

Great Prairie AEA

Employee Handbook



2021-2022

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OPENING STATEMENT

Welcome Letter

Welcome to the Great Prairie Area Education Agency! We are pleased that you have chosen to join our organization and hope that you will enjoy a long and successful career with us. As you become familiar with our culture and mission, we hope you will take advantage of opportunities to enhance your career and further Great Prairie AEA's vision and mission. If you are a returning employee we hope you have an outstanding and rewarding school year!

The Employee Handbook establishes policies, procedures, benefits, and working conditions that must be followed by all Great Prairie AEA employees as a condition of their employment with the agency.

This handbook is a general source of information and may not include every possible situation that could arise. It is not intended, and does not constitute a contract between the agency and employees. It is the employee's responsibility to refer to the agency policies and/or administrative procedures for further information. Whenever the provisions of this handbook conflict with those of a board-adopted policy, an applicable collective bargaining agreement, or any other formal employment contract, the terms of the policy, collective bargaining agreement, and/or employment contract shall govern.

At Great Prairie AEA, we strive to balance the needs of our agency with the continued public health concerns related to COVID-19. It is our priority to keep employees and their families healthy. Please reference the agency's [COVID-19 Pandemic Plan](#) for more details.

A link to [board policies](#) is found under the Staff Portal page of the agency's website under Human Resources.

Definitions

An administrator's title, such as chief administrator or regional director, also means that individual's designee unless otherwise stated.

“The agency” means the *Great Prairie Area Education Agency*.

“Administrator” means Chief Administrator, Associate Administrator/Director of Special Education, Director of District Services, Director of Technology & Innovation, Chief Financial Officer, Human Resources Director, Regional Director, and Public Relations Coordinator/Administrative Assistant & Board Secretary.

“Administrative support staff” means Administrative Secretary, Bookkeeper-Accounts Payable, Bookkeeper-Payroll, Human Resources Assistant, Network Specialist, Production Supervisor, and Technical Support Specialist.

"Agency activities" means all agency activities in which students are involved whether they are agency-sponsored or agency-approved, whether they are an event or an activity, or whether they are held on or off agency property.

"Agency facilities" include agency offices and vehicles.

“Benefit eligibility” means that employees must work half-time or greater to receive employee benefits. Specifically, certified bargaining staff and therapy assistants must work 96 days or more; classified bargaining staff must work 1,000 hours or more; and administrators and administrative support staff must work 120 days or more to be eligible for employee benefits.

“Contract year” shall mean July 1st through June 30th of any given year.

“Full-time” for certified bargaining staff and therapy assistants means working a minimum of 192 contract days. Full-time for classified bargaining staff (including Speech-Language Assistants) means working a minimum of 1,544 hours annually. Full-time for administrators and administrative support staff means working 241 days annually.

“Online learning platform” means Zoom, Google Classroom, or any other web application used to conduct virtual learning.

"Parent" also means "guardian" unless otherwise stated.

“Part-time” means working less than 192 days annually for certified bargaining staff and therapy assistants, 1,544 hours annually for classified bargaining staff, and 241 days annually for administrators and administrative support staff.

“Therapy Assistants” refer to Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants and Physical Therapy Assistants.

Agency Vision, Mission Statement, Educational Goals and Expected Outcomes

VISION

Great Prairie Area Education Agency will be a recognized leader in services that improve student performance.

MISSION

Great Prairie Area Education Agency improves teaching and learning by developing leaders, discovering solutions and delivering services through collaboration with students, families, schools, and communities.

WHY DO WE EXIST?

GPAEA exists to ensure that every child is successful.

WHAT DO WE DO?

We improve teaching & learning.

AGENCY GOALS

All agency services will improve their quality.

All students will improve their performance.

Equal Opportunity Employment

The agency will provide equal opportunity to employees and applicants for employment in accordance with applicable equal opportunity and affirmative action laws, directives and regulations of federal, state and local governing bodies. The agency does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, disability, religion, creed, age, sexual orientation and gender identity in its employment and personnel practices. Opportunity to all employees and applicants for employment includes hiring, placement, promotion, transfer or demotion, recruitment, advertising or solicitation for employment, treatment during employment, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and layoff or termination. The agency will take affirmative action in major job categories where women, men, minorities and persons with disabilities are underrepresented. Employees will support and comply with the agency's established equal employment opportunity and affirmative action policies. Employees will be given notice of this policy annually.

The board will appoint an affirmative action coordinator. The affirmative action coordinator will have the responsibility for drafting the affirmative action plan. The affirmative action plan will be reviewed by the board at least every two years.

Advertisements and notices for vacancies within the agency will contain the following statement: *"The agency is an EEO/AA employer."* The statement will also appear on application forms.

Inquiries by employees or applicants for employment regarding compliance with equal employment opportunity and affirmative action laws and policies, including but not limited to complaints of discrimination, will be directed to the Affirmative Action Coordinator by writing to the Affirmative Action Coordinator, Great Prairie Area

Education Agency, 3601 West Avenue, Burlington, Iowa 52601 or by phone at (319) 753-6561 x1217.

Inquiries by employees or applicants for employment regarding compliance with equal employment opportunity and affirmative action laws and policies, including but not limited to complaints of discrimination, may also be directed in writing to:

- The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Milwaukee Area Office, Reuss Federal Plaza, 310 West Wisconsin Ave., Suite 800, Milwaukee, WI., 53203-2292, 1-800-669-4000 or TTY 1-800-669-6820, www.eeoc.gov/field/milwaukee/index.cfm

OR

- The Iowa Civil Rights Commission, 400 E. 14th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319, (800) 457-4416, www.state.ia.us/government/crc/index.html.

The inquiry or complaint to the federal office may be done instead of, or in addition to, an inquiry or complaint at the local level.

Further information and copies of the procedures for filing a complaint are available in the agency's human resources office - both Ottumwa and Burlington. A copy of the agency's affirmative action plan may also be requested from either office.

Agency Calendar

Each year an agency calendar is developed by the administrative team and approved by the Board of Directors. The calendar reflects the entire year, including holidays and breaks, for most Great Prairie staff members. The 2021-2022 calendar reflects the following holidays and breaks:

- 4th of July - (July 2 through July 5, 2021)
- Labor Day - (September 6, 2021)
- Thanksgiving Break - (November 24, 25 & 26, 2021)
- Winter Break - (December 23, 2021 through January 2, 2022)
- Presidents Day - (February 21, 2022)
- Memorial Day - (May 30, 2022)

Employees should collaborate with their supervisor to develop a planning calendar that aligns best to the district(s) served and the work that needs to be completed.

Individually developed planning calendars must ultimately be approved by your direct supervisor. Employees must also record their work schedule/activities on their GPAEA Google Calendar. The initial calendar and all subsequent changes will be approved and documented using the planning calendar.

- [Approved Agency Calendar 2021-2022](#) (hard copy for informational purposes)

Agency Map

Great Prairie AEA is divided into seven regions, with a main or satellite office designated for each region. In addition, each is led by a Regional Director. A map of the regions, offices, and districts may be found [here](#).

Agency Contacts

The agency directory provides contact information for agency employees and school district personnel. The directory may be found [here](#).

Board Policies

Board policies are established for the success, safety, and protection of all agency employees in the performance of their job duties. [Board policies are available for review and/or download from the agency's website](#). Employees are expected to know existing board policies and refer to the policies when necessary.

If you have questions about board policies, please contact Greg Manske, Human Resources Director or Jennifer Woodley, Public Relations Coordinator/Administrative Assistant & Board Secretary.

Handbook Subject to Change

Although every effort will be made to update the handbook on a timely basis, the agency reserves the right, and has sole discretion, to change any policies, procedures, benefits, and terms of employment without consultation or publication, except as may be required by contractual agreements and law. The agency will provide notice of any handbook revisions in the weekly staff update.

COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS

Licensure

An employee required to hold a license, authorization or certification for his/her position is solely responsible for ensuring it is current. Failure to do so could result in disciplinary action up to and including termination, because by law, the agency cannot pay an employee who does not have a current license, authorization or certification. Specific information regarding an employee's license, authorization, or certification may be obtained from the Iowa Board Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE). The BOEE may be contacted by calling (515) 281-3245 or by visiting their website, located at www.boee.iowa.gov/.

Salary and Wages

Certified Bargaining Group Employees - Detailed salary information is covered in the [2020-2023 Certified Master Contract Agreement](#).

Classified Bargaining Group Employees - Detailed wage information is covered in the [2019-2022 Classified Master Contract Agreement](#).

Therapy Assistants - Detailed wage information is found [here](#).

Administrators and Administrative Support Staff - per individual employment contract.

Group Insurance Benefits

Employees who work half-time or greater (1,000 hours per year for classified bargaining staff) are eligible for group insurance and health benefits. [Documents](#) detailing the plan design and enrollment period will be provided to all eligible employees at least 15 days before the start of the enrollment period. All new employees shall receive group insurance and health benefits information upon acceptance of employment. For additional information, please contact the Human Resources Director or Human Resources Assistant.

Cafeteria Benefit Plan

The agency will provide full-time employees with a monthly cafeteria plan allocation as listed below to purchase insurance. Part-time staff working at least half-time (1,000 hours per year for classified bargaining staff) will receive a pro rata amount of cafeteria plan funds.

Certified Bargaining Group Employees - \$910

Classified Bargaining Group Employees and Therapy Assistants - \$760

Administrators and Administrative Support Staff - Per individual employment contract

Option #1 – Conditional Opt-Out Arrangement

Employees may elect to participate in the opt-out arrangement, which provides a set amount of monthly taxable wage in lieu of enrolling in the group health plan. The amount of opt-out payment will be determined and communicated to employees prior to the beginning of each plan year. Once the opt-out election is made only employees who experience a HIPAA qualifying event will be allowed to withdraw their opt-out election and enroll in our group health insurance plan during the given plan year.

Election of the opt-out arrangement is conditioned upon the employee showing proof of other qualified coverage for themselves and tax family, for the plan year. Qualified coverage must meet the Affordable Care Act (ACA) definition of minimum essential coverage but may *not* be individual market coverage (either through the Exchange/Marketplace or purchased directly with an insurance carrier). Types of minimum essential coverage that qualify for the opt-out payment are as follows (note that minimum essential coverage is defined by law and we cannot change this list unless a legislative change has occurred):

- Employer-sponsored coverage, e.g., through your spouse or parent's employer group health plan (including Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) coverage and retiree coverage)
- Medicare Part A coverage and Medicare Advantage (MA) plans
- Most Medicaid coverage
 - Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) coverage
 - Certain types of veterans health coverage administered by the Veterans Administration
 - TRICARE
 - Coverage provided to Peace Corps volunteers
 - Coverage under the Nonappropriated Fund Health Benefit Program
 - Refugee Medical Assistance supported by the Administration for Children and Families
- Self-funded health coverage offered to students by universities for plan or policy years that begin on or before Dec. 31, 2014 (for later plan or policy years, sponsors of these programs may apply to HHS to be recognized as minimum essential coverage)
- State high risk pool coverage established on or before November 26, 2014 in any State

Option #2 – Flex Credit

Employees not electing the opt-out arrangement will be provided an employer flex credit. The amount of flex credit will be determined and communicated to employees prior to the beginning of each plan year. Employees must first use the flex credit to enroll in our group health insurance plan, for a minimum of a single contract. The amount of money necessary to purchase the single contract cannot be used for any

other purpose (it cannot be used for other benefits nor can it be taken as a taxable wage). Monies remaining from the flex credit, after the purchase of the single health contract, may be used to purchase other cafeteria plan benefits and/or be taken as a taxable wage.

Cafeteria benefit plan options

Employees may elect to enroll in health insurance, dental insurance, vision insurance, flexible spending account, dependent child care account, or take any remaining cafeteria benefit plan funds as additional wages as described above in options #1 and #2.

Group life insurance

The agency will provide a \$50,000 group term life insurance policy to employees working half-time or greater (1,000 hours for classified bargaining employees). The \$50,000 policy reduces to 65% at age 70, 44% at age 75, and 29% at age 80. Administration and administrative support staff receive a policy equal to the product of two times their annual salary (rounded to the nearest thousand) but not to exceed \$200,000.

Long-term disability insurance (LTD)

The agency will enroll employees working half-time or greater (1,000 hours for classified bargaining employees) in a long-term disability policy and pay 100% of the premium. This benefit may be offset or reduced by social security benefits or benefits provided by other sources. Accrued sick leave must be exhausted before LTD benefits will begin.

Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (IPERS)

The agency participates in the Iowa Public Employees' Retirement System (IPERS). This defined benefit plan provides a lifetime retirement benefit to you upon retirement in accordance with a formula based on your age, years of service and the average of your highest five years of wages. For additional information, please contact IPERS at 1-800-622-3849 or visit the IPERS website at www.ipers.org/index.html.

Tax Sheltered Annuity (TSA)

The Retirement Investors' Club (RIC) 403b Plan, also called a TSA (Tax Sheltered Annuity), is a voluntary retirement savings program offered by [participating employers](#) of educational and education-related institutions, including Great Prairie AEA. The RIC 403b Plan is designed to supplement your pension and social security benefits at retirement. You choose how much of your current income to save pre tax, through

automatic salary reductions. Your contributions and earnings grow tax-deferred. Please visit the [RIC website](#) for more information.

Travel Compensation – Within & Outside the Agency

All personnel of Great Prairie Area Education Agency shall be reimbursed for travel expenses incurred as authorized by the chief administrator or designee, and/or for travel incurred [under the policies of the board](#) and regulations of the chief administrator. These travel expenses shall have been incurred while conducting official agency business. Claims for payment shall be made in the format and manner prescribed by the chief administrator or designee acting to comply with established rules, regulations and auditing requirements.

Travel shall be by common carrier or automobile, whichever is the lesser amount and better fits the time schedule of the employee and employer.

When using a travel method that results in an overall cost that is less advantageous to the agency (e.g., more cost, more time out of assignment), the employee will be responsible for the additional cost of that travel and any additional costs linked to the method of transportation. Using a rental car is allowed if it is determined to be less expensive for the AEA than reimbursing mileage. Prior authorization from the employee's supervisor is required for the method of travel. Motel or hotel receipts must accompany the request for reimbursement and reflect single or shared room rate. All employees must assume responsibility for wise and prudent use of public funds and be personally responsible for excessive expenditures as determined by audit.

Business mileage shall be defined as that mileage which accrues on agency business. An employee shall not be paid mileage to and from work. Business mileage will be paid at the rate established by the board.

Employees will be assigned an office for the purpose of calculating reimbursable mileage expenses. Mileage reimbursement shall begin each day from the first legitimate business stop or assigned office, whichever is less from home. In other words, an employee is responsible for the commute each day to an assigned office or first legitimate business stop, whichever is most advantageous to the employee.

In the event an employee proceeds from the last stop on agency business to home, a deduction shall be made from total mileage equal to the distance from the last stop to home or the distance from the employee's assigned office to home — whichever is the lesser amount.

Pre-approved expenses for meals within Iowa are limited to \$35 per day. Pre-approved expenses for meals outside the state are limited to the [U.S. per diem rate tables listed in Internal Revenue Service \(IRS\) Publication 1542](#). Receipts are not required for meal purchases.

At times it may be feasible to reimburse agency staff for lodging expenses within the agency as opposed to reimbursing mileage. Supervisory approval is required for lodging reimbursement within Great Prairie AEA.

EMPLOYEE RELATIONS

Background Checks

Employees are subject to criminal, dependent adult abuse and child abuse background checks at least every five years per Iowa code. The background check will either be conducted by the agency or contracted through an external organization.

<https://educateiowa.gov/resources/laws-and-regulations/legal-lessons/background-checks-and-role-boee>.

Conflict of Interest

No employee may use his or her position to obtain financial gain or anything of substantial value for the private benefit of himself or herself or his or her immediate family, or for an organization with which he or she is associated. Such actions may subject an employee to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Employees will not act as an agent or dealer for the sale of textbooks or other agency supplies to the agency. Employees will not participate for personal financial remuneration in outside activities wherein their position on the staff is used to sell goods or services to students or parents. Employees will not engage in outside work or activities where the source of information concerning the customer, client or employer originates from information obtained because of the employee's position in the agency.

Since employees have access to information and a captive audience that could present a conflict of interest, employees may only solicit other employees or students for personal or financial gain with the prior, advance approval of the chief administrator. If the approval of the chief administrator is given, the employee must conduct the solicitations within the conditions set by the chief administrator. Further, the chief administrator may, upon five days' notice, require the employee to cease approved solicitations as a condition of continued employment.

[Board policy 401.13](#)

Employee Orientation

Employees must know their roles and duties. New employees will participate in an orientation program. The employee's immediate supervisor should provide the new employee with a review of the employee's responsibilities and duties. Payroll procedures and employee benefit programs and accompanying forms will be explained to the employee by representatives of the business and human resources office.

[Board policy 401.2](#)

Employee Records

The agency will maintain personnel records on employees. The records are important for the daily administration of the educational program, for implementing board policy, for budget and financial planning and for meeting state and federal requirements.

The records will include, but not be limited to, records necessary for the daily administration of the agency, salary records, evaluations, application for employment, references and other items needed to carry out board policy. Employee personnel files are agency records and are generally considered confidential records and therefore are not open to public inspection or accessibility. Only in certain limited instances, when the employee has given a signed consent or non-confidential records such as an employee's salary, an employee's individual contract, or if the employee resigned in lieu of termination and the documented reasons why, will employee personnel records be accessible to individuals other than the employee or authorized agency officials.

Employees may have access to their personnel files, except for letters of reference, and copy items from their personnel files at a time mutually agreed upon between the Human Resources Director and the employee. The agency may charge a reasonable fee for each copy made.

[Board policy 401.11](#)

Employee Searches

Employees must understand that their right to privacy is limited in the work environment. Work space, desks, computers or other agency provided space or equipment is the property of the agency and thus may be examined if needed. Any information on the agency's computers, servers, website, online learning platform, etc. and in agency files, etc. are considered a public record and open to public inspection. If the agency conducts an examination or inspection under the terms of this policy, there will be at least two individuals present at the time of the examination or inspection. Should the agency get a request to see this information, at that time, a determination will be made whether the information can be withheld as confidential information. The agency assumes no responsibility or liability for any items of personal property which are placed in the desk or work space which is assigned to employees.

Evaluation

Evaluation of employees on their skills, abilities and competences is an ongoing process supervised by the direct supervisor and conducted by approved evaluators as required by law. The goal of the formal evaluation process is to improve direct and indirect services provided to clients, to maintain employees who meet or exceed the board's standards of performance, to clarify the employees role, to ascertain the areas

in need of improvement, to clarify the immediate priorities of the board and to develop a working relationship between the administrators and other employees.

By October 30th of each school year, the direct supervisor shall notify each employee under their supervision with the evaluation procedures, the criteria, and instruments used in evaluation. The evaluation orientation ensures employees understand the evaluation process. No formal evaluation shall take place until the evaluation orientation is completed.

An employee that feels the evaluation is unfair, unjust or inaccurate may begin the handbook complaint process or other appropriate process. Failure to submit a complaint within 5 work days shall indicate agreement with the evaluation. The evaluation results shall be placed in the employee's personnel file.

If the direct supervisor determines that the employee's performance is not meeting expectations as prescribed by board policy, agency procedures or law, the direct supervisor shall recommend to his/her director and human resources director that the employee be placed on a remedial performance plan. If a remedial performance plan is unsuccessful, the direct supervisor may recommend termination of employment to his/her director and human resources director.

Certified Bargaining Employees [Evaluation Process](#).

Classified Bargaining Employees, Therapy Assistants, and Administrative Support Employees [Evaluation Process](#).

Non-licensed Administrators [Evaluation Process](#).

Licensed Administrators [Evaluation Process](#).

Handbook Complaints

Complaints alleging the misinterpretation or misapplication of the agency employee handbook are addressed in this section. Handbook complaint procedures are a means of internal dispute resolution by which an employee may have their complaints addressed. The goal of the handbook complaint process is to, at the lowest level possible, secure equitable solutions to problems that arise.

This section addresses complaints to the employee handbook. Other employee complaint procedures should be in accordance with the agency's board policy.

Step One

Within 5 work days after the alleged misinterpretation or misapplication of the handbook, an employee with a complaint shall privately discuss the complaint with

their direct supervisor and attempt to find a resolution. The immediate supervisor will respond within 10 work days.

Step Two

If the complaint is not resolved at Step One, the employee alleging the complaint may submit a formal complaint with their direct supervisor and human resources director. The formal complaint must be submitted to the immediate supervisor and human resources director within five work days after the receipt of the direct supervisor's Level One response.

The formal complaint must contain a clear and concise statement of the alleged misinterpretation or misapplication of the handbook, including the facts upon which the complaint is based, the issues involved, the provisions of the handbook involved, the claimed basis for the alleged misinterpretation or misapplication and the resolution that is sought.

The direct supervisor will provide a written answer to the formal complaint within ten work days.

Step Three

If the complaint is not resolved at Step Two, the employee alleging the complaint shall submit the formal complaint to the chief administrator and human resources director within 5 work days. The chief administrator will provide a written answer to the formal complaint within ten work days. The chief administrator's decision will be final.

Mandatory Cooperation in Workplace Investigations

Any workplace investigation conducted by administrative staff or their designee will receive complete cooperation of employees. Employees are expected to be honest, candid and forthright if questioned during an investigation. Impeding, obstructing or failing to cooperate with the investigation and related procedures will not be tolerated.

Mandatory Reporting of Post-Employment Arrests and Convictions

Any employee who is arrested or convicted of any criminal charges shall report such information to the Human Resources Director within 10 business days from the arrest or conviction date.

Probationary Status

The first three years of a newly hired licensed employee's contract is a probationary period unless the individual has already successfully completed the three-year probationary period in an Iowa school district or area education agency. Certified staff and licensed administrators who have successfully completed a probationary period in

a previous Iowa school district or area education agency will serve a two year probationary period.

The probationary period for newly hired or transferred classified bargaining employees is 90 calendar days. It is also 90 days for therapy assistants, non-licensed administrators, and administrative support staff.

Public Complaints about an Employee

The board recognizes that situations may arise in the operation of the agency which are of concern to parents and other members of the agency community.

The board firmly believes concerns should be resolved at the lowest organizational level by those individuals closest to the concern. Whenever a complaint or concern is brought to the attention of the board it will be referred to the administration to be resolved. Prior to board action however, the following should be completed:

- (a) Matters should first be addressed to the agency employee.
- (b) Unsettled matters from (a) above or problems and questions should be addressed to the employee's supervisor and/or director.
- (c) Unsettled matters from (b) above or problems and questions concerning the agency should be directed to the chief administrator.
- (d) If a matter cannot be settled satisfactorily by the chief administrator, it may then be brought to the board for consideration. To bring a concern, the individual shall notify the board president or board secretary in writing, who may bring it to the attention of the entire board.

It is within the discretion of the board to address complaints from the members of the agency community, and the board will only consider whether to address complaints if they are in writing, signed, and the complainant has complied with this policy. The board is not obligated to address a complaint and may defer to the decision of the chief administrator. If the board elects not to address a complaint, the decision of the chief administrator shall be final. If the board does elect to address a complaint, its decision shall be final.

[Board policy 213.3](#)

Qualifications, Recruitment and Selections

Job applicants for all positions will be considered on the basis of the following: training, experience, and skill; nature of the occupation; demonstrated competence; and possession of, or ability to obtain, state license if required for the position.

All job openings shall be submitted to the Iowa Department of Education for posting on TeachIowa, www.teachiowa.gov/, the online state job posting system. Additional announcements of the position may occur in a manner which the chief administrator believes will inform potential applicants about the position. Whenever possible, the

preliminary screening of applicants will be conducted by the administrator who will be directly supervising and overseeing the person being hired.

The board will employ employees after receiving recommendations from the chief administrator. The chief administrator, however, will have the authority to hire an employee on a temporary basis until a recommendation can be made and action can be taken by the board on the position.

[Board policy 408.1](#)

Release of Credit Information

The following information will be released to an entity with whom an employee has applied for credit or has obtained credit: title of position, income and number of years employed. This information will be released without prior written notice to the employee as it is all public information. Confidential information about the employee will be released to an inquiring creditor with a written authorization from the employee.

[Board policy 403.4](#)

Transfers

Determining the location where an employee's assignment will be carried out is the responsibility of and within the sole discretion of the administration. In making such assignments, the administration will consider the qualifications of each employee and the needs of the districts served.

A. A transfer is a change to a different service region or movement from one job category to another within the bargaining unit. A voluntary transfer request may be filed at any time by emailing the Human Resources Director. The email notification must state the position and/or region to which an employee desires to transfer.

B. Posting of Vacancies - Transfer requests shall be emailed to the supervisor listed on the posted vacancy notice. Transfer requests made through the direct supervisor shall be turned in to the Human Resources Office. The vacancy notice will be posted with position title, service region, office location, number of contract days or hours, supervisor, and notification if the position is a new one. Transfer requests will be made for posted vacancies and are applicable only to that vacancy.

1. The agency shall notify the employees of any vacancy via email and shall consider all transfer requests on file prior to filling said vacancy. Employees shall have five (5) work days to request a transfer. When a vacancy is filled through the voluntary transfer procedure, the newly opened vacancy will not be posted.

2. If a position is a new position, the Administrator or designee shall post vacancies at least five (5) work days prior to intended employment for such vacancy. Posting shall be emailed to all employees. The posting shall define the

assignment and location constituting said vacancy. New positions identified in August for a current school year shall require a five (5) work day posting.

C. An administrator will consider the following factors when determining a transfer:

1. needs of the district
2. employee's skill set and strengths
3. team relationships
4. the need for conflict resolution among the employee and school
5. additional training needs
6. distance from employee's home to assignment
7. the extent, number, and recency of previous changes
8. employee's preferences regarding the change
9. employee's years of service
10. employee's past performance evaluations, including Awareness and Assistance plans

D. Transfer requests shall receive consideration prior to the interviewing of outside applicants as long as the request was filed in a timely manner for a posted vacancy or a voluntary transfer request was previously filed. Employees having interviewed for a posted vacancy and not receiving approval of their transfer request may request a meeting to discuss the reason for the denial of transfer and future transfer with the appropriate administrator. Transfer requests shall be approved at the division director level.

An employer initiated transfer will only occur if it becomes necessary for the efficient operation of the agency; considering factors C.1 through C.10 above. Employer initiated transfers shall be verbally communicated to affected employees followed by a written notice or email that includes the reason for the transfer, with a copy placed in the personnel file. The verbal notification shall occur no less than 10 work days prior to the transfer going into effect. The administrator shall not exercise the right to transfer an employee in an arbitrary and/or capricious manner.

Work Day

Applicable to Certified Bargaining Employees Only. Please reference the [2020-2023 Certified Master Contract Agreement](#) regarding Work Day.

Applicable to employees excluding the certified bargaining group:

The agency offices are open from 8:00 a.m to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Friday. The actual working hours are determined by the position for which the individual is employed. The work day will begin at a time established by the direct supervisor. "Day" is defined as one work day regardless of full-time or part-time status of an employee.

Employees may leave at 3:00 p.m. on the last work day preceding Thanksgiving break and Winter break and also on the Friday before Easter.

Flexible scheduling requests may be made to the direct supervisor. Agency operational efficiency must be considered and the direct supervisor's decision is final.

With supervisory approval, year-round employees may work a modified summer schedule. Please reference detailed information in [Board Regulation 401.3R1](#).

Applicable to Classified Bargaining Employees, Therapy Assistants, Administrative Secretary, Bookkeeper-Accounts Payable, Bookkeeper-Payroll, and Human Resources Assistant:

During each work day, employees will be granted one 30 minute unpaid, duty free lunch period. They will also receive two 15 minute paid breaks. The lunch period and breaks may not be routinely stacked to create an hour lunch block. Prior supervisory approval is required for the occasional combining of lunch and breaks.

Overtime hours are defined as hours worked over forty (40) within the same work week (beginning on Monday and ending on Sunday). Overtime hours must be compensated with additional paid wages or compensatory time, at a rate of time and one-half of the employee's straight time hourly rate.

Employees must have prior written approval from their direct supervisor to work beyond the number of hours established for their work day. Flexibility within a work week is permissible with supervisory approval, however, the total number of hours worked shall not exceed forty (40) unless approved by administration.

If it is necessary for an employee to be called back to work at the request of an administrator to attend to an emergency situation or other extraordinary circumstance, the employee shall be paid two hours minimum or for actual time spent if greater than two hours. Overtime may apply if hours worked during the work week exceed forty (40).

Applicable to Administrators:

Administrators typically work from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday and 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on Friday. However, it is expected as a professional, that all obligations and responsibilities are met regardless of the stated time periods.

AGENCY PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

Business Office & Human Resources Procedures

Forms & Filing Procedures

Numerous forms are used within our agency for various purposes. Following is a listing of many forms used and the reason for using them. If you do not see the form you are looking for listed here, please check the Business Office or Human Resources page on the agency website.

Change of Information:

Employee changes in name, address or name(s) of beneficiary should be reported immediately by completing and submitting the following form to the Human Resources Assistant at the Central Office in Ottumwa:

- [Change of Information Form](#)

Employees wishing to change their number of dependents for tax deductions, or make other changes in payroll deductions, should also contact the Human Resources Assistant to obtain the proper forms.

IPERS Change of Beneficiary:

To change the beneficiary on your IPERS account, complete the form linked below and mail it directly to IPERS. IPERS also encourages members to accomplish this electronically on their website:

- [IPERS](#)

Life Insurance Change of Beneficiary:

To change the beneficiary on your life insurance policy, you must access your account on the online insurance program. A link is found [here](#).

Mileage Claims:

All AEA staff members are required to use the [online mileage claim system](#). Information on the use of the online mileage system, as well as username and password, can be obtained by contacting Dennis Gourley, Chief Financial Officer at dennis.gourley@gpaea.org or extension 5282.

Monthly Attendance Report:

Used by all "non-exempt" staff members (this includes all classified staff and non-bargaining support staff members). Forms must be completed monthly and submitted to your supervisor in order to comply with Wage and Hour law.

- [Monthly Attendance Report form](#)

Petty Cash Form:

Used by staff members who have been required to use their own money, up to \$10, to purchase miscellaneous supplies (excluding food) for agency purposes. Use ONLY if you cannot use a purchase order. Form must be signed and turned in to the Business Office, along with receipts for items purchased.

Request to Travel Out of Area/Out of State - Professional Development Request:

Certified and classified staff, COTA's and PTA's must complete this form for proposed professional development activities:

- [GPAEA PD Request Form](#)

Requisitions for Supplies and Services:

Contact your Team/Office Secretary to order materials or services from an outside vendor.

Child Labor

The agency complies with both state and federal child labor laws. Under Iowa Child Labor laws, Iowa Code Chapter 92, minors under the age of 18 are prohibited from working in certain occupations, performing certain duties and from using certain equipment. For more information on federal child labor laws, contact the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division, in Des Moines at (515) 284-4625 or visit www.iowadivisionoflabor.gov/child-labor.

Committees

Equity Committee

Committee members representing all Service Areas, along with community members, are appointed by the Board of Directors and are charged with monitoring the progress of the goals established by the Agency Affirmative Action Plan and reporting all appropriate information to the Administration and the Board. Greg Manske, Committee Chairman.

Staff Events Committee

This committee is agency-wide and open to any staff member. The main purpose of this committee is to give staff members an opportunity to participate in agency-wide activities that promote a positive workplace atmosphere.

It is understood that Offices may wish to hold activities or events for staff in or visiting that office on any given day. Any staff or office activity or event should typically be submitted for approval to Cabinet by July 1 for the following year. Cabinet and Leadership would typically review requests and respond by August 1. During the 2021-2022 school year, requests for staff or office activities should be submitted for approval one month before the event. Any event not submitted and approved within

the timeline established, will be approved at the discretion of the Chief Administrator and needs to be submitted no later than one month prior to the event date. [Submit a Staff or Office Event](#)

Teacher Quality Professional Development Committee (TQPD Committee)

The TQPD committee provides oversight to certified staff professional learning by determining the use and distribution of the professional development funds provided by the Iowa Department of Education. Funds may be allocated to agency-wide, small group, or individual professional learning activities. Please see the [TQPD webpage](#) for more information.

Copyright

Copyright is a form of intellectual property, including digital, that protects original works of authorship including literary, dramatic, musical, and artistic works. The copyright laws of the United States make it illegal for anyone to duplicate copyrighted materials without permission. Severe penalties are provided for unauthorized copying of all materials covered by the act unless the copying falls within the bounds of the “fair use” doctrine. Any duplication of copyrighted materials by agency employees must be done with permission of the copyright holder or within the bounds of “fair use.”

Discipline

Employee violations of board policy and work rules may result in discipline, up to and including termination. Employees whose employment is terminated will be given the appropriate level of due process as required by law.

The agency uses progressive discipline procedures to prevent undesirable employee behavioral issues. In most cases, the agency will follow the steps below. However, the agency may combine or skip steps depending on the facts of each situation and the nature of the offense.

Step One – Verbal Warning

The employee and the direct supervisor shall meet to bring attention to the existing conduct issue. The direct supervisor shall discuss the nature of the problem and clearly describe agency policies and procedures. The direct supervisor shall document this meeting.

Step Two – Written Warning

If the issue in Step One is not corrected, the employee and the direct supervisor shall meet to review the existing behavioral issue and any additional incidents. The direct supervisor shall outline the consequences for failing to meet conduct expectations to the employee. Employees in Step Two shall be placed on a remedial plan.

The direct supervisor shall document the Step Two meeting and give a copy of the documentation to the employee. The original copy shall be placed in the employee's personnel file.

Step Three – Recommendation for Termination of Employment

If the issue in Step Two is not corrected, the employee may be subject to the termination procedures as outlined in Iowa Code and in board policy. The direct supervisor will discuss the appropriate action with their director, human resources director and chief administrator. The chief administrator has the authority to recommend the termination of an employee to the Board.

[Board policy 404.2](#)

Employee Recognition

The agency recognizes and appreciates the services of its employees. Employees who retire or resign may be honored by the board, administration and staff in an appropriate manner.

Employee Publication or Creation of Materials

Materials created by employees and/or the financial gain therefrom are the property of the agency if agency materials and/or time were used in their creation and/or such materials were created in the scope of the employee's employment unless prior arrangements are made. The employee must seek prior written approval of the chief administrator concerning such activities.

Limitations to Employment References

Agency employees shall not assist another co-worker, contractor, or agent in obtaining a new job, apart from the routine transmission of administrative personnel files, if the employee knows, or has probable cause to believe, that such co-worker, contractor, or agent engaged in sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of the law.

This limitation does not apply if the matter has been properly reported to law enforcement and any other regulatory authorities required by law, and either:

- the matter has been officially closed by the law enforcement agency;
- the individual is acquitted or otherwise exonerated of the alleged misconduct; or
- more than four years has passed since the case was opened, and no charges or indictment have been filed.

Payroll Accountability

The agency believes in taking appropriate measures to ensure the accurate expenditure of agency funds through payroll. All agency employees shall be responsible for

accurately and timely reporting their time worked for additional pay (beyond contract). The Chief Financial Officer shall be responsible for the timely and accurate disbursement of payroll for the agency. No individuals beyond the employees and the Chief Financial Officer shall have authority to alter timekeeping for employees without prior approval from the division director. The Chief Financial Officer shall develop procedures to ensure the accurate reporting of time worked and compensation disbursed for all agency employees.

Professional Development

High quality services to students and district staff is imperative for student success, and professional development plays a key role in this success. Employees are expected to attend all professional development opportunities and staff meetings provided by the agency unless they are on leave or have been excused by their direct supervisor.

Requests for attendance or participation in a development program, other than those development programs sponsored by the agency, are made to the direct supervisor. Approval of the direct supervisor must be obtained prior to attendance by a licensed employee in a professional development program when the attendance would result in the licensed employee being excused from their duties or when the agency pays the expenses of the program. The PD request [form](#) must be completed.

Requests for attendance or participation by classified bargaining employees and therapy assistants in a professional development or training program, other than those sponsored by the agency, must be made to the direct supervisor.

Religious Holiday Celebrations in Agency Facilities

Agency employees need to be respectful of the religious beliefs of fellow employees and students. The Iowa Department of Education has provided the following non-exhaustive checklist for prohibited and permissive activities related to religious holiday celebrations in public facilities. This information may be located at www.educateiowa.gov/resources/laws-and-regulations/legal-lessons/religious-holiday-celebrations-public-schools.

Prohibited Activities:

- Displays of religious symbols such as a crèche, an angel, a menorah, or a banner with a religious message (e.g., “Gloria in Excelsis Deo”)
- Display of a Christmas tree with religious symbols such as stars, angels, the baby Jesus, etc.
- Agency-wide prayer or Scripture readings

Permissible Activities:

- Displaying a “giving tree,” (e.g., a tree on which employees hang donated items such as mittens, gloves, etc.)

- Displays of religious symbols when combined with other symbols of cultural and ethnic heritage such as Kwanzaa symbols, Frosty the Snowman, or other festive figures, such as a “Happy Holidays” banner, etc.
- Displays of symbols representing many religious beliefs, even without non-religious symbols. But, just displaying symbols from Christianity and Judaism is an impermissible endorsement of dual beliefs. The display must present a message of pluralism and freedom to choose one’s own beliefs.

Agency Publicity and Community Relations

The agency staff is the connection between the agency, schools and the community. Employees are expected to work in a professional manner with educators, parents and the community, when appropriate, for their positions.

The board president is the spokesperson for the board, and the chief administrator is the spokesperson for the agency. It is the responsibility of the board president and chief administrator to respond to inquiries from the news media about the agency.

[Board policy 901.1](#)

Staff Meetings

Staff meetings provide an opportunity for the communication of important agency information to be shared between administration and employees.

Employees are expected to attend staff meetings unless they are on pre-approved leave or excused by their direct supervisor. Additional information detailing agency staff meetings will be provided by your direct supervisor.

CONDUCT IN THE WORKPLACE

Employee Use of Communication Devices

Agency and personal cellular phones and message devices are to be used appropriately at times that do not conflict with the employees' duties. All personal calling and texting should be done during sanctioned breaks. Agency telephones are not to be used for personal calls.

Fighting

Any verbal or physical altercations between or among employees or others will not be tolerated and may subject the employee(s) to disciplinary action.

Fraud/Unlawful Gain

Any deliberate deception which secures an employee unfair or unlawful gain will be grounds for discipline and may be turned over to law enforcement.

Offensive or Abusive Language

Threatening, intimidating, or using abusive and profane language by agency employees towards others, including derogatory slurs, will not be tolerated and may result in disciplinary action.

Performing Unauthorized Work While on Duty

All agency employees are prohibited from performing unauthorized work while on duty. Doing so could result in disciplinary action.

Use of Agency Facilities and Equipment

The agency attempts to maintain equipment and supplies which permit work to be accomplished in the most efficient and effective manner possible. While employees are encouraged to use these items, it is important to understand that they are agency property only to be used for conducting agency business. After use, agency facilities are to be sanitized by custodians in accordance with public health guidelines. Staff will be responsible for disinfecting the copy machine or other shared equipment after each use. Individually issued agency equipment (computers, laptops, iPads, etc) should be sanitized by the employee to whom it is issued. The sharing of individually issued agency equipment should be avoided.

Abuse or misuse of agency owned property is to be reported immediately to the staff member's supervisor. The supervisor will contact the equipment or facility manager. Failure to do so will limit agency responsibility and/or increase employee responsibility. It is expected that employees will use care and caution when using agency property.

[Board policy and Regulation 904.1/904.1R1 and 904.3/904.3R1](#)

Abuse or misuse or unauthorized use of agency property, private property, materials and/or equipment is subject to disciplinary action.

Use of Time

An employee is responsible for the time on the job which he/she is assigned. Each employee must develop work habits and systems to eliminate back-tracking or poor usage of time. This requires initiative and planning on the employee's part.

The following actions are strictly prohibited by employees: loafing, loitering, sleeping, and engaging in unauthorized personal business.

EMPLOYEE STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

Break or Meal Periods

Certified bargaining staff should refer to the [2020-2023 master contract agreement](#), Work Day Article.

Applicable to employees excluding the certified bargaining group:

You may leave your place of work for your break and lunch periods. You should be in your assigned workplace during other times in the work day, unless you have permission from your supervisor to be elsewhere.

Dress and Grooming

Employees should look their best at all times to maintain the professional atmosphere of the agency. Business/professional attire is expected. It is further expected that all employees represent the agency in a professional manner by appropriately dressing for your position.

Unless specifically approved by your supervisor, blue jeans should not be worn during agency business hours. The only exception will be for Early ACCESS staff with supervisory approval, custodians, media clerks, print technicians, repair technician, and van drivers. During periods of warmer weather, employees are further expected to refrain from wearing shorts, tank tops, halter tops or other inappropriate items. Clothing deemed inappropriate will be discussed with the employee.

The agency recognizes that it is acceptable to wear jeans on Fridays. Please note that staff working in schools on Friday should follow the appropriate dress code for that district(s). It is important that we portray a positive and professional image to our clients. Finally, as role models for students, all staff members are expected to not only dress appropriately, but to practice exemplary hygiene.

Employee Outside Employment

The board believes that the primary responsibility of employees is to the duties of their position within the agency as outlined in their job description. The board expects that agency employees will give the responsibilities of their positions in the agency priority over any other employment. Employees with external employment must keep the two positions separate and the external job cannot impact the agency job. Should a supervisor believe the external position is impacting the internal one; the supervisor will address it with the employee.

The board may request the employee to cease the outside employment as a condition of continued employment with the agency.

[Board policy 403.5](#)

Employee Political Activity

Employees have full equality with other citizens in the exercise of their political rights and responsibilities, but employees shall refrain from certain political activities in the workplace and on agency property under the jurisdiction of the board. Such prohibitions include, but are not limited to:

- Engaging in any activity for the solicitation, promotion, election or defeat of any referendum, candidate for public office, legislation or other political action during work hours/while engaged in official duties and in the presence of any student.
- Soliciting or receiving from any employee or other person any contribution or service for any political purpose during work hours/while engaged in official duties.
- Using school district buildings, agency facilities or students for solicitation, promotion, election or defeat of any referendum, candidate for public office, legislation or other political action. (This provision does not apply to employee use of agency facilities if they are related to third-party events/activities authorized by the agency that are outside the employee's scope of employment.)
- Using agency equipment or materials for solicitation, promotion, election or defeat or any referendum, candidate for public office, legislation or other political action.

Engaging in prohibited political activities may be grounds for disciplinary action.

Employees may request a leave of absence to run for public office. That provision is detailed in the "Political Leave" section of this handbook.

[Board policy 401.9](#)

Ethics – Board of Educational Examiners

Agency employees are expected to perform their jobs in an ethical and honest manner consistent with board policy and the Iowa Board of Educational Examiners (BOEE) rules. Any actions deemed unethical or dishonest will incur appropriate discipline. Licensed staff members are expected to know and understand the Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics of the BOEE. The BOEE's Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics constitutes mandatory minimum standards of practice for all licensed employees. While other employee groups are not subject to the BOEE Code of Ethics, it is good guidance for all employees and recommended reading for other employees as well.

For a copy of the ethics code, please visit www.boee.iowa.gov/doc/ethHndot.pdf.

Failure to Complete Reports

In order to have the agency function in an efficient manner, all employees are expected to meet deadlines for all assigned paper or electronic reports, including but not limited to: time sheets, leave reporting, student records, Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) documentation and testing results.

Gifts

Employees will not, either directly or indirectly, solicit, accept or receive any gift or series of gifts, unless the gift is valued at less than three dollars or has a negligible resale value. Honorariums may be received but must be turned over to the agency unless the employee was on his or her own time, the donor does not meet the definition of “restricted donor” or the gift or honorarium does not meet the definition of gift or honorarium.

[Board policy 403.3](#)

Insubordination

Insubordination is the disobedience, failure or refusal to follow the written or oral instructions of supervisory authority or to carry out work assignments and will not be tolerated. Insubordination may result in disciplinary action.

Agency employees shall contact their direct supervisor if there are concerns regarding working conditions.

Relationships with Co-Workers

Agency employees are encouraged to create an environment where co-workers' collaboration and cooperation add to the overall functioning of the agency and fulfillment of individual job responsibilities. All employees must have a respectful attitude toward their job and co-workers, and they should not allow fellow workers or others to interrupt or demean their work.

Staff Technology Use/Social Networking

Usage of the agency's computer resources is a privilege, not a right, and use entails responsibility. All information on the agency's computer system is considered a public record. Whether there is an exception to keep some narrow, specific content confidential is determined on a case by case basis. Therefore, users of the agency's computer network must not expect, nor does the agency guarantee, privacy for email, online learning platforms, or use of the agency's computer network including websites visited. The agency reserves the right to access and view any material stored on agency equipment or any material used in conjunction with the agency's computer network.

Employees shall not post confidential or proprietary information, including photographic images, about the agency, its employees, students, agents or others on any external web site without appropriate release forms and consent of the Public Relations Coordinator/Administrative Assistant & Board Secretary. The employee shall adhere to all applicable privacy and confidentiality policies adopted by the agency when on external websites. Employees shall not use the agency logos, images, iconography, etc. on external websites. Employees shall not use agency time or property on external sites that are not in direct-relation to the employee's job. Employees must realize that the internet is not a closed system and anything posted on an external site may be viewed by others, all over the world. Employees who do not want agency administrators to know their personal information should refrain from exposing it on the internet. The agency's Public Relations Coordinator is the only authorized person to create and sanction external social media sites for Great Prairie Area Education Agency.

Acceptable Use

All network use with any connected devices must be consistent with the purpose and mission of Great Prairie Area Education Agency. Activities in direct support of this purpose (e.g., professional development, administrative communications, grant applications, service support) are acceptable. For-profit activities including fundraising and public relations activities advertising and extensive use for private or personal business are unacceptable.

Connectivity to the agency's network must not be used for illegal purposes or to transmit threatening, obscene or harassing materials or disrupt or interfere with other network users, services or equipment.

Users of the network will respect the intellectual property rights and privacy rights of others, therefore, it is unacceptable for users to access information and resources unless permission to do so has been granted by the owners or holders of the rights for the information and resources.

Employees accept the responsibility for appropriate use and online etiquette.

[Board Policy](#)

- 603.3 Internet Appropriate Use
- 603.4 Agency Web Site Policy
- 603.5 Use of Informational Resources
- 603.6 Internet Safety

Employees are expected to take reasonable care and protection of assigned agency computers and/or other devices. Employees are expected to follow digital safety protocols established by the Technology Department.

Check the Staff Portal for updated technology-related information and digital safety protocols. [Staff Portal- Technology](#)

Copy Machines- The use of Agency copy machines should be limited to business purposes only. Personal copies are not allowed.

Telephone- The Agency phone system is for business use only. Personal long distance phone calls are not allowed.

Theft

All thefts or loss should be reported immediately to your direct supervisor and the Chief Financial Officer. Any employee found to be involved in theft of the agency's or another person's property will result in appropriate discipline.

Treatment of Clients and Partners of the Agency

Clients and partners of the agency are to be treated with respect. Employees should be courteous at all times. Report to agency administration any mistreatment by agency clients and partners.

STUDENT ISSUES

Abuse of Students by an Agency Employee

Agency employees are encouraged to create professional relationships with students so as to assist with their learning. Employees must not create relationships with students that are unhealthy or illegal. Adults must always be in a position to be trusted and caring for students, but the agency will not tolerate any inappropriate relationships.

Physical or sexual abuse of students, including sexual behavior, by employees will not be tolerated. Employees found in violation of this policy will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

The agency will respond promptly to allegations of abuse of students by agency employees by investigating or arranging for the investigation of an allegation. Employees are required to assist in the investigation when requested to provide information and to maintain confidentiality of the reporting and investigation process.

Refer to the Iowa Department of Education training manual for supporting materials and forms. The training manual can be located at:
<https://educateiowa.gov/chapter-102-level-i-investigator-manual-january-2011-school-leader-update-legal-lesson>.

[Board policy 403.1](#)

Child Abuse Reporting

Child abuse is the result of the acts or omissions of a person responsible for the care of a person under the age of 18 who has suffered one or more of the categories of child abuse as defined in Iowa Code 232.68 (physical abuse, mental injury, sexual abuse, denial of critical care, failure to supervise, child prostitution, presence of illegal drugs, manufacturing or possession of a dangerous substance, bestiality in the presence of a minor, allows access by a registered sex offender, allows access to obscene material or child trafficking).

The agency believes in protecting our students and we strive for them to be productive without outside factors weighing on their ability to learn. In compliance with state law and to provide protection to victims of child abuse, the board believes incidents of alleged child abuse should be reported to the proper authorities. Certified employees and employees holding a Paraeducator Certificate are mandatory reporters and are required to report alleged incidents of child abuse they become aware of within the scope of their professional duties. Non-licensed classified staff should immediately discuss any suspected abuse with an SLP, audiologist, teacher, school administrator or their direct supervisor.

When a mandatory reporter suspects a student is the victim of child abuse, the mandatory reporter shall make an oral report of the suspected child abuse to the Iowa Department of Human Services within 24 hours of becoming aware of the abusive incident and shall make a written report to the Iowa Department of Human Services within 48 hours following the oral report. If the mandatory reporter believes the child is in immediate danger, the local law enforcement agency will also be notified.

Within three months of their initial employment, mandatory reporters will take a two-hour training course involving the identification and reporting of child and dependent adult abuse, or submit evidence they have taken the course within the previous three years. The course will be re-taken at least every three years.

For more information and to access a guide for mandatory reporters, please go to the Iowa Department of Human Services website at:
www.dhs.iowa.gov/sites/default/files/Comm164.pdf.

Iowa Department of Human Services - [Report Abuse](#)

Free training may be accessed at:

- Mandatory Reporter Training Module - [AEA Learning Online](#)
- Iowa DHS Training Module - Sign in [here](#)

[Board Regulation 403.1R1](#)

Agency Level I Investigators:

Regions 1, 2, 3 & 4 - Dr. Jamie Cranston and Alan Schwarte
Regions 5, 6 & 7 - Michelle Harris and Shawn Stringer

Corporal Punishment, Restraint and Detaining Students

State law forbids agency employees from using corporal punishment against any student. Certain actions by agency employees are not considered corporal punishment. Agency employees may use “reasonable and necessary force, not designed or intended to cause pain” to do certain things, such as prevent harm to persons or property.

State law also places limits on agency employees’ abilities to restrain or confine and detain any student. The law limits why, how, where, and for how long an agency employee may restrain or confine and detain a student. If a student is restrained or confined and detained, the agency/school district must maintain documentation and must provide certain types of notice to the child’s parent. For additional information regarding Iowa law on this issue, please visit the “Timeout, Seclusion, and Restraint” section of the Iowa Department of Education’s website, located at www.educateiowa.gov/pk-12/learner-supports/timeout-seclusion-restraint.

Newly hired employees who work directly with students are required to take the Seclusion and Restraint training which is found on the [AEA Learning Online](#) website. [Board policy 403.2](#)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is a federal law ensuring services to children with disabilities throughout the nation. IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education and related services to eligible children. Employees are expected to comply with IDEA. For additional information regarding IDEA, please visit The United States Department of Education website, located at <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/>. Additionally, employees are expected to follow agency procedures for identifying students who need additional assistance and meet the needs of identified students.

Student Records

Agency employees are entrusted with confidential information – whether it is about students or fellow employees. Employees must not disclose confidential student information unless it is permitted by law.

Give careful thought to what you discuss concerning agency matters with parents, colleagues, and members of the community. Rumors and criticism are promoted by outside gossip. Many rumors and unnecessary criticism can be avoided by referring community members to your direct supervisor or appropriate staff member. Employees must exercise significant care and judgment when handling confidential information. A break in confidentiality can result in discipline, and expose the employee to personal liability for violation of Iowa's privacy law.

Please reference [board policies 502.1, 502.2, and 502.3](#) for detailed information regarding student records.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Accommodation Request

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (ADA) and Iowa Civil Rights Act of 1965, as amended (ICRA), the agency has an affirmative legal obligation to provide reasonable accommodation to an employee or applicant with a disability.

Please contact the Human Resources Director (greg.manske@gpaea.org or 319-753-6561 x1217) if you have any questions or wish to file a request for reasonable accommodation.

Administering Medication

The supervision of any medication distribution to students shall be in strict compliance with the rules and regulations of the board. Agency employees may not dispense or administer any medications, including prescription and non-prescription drugs, to students except as outlined in board policy.

Please reference board policy [602.2 - Administration of Medication to Students](#)

Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment

The agency is committed to providing all students and employees with a safe and civil environment in which members of the agency and school community are treated with dignity and respect. Bullying and/or harassing behavior can seriously disrupt the ability of agency employees to maintain a safe and civil environment, and the ability of students to learn and succeed.

Bullying and/or harassment of or by students, employees, and volunteers is against federal, state, and local policy and is not tolerated by the board.

Accordingly, agency employees, volunteers, and students shall not engage in bullying or harassing behavior while on agency or school district property, while in agency-owned or agency-operated vehicles, while attending or participating in agency-sponsored or sanctioned activities, and while away from agency facilities if the conduct materially interferes with the orderly operation of the educational environment or is likely to do so.

Complaints may be filed with the chief administrator or chief administrator's designee pursuant to the regulation accompanying this policy. Complaints will be investigated within a reasonable time frame.

An agency employee, volunteer, or student, or a student's parent or guardian who promptly, reasonably, and in good faith reports an incident of bullying or harassment, in compliance with the procedures in the regulation, to the appropriate agency official

designated by the agency, shall be immune from civil or criminal liability relating to such report and to participation in any administrative or judicial proceeding resulting from or relating to the report.

Retaliation Prohibited

Individuals who knowingly file false bullying or harassment complaints and any person who gives false statements in an investigation may be subject to discipline by appropriate measures.

Any student (juvenile shelter or detention center) found to have violated or retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, suspension and expulsion. Any agency employee found to have violated or retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, termination of employment. Any agency volunteer found to have violated or retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, removal from service and exclusion from agency and/or school grounds.

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the defined words shall have the following meaning:

- “Electronic” means any communication involving the transmission of information by wire, radio, optic cable, electromagnetic, or other similar means. “Electronic” includes but is not limited to communication via electronic mail, internet-based communications, pager service, cell phones, and electronic text messaging. “Harassment” and “bullying” mean any repeated or potentially repeated electronic, written, verbal, or physical act or other ongoing conduct toward an individual based on any trait or characteristic of the individual which creates an objectively hostile school environment that meets one or more of the following conditions:
 1. Places the individual in reasonable fear of harm to the individual’s person or property.
 2. Has a substantial detrimental effect on the individual’s physical or mental health.
 3. Has the effect of substantially interfering with the individual’s academic or career performance. Has the effect of substantially interfering with the individual’s ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by the agency or school.
- “Trait or characteristic of the individual” includes but is not limited to age, color, creed, national origin, race, religion, marital status, sex, sexual

orientation, gender identity, physical attributes, physical or mental ability or disability, ancestry, political party preference, political belief, socioeconomic status, or familial status.

- “Volunteer” means an individual who has regular, significant contact with students.

Filing a Complaint

An individual who believes that he or she has been harassed or bullied may file a complaint with the chief administrator or chief administrator’s designee. The complaint form is available in board policy [Code No. 104](#). An alternate investigator will be designated in the event it is claimed that the chief administrator or chief administrator’s designee committed the alleged bullying or harassment or some other conflict of interest exists. Complaints shall be filed within 60 days of the event giving rise to the complaint or from the date the Complainant could reasonably become aware of such occurrence. The Complainant will state the nature of the complaint and the remedy requested. The Complainant shall receive assistance as needed.

Investigation

The agency will promptly and reasonably investigate allegations of bullying or harassment upon receipt of a written complaint. The chief administrator or the chief administrator’s designee (hereinafter “investigator”) will be responsible for handling all complaints alleging bullying or harassment.

The investigator shall consider the totality of circumstances presented in determining whether conduct objectively constitutes bullying or harassment as defined in board policy. Upon completion of the investigation, the investigator shall issue a report with respect to the findings, and provide a copy of the report to the direct supervisor and director, or chief administrator if the investigation involved a director or regional director.

The complaint and identity of the Complainant, Respondent, or witnesses will only be disclosed as reasonably necessary in connection with the investigation or as required by law or policy. Similarly, evidence uncovered in the investigation shall be kept confidential to the extent reasonably possible.

Agency Decision

The investigator, direct supervisor, director, or chief administrator, depending on the individuals involved, shall inform the Complainant and the accused about the outcome of the investigation. If, after an investigation, a student is found to be in violation of the policy, the student shall be disciplined by appropriate measures, which may include suspension and expulsion. If after an investigation an agency employee is found to be in violation of this policy, the employee shall be disciplined by appropriate measures,

which may include termination. If after an investigation an agency volunteer is found to be in violation of this policy, the volunteer shall be subject to appropriate measures, which may include exclusion from agency and school grounds.

Individuals who knowingly file false bullying and/or harassment complaints and any person who gives false statements in an investigation may be subject to discipline by appropriate measures, as shall any person who is found to have retaliated against another in violation of this policy. Any student found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, suspension and expulsion. Any agency employee found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, termination of employment. Any agency volunteer found to have retaliated in violation of this policy shall be subject to measures up to, and including, exclusion from agency and school grounds.

[Board policy 104 and 104.E1, 104.E2, 104.E3, and 104.R1](#)

Bloodborne Pathogens

All new employees must initially complete the bloodborne pathogens training. Additionally, the following positions must complete the training annually: Audiologists, BASEC Family Support Assistants, Custodians, Early ACCESS Home Interventionists, Early Childhood Behavior Intervention Project Coordinators, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, Physical Therapy Assistants, Speech-Language Assistants, Speech and Language Pathologists, Teacher-Juvenile Home, Teacher-Corrections Program, Teacher Associates-Juvenile Home and Detention Center, and Teacher of the Deaf & Hard of Hearing.

Iowa Workforce Development - Iowa OSHA Job Safety and Health:
www.iowadivisionoflabor.gov/iowa-osh-safety-and-health-poster-0.

Bloodborne Pathogens Training Module - [AEA Learning Online](#)

Communicable Diseases – Employees

Employees who are ill are encouraged to stay home. Please follow personal sick leave guidance found under the Leaves and Absences section.

Employees with a communicable disease will be allowed to perform their customary employment duties provided they are able to perform the essential functions of their position and their presence does not create a substantial risk of illness or transmission to students or other employees. The term “**communicable disease**” will mean an infectious or contagious disease spread from person to person, or animal to person, or as defined by law.

Prevention and control of communicable diseases is included in the agency's bloodborne pathogens exposure control plan. The procedures will include scope and application, definitions, exposure control, methods of compliance, universal precautions, vaccination, post-exposure evaluation, follow-up, communication of hazards to employees and record keeping.

Employees with a higher risk of developing a severe illness from COVID-19, and requesting accommodation, should inform their direct supervisor and contact the Human Resources Director.

Please reference [board policy 405.1, 405.1E1 and 405.1R1](#) for details.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Everyday life can be stressful and can affect your health, well-being and performance. Fortunately, our Employee Assistance Program can aid in finding solutions. When facing personal problems, you might struggle with where to turn for help. The first step is usually the hardest and guidance is often the key. That's why National Insurance Services (NIS) offers an Employee Assistance Program (EAP). An EAP offers a confidential place to find the answers that work for you.

Please review the GPAEA [EAP brochure](#) for more details including a link to access the EAP program.

Employee Injury on the Job

Employee and student safety is a major agency concern. An employee should therefore remove him or herself from and report any situations where employee safety is compromised. If an employee becomes seriously injured on the job, the employee's direct supervisor will attempt to notify a member of the family, or an individual of close relationship, as soon as the employee's supervisor becomes aware of the injury.

If possible, an employee may administer emergency or minor first aid. An injured employee will be turned over to the care of the employee's family or qualified medical professionals as quickly as possible.

It is the responsibility of the employee injured on the job to inform the human resources director or human resources assistant within twenty-four hours of the occurrence.

Employee Physical Examination

The agency believes good health is important to job performance.

Employees whose physical or mental health, in the judgment of the administration, may be in doubt must submit to additional examinations to the extent job-related and

consistent with business necessity, when requested to do so, at the expense of the agency.

The agency will comply with occupational safety and health requirements as applicable to its employees in accordance with law.

[Board policy 405.3](#)

Hazardous Chemical Disclosure

Employees will annually review information about hazardous substances in the workplace. When a new employee is hired or transferred to a new position or work site, the information and training, if necessary, is included in the employee's orientation. When an additional hazardous substance enters the workplace, information about it is distributed to employees as necessary, and training is conducted for the appropriate employees. The human resources director will maintain a file indicating which hazardous substances are present in the workplace and when training and information sessions take place.

The mandatory poster for Job Safety and Health may be located at www.osha.gov/Publications/poster.html and the Iowa specific poster may be found at www.iowadivisionoflabor.gov/iowa-osha-safety-and-health-poster. Posters may also be found on the agency bulletin boards in each office.

Smoke and Tobacco Free Workplace

The agency is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace and to promoting the health and well-being of employees. As required by Iowa Code Chapter 142D, the Iowa Smokefree Air Act, and also motivated by a desire to provide a healthy work environment, the agency prohibits smoking, and the use of tobacco and nicotine products as cited in board policy, on all agency property and vehicles.

[Board regulation 904.1R1](#)

Substance Free Workplace

Alcoholic beverages, illegal substances, and legal substances used illegally shall not be consumed at any time during the employee's work day. It is in violation of agency work rules for an employee to report to work in an unsafe condition, or in a condition which impairs the employee's judgment or performance of job functions due to the use of alcohol or other substances. Unauthorized possession or use of alcoholic beverages or other substances during work hours, while on agency time or property, or while engaging in agency business will result in discipline, up to and including termination.

It is a violation of the federal Substance-Free Workplace law for an employee to unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess, use, or be under the influence of in the workplace any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate,

marijuana or any other controlled substance or alcohol, as defined in Schedules I through V of section 202 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812) and further defined by regulation at 21 C.F.R. 1300.11 through 1300.15 and Iowa Code Chapter 124.

"Workplace" is defined as the site for the performance of work done in the capacity as an employee. This includes agency offices, school district facilities, other agency work sites or agency vehicles. Workplace also includes off-agency or off-school property if the employee is at any agency or school-sponsored, school-approved or school-related activity, event or function where the employee is engaged in agency business.

EMPLOYEES ARE FURTHER NOTIFIED it is a condition of their continued employment that they comply with the above policy of the agency and will notify their direct supervisor and human resources director of their conviction of any criminal drug statute for a violation committed in the workplace, no later than five days after the conviction.

[Board policy 405.5, 405.5E1, and 405.5R1](#)

LEAVES AND ABSENCES

Absenteeism

In order to accomplish the goals and mission of the agency, daily attendance by employees is imperative. Employees are encouraged to limit absenteeism to emergencies and appropriate instances that cannot be scheduled outside of a workday.

Employees must notify their direct supervisor of all times when they will be absent and submit leave requests on the AsureForce leave system. Absences arranged in advance (vacations and personal days) do not require a call when absent or when returning to work, unless outside the scheduled time off. If an employee is absent for five (5) consecutive workdays, without proper notification and authorization, the employee shall be considered to have abandoned his or her position and may be terminated. Misuse of leave procedures or misrepresentation of reasons for leave may lead to discipline. Failure to report promptly at the starting time or leaving before the scheduled quitting time or failure to timely notify the direct supervisor of impending absence or tardiness, prior to designated starting time, is reason for discipline even if the employee has not yet exhausted available paid leave.

Employees with a higher risk of developing a severe illness from COVID-19, and requesting accommodation, should inform their direct supervisor and contact the human resources director.

Bereavement Leave

The agency understands that employees may need time off to mourn the loss of a family member or close friend.

Employees working a minimum of half-time (1,000 hours annually for classified bargaining staff) shall receive up to five (5) days of paid bereavement leave for the death of an immediate family member (spouse, parent, child, stepchild or immediate member of the household). Up to three (3) days of paid bereavement leave may be used for the death of a sibling, grandchild, grandparent, step-parent or in-law. Up to one full day of paid bereavement leave may be taken for the death of other relatives or close friends with supervisory approval.

The direct supervisor should be notified as soon as reasonably possible. Bereavement leave is allowable per occurrence and is not cumulative from year to year.

Employee Holidays

The employee holidays for the 2021-2022 year are as follows:

Independence Day

July 2 thru July 5, 2021

Labor Day	September 6, 2021
Thanksgiving Holiday	November 24, 25 & 26, 2021
Winter Break	December 23, 2021 thru January 2, 2022
President's Day	February 21, 2022
Memorial Day	May 30, 2022

Employee Vacation

Paid vacation is available for those employees who work 12 months a year (minimum of 241 days).

Vacation Schedule (Classified Bargaining and Administrative Support Staff)		
Years 1 thru 5	80 hours	Earned vacation hours are prorated if actual hours worked per day are less than eight (8). For example, part-time custodians working 241 days but only 5.5 hours daily receive prorated vacation.
Years 6 thru 10	120 hours	
Year 11 and beyond	160 hours	
Vacation Schedule (Administrators)		
Year 1 and beyond - 20 days annually for full-time administrators.		

Employees must schedule vacation with their direct supervisor and document the leave request on the AsureForce Leave System. Operational efficiency is crucial and will be considered when approving vacation. Staff may accrue up to a year's worth of vacation days. Staff may not carry over days in excess of one year's worth of vacation days beyond June 30 **of a subsequent contract year** for classified bargaining employees. Administrators and administrative support staff have an additional 3 months to use excess vacation before it is forfeited on September 30.

If an employee's contract terminates prior to the end of a contract year, earned vacation time will be calculated based on actual hours worked. A 241-day contracted employee hired at any time during the course of the contract year will receive prorated vacation based on his/her annual contracted hours.

Classified bargaining employees working less than 241 days annually who were under contract and receiving vacation leave during the 2018-2019 contract year will continue to receive prorated paid vacation in subsequent years.

Family and Medical Leave

Unpaid family and medical leave will be granted up to 12 weeks (or up to 26 weeks of military caregiver leave to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness) per year to assist eligible employees in balancing family and work life. Requests

for family and medical leave will be made to the direct supervisor and human resources director. Employees eligible for family and medical leave must comply with the applicable administrative rules and the agency's family and medical leave policy prior to starting family and medical leave. New employees must work for the agency a minimum of 12 months and have at least 1,250 hours of service during the 12-month period immediately preceding the leave.

For additional information regarding the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) please contact the human resources director or visit the "Family and Medical Leave Act" section of the United States Department of Labor's website, at www.dol.gov/whd/fmla/.

Employees may further reference [board policy 404.6](#) for additional information.

Jury Duty

The board recognizes employees may be summoned for jury duty. Employees who are called for jury service will notify their direct supervisor and human resources director within twenty-four hours after notice of call to jury duty and will provide suitable proof of jury service to the agency.

Employees will receive their regular salary. However, with the exception of mileage reimbursement, any payment for jury duty will be paid to the agency. The employee will report to work within one hour on any day when the employee is excused from jury duty during regular working hours.

Maternity Leave

The Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitles eligible employees to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected maternity leave. It requires the agency to continue to offer the same health insurance coverage at the same premium that an employee would pay if they had remained at work. The agency must also keep a job (or equivalent position) open for an employee when they return. To be eligible for FMLA an employee must have been at their job for 12 months or more and have at least 1,250 hours of service during the 12-month period immediately preceding the leave. If an employee is not FMLA eligible, 8 weeks of unpaid maternity leave shall be provided.

Great Prairie AEA offers paid maternity leave up to 12 weeks to the extent that an employee has paid sick leave available. Family Illness Leave may not be used for maternity leave. Maternity leave is continuous leave and begins on the first scheduled work day after the baby is born. The 12 weeks (60 work days) of FMLA maternity leave is prorated for employees working less than full-time.

To comply with the FMLA, an employee must provide their supervisor and the human resources office with at least a 30-day notice. The FMLA application will be provided to an employee as soon as the human resources office is notified of the pregnancy.

Military Service Leave

Employees may be called to participate in the armed forces, including the National Guard. If an employee is called to serve in the armed forces, the employee will have a leave of absence for military service until the military service is completed.

The leave is without loss of status or efficiency rating and without loss of pay during the first thirty calendar days of the leave.

Personal Leave

Full-time employees shall receive two paid personal leave days (16 hours) per contract year. Personal leave may be used for any purpose at the discretion of the employee. All personal leave requests must be submitted for approval to the direct supervisor at least one day in advance unless there is an emergency or extenuating circumstances.

Personal leave days are not cumulative year to year with the exception of certified bargaining employees. Up to one day (8 hours) of personal leave each contract year may carry over to the following year with a maximum accumulation of three (3) days. A certified bargaining employee shall not use three consecutive days during the first or last ten days of their approved planning calendar unless supervisor approval is granted. Employees working at least half-time (1,000 hours minimum for classified bargaining staff) will receive a prorated amount of personal leave based on his/her annual contracted days or hours.

Sick Leave

Sick leave ensures that employees can take care of their personal and family health needs. Employees who are ill are encouraged to stay home. Full-time employees will be granted 18 days (144 hours) of sick leave each contract year, with up to 12 days available to use for family illness. Employees working at least half-time (1,000 hours minimum for classified bargaining staff) will receive a prorated amount of sick leave based on his/her annual contracted days or hours.

Evidence may be required regarding the mental or physical health of the employee when administration has a concern about the employee's health. Evidence may also be required to confirm the employee's illness or family member's illness, the need for the illness leave, the employee's ability to return to work, and the employee's capability to perform the duties of the employee's position. It is within the discretion of the board or the chief administrator to determine the type and amount of evidence necessary. If an

illness leave is greater than three consecutive work days, the employee may be required to provide medical documentation to substantiate the absence.

Unused sick leave hours will accumulate each contract year to a maximum of one-thousand (1,000) hours. Any employee having a sick leave accumulation equal to 1,000 hours when beginning a new contract year shall have an additional 144 hours (or equivalent amount if part-time) that will be used in that contract year only. If the 144 hours (or equivalent amount if part-time) are not used within the contract year, they do not carry over to the subsequent contract year. Employees are not required to use their accumulated balance until their annual allocation is exhausted.

Sick leave also applies to the following immediate family members: spouse, child, mother, father, sister, brother, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, grandchild or grandparent of the employee or of the employee's spouse.

New employees must begin working before sick leave is earned or taken.

If an employee is unable to report for work because of illness or emergency, it is his/her responsibility to notify the direct supervisor by 8:30 a.m. on each day of the absence. Upon returning to work, employees must immediately record their absence on the iEmployee leave system. Scheduled medical appointments should be communicated to the direct supervisor in advance and subsequently recorded upon return to work.

Sick leave may be used in no less than one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) hour increments. The Human Resources office is available to assist you with questions regarding the ASureForce leave system.

Classified bargaining employees who were under contract during the 2018-2019 contract year will continue to receive 8 paid family illness leave days (64 hours) if working a minimum of 1,544 hours annually. Part-time employees will receive a prorated amount of family illness leave based on his/her annual contracted hours (1,000 hours minimum). Family Illness Leave is not cumulative year to year.

Certified bargaining employees and therapy assistants who were under contract during the 2019-2020 contract year will continue to receive 8 paid family illness leave days (64 hours) if working full-time (192 days). Part-time certified bargaining employees and therapy assistants will receive a prorated amount of family illness leave based on his/her annual contracted days if working at least half-time. Family Illness Leave is not cumulative year to year.

Political Leave

The board will provide a leave of absence to employees to run for elected public office. The chief administrator will grant an employee a leave of absence to campaign as a candidate for an elective public office as unpaid leave.

The request for leave must be in writing to the chief administrator at least 30 days prior to the starting date of the requested leave.

Spring Break Leave

It is recognized that up to a 5-day spring break period is available to all Great Prairie AEA employees. All staff must reflect the scheduling of this time on their individual planning calendars. It is imperative that employees directly serving clients (students, teachers, parents, school administrators) schedule this time to coordinate with the school districts' spring break to provide the least disruption in services. All agency employees must schedule this time no earlier than the last week of February or later than the last week of April. Employees working a 241-day contract must schedule and plan on taking five full days of spring break leave.

Spring break days cannot be taken in hourly units, with the exception of time used for inclement weather; they are to be used as whole days only. These days do not have to be used consecutively. Any unused days each year are forfeited. Under no circumstances may spring break days carry over to the following contract year.

Spring break days may only be taken outside the established timeline for exceptional circumstances with immediate supervisor approval. All requests must be in writing or email.

Spring break leave may also be used outside the established time frame for inclement weather. In other words, if a staff member decides to remain home due to hazardous weather conditions, spring break leave may be used.

Unpaid Leave

Unpaid leave may be used to excuse an absence not provided for in other leave policies of the board. Unpaid leave for employees must be authorized by the chief administrator. Leaves of absence without pay are not encouraged and such requests will generally be denied.

The chief administrator will have complete discretion to grant or deny unpaid leave requests. In making this determination, the chief administrator will consider the effect of the employee's absence on education programming and agency operations, length of service, previous record of absence, the financial condition of the agency, the reason for the requested absence and other factors the chief administrator believes are relevant to making this determination.

Additional unpaid leave requested under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or other applicable laws will be addressed on a case by case basis to meet the needs of the individual employee.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Building Security

The agency is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for employees, school personnel, students and others. In order to accomplish this, it is the responsibility of employees to do their part in creating this safe and secure environment. Employees should contact the Chief Financial Officer (Ottumwa), Human Resources Director (Burlington), or Regional Director (Albia and Fairfield) to report any security/safety hazard(s) or condition(s) they identify.

Drills and Evacuations

Periodically the agency holds emergency fire, tornado and emergency operations drills. The spring 2021 safety plan implementation was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Please check upcoming staff updates for more information.

Emergency Closings, Inclement Weather and Other Interruptions

In the interest of employee safety, the chief administrator or designee may close agency offices on an agency-wide or regional basis during times of inclement weather or other emergencies. Staff members have different jobs, functions and work locations within the agency, therefore, one solution will not work for everyone. Employee safety is paramount, thus employees are empowered to make decisions concerning their personal safety.

The chief administrator will decide if the Burlington or Ottumwa office is closed for inclement weather. The Regional Directors in Albia and Fairfield will make a decision regarding their respective office locations. It is unlikely offices will close unless all schools in a given service region close and travel is not recommended.

In the event agency offices are closed due to COVID-19 concerns, employees will follow the procedures identified in the [COVID-19 Pandemic Plan](#).

Please reference [board regulation 405.7R](#) for detailed information.

[Office Closing Communication Procedures](#)

Staff Identification Badges

An identification badge shall be issued to each employee. Badges shall be worn when the employee is on duty in school district buildings and shall be displayed between the waist and the shoulder on the outer garment or on a lanyard. The loss of a permanent badge shall be immediately reported to Jennifer Woodley, Public Relations Coordinator/Administrative Assistant & Board Secretary, who will issue a replacement

badge. Badges remain the property of the agency and shall be returned to the direct supervisor at the time of resignation, retirement or termination.

Threats of Violence

All threats of violence - whether oral, written or symbolic - against students, employees, visitors, or to agency facilities are prohibited. All such threats will be promptly investigated. Law enforcement may be contacted. Threats issued and delivered away from the agency may be grounds for discipline if the threat impacts the orderly and efficient operation of the agency. Employees engaging in threatening behavior will face discipline, up to and including termination.

Weapons

The agency believes weapons and other dangerous objects in agency facilities cause material and substantial disruption to the agency environment or present a threat to the health and safety of employees, school personnel and others on agency premises. Employees are prohibited from bringing weapons and other dangerous objects on agency premises. Weapons under the control of law enforcement officials or other individuals specifically authorized by the board are exempt in accordance with law and board policy. For more information, visit the Iowa Department of Education Legal Lesson on Firearms on School Grounds at: <https://www.educateiowa.gov/resources/laws-and-regulations/legal-lessons/firearms-school-grounds-january-2013-school-leader>.

TERMINATION OF EMPLOYMENT

Contract Release - Licensed Employee

Licensed employees who wish to be released from an executed contract must give at least twenty-one days' advance notice to the chief administrator. Licensed employees may be released at the discretion of the board. Only in unusual and extreme circumstances will the board release a licensed employee from a contract. The board will have sole discretion to determine what constitutes unusual and extreme circumstances.

Release from a contract may be made contingent upon finding a suitable replacement. Licensed employees requesting release from a contract after it has been signed and before it expires may be required to pay the board the cost incurred to locate and hire a suitable replacement. Upon written mutual agreement between the employee and the chief administrator, the costs may be deducted from the employee's salary. When required, payment of these costs will be a condition for release from the contract. Failure of the licensed employee to pay these expenses when required may result in the agency filing a cause of action in small claims court against the employee.

Please reference [board policy No. 404.1](#) for detailed information.

Resignation - Licensed Employee at Year End

A licensed employee who wishes to resign must notify the chief administrator in writing within the time period set by the board for return of the contract. Resignations of this nature will be accepted by the board.

Resignation – Classified Bargaining & Non-Licensed Employees

Classified and Non-licensed employees who wish to resign mid-year should give the agency at least 14 calendar days advance written notice. Those resigning at year end must return their unsigned employment contract and submit a letter of resignation.

Reduction in Force/Furlough

The board has the exclusive authority to determine the appropriate number of employees. A reduction of employees may occur as a result of, but not be limited to, changes in educational service delivery programming, staff realignment, changes in the size or nature of the student population, financial situation considerations and other reasons deemed relevant by the board.

Due process for termination because of a reduction in force will be followed.

When a reduction is deemed necessary, the agency shall first attempt to accomplish the necessary reduction by normal attrition.

It is the responsibility of the chief administrator to make a recommendation for reduction in force to the board. The chief administrator shall consider the following criteria in making the recommendations:

- Probationary employees
- Employees under a remedial or intensive assistance plan
- Relative skills, ability and demonstrated performance
- Written performance evaluation
- Educational preparation (classified bargaining employees)
- Number of continuous years of service to the agency. This will be considered only when the foregoing factors are relatively equal between employees.

Retirement

Employees who will complete their current contract with the board may apply for retirement. No employee will be required to retire at a specific age.

Application for retirement will be considered when the employee states in writing to the chief administrator, no later than the date set by the board for the return of the employee's contract to the board, the intent of the employee to retire. Applications made after the date set by the board for the return of the employee's contract to the board may be considered by the board if special circumstances exist. It is within the discretion of the board to determine whether special circumstances exist.

Board action to approve an employee's application for retirement is final and such action constitutes nonrenewal of the employee's contract for the next school year.

Additionally, the board may or may not offer an Early Separation program each year as this is a year-to-year decision. Please reference board and administrative policies [403.6](#) and [403.6A](#) for more information.

Regardless whether an Early Separation program is offered by the board or if an employee is eligible, early retirees who retire from a public employer that participates in the Iowa Education Benefits Program (IEBP) insurance plan may elect to continue group insurance coverage under the Iowa Education Benefits Program's ("IEBP") group health insurance plans as described in this [Policy](#) pursuant to Iowa Code Chapter 509A.13.

APPENDIX

Acknowledgement of Receipt

I acknowledge that I have received or can access a copy of the Great Prairie AEA's Employee Handbook available at www.gpaea.org. I understand the employee handbook contains important information about the agency and my role, responsibilities, and duties as an employee. I acknowledge I am expected to be familiar with the contents. I also understand that I should consult with my direct supervisor or human resources director with any questions I have about the contents of the employee handbook or any questions that I feel were not addressed.

I understand that the employee handbook is a general source of information and may not include every possible situation that may arise. I acknowledge that the Employee Handbook is not intended, and does not constitute a contract between the agency and any one or all of its employees.

Employee's Signature

Date

Employee's Name (Printed)

**TO BE PLACED IN EMPLOYEE'S PERSONNEL FILE – COPY PROVIDED TO
EMPLOYEE**