

# THE AMHERST-REGIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS

*Serving Amherst, Pelham and the Amherst-Pelham Region*

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OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT  
170 CHESTNUT STREET  
AMHERST, MA 01002

413-362-1810 (PHONE)  
413-549-6108 (FAX)

July 2011

Dear Faculty and Staff:

Welcome! We are honored you have chosen the Amherst, Pelham or Amherst-Pelham Regional schools as your desired place of employment. Students are at the center of our three districts' shared vision and mission, and we feel our students are best served by an informed and educated faculty and staff. In this spirit, we are providing you with this handbook, which addresses the business and personnel features of our school system.

Although not intended to be comprehensive, the handbook provides guides for topics ranging from special education procedures to school/district office specific protocol. More comprehensive information can be found on our district website, and you will note throughout this document that web links are included to provide more in-depth information about several topics.

Employees should understand that we are governed by both federal and state laws on many issues and by state and district policy in others. It is the employee's responsibility to be aware that these laws exist along with the policies, guidelines, and procedures established in the contractual agreement, school procedures, and other relevant sources such as the state athletic association.

The guidelines in this handbook are established to provide compliance with legal issues and to ensure consistency in our efforts throughout the district. With this common understanding in place, we can devote the majority of our time to planning, teaching, and working for every student's success. In all cases, if you are not sure how to proceed in a particular situation, please seek advice from your principal or district supervisor.

Please acknowledge your receipt of this handbook, and your intention to read and comply with its contents, by signing and returning the last page of the manual to the Human Resources Department. If you are an employee whose contract is being renewed for FY12, you are required to sign and return a salary notification that includes a statement about your requirement to follow the provisions within the handbook and the Boundaries Document.

Sincerely,

Maria Geryk  
Superintendent of Schools

**AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOLS  
170 CHESTNUT STREET  
AMHERST, MA 01002  
413/362-1810  
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**Office of Human Resources**

Dear Staff Member:

As Director of Human Resources, I welcome you as a new or returning member of our staff. It is my hope that this Employee Handbook will answer or clarify many questions you may have, whether you are a veteran staff member or someone new to our district. Should you encounter a question or problem that is not covered in the attached manual, please call or visit the Human Resources Office located in the Regional Middle School or speak with your direct supervisor.

Members of the Human Resources support staff and their primary responsibilities are as follows:

**Assistant Director – Rachel Bowen/362-1808**

- Teacher licensure and Highly Qualified status
- Aesop Coordination (Automated Substitute Software)
- Vacancy postings
- Point of contact person for new and existing staff for referral and support
- Staff Recruitment
- EPIMS

**Benefits Specialist – Maggie Jaeger/362-1895**

- Employee health, dental, and life insurance
- Retirement planning
- Tax-sheltered annuities, 125, and 457 benefit plans
- COBRA and Unemployment
- Workmen’s Compensation and employee accidents

Please call any of the above staff, or contact me at 362-1803 if you have any questions about your employment with our district.

Best wishes for a wonderful and productive school year.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Mazur  
Director of Human Resources

**Amherst-Pelham Regional School District**

**EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK  
2011-2012**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

We are pleased to have you as a member of the staff of the Amherst-Pelham Regional and Public School District. Whether you work full-time, part-time, in an administrative, teaching, professional, or support category, the skills and commitment you bring to your job make an important contribution to our goal of achievement, belonging, and community for all children. We are happy to have you as a member of our team.

Our district has a long history of academic excellence and achievement. It is a place for children to develop to be intellectually curious, humanistic and civic-minded – a continuous process that begins in the home, moves to the classroom, and into the community. The district is committed to creating an environment that achieves equity for all students.

This Employee Handbook has been written to provide information and guidance to our employees. The Amherst-Pelham Regional and Public School District reserves the right to change, add or delete any of the provisions in this handbook at any time. Also, the handbook is not all-inclusive. It is intended to provide relevant information regarding policies and procedures to all employees. Employees will need to work closely with their supervisors so that school-based expectations are clear. This Handbook is not a contract. Those employees covered under collective bargaining agreements should consult the actual agreements and/or speak with building-based union representatives for detailed information about working conditions and benefits. Like any public agency, the district is governed by federal and state laws and adheres to the policies of the local School Committees.

Employees new to the district are likely to have many questions relating to their specific job functions and responsibilities. Please direct any inquiries you might have to your immediate supervisor, building principal, or contact the Human Resources Office at 362-1895 or 362-1808 for assistance.

## **II. ABOUT THE AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOLS**

The District consists of six schools within two towns; four elementary schools, one middle school and one high school. There is also an alternative program, South East Campus, which educates secondary students with unique needs. The three Amherst elementary schools are governed by an elected five-member school committee. Our one elementary school in Pelham is governed by a five-member elected school committee. Our regional high school and middle school is governed by a nine-member school committee with representatives from each of the four towns within the region; Amherst, Pelham, Leverett, and Shutesbury. Our district serves approximately 3000 students from Pre-school through Grade twelve and employs approximately 700 permanent employees.

The administrative operations are centralized at the Regional Middle School under the direction of the Superintendent. In addition to the Superintendent, the Central Office houses the offices of Student Services (including Special Education), Program/Curriculum

Development, Business, Human Resources, Information Systems, Maintenance and Grounds, and Food Services.

### **III. CORE BELIEFS**

The primary responsibility of public education is to prepare our youth for active and productive participation in our society and the world. Understanding that “schools are essential to laying the foundation for the transformation of society and the elimination of oppression and injustice,”<sup>1</sup> the Amherst Pelham Regional Schools affirm their commitment to becoming a multicultural school system, defined both as

- “a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity as acknowledged in various documents (such as the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights)”<sup>2</sup>

and

- “a process of comprehensive school reform and basic education for all students [which] challenges and rejects racism and other forms of discrimination in schools and society and accepts and affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, economic, and gender, among others) that students, their communities, and teachers reflect.”<sup>3</sup>

Our definition of multicultural education should permeate all we do at every level. It requires that

- we affirm the right of all students to the opportunity to learn.
- we affirm the right of all families to participate in the school community.
- we hold high expectations of all students, regardless of ethnicity, race, native language, religion, social class, gender, sexual orientation and/or disability.
- we actively interrupt all manifestations of racism, classism, religious intolerance, heterosexism, ableism, sexism and all other forms of injustice.
- our curricula across all disciplines and the instructional strategies employed by teachers are actively anti-racist/anti-bias.
- we provide our staff with the education, materials and time to develop the required understandings.
- our staff be racially, ethnically and linguistically representative of our student body.
- we allocate resources (monetary and otherwise) to this transformational effort.
- we hold ourselves accountable for reaching these goals.

### **IV. GENERAL EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION**

#### **a. EMPLOYMENT EXPECTATIONS**

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<sup>1</sup> Gorski, Paul. (2000).

<sup>2</sup> National Association of Multicultural Education. Feb. 1, 2003

<sup>3</sup> Nieto, Sonia. (2000). *Affirming Diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. 3rd ed. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

All employees are expected to demonstrate a professional, cooperative, knowledgeable and courteous demeanor in all interactions with students, parents, colleagues and members of the community. The use of profane language is prohibited and may be cause for disciplinary action.

It is expected that all employees will follow general and specific work and employment guidelines, carry out instructions and directions appropriately issued by supervisors or administrators and perform job responsibilities in a satisfactory manner consistent with job descriptions. Employees are expected to have regular attendance, arrive to work on time and adhere to designated starting and ending times for work, breaks, lunch, etc. Employees should be conscious that School Department telephones, supplies and equipment and services (including Internet access and fax machines) are for professional use only. Excessive personal calls, or use of supplies, services or equipment for personal reasons are not allowed. Inappropriate use of equipment, supplies or services, including electronic access, may result in termination. Please refer to the Acceptable Use Policy contained in this manual.

#### **b. CONFIDENTIALITY**

It is expected that employees will protect others' rights to privacy by not releasing confidential information to unauthorized individuals or groups. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action. Employees should consult their supervisors with any questions regarding confidentiality.

As an employee of our school district, you may have access to confidential, protected or privileged information. School staff members who gain access to any private information about others including staff, students and families have a duty to keep such information private. School staff are allowed to discuss private information among themselves if there is a legitimate educational purpose or "need to know".

Some school professionals such as counselors, psychologists and nurses have a higher duty of confidentiality which limits their ability to share private information and only under specific situations.

Here are some general guidelines for staff to follow:

- Discuss personal information about students or families **only** with other professionals who need to know this information to work with them.
- Please do not repeat rumors or gossip that you hear regarding the personal life of students, their families or staff.
- Encourage anyone who requests information about students and their families to pose the question to an administrator.
- Please do not discuss specific information regarding students and their families in front of other students or in public areas. If someone else brings up the topic, offer to discuss it in private at a later time, if appropriate.
- You may not release any type of information regarding students and their families to parties outside the school system unless directed to do so by an administrator. Please refer those types of requests for information to an administrator.

- Always consider that other people may see what you have written or hear what you have said about students or families.
- It is expected that employees will protect others' rights to privacy by not releasing confidential information to unauthorized individuals or groups. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action.

**c. SAFETY**

The School District addresses the issue of safety and updates the district safety manual routinely. Each school has a Safety Team that has developed safety plans commensurate with the district plan and the unique floor plan and operation of the school. All staff must be aware of the components of the plan and participate in drills. Plan overviews should be available in each classroom of our school buildings.

Any concerns about safety should be communicated with the school principal or members of the school Safety Team **immediately**.

Principals will review specifics of the school Safety Plan with faculty and staff through routine communications and faculty meetings. There are, however, some safety terms that apply to all of our school sites about which you should be aware. It is essential that faculty and staff know safety vocabulary and procedures in various situations as terminology and procedures may change over time.

Most importantly, in any emergency, faculty and staff should ensure the safety of children. Students should never be left alone in an emergency and supervisors should make every effort to take attendance and monitor the presence or absence of students. Those not in supervision of students should report to assigned areas or seek to assist those supervising student as necessary.

All drills must be taken seriously. No two emergencies are alike so rehearsal of "responding to an emergency" in a drill is good practice for any situation.

We address emergencies in one of five categories: In the following cases, you should not permit anyone to enter the office or classroom space unless you are certain about their identity. An exception to this is when you are notified that there is a student or staff member in need of shelter.

1. **LOCKDOWN** – *This means that all exterior windows and doors are locked, and no one leaves the building. Lockdown status is typically called when there is an emergency situation in a different school building, local business or nearby private home.*

**Procedure:**

Announcement made by Main Office to enact "Lockdown".

Personal Safety Response ACTIONS for "Lockdown":

- Lock classroom and other doors.
- Take attendance.
- Place green/red tag on door.

- Return wayward students to classroom from which they came.
- Close windows and window treatments.
- Keep students in the room.
- Proceed with normal class activity.
- **Address the needs of any special needs students (i.e. utilize a pictogram or direct a paraprofessional to monitor student).**

2. **SHELTER IN PLACE** – Means that all doors and windows are locked and everyone remains in place in the room they occupy at the time of the shelter in place announcement. Individuals should move away from windows and doors. Shelter in place is likely called because there is a threat in the building – a suspected intruder in the hallway or outside of the building. Shelter in place takes precedent over a fire alarm; you should not exit the building even though the alarm is sounding. An announcement or code words will be used when all is clear.

**Procedure:**

Announcement made by Main Office to enact “Shelter In Place”

- Lock classroom doors.
- Take attendance.
- Place green/red tag on door.
- Turn off all lights.
- Locate occupants out-of-sight and away from door.
- Remain quiet and do not enter hallways.
- Place wayward students in nearest available classroom.

3. **EVACUATION** – ex. FIRE DRILL An alarm will sound indicating the need to evacuate the building as soon as possible.

Announcement made by Main Office to enact “Evacuation” or fire alarm.

**Procedure:**

- Take class attendance roster.
- Close windows and doors.
- Leave building, leading students to designated location.
- Take attendance.
- Report missing students to Incident Command.

4. **EVACUATION and RELOCATION** - An occasion may arise when everyone must evacuate the building and the premises to a relocation site (all schools have identified relocation sites). Procedures for family reunification will be employed.

5. **INSIDE RELOCATION** – An occasion may arise such as a bomb threat where evacuating from one wing or section of a building is required but there is no need to evacuate the building.

**d. WELL-BEING**

Within school buildings, nationally and locally, there currently exists a widespread concern regarding matters of institutional and personal safety. In response to these circumstances, the “Responsiveness Committee” was convened by the superintendent in the spring of 2007, to make recommendations to address building safety and personal wellbeing issues within our schools. This Committee recommended using **PRISM** as a framework to analyze safety and wellbeing issues

**PREVENTION**

1. There must be a clear district wide policy on each of the identified safety/well being issues.
2. Each school must develop its own set of protocols for each district safety/well being policy.

**RESPONSE**

3. Each and every school employee must be adequately prepared to fulfill the responsibility of a First Responder.
4. In each school there must be clearly identified Second Responders.

**INTERVENTION**

5. Forums for Conversation must be developed for the staff of each school.
6. Each school must take steps to inform parents of the policies and protocols related to school safety and personal wellbeing issues.

**SUPPORT**

7. In each building there must be appropriate programs and staff in place to provide the appropriate level of support for students.
8. There must be in place an emotional and psychological safety net for all staff.

**MONITORING**

9. In each school there should be a Safety Committee charged with monitoring and evaluating District Policies and Building Protocols regarding safety issues and a Crisis (Responsiveness) Committee charged with monitoring and evaluating District Policies and Building Protocols regarding well being issues.
10. In order to ensure the safety and wellbeing of students, staff members must be able to monitor the effects of societal issues, especially male socialization, that often cause the problematic behaviors threatening schools.

Every adult in a school is “first responder.” Any information, observation, or concern that affects the personal, social, or emotional well-being of self and/or others must be reported. One might note that this is anything that prompts the “uh oh” feeling that something or someone has crossed a line of well-being. No one should ever be in a position of stating after the fact of an emergency or crisis that s/he had an inkling or information and did not share it with anyone.

Every adult, as a “first responder” must know with whom s/he is to communicate information. In any instance, concerns or information can be shared with any school or district administrator.

Faculty and staff should be aware that by law, all are mandatory reporters for instances of child abuse, neglect, and other crisis situations.

“Second responders” are those individuals who have been trained to ensure that information is shared further to appropriate sources to determine next steps.

**e. SMOKING**

Smoking or the use of any tobacco products within the school buildings, school facilities, on school grounds or on school buses by any individual, including school personnel, is prohibited by law and is strictly enforced.

**e. DRUG FREE WORKPLACE**

The Amherst-Pelham Regional School District recognizes the importance of maintaining a workplace that is drug and alcohol free in order to enhance the welfare of employees and students. The Drug-Free Workplace Act requires the district to certify that they maintain a drug-free workplace as a condition of receiving federal grants and contracts.

Employees are prohibited from engaging in the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of any controlled substance or the possession, use, purchase, sale or other transfer of alcohol by any employee while on School premises or while performing any job-related activity, whether on or off School premises. Employees are also prohibited from reporting for work or performing any job-related activities, on or off school premises, while under the influence of alcohol or an illegal controlled substance. An employee who violates this policy is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

This policy does not prohibit use or possession of a drug prescribed for the employee by a licensed physician and used in a therapeutic dosage in accordance with the physician’s instruction; however, employees are required to disclose to the Superintendent the use of any prescribed drug that may impair the employee’s ability to perform his/her job safely and effectively.

**f. EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

Employees of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District and their families are covered by two Employee Assistance Programs. If assistance is needed with a drug, alcohol, or other problem, Amherst and Pelham School employees may call Baystate Employee Assistance Program at 1-800-282-5442. Employees of the secondary schools, the middle and high schools, can call ESI - Employee Assistance Group at 1-800-252-4555 or 1-800-225-2527. If you are a member of the secondary staff, you may also review the ESI website at [www.theeap.com](http://www.theeap.com). Both programs offer assistance with a wide variety of health and personal challenges. Referral to the program can be made directly by the employee or family member. Please be assured that all employee interactions with EAP or the ESI are strictly confidential; as the employer, we do not have access to personal information you may share with employee assistance staff.

**g. STAFF ETHICS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The district expects members of its professional staff to be familiar with the code of ethics that applies to their profession and to adhere to it in their relationships with students, parents, coworkers, and officials of the school system. No employee of the school district will engage in or have a financial interest in, directly or indirectly, any activity in which the school district has an interest, or that conflicts or raises a reasonable question of conflict with his/her duties and responsibilities in the school district. Nor will any staff member engage in any type of private business during school time or on school property.

Employees will not engage in work of any type where information concerning customer, client, student or employer originates from any information available to them through school sources. Moreover, as there should be no conflict of interest in the supervision and evaluation of employees, at no time may an administrator be responsible for the supervision and/or evaluation of an employee directly related to him/her, including individuals who reside in the same household.

At least two weeks before the school district employs a member of the immediate family of the superintendent, a central office administrator or a school committee member, or before a member of the immediate family of a principal shall be assigned as an employee at the principal's building, written notice shall be given to the school committee of such person's prospective employment or assignment.

**V. LABOR ORGANIZATIONS**

The district negotiates collective bargaining agreements with labor organizations representing several bargaining units. The bargaining units are as follows: certified personnel (unit administrators and teachers), secretarial/clerical, and paraprofessionals are represented by the Amherst-Pelham Education Association (an affiliate of the Massachusetts Teachers' Association). Custodial, maintenance, and transportation staff are represented by AFSCME Local #1725 of the AFL-CIO.

The majority of permanent employees hold positions in one of these bargaining units. If your position is in one of these bargaining units, you should receive a copy of the labor agreement that applies to your position from the union representative in your building or from Central Office. These agreements outline more specifically some of the employment issues addressed in this Handbook.

**VI. JOB OPENINGS AND POSITION POSTINGS**

The Amherst-Pelham Regional School District posts vacancies on an as needed basis and in accordance with the terms of negotiated contracts. The position postings allow the District to inform employees of openings that may afford them opportunities for advancement or transfer. All current vacancies are posted within individual buildings and on the District website, [www.arps.org](http://www.arps.org). To be considered for a vacancy or to transfer within the district, candidates must register online for the vacancy. It is also advisable to notify the Director of Human Resources of a request for transfer. If a position is not affiliated with any bargaining

unit, the duration of the posting period and placement of postings will be decided by the Superintendent or his/her designee with the needs of the district in mind. Most vacancies are also advertised locally and regionally in newspapers and other periodicals.

## **VII. STARTING EMPLOYMENT WITH THE AMHERST SCHOOL DISTRICT**

### **1. EMPLOYMENT PAPERWORK**

Upon acceptance of a job offer and prior to beginning work, all new employees must arrange to visit the Human Resources Office to ensure that documentation necessary for employment has been submitted. At this time, employees can review their eligibility to receive benefits. Employees must provide proof of eligibility to work in the US by completing the Federal Employment Eligibility and Verification Form. Birth certificates are required by the Hampshire County Retirement Board for all non-teaching staff members. Depending on the nature of your position within the district, official education transcripts may be required. All employees must supply their original Social Security cards in their legal name, so that a copy may be made.

### **2. IDENTIFICATION BADGES**

At the beginning of the school year, each employee of the School District, including administrators, faculty, staff, coaches, and part-time employees will be issued ID badges which are required to be worn while on School District property. The ID shall be displayed so that it is easily visible.

In the event that an official ID badge is unavailable for any employee, the front office of each school shall issue a temporary identification badge. The temporary ID shall be returned to the front office each time the employee exits the school.

Every employee shall return the employee's ID to the principal of employee's assigned building or the Human Resources Department upon termination of employment.

### **3. CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECKS**

The policies of the Amherst-Pelham School District require that Criminal Records Checks (CORIs) are conducted on all employees, tutors and regular volunteers. CORIs are conducted at the time of job offer, and all offers of employment are contingent upon satisfactory results as determined by the employer. The districts reserve the right to periodically update CORI records for individual employees, employees in specific job categories or the school department as a whole. An unsatisfactory CORI report may result in termination of employment. CORIs are routinely conducted every three years, or when the employer becomes aware of the possibility of criminal activity.

### **4. ORIENTATION**

School and department administrators want employees to be successful in their new jobs and are prepared to answer questions employees may have about specific responsibilities, work hours and general policies and procedures relating to employment in the Amherst School District. Please feel free to ask questions of your building principal, supervisor or human resources staff at any time.

## **VIII. EMPLOYMENT GUIDELINES**

## **1. COMPENSATION AND PAY SCHEDULE**

Salary is based on the salary range established for each position. Previous experience and level of education may also be factors in determining salary. Salary schedules for positions covered under collective bargaining agreements are provided within such agreements. Completed employment paperwork must be provided to the Human Resources Office two weeks prior to a scheduled pay date in order to receive a paycheck.

Salary increases, including step increases, are governed by collective bargaining agreements for unionized employees. Non-union employees are granted increases at the discretion of the Superintendent and School Committee.

## **2. WORK SCHEDULES**

Employees in the Amherst School District work a wide variety of schedules and hours. The work year may be based on a 10-month or 12-month schedule, and regular work hours may range from less than 10, to 40 hours or more per week, depending upon the nature of the position, school and district needs and collective bargaining agreements. One's supervisor or building/department administrator will explain the work hours associated with a position in accordance with School policies and practices and answer any pertinent questions.

## **3. ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES**

In 2009, the district purchased software, Aesop, so that employees can report their individual absences by phone or online. If you are a teacher in our district, you will have the ability to post lesson plans and state preferences for individual substitutes to cover your absences via Aesop software. Instructions for accessing Aesop are provided at the time of hire and are available on our website at [www.arps.org](http://www.arps.org).

All employees are expected to be regular in attendance. If an employee is absent for 3 or more consecutive days, he/she may be required to provide written medical documentation to the Human Resources Department to justify the absence. An employee may be required to provide medical documentation to support an absence at any time.

All employees are required to account for each absence by completing appropriate paperwork, which is available in school offices. Some employees submit individual timesheets that must be certified by their supervisor. If timesheets are not submitted on schedule, an employee may experience delays in receiving pay.

In the event of a teacher's absence, it is expected that lesson plans and other pertinent materials relating to curriculum and schedules can be easily accessed by the building administrator and the substitute teacher and that notice of absence will be made to the teacher's supervisor and to the building principal.

Failure to notify a supervisor of an absence in a timely manner or to provide requested medical documentation can result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

#### **4. SCHOOL CANCELLATIONS**

Weather or other emergency conditions may necessitate that schools be closed. Such closings are announced on radio and local television stations. Our district also maintains a “snow line” that can be reached by calling 362-1898. Cancellations and delays are also posted on the homepage of our website at [www.arps.org](http://www.arps.org). Certain employees may be required to report to work, even in severe weather. Your supervisor will advise you if your position falls within this category. Should unique circumstances occur within the district or at a particular school, the superintendent can activate an “all call” message to your home telephone, advising you in the event of unanticipated situations that might close or delay school.

#### **5. PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

Periodically, and in accordance with negotiated contracts, if applicable, a supervisor will formally evaluate an employee’s job performance and assess how satisfactorily he/she is performing the responsibilities of their position. Performance evaluation is an important factor in continued employment. If an employee does not agree with a performance evaluation, he/she may submit a written response addressing any relevant issues to the supervisor and to the Director of Human Resources. The performance evaluation and any written response an employee elects to submit will be included in the employee’s permanent personnel record. Collective bargaining agreements may have specific requirements regarding evaluation.

#### **6. TERMINATION, RESIGNATION OR RETIREMENT**

Ongoing employment is not guaranteed to any employee. Termination of an individual may result from reorganization, financial circumstances, lack of work, or poor performance. Written notice of termination for such reasons will conform with the requirements of individual labor contracts.

In the event that an employee resigns employment, he/she is expected to provide written notification of the resignation and a minimum of two weeks notice to his/her supervisor and to the Director of Human Resources. Those individuals whose responsibilities are determined by the academic calendar are expected to fulfill their commitments through the academic year. Certain administrative employees have a greater notice requirement under individual contracts. Employees are encouraged to arrange an exit interview with a Human Resources staff member.

If an employee plans to retire, he/she should send written advance notification to his/her supervisor and the Director of Human Resources, and also directly contact the Retirement Board in which he/she is enrolled well in advance of the anticipated date of retirement to assure that any pension payments and insurance benefits due will be coordinated to avoid gaps in income or insurance coverage. In addition, collective bargaining agreements may have specific language concerning notification dates that must be adhered to in order to receive certain benefits. Once notice of retirement is accepted by the Superintendent or his/her designee, it may not be rescinded.

The Massachusetts Teachers’ Retirement System (MTRS) administers the retirement system for teachers and educational administrators. Hampshire County Retirement administers the retirement benefit for non-teaching and some administrative staff.

Great West administers retirement plans for employees who are not eligible to join the Massachusetts Teachers' or Hampshire County retirement systems.

**7. REHIRES**

Employees who leave the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District in good standing and later wish to return are eligible for consideration for rehire provided an appropriate position is available. A previous employee who is rehired is not guaranteed credit for prior service for purposes of vacation, eligibility, seniority, and other pertinent benefits. Application of benefits is in accordance with negotiated salary contracts.

**IX. PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS**

**1. PAY SCHEDULE/DIRECT DEPOSIT/DEDUCTIONS**

Full year employees are paid 26 times per year. School year employees have the option of being paid 22 or 26 times per year. This pay option declaration must be made at the time of original hire or annually, prior to the first pay period of the school year. In accordance with federal regulations, changes to the 22/26-pay and lump sum option may not be made after the school year begins. Employees may elect to have their salary directly deposited to his/her bank account by obtaining a Direct Deposit authorization form from Human Resources or from the Business Office.

All payroll deductions are itemized on paycheck stubs or Advice of Deposit forms. To ensure that an employee is paid accurately, he/she should report any change in name, address, marital status or number of exemptions to 362-1895 or 362-1810. Questions regarding pay may be addressed with the Payroll Department staff at 362-1817 or 362-1821

**2. PAYCHECK DISTRIBUTION**

When school is in session, paychecks will be sent from the Business Office to each building and distributed to employees. If school is not in session, paychecks may be picked up at the Business Office in the Middle School between 8 a.m. and 3 p.m. For those employees with Direct Deposit, notification of the deposit can be made to the individual via email if requested.

**3. PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS**

Employees who qualify for membership in either the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System or in the Hampshire County Retirement System are required to contribute a percentage of salary to the Plan. The required amount will be deducted each pay period.

**4. DEFERRED COMPENSATION PLAN**

Employees who do not qualify for membership in either the Teachers Retirement System or the Hampshire County Retirement System are required under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations to make a 7.5% contribution to a Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP) as an alternative to Social Security (FICA) contributions. Upon leaving the employ of the district, individuals have the option to withdraw DCP contributions.

## **5. UNION DUES/AGENCY FEE**

If an employee is hired into a position covered by a collective bargaining agreement, union dues (or an agency fee) may be deducted from his/her pay, depending upon the terms of the agreement. Failure to agree to pay these fees can lead to loss of employment.

## **6. OVERPAYMENT**

Because they share in the responsibility for accurate pay amounts, employees are advised to review their initial pay, deductions, and any pay changes carefully. If an employee is overpaid by mistake, the employee is expected to reimburse the District for the overpayment.

If the overpayment is nominal, it is deducted from the employee's next paycheck. In some cases, when overpayment is significant, the Director of Finance and Operations will establish a repayment plan. Determination of what is considered "nominal" or "significant" is at the discretion of the Director of Finance and Operations.

## **X. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS –**

### **1. ELIGIBILITY**

Regular full-time and part-time employees who work a schedule of 20 hours or more per week are eligible to participate in medical, life, and dental insurance plans.

### **2. HEALTH PLAN ENROLLMENT**

New employees who work 20 or more hours per week are eligible for health and dental insurance benefits and must enroll within 30 calendar days from the date of hire. Those who do not enroll within this timeframe will not be eligible to enroll for health insurance coverage until the next annual open enrollment period, with the exception of certain "qualifying" events. It is the responsibility of the employee to inform Human Resources within 30 days of the occurrence of a qualifying event.

Employees who work a schedule with 16 or more hours per week may elect to have a payroll deduction for a non-employer group plan. If you would like information about these State-sponsored plans, please call 362-1895.

### **3. HEALTH CARE PLAN OPTIONS AND COSTS**

District employees who qualify for medical coverage have the option of selecting from two plans; Harvard Pilgrim Insurance or Blue Cross and Blue Shield. The Town of Amherst periodically reviews health care plan offerings. Once an employee has elected a health insurance option, he/she must remain enrolled in that option until the next open enrollment period. During the open enrollment period, employees may elect to change plans or coverage or to enroll in a plan if eligible.

Eligible employees may elect either individual or family coverage. Family coverage provides for spouses and/or dependents that are under age 19, dependents who are full-time students under age 25 and dependents of any age that fit the insurance plan's definition of disabled.

An employee may change from individual to family coverage, or add additional members to the plan within thirty days of a birth or adoption of a child or marriage. The Human Resources Office must be notified within 30 days of such an event to effect a change in coverage outside of the open enrollment period.

To obtain detailed information about available health insurance options, contact the Human Resources Office at 362-1895 or 362-1808.

#### **4. COBRA**

If employment should terminate or an employee becomes ineligible to participate in a group health insurance plan, he/she and/or his/her dependents have the right to continued participation in the district group health insurance plan for up to eighteen months (thirty-six months under certain circumstances) under federal COBRA legislation. The employee will be required to pay the full cost of the premium plus an administrative fee. Under COBRA continuation, the district will no longer contribute to the cost of health insurance premiums. For additional information about this option, please contact the Human Resources Department at 362-1895 or 362-1808.

#### **5. DENTAL INSURANCE**

Employees may be eligible to participate in MetLife Dental Plan. This is a voluntary plan paid for by the employee. For information about this coverage, please contact the Human Resources Department at 362-1895 or 362-1808.

#### **6. LIFE INSURANCE**

If an employee participates in Health Insurance, it is mandated that the employee enroll in a minimum (\$10,000) term life insurance policy through Boston Life Insurance. Optional life insurance is also available.

#### **7. RETIREMENT PLANS**

##### **a. Massachusetts Teachers' Retirement Plan**

Eligible teachers and administrators participate in the Massachusetts Teachers Retirement System (MTRS) pension plan, a State-administered plan. If an employee is eligible for this plan, after completing and submitting the application, he/she will be enrolled at the time he/she completed their new hire paperwork. Information on the provisions of this Plan may be obtained from the MTRS.

##### **b. Hampshire County Retirement**

Other regular full-time and part-time employees who work a minimum of 20 hours per week may participate in Hampshire County Retirement. Participation in the Plan begins on the first day of qualified employment. New employees will be enrolled in the Plan through the Human Resources Department.

Hampshire County Retirement provides a monthly pension benefit to eligible employees who have completed sufficient service upon retirement. This Plan provides provision for vested minimum retirement as early as age 55 with 10 years of creditable service. The amount of pension benefit increases as age and

amount of creditable service increases. Disability Retirement benefits are also available for permanently disabled employees who meet certain other qualifications. Detailed information about employee contributions, venting, plan administration, etc. is available through the Hampshire County Retirement Office.

**c. Mandatory Deferred Compensation**

School Department employees who are not eligible for coverage by the MTRS or through Hampshire County Retirement must, according to Federal law, participate in mandatory deferred compensation in lieu of Social Security. Under this requirement, 7.5% of wages are invested on a tax-deferred basis in a Deferred Compensation Plan (DCP).

These mandatory contributions continue as long as the employee is employed by the School Department and is not a member of the retirement system. If employment terminates, the participant may elect to leave the funds in the plan and earn tax-deferred interest or withdraw the funds and pay taxes on the income.

**8. WORKER’S COMPENSATION**

Workers’ Compensation is designed to provide benefits in the event that an individual is injured in connection with his or her employment. If an employee is injured, he/she should immediately notify his/her supervisor and report the accident, no matter how minor it may seem. An Accident Report Form, available from the school office or from the Human Resources Office should be completed.

**9. UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION**

Unemployment Compensation provides temporary income for those who have lost their jobs under certain conditions. For more information about Unemployment Compensation, or to apply for benefits, contact the local office of the Massachusetts Department of Employment and Training.

**XI. TIME OFF**

**1. HOLIDAYS**

Paid holidays for employees are specified in various union contracts. Teachers and certain other salaried staff who work on a school calendar basis do not receive separate paid holidays. Other employees may be eligible for paid holidays. Our school district recognizes the following holidays:

- |                             |                  |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| New Year’s Day              | Independence Day |
| Martin Luther King, Jr. Day | Labor Day        |
| Presidents’ Day             | Columbus Day     |
| Patriots’ Day               | Veterans’ Day    |
| Memorial Day                | Thanksgiving Day |
|                             | Christmas Day    |

In some instances, holidays that fall on a Saturday are observed on the preceding Friday, and holidays that fall on a Sunday are observed on the following Monday. Union contracts should be referred to for specific details.

In order to be eligible for paid holidays, the holiday must fall within the employee's regular work week. For instance, an employee whose regular work year is from September to June would not be eligible for the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. Similarly, an employee who normally works a three-day schedule consisting of Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays would not be eligible to be paid for Labor Day, which traditionally falls on a Monday.

Employees who are on unpaid leave of absence or are otherwise absent without pay are not eligible to be paid for holidays.

## **2. PERSONAL DAYS**

Regular School Department employees are generally granted up to three personal days each year. These days may be used for personal situations beyond the control of the individual. Employees must notify their supervisor as far in advance as possible when they would like to take a personal day by completing the appropriate district absence form. Personal Days do not carry over from year to year and may not be used to extend a school vacation period. Leave which qualifies under the Small Necessities Leave Act is charged against the three annual personal days. Please refer to the appropriate union contract for specific language concerning personal leave.

## **3. VACATION**

Full-year (12 month) employees are eligible for annual vacation leave based on the nature of their position, length of service, union contract and other factors. Employees covered under collective bargaining agreements should consult their union contract for specific vacation eligibility requirements and benefits.

Every effort is made to grant vacation requests at the time an employee desires to take vacation leave. However, adequate coverage must be maintained to ensure effective and safe school and office operations. Therefore, vacation requests must be approved by the supervisor in advance and vacation preference is not guaranteed. For purposes of earning and using vacation time, the work year is July 1 through June 30. Generally, vacation time is not credited in advance and is accrued and credited to the employee's vacation record as of July 1 each year. Employees should consult their union contract to determine how many vacation days are permitted to be accrued.

When an employee leaves the employ of the school district, the district will pay the employee for any accrued, unused vacation days in accordance with negotiated contracts.

## **4. SICK LEAVE**

Regular full-time employees and part-time employees are eligible to accrue sick leave. Sick leave is to be used in the event of personal illness or eligible family leave, non-job related injury or disability. Sick leave may also be applied to supplement Workers' Compensation payments up to the level of regular pay. Sick leave may be used for

doctor's visits which cannot be scheduled outside of normal work hours. Please refer to the Family Medical Leave Policy for information about FMLA leave.

Unused sick days may accumulate from year to year up to a maximum specified within union or individual employment contracts. Employees are encouraged to use sick leave days only when medically necessary to allow the accumulation of sick leave towards income protection in the event of a lengthy illness or disability.

In accordance with union contracts, employees may "buy back" their accumulated sick leave days upon retirement within certain limitations. A per diem rate (in accordance with negotiated union contracts) is applied to calculate the amount to which one is entitled.

## **5. FMLA**

Eligible employees are able to take up to 12 unpaid weeks of leave for family or medical leave under federal law and up to 24 hours unpaid leave for family obligations under state law within a rolling 12-month period. The Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) applies to employees who have been employed for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1,250 hours in the prior 12-month period and who are seeking leave for the purpose of either a) caring for a child within the first 12 months after birth, adoption, or placement for adoption or foster care, b) caring for a spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition, or c) an employee's own serious health conditions which makes the individual unable to perform his/her job. Thirty days notice is required whenever possible. Advance notice whenever possible, along with the appropriate medical certification must be provided or the request for leave may be denied. The District may require second or third opinions (at the employer's expense) and a fitness for duty report to return to work.

It is important to note that Family Medical leave is cumulative for all covered purposes; that is, individual sick leave days, medical leave, maternity leave, doctor's visits, etc. counts cumulatively against the annual entitlement of twelve weeks. Restrictions are in place as well for spouses employed by the same employer and the timing of leaves.

During approved Family Medical leave, either paid or unpaid, group health and life insurance benefits will be continued under the same terms as when the individual was working, for a maximum of twelve weeks within a 12-month period. According to individual negotiated union contracts, employees may be able to apply a limited amount of their sick leave to care for a seriously ill family member.

If an employee's need for leave extends beyond 12 weeks due to his or her own medically documented illness or disability, the employee may request to continue to be paid using accumulated sick leave. Once personal sick leave and personal days are exhausted, the leave shall be unpaid. In special circumstances, additional, limited leave may be granted. While on an approved personal medical leave, employees are eligible for group health insurance coverage on the same basis as when they were working, including premium contributions from the district. Requests to extend Personal Medical Leaves of Absence must be made in writing to the Director of Human Resources.

Upon return from FMLA, most employees will be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms. The use of FMLA leave will not result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of an employee's leave.

#### **6. Maternity Leave**

Employees who are not eligible under FMLA may be eligible under state law for maternity leave. Under this type of leave, employees are eligible for up to eight (8) weeks of unpaid leave for the purpose of giving birth to or adopting a child. Written notice of the anticipated date of leave and date of return is required. Accrued sick leave and personal leave may be applied to the leave term.

#### **7. Small Necessities Leave**

Under state law, eligible employees are able to take up to 24 hours leave for family obligations during any fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). This law applies to employees who have been employed for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1,250 hours in the prior 12-month period and who are seeking leave for the purpose of participating in school activities directly related to the achievement of their child, to take their child to a routine medical or dental appointment or to accompany an elderly relative (of 60 or more years of age) to a routine medical or dental appointment or for other services such as interviewing at a nursing home. Leave may be taken in increments of at least one hour for up to 24 hours in a fiscal year. This leave is unpaid unless an employee chooses to apply personal leave or accrued sick or vacation time as provided in applicable collective bargaining agreements. This leave does not diminish any greater period of leave that may be provided for in a collective bargaining agreement.

#### **8. Bereavement Leave**

Employees should consult their respective collective bargaining contracts to ascertain the amount of bereavement leave to which they are entitled. In general, employees are granted 4 days of bereavement leave in the event of a death of a close relative or member of the household.

#### **9. Military Leave**

When an employee is called to military service, the employee must give advance written notice to the school district of the military leave. Military leave includes active duty, active duty training, inactive duty training, full-time National Guard duty or an absence to determine fitness to perform military services. Written notice of service may include copies of orders or other written documentation with respect to being called to service. Employees covered under collective bargaining agreements should consult the bargaining agreement for additional information with respect to military leave.

Consistent with the practice of the Town of Amherst, the school district pays the difference in salary between military pay received and regular salary for those on approved military leave. The employee is required to provide documentation of the military pay amount to the Payroll Department so that the appropriate offset amount can be made.

### **10. Jury Duty**

Employees are granted time off with pay to serve Jury Duty. Appropriate documentation must be provided to the Human Resources Department for submittal to the Payroll Department. The School Department will make up the difference between Jury Duty pay and regular salary, if any, for the period of Jury service.

### **11. Unpaid Leaves of Absence**

Unpaid personal leaves of absence may be requested and are subject to approval of the Superintendent of Schools or his/her designee. Such leaves may not exceed one year, except as otherwise specified in union contracts. The deadline for receipt of requests for unpaid leave is April 1, unless specified otherwise in Union contracts.

## **XII. ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY – TECHNOLOGY**

The Amherst-Pelham School District is pleased to bring access to the district networking facilities, including Internet and email access, to employees and students. Our goal in providing this network service to teachers, staff, and students is to promote educational excellence in our schools by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication.

With access to the Internet, also comes the availability of material that may not be considered to be of educational value in the context of the school setting. We acknowledge the existence of inappropriate material on the Internet, including, but not limited to, any materials not in support of the system's curriculum, and shall do everything we can to actively restrict access to them; however, no combination of hardware and software can guarantee complete control of unacceptable material. It should be clearly understood by all employees that access to such material in any form is strictly prohibited.

The smooth operation of the network relies upon the proper conduct of the end users who must adhere to strict guidelines. Detailed guidelines are attached as an addendum to this employee handbook so that users are fully aware of the responsibilities of Internet and network use. In general this requires a commitment to efficient, ethical, and legal utilization of the network resources. If a user violates any of these provisions, his or her account will be terminated and future access could be denied.

Specific rules and guidelines regarding use of the Internet are attached to this Handbook as an Addendum and are subject to change as found on the [www.arps.org](http://www.arps.org) website. Please read this Addendum carefully and abide by its' contents. Summary information about the Acceptable Use Policy is as follows:

- 1) Acceptable Use – The purpose of network and Internet access is to support research and education. The use of your account must be in support of education and research and consistent with the educational objectives of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District. Use for commercial activities is not acceptable. Installation of any personal software or instant messaging is prohibited as well.

- 2) Privacy – The district network, the Internet and the ARPS web pages are “public places” shared with other users. Access is granted to users as a privilege and not a right; therefore ARPS hereby notifies all users that:
  1. there is no right to privacy for communication, including email, and
  2. any and all traffic on the district network and individual school local area networks shall be monitored to ensure that the network continues to function in a proper and appropriate manner for all users.
- 3) Liability – The Amherst-Pelham Regional School District shall make no warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied, that the functions or the service provided by or through the district’s networks will be error free or without defect. ARPS will not be responsible for any damage users may suffer, including but not limited to loss of data or interruptions of service. ARPS shall not be responsible for the accuracy or quality of the information obtained through or stored on the system. ARPS shall not be responsible for financial obligations arising through the unauthorized use of the system. ARPS shall not be responsible for any copyright violations or any other illegal use of the Internet.
- 4) Security – Security on any computer system is a high priority, especially when the system involves many users. If you feel you can identify a security problem on the ARPS network on Internet access, you must notify an administrator. Do not demonstrate the problem to other users. Do not use another individual’s account without written permission from that individual.
- 5) Vandalism – Vandalism will result in cancellation of privileges. Vandalism is defined as any attempt to harm or destroy data or property of another user, the Internet, or other networks that are connected to the Internet backbone. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creation of computer viruses and/or hacking.

### **XIII. AIDS/HIV AWARENESS – UNIVERSAL PRECAUTIONS**

Universal precautions are based on one simple fact: There is no way to be sure a person is not infected, so it is safest to handle everyone’s blood and body fluids as if they carried HIV (AIDS) and HBV (Hepatitis B). Accidental exposures should immediately be reported to an individual’s supervisor. Please follow the following guidelines if your job requires you to have possible exposure to blood or body fluids:

1. Avoid contact with body fluids. When contact with body fluids cannot be avoided, personal protective equipment will be used. Use a shovel, a dust pan and brush, or tongs to pick up broken glass. If there’s blood on the floor, use a mop instead of a sponge to clean it up.
2. Protect yourself. Personal protective equipment includes gloves, masks, aprons, lab coats, face shields, protective eyewear, mouthpieces, resuscitation bags or other ventilation devices.
3. Wash with soap and water. After removing gloves or if body fluids get on the skin, wash with non-abrasive soap and running water. If there is a splash on the eyes, nose or mouth, rinse the area with plenty of water.

4. Discard or decontaminate. Discard any disposable item that has had direct contact with body fluids into an appropriate trash receptacle.

#### **XIV. CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES**

The district believes that controversy is an essential part of the democratic process and that an important goal of public education is to help students develop the capacity to respectfully, critically and positively participate in the discussion and analysis of controversial issues. Teaching staff should seek guidance from building principals in dealing with controversial issues in the classroom. In addition, reference should be made to the School Committee policy regarding such issues.

#### **XV. MANDATORY REPORTING - REPORTING CHILD ABUSE**

The School Committees intend fully to comply with laws for reporting child abuse and neglect.

Any school official or employee who knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect, or observes the child being subjected to conditions or circumstances which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect, will immediately report or cause a report to be made to the building principal or his/her designee, who will then become responsible for making a report to the Department of Social Services as required by law.

Any person who, in good faith, participates in making such reports or in any judicial proceeding resulting there from will be immune from civil or criminal liability.

It is not the responsibility of the school official or employee who initiated the report to prove that the child has been neglected or abused.

The superintendent will prepare and implement such procedures as are necessary to accomplish the intent of this policy and of the law.

#### **XVI. NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

Public Schools have the responsibility to overcome, insofar as possible, any barriers that prevent children from achieving their potential. This commitment to the community is affirmed in the following statements of School Committees' intent to:

1. Promote the rights and responsibilities of all individuals as set forth in the state and federal constitutions, pertinent legislation, and applicable judicial interpretations.
2. Encourage positive experiences in human values for children and youth and adults, all of whom have differing personal and family characteristics and who come from various socioeconomic, racial and ethnic groups.

3. Work toward a more integrated society and to enlist the support of individuals as well as groups and agencies, both private and governmental, in such an effort.
4. Use appropriate communication procedures to resolve the grievances of individuals and groups.
5. Carefully consider, in all the decisions made within the school system, the potential benefits or adverse consequences that those decisions might have on the human relations aspects of all segments of society.
6. Regularly review the policies and practices of this school system in order to achieve to the greatest extent possible the objectives of this statement.

The Committees' policy of nondiscrimination extends to students, staff, the general public, and individuals with whom they do business; and applies to race, national origin, religion, sex, economic status, political party, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, veterans' status, and other human differences.

#### **XVII. BULLYING**

Any and all acts of bullying, cyber-bullying and retaliation based upon reports of bullying to the school administration are prohibited in the Districts. As an employee in the school district, it is your responsibility to report any acts of bullying to your direct supervisor and/or the building principal.

**Bullying** is defined as the repeated use by one or more students of a written, oral, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at another individual(s) (hereinafter target) that

- causes physical or emotional harm to the victim or damages the target's property,
- places the target in reasonable fear of harm or damage to his/her property,
- creates a hostile environment at school for the target,
- infringes on the rights of the target at school or
- substantially and materially disrupts the education process or orderly operation of a school.

Examples of bullying include but are not limited to:

1. Intimidation, either physical or psychological (in person or via an electronic device)
2. Threats of any kind, stated or implied (in person or via an electronic device)
3. Assaults, whether verbal, physical, psychological, or emotional
4. Attacks on student property
5. Demeaning names or phrases directed at an individual student
6. Touching another individual in a demeaning manner

**Cyber-bullying**, is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, which shall include, but shall not be limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system,

including, but not limited to, electronic mail, internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications.

Cyber-bullying also includes:

1. the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person;
2. the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages, if the creation or impersonation creates any of the conditions listed in (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying; and
3. the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons, if the distribution or posting creates any of the conditions listed in (i) to (v), inclusive, of the definition of bullying.

**Retaliation** is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

The Principal of each school (or his/her designee), supported by the central office administration, will make clear to students, families and staff that bullying in the school buildings, school grounds, on the bus or school-sanctioned transportation, or at school-sponsored functions held in any location is prohibited, and will not be tolerated.

The Principal of each school (or his/her designee), supported by the central office administration, will train all staff in the prevention, identification, intervention and reporting process of bullying incidents, as stated in the school districts' guidelines.

The Principal of each school (or his/her designee), supported by the central office administration, will inform students' parents/guardians of any allegations, reports and/or complaints of bullying incidents, as stated in the districts' guidelines.

The Principal of each school (or his/her designee), supported by the central office administration, will oversee the implementation of the school districts' empathy/social skills and anti-bullying developmental curriculum in their schools, as stated in the school districts' guidelines.

The Principal of each school (or his/her designee), supported by the central office administration, will inform the parent/guardian of all reported bullying incidents involving his/her child as the target of the bullying or as the perpetrator of the bullying, consistent with the requirements of 603 CMR sect. 23.00 and FERPA and the districts' guidelines.

Upon receipt of a complaint, report and/or allegation of bullying, the principal (or his/her designee) will conduct an initial investigation as soon as practicable, as stated in the districts' guidelines. The timeliness of an investigation will depend upon such factors as the number of individuals involved, the number of witnesses to be interviewed, the availability of witnesses, the school schedule and other factors.

When it is determined by the Principal that bullying has occurred, the principal will:

- ✓ act promptly to provide a remedy to the target(s) as well as to take appropriate disciplinary action against the perpetrator(s).
- ✓ address the school climate, as necessary.
- ✓ impose the necessary corrective action

#### **XVIII. NEED TO KNOW**

All employees must show extreme caution in managing student, personnel, and financial records. Records with personal information should not be left on desks, and critical records should be maintained in locked files.

Being an employee of a single school, department, or district does not entitle everyone to information about every situation. Details of discipline cases, student academic performance, and confidential information may not be shared simply because one works in the same school or building. Information is provided solely on a “need to know” basis and in compliance with district and state policy and state and federal law.

#### **XIX. RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS**

Teachers and other school staff working with students have great responsibility in today’s society. In order to maintain the respect and confidence of one’s colleagues, of students, of parents and of members of the community, staff members should strive for the highest possible degree of ethical conduct at all times. (Code of Conduct, APEA Contract) Whenever there is doubt about the intentions of a staff member in his or her relationships with a student(s), students and the staff member are at risk.

The following “Boundaries List” is intended to maximize the safety and protection of students, as well as to protect staff members from allegations that may adversely affect their professional reputation and their livelihood.

**Boundaries, Common Sense, and Avoiding the Question:  
“What were you thinking?”  
plus a few essential reminders  
2011-2012**

No matter how old they are, school-aged students are “kids.” Student teachers and all staff are “adults.” Boundaries between students (no matter what their age) and adults should be clear and maintained. Adults should speak like, dress like, and respond like adults. And, there are boundaries that should not be crossed.

- Don't date students or touch students. While we recognize that there are moments where you might appropriately touch/hug students, you need to know that every touch/hug runs the risk of being interpreted as “inappropriate” – thus the guidance not to touch students.
- Don't “IM” students, visit Facebook profiles of students, invite students to your personal networking spaces, “friend” students, get personal with students, or text message students. If you use social networking tools as part of your instruction, make sure to create an educational version that is different than your personal version. You should urge students to do the same so that their personal online lives are not open and available to you.
- When meeting with individual students before, during, or after school, do what you can to “remain in the public eye”. This means that you should keep your classroom door open, be visible to anyone walking by, or meet in public spaces such as the library, etc.
- Emails to students should be about homework and assignments and must be generated only from your school email address.
- Talk-back from a student? Don't escalate! Take a breath – walk away – and, think of 10 other things you can do but: Don't hit - push - “sit” - or physically “escort” students.
- Don't let students sleep in class. They may not be sleeping – and, if they are sleeping, it sends the message that you condone it.
- Make sure all students – every student – knows that it is “ok to tell” if something hurtful to self or others may occur. Students need to know that tattle-tales are hurtful but responsible telling is helpful and could save lives. And, adults need to know that, too! Don't be a bystander.
- Don't allow conversations about student alcohol use, drug use, partying, or inappropriate activities to continue in your presence. Silence is validation. “Knock it off” or “That's not appropriate talk for here” will work.
- Take every comment, note, essay, journal entry, or other indication of suicide ideation, drug use, illicit activity, hate language, or anger to the point of attack... seriously! Then immediately report it to an administrator. Do not wait – report it immediately! Don't be in a position to wish you had reported it after it is too late.

- Interrupt actions and comments that are racist, sexist, hate-filled or discriminatory in any way. Confront put-downs and bullying no matter how subtle or ‘minor.’ And – report it – it could be part of a pattern about which you are not aware.
- Know the procedures for the “bad things that can happen in schools” emergencies and the categories of responses (lockout, lockdown, evacuate, evacuate and relocate). Take drills seriously. Take attendance in emergency drills. And, “Who knows where the child in the wheel chair is when the alarm goes off?” Keep this in substitute teacher plans, too.
- You may think the kids understand sarcasm, but whether intended or not, it can create an unsettled feeling like public humiliation. They may laugh, but that’s only on the outside. And, never humiliate a student publically or privately, tell the class to “shut up,” or yell at kids.
- No weapons on premises (that includes parking lots) – kids and adults (except police)!
- No alcohol on school premises. Period. That includes gifts from one adult to another.
- Don’t lock (or tape) a student in any room, place or space – literally or figuratively.
- Don’t leave bad news or details on voice mail and/or home answering machines (“Your son/daughter got in trouble today.” “Sorry, you didn’t get the part in the play.”)
- Classrooms are captive audiences. Adults should not use the classroom as a soap box. Let students figure things out on their own and come up with their own opinions. And, some topics are adult topics and adult language is adult language no matter how adult the students are or think they are.
- Confront strangers even if they look like parents or a vendor in the building for a meeting. Ask if you can help. Direct them to the office. Help them find it (don’t let them wander alone). Just because someone is in a coat and tie or has a uniform does not mean they checked in the office and are not inside to do bad things.
- Movies and video clips are to be educational - time is limited enough - we don’t need to entertain or ‘buy time’ before vacations or the end of the year with movies. “Show the movie” is not a sub plan. The last days of the school year are still school days.
- The school’s internet is for school work. Use common sense. You should have no expectation of privacy, especially if you are crossing ethical, moral, and professional lines. Know what is in the Acceptable Use Policy.
- Don’t make assumptions that could be “ouches.” An “ouch?” A stinging statement like: “Are you sure *you* are supposed to be in this honors class?” “Did you take your medication today?” “Are those your notes?” (to the student proudly turning in her polished Final Project in the best spiral notebook she could afford).

- Every one is a “first responder” for well-being and a legal mandatory reporter for issues of abuse and neglect. Immediately notify your principal or supervisor if you witness or suspect a child is being abused or neglected.
- Don’t give students aspirin, medicines, or any drug or herbal remedy.
- Field Trips or leaving the building? All details must be reviewed and agreed upon with your principal. Parents must know them, too.
- Don’t drive kids anywhere. Only when you have permission from your Principal with appropriate forms signed or when you are the parent should you drive students. If it’s an emergency and you must, the student rides in the back seat – with a seatbelt.
- Listen. Listen some more. Then listen again... with empathy.
- Respect “need to know” limits on information. Not everyone in a building needs to know the details of a discipline case or a situation. Outside of those who “need to know” it is gossip or potentially a violation of privacy.
- Please don’t “cc” everyone on emails – and don’t “respond to all” except when necessary – especially when student information is included. Again – “need to know” and how much information an individual needs varies.

***Please, please note:*** *Being addressed so bluntly on such outrageous situations may offend some readers. While these concepts could be shared with positive, professional, glass-half-full language, this approach insures specificity and little to no grey area. There’s just no nice way to say “Don’t date students.” Sadly there are a few educators across the country who probably wished they had read such a blunt statement and not had to answer the question: “What were you thinking?” Sorry. Thank you.*

**XX. PHYSICAL CONTACT BETWEEN EMPLOYEES AND STUDENTS AT SCHOOL AND DURING SCHOOL SPONSORED FUNCTIONS**

What constitutes appropriate physical contact in one circumstance may be totally inappropriate in another. The decision of whether or not to touch a student must be made by the employee involved. Once it occurs, its appropriateness depends on a variety of factors, not the least of which will be the student's reaction and responses of other adults. The administration believes that its employees individually and collectively possess the wisdom and expertise necessary to conduct themselves in a manner which is educationally sound and acceptably both within the professional community and the community at large.

1. All physical contact between employees and students should have a valid educational purpose and objective, meeting only the student's needs.
2. The use of physical contact or force in order to impose the staff member's will upon a student is strictly prohibited, except when such contact is reasonably necessary for the health and safety of the teacher, other personnel, the student and/or other students. In those circumstances, only that amount of contact which is necessary to ensure such health and safety, may be used. RESTRAINT OR OTHER PHYSICAL CONTACT SHOULD BE USED ONLY AS A LAST RESORT WHEN OTHER MEANS OF INTERVENTION ARE INSUFFICIENT.
3. Employees who observe physical contact between students and employees which they deem to be inappropriate are expected to report said observations to the building principal and/or the Superintendent of Schools as soon as possible. If the contact is perceived to be immediately harmful by the observer, prompt intervention to prevent further harm is expected.
4. Questions of the appropriateness of physical contact are to be determined by the context of the contact on a case-by-case basis. Issues such as intent, context, location, circumstances, age, and sex are all considerations which may be relevant. Touching students under clothing, in the genital areas, or on the buttocks, or breasts is prohibited.
5. Whether or not an emergency situation exists, depends upon an objective rather than a subjective standard.
6. Instances of inappropriate physical contact initiated, encouraged, practiced and/or tolerated by employees, in even a single instance, will result in disciplinary action which may include dismissal.

Given the complexity of this issue, the School Committee and administration recognizes that some employees may implement a practice of never touching students. That is not the School Committee's intent or objective. It is expected that any physical contact between an employee and a student will have a legitimate purpose consistent with the schools' role as educator and caretaker of minor children.

**XXI. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND DISCIPLINE**

Every teacher and employee is expected to have a "PRISM" (Planning and Prevention, Response, Intervention, Student Support, and Monitoring Progress) plan in place and to have communicated this plan with his/her supervisor and to know their school's general plan for student behavior management, communications with parents/guardians, and

other procedures. Teachers/supervisors should acquire techniques on behavior management, de-escalation techniques, and active listening. At no time should an employee attempt to restrict, manage, or restrain a student physically unless prescribed for a particular student with requisite training by the employee. At no time should a student be placed in a locked room or setting.

## **XXII. SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

In accordance with the requirements of Massachusetts General Law Chapter 151B, the school district hereby affirms its commitment to promoting a workplace free of sexual harassment.

It is the goal of the Amherst-Pelham, Amherst and Pelham School districts to promote a workplace that is free of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment of employees occurring in the workplace whether it be in the form of physical or verbal harassment and regardless of whether committed by administrative or non-administrative personnel, teachers, consultants, or community member is unlawful and will not be tolerated by the school districts. Further, any retaliation against an individual who has complained about sexual harassment or retaliation against individuals for cooperating with an investigation of a sexual harassment complaint is similarly unlawful and will not be tolerated. To achieve our goal of providing a workplace free from sexual harassment, the conduct that is described in this policy will not be tolerated and we have provided a procedure by which inappropriate conduct will be treated.

We will respond promptly to complaints of sexual harassment and where it is determined that such inappropriate conduct has occurred, we will act promptly to eliminate the conduct and impose such corrective action as is necessary, including disciplinary action where appropriate.

DEFINITION: Massachusetts General Law Chapter 151B, defines sexual harassment as “sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when: (a) submission to or rejection of such advances, requests or conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or as a basis for employment decisions; or (b) such advances, requests or conduct have the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance by creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or sexually offensive educational environment.”

While it is not possible to list all those additional circumstances that may constitute sexual harassment, the following are some examples of conduct which if unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment depending upon the totality of the circumstances including the severity of the conduct and its pervasiveness:

- Sexual advances - whether they involve physical touching or not;
- Sexual epithets, jokes, written or oral references to an individual’s sexual conduct, gossip regarding one’s sex life; comment on an individual’s body, comment about an individual’s sexual activity, deficiencies, or prowess;

- Displaying sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cartoons;
- Leering, whistling, brushing against the body, sexual gestures, suggestive or insulting comments;
- Inquiries into one's sexual experiences; and,
- Discussion of one's sexual activities.

CONSEQUENCES: Staff members found to have engaged in acts of sexual harassment will face one or more of the following consequences: (1) written reprimand and warning, (2) suspension without pay, (3) dismissal, and/or (4) referral to the police.

Reprisals, threats or intimidation of the victim will be treated as serious offenses, which could result in dismissal from employment.

PROCESS FOR FILING INTERNAL COMPLAINTS: Because of the important nature of this problem, immediate and direct attention will be given to complaints.

Please contact the Director of Human Resources, or the Superintendent, 413-362-1810, for information about filing a complaint or refer to the "Complaint Procedure for Allegations of Discrimination."

Workers who believe they have been subjected to sexual harassment may also, or instead, report this to the following State and/or Federal agencies:

Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination  
 One Ashburton Place  
 Sixth Floor, Room 601  
 Boston, MA 02108  
 Telephone 617-565-3200  
 Fax 617-565-3196  
 TTY 617-565-3204

Office for Civil Rights  
 U.S. Department of Education  
 J. W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse  
 Post Office Square  
 Boston, MA 02109  
 Telephone 617-223-9662  
 Fax 617-223-9669  
 TTY 617-223-9695  
 TDD 617-223-4097

**XXIII. WORKPLACE HARASSMENT**

The Amherst-Pelham Regional School District is committed to maintaining a work environment that is free not only of sexual harassment, but free of harassment for any reason. The District expects all employees and members of the school community to conduct themselves in an appropriate and professional manner with concern for their fellow employees, students, and community members.

Any violation of the District's policy on harassment should immediately be brought to the attention of the building principal and Human Resources Director or Superintendent of Schools so that an investigation may be conducted and appropriate corrective action taken. An employee found to have violated this policy would be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including warning, reprimands, suspension or discharge or exclusion, subject to applicable procedural requirements.

Retaliation in any form against any person who files a complaint of harassment or assists in investigating such a complaint is prohibited. Complaints of retaliation will be promptly investigated and appropriate action will be taken immediately. However, filing a complaint of harassment does not protect a complainant from legitimate discipline.

**XXIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT**

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT  
OF THE  
AMHERST-PELHAM REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT  
EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

My signature indicates that I have received a copy of the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District Employee Handbook, including the Boundaries Document on Page 30 and the Acceptable Use Policy Addendum covering use of technology. I understand that it contains important information on the general personnel policies and practices of the District and of the privileges and obligations of being an employee of the District. In addition, the Amherst-Pelham Regional School District Employee Handbook contains notifications required by law.

I understand that this handbook does not constitute a contract and makes no guarantees of employment, compensation, or benefits and that the Superintendent and/or School Committee reserve the right to make changes in the policies and practices at any time at their sole discretion, and interpret and administer the policies in light of changing circumstances and events.

Staff Name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

**INSTRUCTION: ACCEPTABLE NETWORK USE POLICY**

The intent of this policy is that students will use computer networks only for purposes consistent with our approved curriculum. All school computers are to be used in a responsible, efficient, ethical and legal manner. The codes of conduct of the schools apply to our internal network and to Internet activities, and this acceptable use policy should therefore be considered an extension of the behavior codes.

The Internet is an electronic communications network which provides access to vast, diverse and unique resources in a global community. Our goal in providing Internet access to teachers, staff and students is to promote educational excellence in the schools by facilitating resource sharing and communications. Staff and students are encouraged to use the Internet to pursue intellectual activities, seek resources, access libraries and engage in learning activities.

Access to the district network is subject to adherence with the district's acceptable network use policy and the exercise of good judgment and common sense. All adult users will be required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of all administrative regulations and procedures governing use of the system and shall agree in writing to comply with such regulations and procedures. All student users will be required to acknowledge receipt and understanding of all administrative regulations and procedures governing use of the system to the extent appropriate for their age.

Noncompliance with applicable regulations and procedures, or inappropriate use of the district network or external networks, may result in suspension or termination of user privileges and other disciplinary actions. Examples of such inappropriate uses include unauthorized access into school accounts or private files, destruction of others' files, harassment of students or staff, introduction of computer viruses, commercial use of the school networks, violation of copyright laws, use of inappropriate language, transmission of or searches for obscene material, installing non-approved software, physical abuse of equipment, and unauthorized reconfiguration of equipment. (See policies JICFB Bullying and JICFC Student-to-Student Harassment.) Violations of law may result in criminal prosecution as well as loss of user privileges and disciplinary action.

Individuals who log on to the network at school are responsible for all activities while using their account. Therefore, users should not share passwords and should change their passwords frequently. Users should also exercise caution when revealing personal information. To insure personal safety and the safety of others, users should not publish their home address or phone number over the Internet. If students experience any concerns over communications they have received from others over the Internet, they should seek assistance from staff or parents immediately.

In accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), passed by the US Legislature in January, 2001 (Public Law 106-554), our schools employ filtering software to block access to

inappropriate content on all computers with Internet access. Users are restricted from accessing visual depictions of subject matter that is obscene, pornographic, or harmful to minors. Users should furthermore be aware that filtering software will not block ALL inappropriate web sites (e.g. new sites that have not yet been added to the filter lists). Members of the school community will report inappropriate sites not blocked by the filters to the appropriate staff. For users 18 and over, filtering software may be temporarily disabled by a technology administrator for legitimate research purposes, or the individual may be given access by a technology administrator to a different, non-filtered account. The district reserves the right to filter other areas that may contain subject matter that is obscene, disruptive, harmful to minors or otherwise deemed inappropriate for school use.

Electronic mail transmissions and other use of electronic resources by students and employees will not be considered confidential and may be monitored at any time by the network administrator or designated staff to ensure appropriate use for instructional and administrative purposes, and may be disclosed to others, including law enforcement officials, without notice.

The Superintendent will publish the Acceptable Network Use Policy Guidelines on the school district website each year.

**LEGAL REF:** Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), Public Law 106-554, 2001