Free Workplace policy, including, but not limited to the following circumstances: evidence of drugs or alcohol on or about the employee's person or in the employee's vicinity; unusual, bizarre or erratic conduct that suggests the employee is impaired by, or under the influence of, drugs or alcohol; or an on-the-job accident or injury under circumstances that suggest the possible use or influence of drugs or alcohol in the injury.

Nothing in this policy prohibits, or in any way limits, the lawful use of prescription or nonprescription drugs. However, an employee must inform his/her immediate supervisor if he/she is using a prescription or nonprescription drug which could impair work performance or pose a risk of harm to the employee, to others, or to property. It is the employee's responsibility to determine from his or her physician(s) if the medication can impair work performance or pose such a risk. If the lawful use of lawful prescription or nonprescription drugs does limit or otherwise impair the employee's ability to perform the essential functions of his or her position or otherwise creates a safety risk, the Human Resources Department will meet with the employee to determine whether a reasonable accommodation is available.

#### **8.4. Suspicious Behavior**

Employees are encouraged to report any suspicious behavior observed at school or at any school-related or school-sponsored activity. Strangers or former employees walking unaccompanied in areas not generally open to the public should be pointed out to a supervisor.

#### **8.5. Former Employees**

Former employees may not enter areas that are not open to the public after they are no longer employed by PANOLA SCHOOLS.

#### **8.6. Employee Dress Code**

Employee dress should be neat and clean and appropriate for a professional appearance. Denim jeans are allowed so long as the jeans are free from holes and frays. If an employee is unsure of the appropriateness of a particular item of clothing, the employee should choose not to wear it.

An administrator may require an employee to cover tattoos and/or remove facial jewelry. Additionally, because it is difficult to establish a specific dress standard, a PANOLA SCHOOLS' administrator may require an employee to change their dress if in their best judgment the dress is inappropriate.

Exceptions to the dress code may be considered in order to make reasonable accommodations for an employee's disability, as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act, or an employee's sincerely held religious belief.

#### **8.7. Outside Employment**

Employees of PANOLA SCHOOLS are expected to work solely for PANOLA SCHOOLS. Any outside employment, whether self-employment or working for another employer, should be immediately disclosed to and approved by The Superintendent. In some circumstances such outside employment may be permitted by PANOLA SCHOOLS, however, PANOLA SCHOOLS retains the right to review and evaluate each situation on an individual basis.

#### **8.8. Employee Monitoring**

Employees do not have an expectation of privacy in any work areas (e.g. offices, desks, file cabinets, etc.) or in any PANOLA SCHOOLS property, either owned or leased. Work areas and PANOLA SCHOOLS' property are subject to search at any time. Any of the following may be monitored if they occur during business hours and/or on school property: phone calls, voice-mail, e-mail (work and personal), and internet activity.

#### **8.9. Audio & Video Recordings**

An employee is prohibited from making any audio or video recording while acting in the course and scope of their employment or while on school property without the written consent of all parties subject to the recording. School functions such as athletic activities or performances are exempt from this prohibition.

### **8.10. Office Dating**

Employees who are in administration/management/supervisory roles are prohibited from dating any employee over whom they have direct or indirect supervision. Also, individuals who work within the Human Resources Department are prohibited from dating any PANOLA SCHOOLS' employee.

If two employees are involved in a dating relationship it will be presumed by PANOLA SCHOOLS that the relationship is welcomed by both parties unless one or the other notifies PANOLA SCHOOLS to the contrary. Public displays of affection and favoritism in the course of employment are prohibited.

Conduct that occurs during a disagreement or following a termination of the relationship must not violate PANOLA SCHOOLS' harassment policy.

### **8.11. Workplace Investigations**

There are instances when PANOLA SCHOOLS may wish to investigate personnel matters. Employees are required to cooperate in any investigation. Refusal to participate, or actions taken to compromise the effectiveness of any investigation, may result in termination. If the employee is instructed not to discuss the matter being investigated, failure to abide by this instruction may also result in termination. This restriction excludes the employee's privileged communications with his or her own private legal counsel.

### **8.12. Updated/Current Employee Information**

Employees are required to regularly update:

- A change in home address or telephone number;
- A change in marital status or in the number of dependents;
- A change of insurance beneficiary;
- A change in the number of exemptions claimed for income tax purposes;
- The driving record or status of an employee's driver's license, if the employee operates any PANOLA SCHOOLS' vehicle or operates his or her own vehicle for work-related duties, not including driving to and from work.
- A legal change of name.
- The Public Information Act form indicating whether certain personal information may be released to the public.

Updates should be made by notifying Human Resources.

### **8.13. Allowable Uses of PANOLA SCHOOLS' Property**

Employees may use PANOLA SCHOOLS' property only for a purpose that is consistent with applicable law and to implement a program that is described in PANOLA SCHOOLS' charter.

Employees of PANOLA SCHOOLS may use local telephone service, cellular phones, electronic mail, and Internet connections for incidental personal use under the following conditions:

- Such incidental personal use must not result in any direct cost paid with state funds. If this does happen, the employee who caused the direct cost to be incurred by PANOLA SCHOOLS must reimburse PANOLA SCHOOLS;
- Such incidental personal use must not impede the functions of PANOLA SCHOOLS;
- The use of PANOLA SCHOOLS' property for private commercial purposes is strictly prohibited; and
- Only incidental amounts of an employee's time for personal matters, comparable to reasonable coffee breaks during the day, are authorized under this section.

An employee may be required to compensate PANOLA SCHOOLS for any damage and/or destruction the employee causes to PANOLA SCHOOLS' property.

A violation(s) of this section may result in disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

### **8.14. Computer & Internet Use**

With the exception of the incidental personal use described in Section 8.13, access and use of PANOLA SCHOOLS' computers, computer networks, electronic mail, and the Internet is only for educational and administrative purposes. The access of material that is obscene, child pornography, or harmful to minors is prohibited.

Failure to comply with this section may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

### **8.15. Administration of Medication to Students**

The administration of medication to students must be done in accordance with PANOLA SCHOOLS' policy. All employees, agents, and volunteers are prohibited from administering any medication to a student unless expressly authorized by PANOLA SCHOOL.

### **8.16. Reporting Child Abuse/Child Neglect**

An employee, volunteer, or agent that believes a child has been adversely affected by physical, sexual, or mental abuse or neglect must make a report within 48 hours of first suspecting such abuse or neglect. The report must be made to law enforcement or the Department of Family and Protective Services, Child Protective Services.

### **8.17. Traffic Violations**

If an employee, during the course of PANOLA SCHOOLS' business, receives a traffic violation, the employee will be personally liable for any expenses incurred from that violation. If during the course of transporting a student(s) an employee receives a traffic violation, that employee is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including discharge.

### **8.18. Workers' Compensation**

*PANOLA SCHOOLS is covered by workers' compensation insurance. Employees should immediately notify their supervisor of any injuries sustained during the course of their employment.*

*Employees have the right to retain their common law right of action by making a written election. The new employee notice is available online:*

*<http://www.tdi.texas.gov/forms/dwc/newemployeeenotice.pdf>.*

## **9. GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Employees who have a complaint about their terms or conditions of work are encouraged to resolve their concerns informally with their co-workers and/or supervisors at the lowest level possible. If the employee is not satisfied with the outcome of the informal resolution, then the employee may file a formal complaint according to the procedures below.

With the exception of a complaint against the Superintendent, each complaint must initially be brought at the lowest level of review, at the Campus Principal Review level. If the complaint is against the principal, then the complaint may be initially brought at the Superintendent level.

### **9.1. Campus Principal Review of Complaint**

Where an employee has a complaint or concern regarding their terms or conditions of work, the individual shall first bring their complaint or concern in writing to the appropriate campus principal or to the employee's direct supervisor if the employee does not work on a school campus. The complaint must be brought within 15 school days of the date that the complainant knew or should have known of the alleged harm. The complaint must be specific, and where possible suggest a resolution. The principal/supervisor must hear the complaint, attempt to remedy the complaint in the best interest of the affected parties, and document the outcome. The principal/supervisor must respond to the complainant and issue a final decision in writing within 10 days of the principal's/supervisor's receipt of the complaint.

## **9.2. Superintendent Review of Complaint**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the final decision of the campus principal/supervisor, then the individual may file a written appeal to the Superintendent. This written appeal shall be filed with the Superintendent's office within 10 days of the individual's receipt of the final decision from the campus principal/supervisor. The complaint shall include a copy of the prior written complaint along with a copy of the final decision of the campus principal/supervisor. A copy of the appeal shall also be delivered to the campus principal/supervisor.

The appeal must be specific, and where possible suggestion a resolution. The complaint shall not include any new issues or complaints unrelated in the original complaint.

The Superintendent, or the Superintendent's designee, shall respond to the complaint and issue a final decision in writing within 15 days of receipt of the written appeal.

## **9.3. Board of Directors Review of Complaint**

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Superintendent's final decision, then the individual may appeal their complaint in writing to the Board of Directors within 10 days of receiving the Superintendent's final decision. The complaint shall be directed to the President of the Board and shall include a copy of the written complaint to the Superintendent along with a copy of the Superintendent's final decision. A copy of this appeal shall also be delivered to the Superintendent.

The President of the Board, at the next regular meeting of the Board, shall provide a copy of the complaint record to all board members. The Board's decision shall be decided on a review of the record developed at the Superintendent's level. Any action of the Board of Directors regarding the complaint shall be taken in compliance with the Texas Open Meeting Act.

### **OR**

Individuals who are dissatisfied with the response of the Superintendent may present their complaint to the Board of Directors during the time of CITIZEN'S PRESENTATIONS at the next regular meeting of the board of directors. The board shall "stop, look, and listen" to the complaint, but may not deliberate or act on the complaint except in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act.

A complaint against a Superintendent shall begin with the complaint being filed, in writing, within fifteen school days of the date that the complainant knew or should have known of the alleged harm to the Human Resource Director. The Human Resource Director must respond to the complainant and issue a final decision in writing within 10 days of the receipt of the complaint.

If the complainant is not satisfied with the Human Resource Director's final decision, then the individual may appeal their complaint in writing to the Board of Directors within 10 days of receiving the HR Director's final decision. The complaint shall be directed to the President of the Board and shall include a copy of the written complaint to the HR Director along with a copy of the Director's final decision. A copy of this appeal shall also be delivered to the Director.

The failure of the Board of Directors to act on a complaint has the effect of upholding the HR Director's decision.

## **10. DISCIPLINE**

In an effort to correct employee misconduct at the earliest stage possible, PANOLA SCHOOLS' administration may implement a stair-step disciplinary procedure. Such procedure may begin first with a verbal warning. The next offense would proceed to a written warning; the next step is suspension; followed by termination of employment.

Though PANOLA SCHOOLS may utilize such stair-step disciplinary procedures, PANOLA SCHOOLS reserves the right to skip any or all steps and immediately discharge the employee.

The stair-step disciplinary procedure does not forfeit the at-will status of its employees and PANOLA SCHOOLS preserves the at-will nature of the employment relationship. Accordingly, discharge may be initiated by PANOLA SCHOOLS at any time, with or without cause, and with or without notice.

## **11. SEPARATION FROM EMPLOYMENT**

### **11.1. Resignation**

An employee is expected, but not required, to give as much advance notice as possible regarding their resignation from PANOLA SCHOOLS. Typically, two weeks (10 business days) is considered sufficient notice time. PANOLA SCHOOLS requests that employees submit their resignation in writing to their supervisor; the writing should include the employee's anticipated last day work day.

PANOLA SCHOOLS reserves the right to require the employee to resign immediately rather than work during the notice period.

### **11.2. Discharge**

In an effort to reduce the risk of employee violence or vandalism, upon an employee's discharge from employment, PANOLA SCHOOLS' administration may request that an employee leave the facility immediately upon separation from employment. If accompanied by a PANOLA SCHOOLS administrator, the employee will be permitted to gather his/her personal belongings before being escorted to the exit.

The exiting employee is prohibited from taking any PANOLA SCHOOLS' property or information with him/her; the employee is not to retain in hard copy or soft copy any PANOLA SCHOOLS information. PANOLA SCHOOLS reserves the right to examine any boxes, briefcases, or other receptacle of an exiting employee to ensure these rules are being followed.

An exiting employee who has been discharged is not to return to the premises of PANOLA SCHOOLS without prior written approval from the Human Resources Department or the principal of the school campus.