



# **RIDGEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS EMPLOYMENT HANDBOOK**

OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES  
49 Cottage Place  
Ridgewood, New Jersey 07450

Updated 08/16/23

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## INTRODUCTION

### DISCLAIMER

The purpose of this handbook is to provide descriptive information and practical guidance to new and current District employees. It supersedes any prior handbook. This handbook is not a contract of employment. No information contained in this handbook should be construed as a contract of employment or guarantee of continued employment.

This handbook does not supersede any individual employment contract(s) or collectively negotiated agreement(s) with the Ridgewood Board of Education and Ridgewood Education Association (REA) or Ridgewood Administrators Association (RAA) or the job description. Neither this handbook nor any other guideline, policy or practice of the Board of Education creates an employment contract.

No one is authorized to provide any employee with an employment contract or special arrangement concerning the terms or conditions of employment unless the contract or arrangement is in writing and signed by the Superintendent of Schools and is formally approved by the Board of Education.

This handbook is not intended to create an **express or implied contract** or guarantee of employment for any length of time or under any particular condition or any special arrangement.

More specific information may be obtained from the REA Agreement, RAA Agreement or the Policy Manual of the Ridgewood Board of Education (which can be found through a link on the District website.) For your convenience, a list of contact phone numbers has been included in this handbook for future reference.

Jaime Cangialosi-Murphy  
Director of Human Resources  
201-670-2700 ext. 10504  
jmurphy@ridgewood.k12.nj.us  
(Fax) 201-670-2668

Mark Schwarz  
Superintendent of Schools  
201-670-2700 ext. 10530  
mschwarz@ridgewood.k12.nj.us  
(Fax) 201-670-2668

Dear Ridgewood Public School Employee:

Whether you have just joined our staff or have been working for the Ridgewood Board of Education for a while, we are confident that as an educator or support staff member who supports our educational mission, you will have a rewarding career; and we look forward to a productive and successful collegial association. Our district's mission is to be the world's highest educational quality provider. We consider the employees of the Ridgewood Board of Education to be our most valuable resource to provide an excellent education to the children of this Village. We thank you for joining our team and also thanks to those that continue being a team player with us.

This handbook has been developed to serve as a general information employment guide. It is intended to be a living document that will change over time. If you have any questions after reading this document, please reach out to the Human Resources Department.

For more details about your contract or district policy, you should refer to your collective bargaining agreement and the Ridgewood Board of Education Comprehensive Policy Manual.

We hope you find this handbook helpful, and please feel free to contact the H.R. Department with any questions.

Sincerely yours,

Mark Schwarz  
Superintendent of Schools

Jaime Cangialosi-Murphy  
Director of Human Resources

# SCHOOL ORGANIZATION AND MISSION STATEMENT

## RIDGEWOOD BOARD OF EDUCATION

### 2023-2024 BOARD MEMBERS

President	Hyunju Kwak
Vice President	Michael Lembo
Board Member	Shelia Brogan
Board Member	Saurabh Dani
Board Member	Muhammad Mahmoud

### CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

Superintendent	Mr. Mark Schwarz	201-670-2700 x 10530
Interim Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment	Mr. Richard Freedman	201- 670-2700 x 10502
Business Administrator/ Board Secretary	Ms. Julie Kot	201- 670-2700 x 10503
Director of Human Resources	Ms. Jaime Cangialosi-Murphy	201-670-2700 x 10504
Director of Special Services	Dr. Michele Fenwick	201-670-2700 x 10505
Manager of Information Technology	Mr. Serhiy Morhun	201-670-2700 x 10507

## **PRINCIPALS**

Hawes Elementary School	Ms. Shauna Stovell	201-670-2720
Orchard Elementary School	Ms. Mary Ferreri	201-670-2730
Ridge Elementary School	Mr. Michael Piacenza	201-670-2740
Somerville Elementary School	Dr. Lorna Oates-Santos	201 670-2750
Travell Elementary School	Mr. Brian Ross	201-670-2760
Willard Elementary School	Ms. Caroline Hoffman	201-670-2770
Benjamin Franklin M.S.	Ms. Stacey Wisniewski	201-670-2780
George Washington M.S.	Dr. Katherine Kashmanian	201-670-2790
Ridgewood High School	Mr. Jeffrey Nyhuis	201-670-2800
Glen School/R.E.D. Program	Coordinator-Ms. Janel Nese	201-251-3140

## **ASSISTANT PRINCIPALS**

Benjamin Franklin M.S.	Ms. Lauren Carr	201-670-2700 x 30503
Benjamin Franklin M.S.	Mr. Gregory Wu	201-670-2700 x 30502
George Washington M.S.	Ms. Michelle Melucci	201-670-2700 x 40503
George Washington M.S.	Mr. Timothy Monahan	201-670-2700 x 40502
Ridgewood High School	Mr. David Bailey	201-670-2700 x 20502
Ridgewood High School	Ms. Danielle Wood	201-670-2700 x 20503



## **SUPERVISORS**

Supervisor of Special Education/ Elementary	Ms. Janel Nese	201-670-2700 x 10557
Supervisor of Special Education/ Middle School & High School	Ms. Amanda Znutas	201-670-2700 x 10556
Supervisor of Wellness, P.E. and Family Consumer Science	Mr. Daniel Kilday	201-670-2700 x 20512
Supervisor of Math and Computer Science	Ms. Ashley Onembo	201-670-2700 x 20506
Supervisor of Social Studies, World Language and Business	Mr. Mark Ferreri	201-670-2700 x 20504
Supervisor of English	Ms. Susan Nold	201-670-2700 x 20752
Supervisor of Elementary Education/ Math & Science	Ms. Jean Anne O' Neill	201-670-2700 x 10509
Supervisor of Elementary Education/ English Language and Social Studies	Dr. Julie-Anne Matthews	201-670-2700 x 10546
Supervisor of Science	Ms. Tara Taylor	201-670-2700 x 20756
Supervisor of Visual and Performing Arts	Mr. Christopher McCullough	201-670-2700 x 20509
Supervisor of Athletics	Mr. Keith Cook	201-670-2700 x 20510

**EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY OFFICERS (EEO)**

Affirmative Action Officer	Ms. Jaime Cangialosi-Murphy	201-670-2700 x 10504
Elementary/EEO	TBD	
Middle School/EEO	TBD	
High School/EEO	Ms. Meredith Yannone	201-670-2700 x 20567

**RIDGEWOOD ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION (RAA)**

Co-President	Ms. Mary Ferreri	201-670-2700 x 53501
Co- President	Dr. Lorna Oates-Santos	201-670-2700 x 55501
Vice President	Mr. Chris McCullough	201-670-2700 x 20509
Secretary	Ms. Lauren Carr	201-670-2700 x 30503
Treasurer	Ms. Danielle Wood	201-670-2700 x 20503

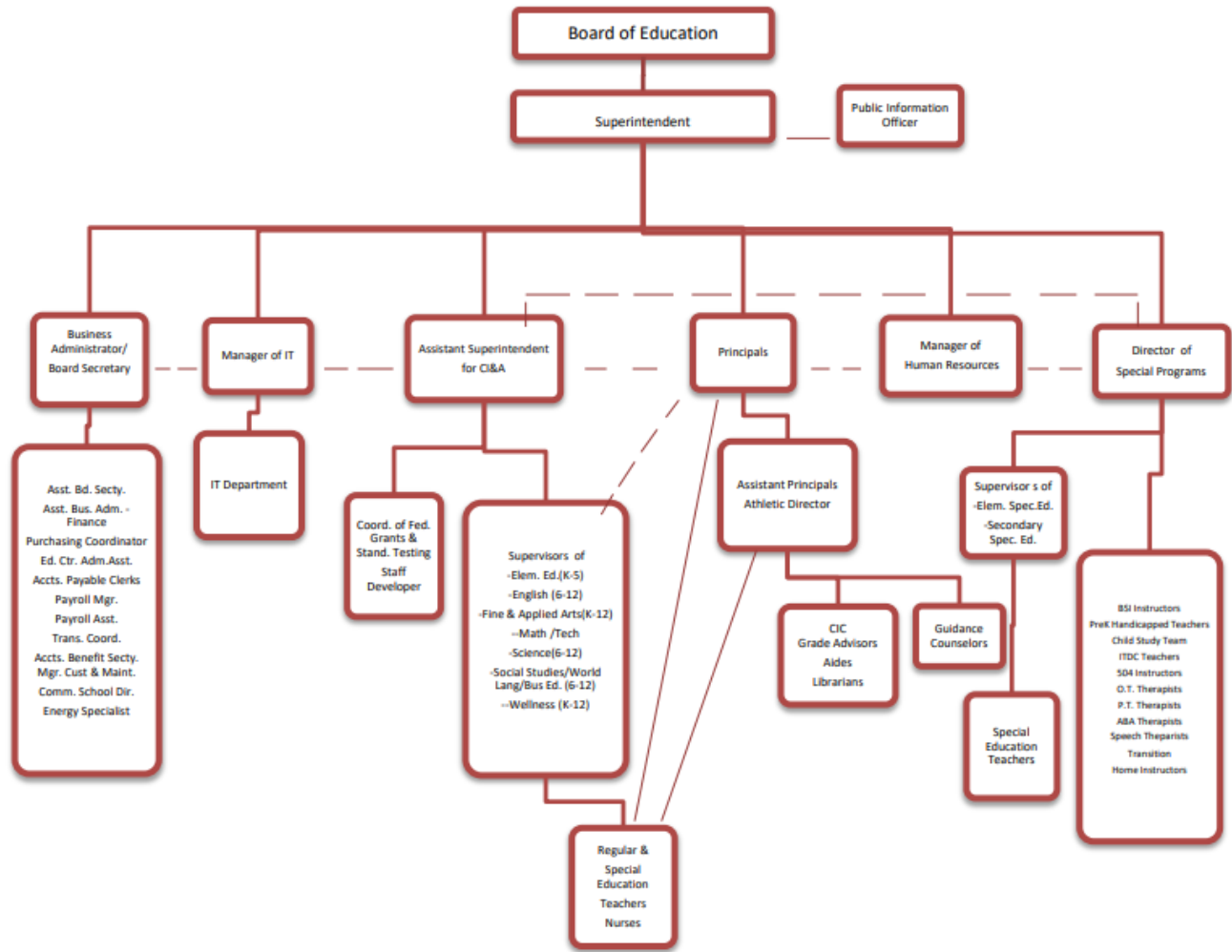
**RIDGEWOOD EDUCATION ASSOCIATION (REA)**

President	Mr. Michael Yannone	201-670-2700 x 20679
Vice President	Ms. Julianna Berry	201-670-2700 x 52611
Secretary	Mr. Chuck Nebbia	201-670-2700 x 52618
Treasurer	Ms. Kristen Rosolanko	201-670-2700 x 30639
Chief Negotiator/ Contract Committee Chair	Mr. Matthew Connelly	201-670-2700 x 56614
Grievance Chairperson	Mr. Matthew Connelly	201-670-2700 x 56614

## **RIDGEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Ridgewood Public Schools, committed to a tradition of excellence and innovation, in partnership with the community, provide a rich and challenging learning environment, enabling students to maximize their unique potentials to become lifelong learners and productive, responsible citizens.*

# RIDGEWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOLS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## **ANTI-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

### **Affirmative Action/ Equal Opportunity/Non-Discrimination**

The Board's affirmative action program shall recognize and value the diversity of persons and groups within society and promote the acceptance of persons of diverse backgrounds regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, age, marital status, affectional or sexual orientation, gender, religion, disability, socioeconomic status or any other status or characteristic identified by applicable state or federal law. It is the policy of the Ridgewood Board of Education to avoid discrimination. Any student, parent, staff or community member who has a concern arising from alleged prejudice or discrimination on the basis of the aforementioned items, may contact the Affirmative Action Officer(s) or utilize the District Affirmative Action Grievance Procedure. [See- Policies Nos. 1140, 1550, 2260, 5750, 5755, etc.]

### **Americans with Disabilities Act**

It is the policy of the Board of Education that no qualified handicapped or disabled person shall, on the basis of handicap or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in employment or under any program, activity or vocational opportunities sponsored by this Board. The Board shall comply with §504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. It shall also comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act through the implementation of [Policy No. 2460 and Regulations Nos. 2460 through 2460.14]. Notice of the Board's policy on discrimination in employment [Policy and Regulation No. 1530 and education [Policy and Regulation No. 5750] will be included in the Board policy manual and posted throughout the district and referenced in any district statement regarding the availability of employment positions or educational services.

## **Sexual Harassment & Workplace Bullying**

The Ridgewood Board of Education does not permit workplace harassment of any kind. The Board of Education recognizes that an employee's right to freedom from employment discrimination includes the opportunity to work in an environment untainted by sexual harassment or a hostile work environment. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances or conduct of a sexual nature, which unreasonably interferes with the performance of a person's job or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment can range from persistent offensive sexual jokes to inappropriate touching to posting offensive materials on a bulletin board. The two basic types of unlawful harassment are "Quid Pro Quo", meaning "This for that", and "Hostile Work Environment". Quid pro quo harassment generally results in a tangible employment decision based upon an employee's acceptance or rejection of unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favors, but it can also result from unwelcome conduct that is of a religious nature. Hostile Work Environment harassment can result from unwelcome conduct of supervisors, co-workers, contractors or anyone with whom the victim interacts on the job. The conduct renders the workplace atmosphere intimidating, hostile or offensive. The Board does not permit harassing conduct by anyone in the school district, including contractors. Any employee or agent of this Board who is found to have sexually harassed an employee of this district will be subject to discipline which may include termination of employment. Any employee who has been exposed to sexual harassment by an employee or agent of this Board is encouraged to report the harassment to an appropriate Principal, immediate Supervisor, district EEO Officer, or to the Director of Human Resources. See District webpage/HR/EEO-Discriminatory Harassment Investigation Procedures, or see Policy #3362, 4352 and 4351.

### **Workplace Bullying**

The District defines bullying as "inappropriate behavior, either direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment." Such behavior violates the district Code of Ethics [District Policy No. 3211], which clearly states that all employees will be treated with dignity and respect.

The purpose of this policy is to communicate to all employees, including teachers, support staff and administrators, that the district will not tolerate bullying behavior. Employees found in violation of this policy will be disciplined up to and including termination/tenure charge.

Bullying may be intentional or unintentional. However, it must be noted that where an allegation of bullying is made, the intention of the alleged bully is irrelevant and will not be given consideration when implementing discipline. As in sexual harassment, it is the effect of the behavior upon the individual that is important. The district considers the following types of behavior examples of bullying:

**Verbal bullying:** Slandering, ridiculing or maligning a person or his/her family; persistent name calling that is hurtful, insulting or humiliating; using a person as the butt of jokes; abusive and offensive remarks.

**Physical bullying:** Pushing, shoving, kicking, poking, tripping, assault or threat of physical assault; damage to a person's work area or property.

**Gesture bullying:** Non-verbal threatening gestures or glances that convey threatening messages.

**Exclusion:** Socially or physically excluding or disregarding a person in work-related activities.

Any employee who has been exposed to sexual harassment or workplace bullying by any employee or agent of this Board is encouraged to report the harassment/bullying to an appropriate supervisor, the district's Affirmative Action Officer or one of the district's E.E.O. Officers. Complaints will be promptly investigated as per Policies Nos. 3281/4281; 3362/4362; 5751. An employee may complain of any failure of the Board to take corrective action by recourse to the procedure by which the discrimination complaint is processed. [See Policies Nos. 3362, 1530, 4352 & 5751].

### **Ridgewood Public Schools EEO/Discrimination Harassment Investigation Procedure**

The Ridgewood Public Schools are committed to providing all students and staff members with an environment that is free from discrimination and harassment. Any type of discriminatory action or harassment by one person against another because of race, religion, creed, color, age, ancestry, national origin, marital or domestic partnership status, family status (including pregnancy), gender, affectional or sexual orientation, mental or physical disability or perceived disability, atypical hereditary cellular or blood trait, genetic information or the refusal to test for or disclose genetic information, and/or liability for military service *that interferes with sound educational values* is a violation of the Ridgewood Public Schools' policy.

This procedure also encompasses sexual harassment, whether it be physical or verbal, committed by supervisors and nonsupervisory personnel. Specifically, no persons shall threaten or insinuate directly or indirectly that any employee's submission to or rejection of sexual advances will in any way influence decisions regarding that employee's employment, evaluation, wages, advancement, any conditions of employment, or right to an educational opportunity.

Our commitment to equal educational opportunity and equal employment opportunity applies to everyone living or working in the Ridgewood School District, and it is enforced by investigating and responding to all incidents or complaints.

## **Complaint/Investigation Procedure**

It is desirable that problems and complaints of alleged discrimination/harassment be resolved in a prompt and positive manner. Where appropriate, such problems and complaints may be resolved in an informal manner.

A “complaint” shall mean the filing of a statement, preferably in writing, alleging that there has been an instance of discriminatory harassment, including sexual harassment, in the employment environment and/or the educational program or activities of the District.

### **Level I – Notification, Investigation & Response**

Any employee with a complaint about discriminatory harassment shall notify a Principal or immediate supervisor, a district EEO Officer, or the Director of HR (district AA Officer) of the person who committed the alleged offense. Complaints brought to teachers, counselors or other staff members must be referred to one of these individuals immediately. If the Principal or immediate supervisor is the subject of the complaint, it should be referred to the Manager of HR. If the Director of HR is the subject of the complaint, it should be referred to the Superintendent. If the Superintendent is the subject of the complaint, it should be referred to the Board of Education (BOE).

The Principal/immediate supervisor, EEO Officer or Director of HR will establish a record of the discussion that takes place relative to any verbal complaint filed. Investigation will be conducted, and the parties to the complaint will receive written notice of the resolution of the problem, to the extent allowed by law, no later than seven (7) working days after receipt of the written complaint unless the circumstances of the complaint or investigation warrant additional reasonable time.

The responsible administrator will investigate the complaint directly, or request investigation by a district EEO Officer. The investigator will at all times work to be prompt, thorough and confidential. The investigation report of a district EEO Officer will be given to the responsible administrator who will take appropriate action(s) and/or make appropriate recommendation(s) based on its findings and conclusions.

### **Level II – Appeal to Superintendent**

If either party is not satisfied with the Level I decision s/he may appeal it to the Superintendent or designee within three (3) working days of receipt of the decision. The Superintendent or designee will provide a hearing for the appealing party within seven (7) working days. Additional investigation may be conducted, or a decision may be made based on a review of the Level 1 record. The Superintendent will respond to the appeal and issue a decision to all parties within seven (7) working days of receipt of the appeal or the hearing, whichever is later.



### **Level III – Appeal to Board of Education**

If either party is not satisfied with the Level II decision s/he may appeal it to the BOE within three (3) working days of receipt of the decision. The BOE will review the Level 1 and Level 2 records and may direct additional investigation be conducted. At the appealing party's request, the BOE may convene a hearing for all parties to the complaint. The BOE will respond to the appeal and report its decision to all parties within forty-five (45) calendar days of the appeal or the hearing, whichever is later.

**NOTE:** A staff member also has the right to contact the U.S. Office of Civil Rights or NJ Division of Civil Rights for the resolution of any complaint. **QUESTIONS ABOUT EEO/NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICIES OR PROCEDURES SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:**

**Jaime Cangialosi-Murphy**, Director of Human Resources  
Education Center, 49 Cottage Place 201-670-2700 x10504

Or designee

### **Child Neglect and Abuse**

In New Jersey, any teacher or other concerned person having reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 has been subjected to abuse, abandonment, cruelty and/or neglect must immediately report the information to the (SCR) State Central Registry/DCF (Division of Children and Families) hotline. The State Central Registry (SCR) is the centralized center to report child abuse and neglect **1-877-NJABUSE**. A concerned caller does not need proof to report an allegation of a child abuse, can make the report anonymously and is immune from any criminal or civil liability as a result of such action. Any person who knowingly fails to report suspected abuse is considered a disorderly person and is subject to a fine or imprisonment, or both. District employees should follow specific steps when reporting child abuse. [See Policies Nos. 3280; 3281; 8462]

### **Harassment, Intimidation and Bullying**

The Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying of a student. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe and disciplined environment. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff and volunteers should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying.

“Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any gesture, any written, verbal or physical act, or any electronic communication, as defined by N.J.S.A. 18A:37-14, whether it is be single incident or series of incidents, that:

1. Is reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or a mental, physical or sensory disability, or by any other distinguishing characteristic;
2. Takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, on a school bus, or off school grounds as provided for in N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15-3;

3. Substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students and that:
  - a. A reasonable person should know, under the circumstances, that the act(s) will have the effect of physically or emotionally harming a student or damaging the student's property, or placing a student in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm to this person or damage to his property;
  - b. Has the effect of insulting or demeaning any student or group of students; or
  - c. Creates a hostile educational environment for the student by interfering with a student's education or by severely or pervasively causing physical or emotional harm to the students.

The district (schools) is required to address harassment, intimidation, and bullying occurring off school grounds when there is a nexus between the harassment, intimidation, and bullying and the school (e.g., the harassment, intimidation, or bullying substantially disrupts or interferes with the orderly operation of the school or the rights of other students).

The Board of Education requires its school administrators to implement procedures that ensure both the appropriate consequences and remedial responses for students who commit one or more acts of harassment intimidation, or bullying. The district will conduct a prompt investigation of reports and violations and complaints of harassment, intimidation, or bullying in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:37-15(b)6. (See Policy No. 5512)

### **Conscientious Employee Protection Act**

Under the Conscientious Employee Protection Act, an employer shall not take retaliatory action against any employee who:

1. discloses or threatens to disclose to a supervisor or a public body that the employer is engaging in an activity or practice that the employee reasonably believes is violating the law, a rule or a regulation promulgated pursuant to law;
2. provides information to or testifies before a public body conducting an investigation into possible violations of law, of a rule or of a regulation by the employer; or
3. objects or refuses to participate in any activity or practice of the employer that the employee reasonably believes is in violation of the law, a rule or a regulation, is fraudulent or criminal, or is incompatible with a clear mandate of public policy concerning the public health, safety or welfare or the protection of the environment. [See- Policies Nos. 3381, 4381]
4. The Act also protects an employee who is a licensed or certified health care professional and who objects to or refuses to participate in any activity or practice of the employer that the employee reasonably believes constitutes improper quality of patient care from retaliatory employment action by the employer.

Before providing notice to a public body, however, an employee must first bring his/her concerns about an activity that may be a violation of the law to the attention of a supervisor and give the employer a reasonable opportunity to correct the activity.

An employee who believes that he/she has been retaliated against in violation of this law may bring an action in a court within one year of any retaliatory action taken and may be entitled to an injunction against the employer's retaliatory employment conduct, to reinstatement to the former employee's employment position, and to compensation for lost wages and benefits and attorney's fees.

Although not required to do so by law, employees are always encouraged to bring their concerns about employment retaliation to the attention of their supervisor or higher management.

## COMPENSATION

### **Salary**

Salaries for certificated and non-certificated employees in the Ridgewood Education Association (REA) are determined by placement on the salary guide of the CBA. The Ridgewood Board of Education retains the authority to hire at salaries indicated on the appropriate guide. Salaries for Ridgewood Administrators Association employees will be determined by the Ridgewood Board of Education as appropriate for the positions and the needs of the district. Salaries for Non-Affiliated employees are also determined by the Board of Education when not covered by the terms of a negotiated agreement or in an individual contract with the Board. **N.J.S.A. 18A:6-6; 18A:16-11; 18A:27-4; 18A:29-2**

Employees are paid twice a month on the 15<sup>th</sup> and the 30<sup>th</sup> of the month. All deductions are listed on the employee's pay stub, which can be found in the Employee Portal. Questions should be directed to Payroll at 201- 670-2700, Extension 10559. [See Policies Nos. 3410, 4410]

### **Payment of Wages**

It is the district's policy that employee paychecks will only be given through direct deposit.

If the normal payday falls on a district-recognized holiday, paychecks will be distributed one workday before the aforementioned schedule.

Employees may be paid through direct deposit of funds to either a savings or checking account at the financial institution of their choice.

In the event that a paycheck is lost or has an error, the Human Resources department must be notified in writing as soon as possible before a replacement check can be issued by the Payroll Office.

A Personnel File Change form must be completed through Frontline Central if an employee's marital status, name, address, cell phone number, email or emergency contact etc. changes.

If the number of exemptions previously claimed increases or decreases, a new Form W-4 must be submitted to the Payroll Department.

### **Employment Travel Reimbursement**

Employees will be reimbursed for reasonable expenses incurred in connection with approved travel on behalf of the District as per state statute.

Travelers seeking reimbursement should incur the lowest reasonable travel expenses and exercise care to avoid the appearance of impropriety. If a circumstance arises that is not specifically covered in the travel policies, the most conservative course of action should be adopted.

Travel for staff must be authorized in advance. Travelers should verify that planned travel is eligible for reimbursement before making travel arrangements. Upon completion of the trip, and within 30 days, the traveler must submit a Travel Reimbursement Form and supporting documentation to obtain reimbursement of expenses. [See Policies Nos. 3240; 4160; 6471] Travel, procedures and authorization and reimbursement forms can be found on the district website.

### **Performance Review**

Performance evaluations will be performed as required by state statute, the collective bargaining agreements and Policies Nos. 3126 and 3144.12. The performance evaluation will be discussed, and both the employee and supervisor will sign the form to ensure that all strengths, areas for improvement and performance goals for the next review period have been clearly communicated. Performance evaluation forms will be retained in the employee's personnel file or Frontline Professional Growth.

# **BENEFITS**

## **Medical/Prescription/Dental Insurance**

### **Medical/Prescription**

The Board will provide eligible employees with medical and prescription insurance through its enrollment in the New Jersey School Employees' Health Benefits Program ("SEHBP"). Employee health benefits contributions shall be made in accordance with all applicable NJ statutes. Enrollment in the SEHBP includes eligible dependents, a spouse, civil union partner, or eligible same sex-domestic partner and/or eligible children. As defined by the State Health Benefits Program. [Note: Check with the NJ Division of Pension and Benefits. Civil union and domestic partner coverage may be subject to federal tax.]

Medical coverage for ten-month employees hired prior to the start of the school year will begin September 1<sup>st</sup>. If a ten-month employee does not start on the first day of school, there is a 60-day waiting period. Medical coverage for twelve-month will commence after the sixty (60) day grace period. (See REA/RAA Agreements, for specific eligibilities for part-time employees, minimum work schedule is 0.7 FTE.)

### **COBRA- Continuation of Health Coverage**

In compliance with the 1986 Budget Reconciliation Act, health insurance will be continued for eighteen (18) months for terminated employees and for thirty-six (36) months for dependents of active and retired employees after death, divorce, or legal separation of the covered employee and for dependents child(ren) after ceasing to be a dependent (age 26), under the Board's insurance plan. Premiums for this extended group health coverage will be paid by the terminating/retired employee or dependent(s).

### **Dental**

The Board will provide eligible employees dental coverage through the enrollment in the Board's dental insurance programs, subject to employee dental contributions.

All eligible new enrollees are subject to a one-month waiting period for dental coverage. Eligibility for dental coverage requires a minimum work schedule of 0.5 FTE.

### **Disability Insurance**

All NJEA members may enroll in the New Jersey Education Association's group disability plan which is underwritten by the Prudential Insurance Company. The plan is designed to provide cash benefits during disability caused by illness or accidents. The cost of the plan varies according to the benefits selected. Call Prudential at 1-800-727-3414 for more information.

AFLAC is also offered to **all** employees by contacting Nicholas Duchensky is at 973-808-4600.

## **Tax Shelter Annuities**

Employees of the Ridgewood Public School District may enroll with several companies that service the district by providing tax shelter annuities. These plans permit employees to deduct a specific amount from their paychecks into a tax shelter annuity and delay the payment of taxes on the amount. The principal and interest accumulate tax free until withdrawal, usually after retirement when an employee is in a lower tax bracket. These are long-term investments, and employees are cautioned that there are penalties for early withdrawals (usually 10% - 20% penalty for withdrawal under age 59.5). Effective July 1, 2018, **U.S. OMNI** is the Third Party Plan administrator for our 403(b) & 457(b) plans. **OMNI** will ensure that the plan sponsor, the participants, each of our investment providers and their agents adhere to the many compliance regulations mandated by the Internal Revenue Service. OMNI's call center representatives can be at **1-877-544-OMNI (6664)**. Please contact the Business Office with any additional questions. (Please see the district website for a listing of plan options and contact numbers.)

## **Credit Union**

Employees may join the Visions Federal Credit Union which allows for automatic payroll deposits, as well as checking accounts, savings accounts, personal and mortgage loans, credit cards and many other services. The Vision Federal Union is located at 78 Washington Avenue, Westwood, NJ 07675; 1 Lethbridge Plaza, Mahwah, NJ 07430; or 5 Washington Avenue, Dumont, NJ 07628. Phone # 1-800-242-2120. Enrollment is optional; the district has no affiliation with the credit union.

## **Flexible Spending Account – Cafeteria 125**

As part of the district's Flexible Benefits Plan (*Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey* [www.horizonblue.com/fsa](http://www.horizonblue.com/fsa)), we currently offer an employee-funded flexible spending account (FSA) to regular full-time employees hired on or before January 1 of a calendar year. Plan participants may elect to designate an annual amount of flexible dollars to pay for eligible healthcare expenses, including medical or dental insurance deductibles, copayments, and out-of-pocket costs for vision care and other types of care.

If eligible, medical or dental expenses are less than the elected annual amount of flex dollars for that year, the balance will be forfeited.

## **Life Insurance**

Active employees in the PERS or TPAF (NJ Division of Pensions and Benefits) ~~you~~ may be covered by one of two types of group life insurance. Please check your pension statement to determine the type of life insurance for which you are eligible.

### ***Non-Contributory Group Term Life Insurance***

Policy No. G-14800 is provided by the district through the pension fund. There is no cost to the employee for this coverage.

### ***Contributory Group Term Life Insurance***

The employee is required to pay for the contributory insurance (elective). The cost of the insurance for PERS members (Policy No. G-13900) is 0.5 of 1 percent (.005) of base salary, and for TPAF members (Policy No. G-14300) is 0.4 of 1 percent (.004) of base salary.

The benefit for active members of PERS or TPAF enrolled in NONCONTRIBUTORY Group Life Insurance **ONLY** is 1.5 x base salary.

The benefit for active members of PERS or TPAF enrolled in **both** the CONTRIBUTORY AND NONCONTRIBUTORY Group Life Insurance is 3.0 (PERS) or 3.5 (TPAF) x base salary. The law requires that a member must be covered by Noncontributory insurance for the first 12 months of membership. After the 12 months has elapsed, a member may voluntarily withdraw from contributory insurance if they wish. A properly completed "Notice for Withdrawal from Contributory Group Life Insurance must be filed with the retirement system before contributory coverage can be cancelled. (See Fact sheets in the TPAF or PERS Member Guidebook on the NJ Divisions of Pensions and Benefits website. on

When an active member dies, not as a result of regular or assigned duties, the named beneficiaries are entitled to the payment of group life insurance benefits and the return of the member's accumulated pension contributions with interest, if any.

The amount of life insurance benefits paid to beneficiaries at your death depends on three factors:

- membership status at the time of death;
- salary; and
- age.

**Note:** The employer pays the contributory group life insurance premium for covered TPAF members who are age 70 and older.



## **Workers' Compensation Benefits**

An employee who sustains a work-related injury or accident shall be presumed eligible for worker's compensation and should seek the worker's compensation benefits to which he/she is entitled by law. The Board of Education will permit, in accordance with law, the absence without loss of pay or of annual or accumulated sick leave benefits for the injured employee. Any employee who qualifies for work-related disability pay under this policy shall receive full pay during the period he/she is on disability leave of absence, up to one calendar year. [See Policies Nos. 3425, 4425.]

Employees who sustain work-related injuries must immediately notify their department supervisor and school nurse. The school nurse or injured employee should contact the worker's compensation provider (First MCO at 800-831-9531). First MCO will direct the injured employee to a medical facility, if it is not an emergency.

## **Tuition Reimbursement**

Upon completion of graduate credit coursework, the Board will reimburse employees covered in the Collective Bargaining Agreement (REA & RAA) for tuition and fees per credit. All courses must receive prior approval from the employee's immediate supervisor and the Superintendent. All payments are subject to a District cap, as well as the contract and form stipulations. Forms for tuition reimbursement are obtainable on the District website.

## **Children of Non-Resident Staff Members Attending Ridgewood Schools**

Staff members' children may attend the Ridgewood Public Schools upon approval of the Superintendent. The children of nonresident permanent, salaried staff members of the Board of Education may be admitted to the schools of the district at a tuition rate, set annually by the Board of Education prior to the end of the school year, upon recommendation of the Superintendent and the approval of the Board. Approval of enrollment shall be based on availability of space in the schools; the Superintendent shall review the availability of space on an annual basis. Annually, the nonresident staff member must submit a letter to the Superintendent requesting their child to be approved for admittance in the district in the subsequent school year. All such letters must be received by the Superintendent by May 15 of the current school year in order for the child to be considered for admittance in the following school year. The Superintendent will notify the nonresident staff member of the decision, in writing no later than June 15 of the current school year.

A written request for permission to enroll a child of a nonresident staff member, including school preference, must be submitted to and approved in writing by the Superintendent at least thirty (30) days prior to admittance. Tuition will cover only the typical costs associated with an education in the Ridgewood School District. Any extraordinary costs will be borne by the parents(s) guardian(s). Examples of extraordinary costs include, but are not limited to, fees for OT/PT, aides, out-of district transportation, etc. Children of any district employee hired after July, 2022 shall be assessed a tuition rate as established by the Board approved out-of district tuition rate. [See Policy No. 5111].

## **TIME OFF/LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

### **Leaves of Absence**

Leaves of absence, which include bereavement leave, family leave, childcare/maternity leave, personal business leave, and sick leave, are all detailed in the REA and/or RAA Agreements that have been negotiated. [See Policies Nos. 3432; 3161/4161; 3425/4425; 3431.1/4431.1; 3435/4435; and 3437/4437]

### **Sick Leave**

All full-time, regular employees accrue sick leave from the date of hire, for a total of ten (10) days per year for ten (10) month employees, eleven (11) days per year for eleven (11) month employees and twelve days for twelve (12) month employees.

For additional information, please reference Policy Number 1642.01 or your applicable employee contract.

### **Personal Days Leave**

Please consult the REA and/or RAA agreements concerning bereavement days, family illness/injury days, personal days, maternity days, and family leave. Non-affiliated employees receive the same numbers of days as the terms of the negotiated REA and RAA agreements, three (3) days annually, which is converted to personal/sick if not utilized during the school year. No personal days, without reason, shall be allowed immediately before or after a holiday or any vacation period for which school is closed as designated by the official school calendar (one exception to this rule is allowed per year.)

### **Recess Days**

All full-time, twelve month employees shall have five days per year. The recess days are available during school recess periods as designated by the official school calendar. Contact Human Resources for additional information.

## **Bereavement Leave**

An employee who wishes to take time off due to the death of an *immediate family member* should notify his or her supervisor immediately. Absences may be compensated for as many days as the Superintendent considers suitable in the individual cases, up to a maximum of five (5) days. Additional leave may be granted at the discretion of the Superintendent. For purposes of definition regarding an *immediate family member* includes: husband, wife, domestic partner/civil union, child, father, mother, brother, sister, grandfather, grandmother, relatives by marriage in the same degree of relationship, those serving the staff member in loco parentis, or any relative whose actual household at the time is also the household of the absentee.

Paid bereavement leave is granted according to a schedule [See Policy No. 3212 and details within the REA and RAA agreements of district employees.]

## **Family and Medical Leave (FMLA)**

The District provides all new employees with notices required by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) on [Employee Rights and Responsibilities Under the Family and Medical Act](#).

The function of Policies Nos. 3431.1 and 4431.1 is to provide employees with a general description of their FMLA rights. In the event of any conflict between these policies and the applicable law, employees will be afforded all rights required by law.

Questions, concerns or disputes with these policies must be directed to the Manager of HR.

## **Military Leave**

The Board of Education recognizes that military service rendered by any district employee in the defense of the country or in maintaining preparedness for conflict, foreign or domestic, is a service benefiting all citizens. Any permanent or full-time officer and/or employee of the district will be provided military leave and related benefits pursuant to the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA), 38 U.S.C. Section 4301 et seq., P.L. 2001 Chapter 351 amending N.J.S.A. 38:23-1, N.J.S.A. 38A:1-1 and N.J.S.A. 38A:4-4., and any other applicable Federal and State laws. [See Policies Nos. 3437, 4437]

Employees requesting leave for military duty should contact Human Resources as soon as they are aware of the need for leave. The district is committed to protecting the job rights of employees absent on military leave. If any employee believes that he or she has been subjected to discrimination in violation of district policy, the employee should immediately contact Human Resources.

## **Paid Holidays**

The District recognizes paid holidays each year. Each year these holidays are posted on a district calendar and distributed to twelve (12) month employees.

## **Vacation**

All twelve (12) month employees must enter their vacation in Frontline's Absence Management and have it approved by their building principal or supervisor.

## **Jury Duty**

Employees that are called to jury duty must provide proof to their building principal or supervisor.

## **District Calendar**

The district calendar is approved yearly by the Board of Education. Calendars can be found on the District website at [www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us](http://www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us). The school/ work year shall run from July 1<sup>st</sup> through June 30<sup>th</sup>.

## **Professional Development**

Employees are encouraged to attend graduate school, district professional development classes, conferences or workshops that provide for professional growth. In addition to tuition reimbursement, as explained above, teachers may enroll to take courses or to teach an area of expertise in the Ridgewood Professional Development Program (PDP). Teachers who teach the courses are compensated. Anyone interested in attending a conference or workshop must have formal Board approval prior to enrolling. This process includes first completing a “Professional Day Request” form and receiving permission from the school principal or his/her designee, plus the Superintendent. All required forms are available on the District website and also in the main office of each building. The employee may be reimbursed for his/her expenses or a portion of his/her expenses. [See REA, RAA agreements] The amount eligible for reimbursement is determined by the school administration, REA, RAA, state regulations and/or budget limitations.

*See Appendix A: Attendance Rules by Category (page 46)*

## EMPLOYMENT

### **District Policies and Job Descriptions**

The Board of Education has comprehensive bylaws, policies and regulations manuals located in the main office of each building and on the District website. Additionally, every position in the district has a Board-approved job description which can be found on the District website. Individual job descriptions and specific policies/regulations must be reviewed by each employee yearly. It is the staff member's responsibility to review the mandated policies/regulations on the District website under the faculty/staff section and "sign off" on the verification after reading the annual policy notification.

### **Notice of Vacancies and Employment Opportunities**

Notices of vacant positions in the Ridgewood Public Schools are posted on the District website: [https://www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us/our\\_district/human\\_resources/job\\_opportunities](https://www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us/our_district/human_resources/job_opportunities).

Vacancies are e-mailed to all District employees. The Ridgewood school district only uses an online application process; to apply for employment, an **online application** must be completed and submitted, which will then be reviewed by the principal, supervisors and other administrative staff. The administrator(s) responsible for filling a particular vacancy will contact the applicant directly for an interview.

Applicants may, and should, upload and attach supporting documentation to online application. This documentation may include: NJDOE certifications; undergraduate and graduate transcripts; and professional references (preferably from employment supervisors), with contact information for future use if needed. Paper copies of these supporting documents, as well as the candidate's resume and cover letter, should be brought to the interview.

Applicants should not mail, e-mail or bring resumes, transcripts, letters of recommendation or any other documentation to the District HR Office or to any schools unless specifically requested by an administrator during the recruitment process. Unsolicited paper documents will be discarded. Completed applications will be retained with active status for the remainder of the current school year.

### **Background and Reference Checks**

To ensure that individuals who join the District are well qualified and to ensure that the District maintains a safe and productive work environment, it is District policy to conduct pre-employment background checks on all applicants who accept an offer of employment. Background checks may include verification of any information on the applicant's resume or application form, as well as a criminal history background check as required by law.

All offers of employment are conditional on receipt of a background check report that is acceptable to the District. Background checks will include a criminal record check. All background checks are conducted in conformity with the Federal Fair Credit Reporting Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and state and federal privacy and antidiscrimination laws. Reports are kept confidential and are only viewed by individuals involved in the hiring process.

If information obtained in a background check would lead the District to deny employment, a copy of the report will be provided to the applicant, and the applicant will have the opportunity to dispute the report's accuracy.

The District also reserves the right to conduct a background check for current employees to determine eligibility for promotion or reassignment in the same manner as described above.

### **New Jersey First Act**

The New First Act went into effect on September 1, 2011. It requires that all employees of school districts who began their office, position or employment on or after September 1, 2011 must reside in the State of New Jersey, unless exempted under the law. Employees who do not reside in New Jersey have one year after the effective date of office, position or employment to establish residence to New Jersey. Those who do not do so are subject to removal from office, position or employment.

Employees hired by the school district prior to September 1, 2011, are not required to move to New Jersey.

### **Nepotism, Employment of Relatives and Personal Relationships**

The District wants to ensure that its practices do not create situations such as conflict of interest or favoritism. This extends to practices that involve employee hiring, promotion and transfer. Close relatives, partners, those in a dating relationship or members of the same household are not permitted to be in positions that have a reporting responsibility to each other. Close relatives are defined as husband, wife, domestic partner, father, mother, father-in-law, mother-in-law, grandfather, grandmother, son, son-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law, uncle, aunt, nephew, niece, brother, sister, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, step relatives, cousins and domestic partner relatives.

If employees begin a dating relationship or become relatives, partners or members of the same household, and if one party is in a supervisory position to the other, that person is required to inform management and HR of the relationship.

The District reserves the right to apply this policy to situations where there is a conflict or the potential for conflict because of the relationship between employees, even if there is no direct-reporting relationship or authority involved.

### **Progressive Discipline**

Every employee has the duty and the responsibility to be aware of and abide by existing rules and policies. Employees also have the responsibility to perform their duties to the best of their ability and to the standards as set forth in the job description or as otherwise established. The District supports the use of progressive discipline to address issues such as poor work performance or misconduct. This progressive discipline policy is designed to provide a corrective action process to improve and prevent a recurrence of undesirable behavior and/or performance issues. This policy has been designed to be consistent with District organizational values, HR best practices and employment laws.

Outlined below are the general steps of the District progressive discipline policy and procedure. The District reserves the right to combine or skip steps in this process depending on the facts of each situation and the nature of the offense. The level of disciplinary intervention may also vary. Some of the factors that will be considered are whether the offense is repeated despite coaching, counseling and/or training; the employee's work record; and the impact of the conduct and performance issues on the District.

The following outlines the District's progressive discipline process:

**Verbal warning:** A supervisor verbally counsels an employee about an issue of concern, and a written record of the discussion is placed in the employee's file for future reference.

**Written warning:** Written warnings are used for behavior or violations that a supervisor considers serious, or in situations when a verbal warning has not helped change unacceptable behavior. Written warnings are placed in an employee's personnel file. Employees should recognize the grave nature of the written warning.

**Performance Improvement Plan:** Whenever an employee has been involved in a disciplinary situation that has not been readily resolved or when he/she has demonstrated an inability to perform assigned work responsibilities efficiently, the employee may be given a final warning or placed on a Performance Improvement Plan (PIP), which requires the employee to demonstrate a willingness and ability to meet and maintain the conduct and/or work requirements as specified by the supervisor and the organization within a specified time period. At the end of that time period, the PIP may be closed or, if established goals are not met, further disciplinary action -- up to and including tenure charges -- may be necessary.

The District reserves the right to determine the appropriate level of discipline for any inappropriate conduct.

## **Transfers**

Transfers, either voluntary or involuntary, are made only in the best interest of the school district, the program and the needs of the staff. These factors shall be considered in determining the transfer or reassignment of an employee. [See RAA or REA agreements and District Policy No. 3377.]

## **Separation of Employment**

Separation of employment within the school district can occur for several different reasons:

**Resignation:** Although it is hoped that employment with the District will be a mutually rewarding experience, varying circumstances may cause employees to voluntarily resign. Resigning employees are encouraged to provide statutory/contract notice, preferably in writing, to facilitate a smooth transition out of the District. The administration reserves the right to provide an employee with pay in lieu of notice in situations where job or business needs warrant such action. If an employee provides less notice than required, the employer may deem it necessary to inform the NJDOE for certified employees. [District Policy 3141]

**Retirement:** Employees who wish to retire are required to notify their supervisor and the HR Department in writing, as detailed in the collective bargaining agreement.

**Job Abandonment:** Employees who fail to report to work or contact their supervisor in a timely manner may be considered to have abandoned the job without notice. The supervisor shall notify the HR Department and initiate the paperwork to terminate the employee.

**Termination:** Most employees of the District are employed on a tenure track basis. The District retains the right to terminate non-tenured employees or non-aligned employees. Tenured employees are subject to dismissal District Policy No. 3141) through tenure laws. [District Policy No. 3144]

### **Return of School District Property**

Separating employees must return all District property at the time of separation, including uniforms, cell phones, keys, PCs and other electronic devices, identification cards, etc.

The separating employee shall contact the HR Department as soon as notice is given to schedule an exit interview. The interview will be on a date and time mutually agreed on. Accrued vacation and/or sick leave will be paid in the last paycheck unless the employee resigned and did not provide notice as detailed in the collective bargaining agreements. Payment will therefore be delayed.

Health insurance terminates the last day of the month of employment, unless an employee requests immediate termination of benefits. Information for Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation (COBRA) continued health coverage will be provided.



## WORKPLACE SAFETY

### District Emergency Information

The Ridgewood School District will respond to weather or other emergencies in one of four ways: cancellation of the school day; delayed opening; emergency early dismissal; or emergency minimum day. In these instances, district parents/guardians will be notified via the district website ([www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us](http://www.ridgewood.k12.nj.us)); an e-mail announcement; and the automatic telephone notification system. In addition, a message will be placed on the central office line at 201-670-2700; callers should press \* for announcements.

1. NO SCHOOL.
2. DELAYED OPENING: Under the delayed opening plan, the school day will begin two hours later than usual. School bus schedules will operate two hours later. The morning kindergarten will be cancelled; the afternoon kindergarten will follow the regular hours (12:20-3 p.m.). Children in grades 1-5 who have not ordered lunches must bring a bag lunch to school. There will not be sufficient time for children to go home for lunch when there is a delayed opening.
3. EMERGENCY EARLY DISMISSAL: If it is necessary to dismiss early, every effort will be made to notify parents by way of announcements on the RPS district website, email, and the automatic telephone notification system. Middle and elementary school students will be released to responsible adults identified by parents on their child's Emergency Card.
4. EMERGENCY MINIMUM DAY: If an early dismissal is anticipated before the start of school, for example, if weather conditions are expected to deteriorate after school begins but before the school day ends, all children will be dismissed at the closing times posted below. Every effort will be made to call an Emergency Minimum Day the night before or very early the morning of the anticipated emergency conditions via the customary notification channels. Cafeterias will not operate and lunches will not be provided. Students will attend school as follows:

Glen/RED Program: 9 -11 am

Grades K through 5: 8:45 – 12:45 pm

Grades 6 through 8: 8:00 am – 12:15 pm

Grades 9 through 12: 8:20 am – 3:30 pm

Emergency closing information can also be obtained from the district website and/or automatic calls to the district.

Please DO NOT CALL the police or fire departments or the individual schools for information on the closing of schools. These departments are not prepared to handle such inquiries.

## **Electronic Surveillance in School Buildings and On School Grounds**

The Board of Education authorizes the use of electronic surveillance monitoring devices in school buildings and on school grounds. Therefore, all school buildings and school grounds within this school district may be monitored using such devices in accordance with Board Policy.

## **Allergies/Individual Medical Needs**

There are staff members and students prone to allergic reactions from certain fragrances, aromas, and/or foods. Staff members should show consideration for others by not using any fragrance, aromas or share food that would be detrimental to the health and welfare of others. The administration will strive to make reasonable accommodations for those students and staff who may be adversely affected. Employees with individual medical needs, i.e. diabetes, allergies, etc., are asked to notify the nurse in their building.

## **Injury to Employee**

Employees who are injured at work MUST seek immediate medical attention, either from the school nurse or at the nearest emergency room. Employees are required to complete an Accident Report Form for all injuries through the school nurse, who will notify First MCO, which will medically manage and direct further care for the injured employee. For the reporting of injuries, First MCO is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week via **800-831-9531**. The procedures and forms are located in every school nurse office.

Worker's Compensation inquiries should be directed to the Benefits Coordinator or HR Office.

## **Drug-Free Workplace**

The District has a longstanding commitment to provide a safe and productive work environment. Employees should report to work fit for duty and free of any adverse effects of illegal drugs or alcohol. Alcohol and drug abuse pose a threat to the health and safety of employees and to the security of students and facilities. For these reasons, the District is committed to the elimination of drug and/or alcohol use and abuse in the workplace.

District Policy No. 3218 outlines the practice and procedure designed to correct instances of identified alcohol and/or drug use in the workplace. This policy applies to all employees. The HR Department is responsible for policy administration.

This policy does not prohibit employees from the lawful use and possession of prescribed medications. Employees must, however, consult with their doctors about the medication's effect on their fitness for duty and ability to work safely, and promptly disclose any work restrictions to their supervisor. Employees should not, however, disclose underlying medical conditions unless it is necessary.

## **Work Rules**

The following work rules apply to all employees:

Whenever employees are working, are operating any school district vehicle, are present on school premises, or are conducting related work off-site, they are prohibited from:

- Using, possessing, buying, selling, manufacturing or dispensing an illegal drug (to include possession of drug paraphernalia)
- Being under the influence of alcohol or an illegal drug as defined in this policy
- Having the presence of any detectable amount of any illegal drug or illegal controlled substance in an employee's body while performing company business or while in a company facility is prohibited.

The District will not allow any employee to perform their duties while taking prescribed drugs that are adversely affecting the employee's ability to safely and effectively perform. Employees taking a prescribed medication must carry it in the container labeled by a licensed pharmacist or be prepared to produce it if asked.

Any illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia will be turned over to an appropriate law enforcement agency and may result in criminal prosecution.

### **Reasonable Suspicion Testing**

The District retains the right to require substance abuse testing if, based on observations by a supervisor, there is reasonable suspicion of apparent use, possession or impairment in the workplace. The Director of Human Resources must be consulted before sending an employee for reasonable suspicion testing.

**Follow-up:** Employees who have tested positive, or otherwise violated District policy, are subject to discipline up to and including discharge/tenure charge. Depending on the circumstances and the employee's work history/record, the District may offer an employee who violates this policy or tests positive the opportunity to return to work on a last-chance basis pursuant to mutually agreeable terms, which could include follow-up drug testing at times and frequencies for a minimum of one (1) year but not more than two (2) years. If the employee either does not complete his/her rehabilitation program or tests positive after completing the rehabilitation program, he/she will be subject to immediate discharge or tenure charge.

**Non-compliance Consequences:** Employees who refuse to cooperate in required tests or who use, possess, buy, sell, manufacture or dispense an illegal drug in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

### **Confidentiality**

Information and records relating to positive test results, drug and alcohol dependencies and legitimate medical explanations provided to the HR Director shall be kept confidential to the extent required by law and maintained in secure medical files separate from normal personnel files.

### **Inspections**

The district reserves the right to inspect all portions of its premises for drugs, alcohol or other contraband. All employees, contract employees and visitors may be asked to cooperate in inspections of their persons, work areas and property that might conceal a drug, alcohol or other contraband. Employees who possess such contraband or refuse to cooperate in such inspections are subject to appropriate discipline and police involvement.

## **Crimes Involving Drugs**

The District prohibits all employees from manufacturing, distributing, dispensing, possessing or using an illegal drug in or on District premises or while conducting District business. Employees are also prohibited from misusing legally prescribed or over-the-counter (OTC) drugs. Law enforcement personnel shall be notified, as appropriate, when criminal activity is suspected.

## **Violence in the Workplace**

All employees, students, visitors, and vendors must be treated with courtesy and respect at all times. Employees are expected to refrain from conduct that may be dangerous to others. Conduct that threatens, intimidates or coerces another person will not be tolerated. District resources may not be used to threaten, stalk or harass anyone at the workplace or outside the workplace.

Indirect or direct threats of violence, incidents of actual violence and suspicious individuals or activities should be reported as soon as possible to a supervisor and/or HR. When reporting a threat or incident of violence, the employee should be as specific and detailed as possible.

Employees should also promptly inform the HR Department of any protective or restraining order that they have obtained that lists the workplace as a protected area.

The District is committed to supporting victims of intimate partner violence and treats threats coming from an abusive personal relationship as it does other forms of violence. Employees are encouraged to report safety concerns with regard to intimate partner violence.

The District will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of threats of violence or incidents of actual violence and of suspicious individuals or activities. The identity of the individual making a report will be protected as much as possible. The district will not retaliate against employees making good-faith reports of violence, threats or suspicious individuals or activities.

In order to maintain workplace safety and the integrity of its investigation, the district may suspend employees suspected of workplace violence or threats of violence, either with or without pay, pending investigation. Anyone found to be responsible for threats of or actual violence or other conduct that is in violation of these guidelines will be subject to prompt disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

The District encourages employees to bring their disputes to the attention of their supervisors or HR before the situation escalates. The District will not discipline employees for raising such concerns.

## **Safety**

It is the responsibility of each employee to conduct all tasks in a safe and efficient manner and to comply with all local, state and federal safety and health regulations and program standards, as well as to address special safety concerns in a particular area or with students.

Although most safety regulations are consistent throughout the District, each facility has an emergency plan detailing procedures in handling emergencies such as fire, weather-related events and medical crises. Building administrators will train staff for these emergencies.

Furthermore, the district requires that every person in the organization assumes the responsibility of individual and organizational safety. It is the responsibility of each employee to identify and familiarize her/himself with the emergency plan for his/her building. Failure to follow district safety and health guidelines or engaging in conduct that places the employee, students, district guests or district property at risk can lead to employee disciplinary action and/or termination.

It is the responsibility of the employee to complete an Accident and Incident Report for each safety and health infraction that occurs by an employee or that the employee witnesses. These reports can be filled out with the assistance of the school nurse.

### **Smoke-Free Workplace/Gambling**

In order to provide and maintain a safe and healthy work environment for all employees, students and visitors, both District policy and state law prohibits smoking on all District premises. The law defines smoking as the "act of lighting, smoking or carrying a lighted or smoldering cigar, cigarette or pipe of any kind."

Smoking is **not** permitted on District property. The smoke-free workplace policy applies to:

- all areas of District buildings and grounds
- all District-sponsored off-site activities.
- all vehicles owned or leased by the District.
- all visitors (District guests and vendors) to the District premises.
- all contractors and consultants and/or their employees working on the District premises.
- all employees, temporary employees, volunteers and students.

Illegal gambling is **not** permitted in or on District property.

## WORKPLACE EXPECTATIONS

### Field Trips

Teachers who wish to take their class on a field trip must complete a Request for Field Trip form and a Field Trip Rationale form and submit the completed forms to their immediate supervisor. Sufficient time must be allowed since all field trips require prior Board of Education approval and must follow Policy No. 2340.

### Lesson Plans

All teachers in the Ridgewood Public School district should thoroughly prepare for each day's lessons. Lesson plans are essential to a well-organized and meaningful classroom experience. These lesson plans should be available to a substitute teacher in the event that the regular classroom teacher is absent from class. (Policy No. 3270)

### Securing Substitute Teachers

In the event that a teacher will be absent, it is the employee's responsibility to submit an absence notification and request a substitute through the Absence Management System system. *This includes absences for illness, professional days and personal days.*

### Safety of Students

**Substance Abuse** - Employees who have reason to believe that a student or staff may be under the influence of alcohol or drugs must inform the school principal and school nurse immediately.

**Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P)** – All district employees are mandated reporters (N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.10). Employees having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to child abuse or acts of child abuse, must report their concerns to DCP&P. The employee should inform the building principal or designee, who will assist the employee in notifying DCP&P at 1-877-NJABUSE and law enforcement officers.

**Fire Safety** - All employees should be aware of and inform students of both primary and secondary means of egress (routes for getting out of the building). Employees should require that students leave the building in an orderly, quiet manner and ensure that windows and doors to classrooms are closed. Grade books and attendance lists are needed in case of an emergency.

**Security Safety** - Employees should know the procedures in case of a building lockdown or other crisis situations.

**Supervision** - Students should be supervised at all times. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that his/her students are properly supervised.

## **Homework**

The Ridgewood Board of Education believes that homework that is relevant to material presented in class provides an opportunity to reinforce the pupil's knowledge and the concepts and skills presented in class. Homework also provides an excellent opportunity to develop within each student a sense of responsibility toward completing a job that he/she must without overt parental involvement. It is, therefore, extremely important that each student do homework on an independent basis. Errors on homework are used by teachers for assessment purposes. Parents are encouraged to provide support, rather than correcting student homework. Teachers must use discretion in deciding the number and length of homework assignments and should adhere to individual school guidelines. The Board encourages the use of interrelated major homework assignments such as term papers, themes and creative art projects. Homework shall not be used for punitive reasons.

## **Communication with Parents**

Employees must respond to parents' emails, phone messages, or other communications within 24 hours or as quickly as possible. If assistance is necessary, employees should notify their immediate supervisor.

Pupils who anticipate being excused from class for any reason must make advance arrangements with the teacher of the missed classes to make up the missed work. These arrangements must be made before the absence from class.

All work missed by an unanticipated, excused absence from school must be made up for credit upon the student's return to school. It is the student's responsibility to meet with his/her teacher(s) to make plans for this purpose. Normally, all missed tests, examinations, homework, and mandatory class work should be completed within two (2) days for each day of absence and within a maximum of ten (10) days for absences of one week or longer. However, students who miss a test, exam, quiz, etc., because of a single day of absence, should make up the test, exam, quiz, etc. on the first day they return to class.

## **Money Collection**

There are times when school district employees may need to collect funds for field trips, athletic events, plays, musicals, concerts or other artistic events/performances. The employees responsible should exercise care and due diligence in the handling of these funds. As soon as possible, the money must be handed in to the administrator in charge of student activities or his/her designee. Employees will be held responsible for any lost school funds.

## **Return of Student Work**

Providing students with the opportunity to learn from past performance is important for student achievement and success. Therefore, staff members should adhere to the following guidelines regarding student work:

- All student work should be reviewed, corrected, and returned to the student in a timely manner.
- Teachers should assist students by reviewing their work with them.
- Students will be permitted to retain all work.

## **Confidentiality**

It is District policy that all information considered confidential will not be disclosed to external parties or to employees without a “need to know.” If an employee questions whether certain information is considered confidential, he/she should first check with his/her immediate supervisor. This handbook is intended to alert employees to the need for discretion at all times and is not intended to inhibit normal educational communications.

All controversial inquiries from the media must be referred to your immediate supervisor or the superintendent’s office, who will determine the proper course of action.

## **Conflicts of Interest**

Employees must avoid any activity that might impair, or even appear to impair, their ability to make objective and fair decisions when performing their jobs. At times, an employee may be faced with situations in which actions taken on behalf of the District may conflict with the employee’s own personal interests. In such instances, District property and information may not be used for personal gain. The district’s Code of Ethics Policy No. 3211; Consulting Outside the District Policy 3211.3; Conflict of Interest Policy 3214; Tutorial Services Policy No. 3232 detail the District’s position in this area.

## **Outside Employment**

Employees are permitted to engage in outside work or to hold other jobs, subject to certain restrictions as outlined below.

Activities and conduct away from the job must not conflict with or compromise the District’s interests or adversely affect job performance and the ability to fulfill all job responsibilities. Employees are prohibited from performing any tutorial services [District Policy No. 3232] for students who are enrolled in their class or the class they are currently teaching. This prohibition also extends to the unauthorized use of any materials or equipment and the unauthorized use or application of any confidential information. In addition, employees are not to solicit or conduct any outside work during paid working time.

Employees are cautioned to carefully consider the demands that additional work activity will create before accepting outside employment. Outside employment will not be considered an excuse for poor job performance, absenteeism, tardiness, leaving early, refusal to travel or refusal to work overtime or different hours.

Employees who have accepted outside employment may not use paid sick leave to work on the outside job. Fraudulent use of sick leave will result in disciplinary action.

Teaching staff who wish to coach outside the District must receive permission from the superintendent and if given permission, must be able to be present for all District, building and/or department meetings as necessary.



## **Attendance and Punctuality**

For 11 and 12-month employees, vacation and holidays must be scheduled with one's supervisor in advance. For all employees, sick leave may be used in the case of emergency or sudden illness without prior scheduling. All absences should be scheduled through Frontline Education/Absence Management (formerly Aesop). Absences due to illnesses or injuries that qualify under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) will not be counted against an employee's attendance record. Medical documentation within the guidelines of the FMLA may be required in these instances. Failure to report to work or to report an absence is a no-call/no-show and is a serious matter. (See attendance rules by category in the appendix)

## **Attire and Grooming**

It is important for all employees to project a professional image while at work by being appropriately attired. District employees are expected to be neat, clean and well-groomed while on the job. Clothing must be consistent with the standards for a professional environment and must be appropriate to the type of work being performed.

The District is confident that employees will use their best judgment regarding attire and appearance. Management reserves the right to determine appropriateness. Any employee who is improperly dressed will be counseled.

## **Electronic Communication and Internet Use**

The following guidelines and Policies Nos. 3321 & 3283 - Communicating with Students -- have been established for using the Internet and email in an appropriate, ethical and professional manner:

- Internet, district-provided equipment (e.g., laptops, computers) and services may not be used for transmitting, retrieving or storing any communications of a defamatory, discriminatory, harassing or pornographic nature.

The following actions are forbidden: using disparaging, abusive, profane or offensive language; creating, viewing or displaying materials that might adversely or negatively reflect upon the District or might be contrary to the District's best interests; and engaging in any illegal activities, including piracy, cracking, extortion, blackmail, copyright infringement, and unauthorized access of any computers and district-provided equipment.

- Employees must not use the Internet system in a way that disrupts its use by others.
- Employees are prohibited from sending or receiving files that are not related to work.
- Employees should not open suspicious emails, pop-ups or downloads. Contact IT with any questions or concerns to reduce the release of viruses or to contain viruses immediately.
- Internal and external e-mails are considered business records and may be subject to discovery in the event of litigation. For this reason, e-mails are required to be saved by the district. Be aware of this possibility when sending e-mail within and outside the District.

**Right to Monitor:** All District-supplied technology and records belong to the District and not to the employee. Inappropriate or illegal use or communications are considered serious infractions.

### **School District Provided Technology Devices to Staff Members**

The Board of Education may provide technology devices to staff members for the express purposes of enhancing productivity and improving operational efficiency. “Technology devices” or “device” shall include, but not be limited to, portable devices such as computers, laptops, tablets, cellular telephones or any other computing or electronic devices the school district provided to staff members to be used in their school’s business-related responsibilities.

Use of all devices is subject to the school district’s acceptable use of technology policies and any other Board policies regarding appropriate and acceptable conduct by a staff member.

Staff members who are provided with technology devices are expected to take all appropriate measures and precautions to prevent loss, theft, damage, and/or unauthorized use of such technology devices. Should the staff member have reason to believe the technology device may have been stolen, the staff member must:

- a. Immediately report incident to his/her immediate supervisor
- b. File an official police report documenting the theft; and
- c. Provide a copy of the police report to his/her immediate supervisor

If a staff member fails to adhere to the above procedures, the staff member will be held legally and financially responsible for the replacement of such technology device. Additionally, a staff member may be financially responsible for the loss or damage of a technology device. [See Policy No. 7522]

### **Return of School District Property**

All technology devices are considered the personal property of the Board of Education and shall be returned upon termination of employment with the school district or immediately upon request by the Superintendent of Schools or designee. [See Policy No. 7522]

### **Social Media – Acceptable Use**

Below are guidelines for social media use. [See Policy No. 3283]

- Post only appropriate and respectful content.
- Maintain the confidentiality of District information and private or confidential information. Do not post internal reports, policies, procedures or other internal district-related confidential communications.
- Do not create a link to your District web-page from your personal blogs, websites or other social networking sites without identifying yourself as a District employee.

## **Solicitations, Distributions and Posting of Materials**

The District prohibits the solicitation, distribution and posting of materials on or at District property by any employee or non-employee. Permission must be granted by your direct supervisor. The sole exceptions to this policy are charitable and community activities supported by the District and District-sponsored programs.

### **Provisions**

- Non-employees may not solicit employees or distribute literature of any kind on District premises at any time.
- Employees may only admit non-employees to work areas with supervisor approval or as part of a District-sponsored program. These visits should not be disruptive. An employee must accompany the non-employee at all times. Former employees are not permitted onto District property except for official business.
- Employees may not solicit other employees during work times, except in connection with a District-approved or sponsored event.
- Employees may not distribute literature of any kind during work times or in any work area at any time, except in connection with a District-sponsored event.
- The posting of materials or electronic announcements are permitted with approval from the Superintendent's Office.

### **Employee Personnel Files**

Employee files are maintained by the HR Department and are considered confidential. Supervisors may only have access to personnel file information on a need-to-know basis.

A supervisor considering the hire of a former employee or transfer of a current employee may be granted access to the file, or limited parts of it, in accordance with anti-discrimination laws.

Upon request, personnel file access by current employees and former employees will generally be permitted within three days of the request unless otherwise required under state law. Personnel files are to be reviewed in the HR Department. Personnel files may not be taken outside the department.

With appropriate documentation, representatives of government or law enforcement agencies, in the course of their duties, may be allowed access to file information.

[Note: Please be advised that Policies 1530, 1550, 3160, 4160, 8320 may be subject to state requirements, including potential requirements to provide copies of personnel files.]

## Performance Review

Performance evaluations will be carried out as required by state statute, the collective bargaining agreements and Policies Nos. 3221, 3222, 3223, 3224, 4220. The performance evaluation will be discussed, and both the employee and supervisor will sign the form to ensure that all strengths, areas for improvement and performance goals for the next review period have been clearly communicated. Performance evaluation forms will be retained in the employee's personnel file.

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT</b>
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The Employee Handbook contains important information about Ridgewood Public Schools. I understand that I should consult the HR Department regarding any questions not answered in the handbook.

Since the information, policies and benefits described herein are subject to change at any time, I acknowledge that revisions to the handbook may occur. All such changes will generally be communicated through official notices, and I understand that revised information may supersede, modify, or eliminate existing policies.

Furthermore, I understand that this handbook is neither a contract of employment nor a legally-binding agreement. I have had an opportunity to read the handbook, and I understand that I may ask my supervisor or any employee of the HR Department any questions I might have concerning its contents. I accept the terms of the handbook. I also understand that it is my responsibility to comply with the policies contained in this handbook, and any revisions made to it. I further agree that if I remain with Ridgewood Public Schools following any modifications to the handbook, I thereby accept and agree to such changes.

I have received a copy of Ridgewood Public School's Employee Handbook on the date listed below. I understand that I am expected to read the entire handbook.

Additionally, I will sign the two copies of this Acknowledgment of Receipt, retain one copy for myself, and return one copy to the Human Resources Department.

I understand that this form will be retained in my personnel file.

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Updated 08/16/23