

Ridgeview Global Studies Academy

Ralph H. Frier, Principal

Employee Handbook & Benefit Information

2008-2009

Mission Statement

In our ever-changing, multicultural world, we will spark the desire in our school family to become responsible and caring decision-makers. United, we will provide challenges and skills in a loving environment, empowering everyone to reach his fullest potential.

The information provided in the Employee Handbook and Benefits Information is intended to advise employees of Ridgeview Global Studies Academy of the various policies, procedures, benefits, and services available to them. This handbook is not an employment contract, nor is it a guarantee of any rights, benefits or entitlement to the same.

EDUCATION STANDARDS COMMISSION

The Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida and the Principles of Professional Conduct of the Education Profession in Florida

Chapter 6B-1 Florida State Board of Education Academic Rules Adopted: June 15, 1982

Amended: November 24, 1998

6B-1.01 Code of Ethics of the Education Profession in Florida

1. The educator values the worth and dignity of every person, the pursuit of truth, devotion to excellence, acquisition of knowledge, and the nurture of democratic citizenship. Essential to the achievement of these standards is the freedom to learn and to teach the guarantee of equal opportunity for all.
2. The educator's primary professional concern will always be for the student and for the development of the student's potential. The educator will therefore strive for professional growth and will seek to exercise the best professional judgment and integrity.
3. Aware of the importance of maintaining the respect and confidence of one's colleagues, of students, of parents and of other members of the community, the educator strives to achieve and sustain the highest degree of ethical conduct.

6B-1.06 Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida

1. The following disciplinary rule shall constitute the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida and shall apply to any individual holding a valid Florida teacher's certificate.
2. Violation of any of these principles shall subject the individual to revocation or suspension of the individual teacher's certificate or the other penalties as provided by law.
3. Obligation to student requires that the individual:
 - a. Shall make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning or health or safety.
 - b. Shall not unreasonably restrain a student from independent action in pursuit of learning.
 - c. Shall not unreasonably deny a student access to diverse points of view.
 - d. Shall not intentionally suppress or distort subject matter relevant to a student's academic program.
 - e. Shall not intentionally expose a student to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
 - f. Shall not intentionally violate or deny a student's legal rights.
 - g. Shall not on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition if otherwise qualified, or social and family background exclude a student from participation in a program; deny a student benefits; or grant a student advantages and shall make reasonable effort to assure that each student is protected from harassment and discrimination.
 - h. Shall not exploit a professional relationship with a student for personal gain or advantage.

- i. Shall keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional services, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
4. Obligation to the public requires that the individual:
 - a. Shall take reasonable precautions to distinguish between personal views and those of any educational institution or organization with which the individual is affiliated.
 - b. Shall not intentionally distort or misrepresent facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.
 - c. Shall not use institutional privileges for personal gain or advantage.
 - d. Shall accept no gratuity, gift or favor that might influence professional judgment
 - e. Shall offer no gratuity, gift, or favor to obtain special advantages.
5. Obligation to the profession of education requires that the individual:
 - a. Shall maintain honesty in all professional designs.
 - b. Shall not on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition if otherwise qualified, or social and family background deny to a colleague professional benefits or advantages or participation in any professional organization.
 - c. Shall not interfere with a colleague's exercise of political or civil rights and responsibilities.
 - d. Shall not engage in harassment or discriminatory conduct which unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance of professional or work responsibilities or with the orderly processes of education or which creates a hostile, intimidating, abusive, offensive, or oppressive environment; and further, shall make reasonable effort to assure that each individual is protected from such harassment or discrimination.
 - e. Shall not intentionally make false or malicious statements about a colleague.
 - f. Shall not use coercive means or promise special treatment to influence professional judgment of colleagues.
 - g. Shall not misrepresent one's own professional qualifications.
 - h. Shall not submit fraudulent information on any document in connection with professional activities.
 - i. Shall not make any fraudulent statement or fail to disclose a material fact in one's own or another's application for a professional position.
 - j. Shall not withhold information regarding a position from an applicant or misrepresent an assignment or conditions of employment.
 - k. Shall provide upon request of the certificated individual a written statement of specific reason for recommendations that lead to the denial of increments, significant changes in employment, or termination of employment.
 - l. Shall not assist entry into or continuance in the profession of any person known to be unqualified in accordance with these Principles of

Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida and other applicable Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules.

- m. Shall self-report within 48 hours to appropriate authorities (as determined by district) any arrest/charges involving the abuse of a child or the sale and/or possession of a controlled substance. Such notice shall not be considered an admission of guilt nor shall notice be admissible for any purpose in any proceeding, civil or criminal, administrative or judicial, investigatory or adjudicatory. In addition, shall self-report any conviction, finding of guilt, withholding of adjudication, commitment to a pretrial diversion program, or entering of a plea of guilty or Nolo Contendere for any criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation within 48 hours after the final judgment. When handling sealed and expunged records disclosed under this rule, school districts shall comply with the confidentiality provisions of Sections 943.0585(4) C and 9432.059(4) C, Florida Statutes.
- n. Shall report to appropriate authorities any known allegations of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 231.28(1), Florida Statutes.
- o. Shall seek no reprisal against any individual who has reported a violation of Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in Section 231.28(1), Florida Statutes.
- p. Shall comply with the conditions of an order of the Education Practices Commission imposing probation, imposing a fine, or restricting the authorized scope of practices.
- q. Shall, as the supervising administrator, cooperate with the Education Practices Commission in monitoring the probation of a subordinate.

DISCRIMINATION POLICY STATEMENT

No employee, student, or applicant shall on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, marital status, age, religion, or any other basis prohibited by law be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity or in any employment conditions or practices, conducted by the Polk County Public School System.

Statutory Authority: Section 230.22(2), Florida Statutes
Law Implemented: Section 228.2001, Florida Statutes

PROHIBITION OF SEXUAL/RACIAL HARASSMENT OF EMPLOYEES

The School Board of Ridgeview Global Studies Academy forbids the discrimination against any employee, applicant for employment, or student on the basis of sex or race. The Board will not tolerate sexual/racial harassment activity by any of its employees. This policy also applies to non-employee volunteers who work subject to the control of school authorities.

Sexual harassment consists of un-welcomed sexual advances, request for sexual favors, and other inappropriate verbal, nonverbal, graphic, written, or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, as a term or condition of employment or of an individual's education.
- submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for an employment or academic decision affecting that individual; or
- such conduct substantially interferes with an employee's work performance or student's academic performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or school environment.

Sexual harassment, as defined above, may include but is not limited to the following:

- verbal, non-verbal, graphic, and written harassment or abuse;
- pressure for sexual activity;
- repeated remarks to a person with sexual or demeaning implications;
- unwelcome or inappropriate touching;
- suggesting or demanding sexual involvement accompanied by implied or explicit threats concerning one's employment.

Racial harassment consists of verbal, nonverbal, graphic, written, or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward any employee based upon race when such conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment; or when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or employment opportunities.

Racial harassment as defined above, may include but is not limited to the following conduct which is based upon race:

- epithets and slurs;
- written or graphic material that shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group;
- negative stereotyping;
- threatening, intimidating or hostile acts.

DRUG FREE WORKPLACE

In compliance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, the School publishes an annual statement, notifying employees that unlawful possession, use, or distribution of illicit drugs and alcohol by employees is prohibited. This includes any school-related activities away from or on School premises.

Any employee violating the policy shall be immediately suspended by the Principal, and the Principal is hereby directed to report any violation to the Ridgeview Academy School Board for further action, which could result in termination of employment.

Failure by any School employee to report a known violation of this policy will constitute an act of insubordination and willful neglect of duty. Employees need to be aware that compliance with the Ridgeview Academy School Board Policy is mandatory and violators will be referred for prosecution.

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK & BENEFIT INFORMATION

2008 - 2009

Section 2 Policies and Procedures

Attendance/Promptness	Sick Leave
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Injury/Illness in the Line of Duty	Visitors on Campus
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ATTENDANCE AND PROMPTNESS

Because we serve the public, getting to work on time and being present every day are most important. The public expects and has a right to demand prompt and efficient service. If you must be absent, it is your responsibility to notify the assistant principal and/or secretary to obtain a substitute. This allows him/her to reassign your work and maintain a high standard of service. Excessive absenteeism may be grounds for disciplinary action or dismissal. We cannot operate as effectively when an employee is absent.

Teachers are to be on duty from 7:45 A.M. until 3:30 P.M. Paraprofessionals are to be on duty from 7:45 A.M. until 3:30 P.M. Upon arrival and departure employees are to initial the space opposite their names on the SIGN-IN SHEET, located in the staff workroom. Employees are to sign the signature box, also. If it is necessary for an employee to leave campus any time during the school day, he/she must sign out and sign back in on his/her individual sheet in the sign-in/sign-out book, located in the staff workroom. **FOR LIABILITY REASONS, PRIOR PERMISSION MUST BE OBTAINED FROM THE PRINCIPAL OR HIS DESIGNEE BEFORE LEAVING CAMPUS.**

CERTIFICATION

(We utilize the services of the Polk County School Board for certification requirements.)

The Certification Office operates through the Human Resource Services Division of the Polk County School Board. A valid, Florida Educator's Certificate is required by all teachers under Florida law. The PCSB staff will assist you with the approval of appropriate coursework for renewal or addition of a subject to your certificate. If you are not sure, it is always better to ask.

Securing and updating a certificate is the responsibility of the teacher. The HRS staff is available to provide you with guidance, but you must fulfill the requirements and complete all procedures.

For teachers with a temporary certificate, it is extremely important that you follow the requirements listed in your Official Statement of Eligibility issued by the Florida Department of Education. If you have specific testing requirements to meet, the Certification Office has the registration bulletins and test information you need. **DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO TAKE THESE TESTS.** (Completion of certification requirements has a major impact on your reappointment eligibility)

Should your name change after your certificate has been issued, you can apply to change your name on your certificate. There is a fee. If you wish, you can wait until the next renewal date of your certificate and change your name at NO additional charge. You should also change your name on your social security records.

If you have earned a higher degree from an accredited institution, you must submit to the Human Resource Services Division an official transcript with the higher degree conferred. A pay change can be effected as soon as official transcripts are received in the HRS Office (by September 1 for the first semester and by February 1 for the second semester).

Teachers and administrative staff must now provide the District Certification Office with a copy of their certificate. The Florida Department of Education no longer provides the District with a copy of your certificate. New teachers must also provide the District with a copy of their Statement of Eligibility.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

All changes in address or phone numbers should be reported in writing. A Change of Address Form can be acquired from the secretary. Name changes should be reflected on your Social Security Card, and a copy of your new card should be given to the secretary.

COURIER MAIL PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES

Interdepartmental mail is delivered to school district related facilities via the courier service. The couriers handle both district and U.S. mail. It is important to note that the courier service provided by the district is intended for business related mail only, and employees should not use the courier to send mail or packages of a personal nature.

Please adhere to the following tips when using the courier service.

Envelopes or packages should be clearly marked with the recipient's name, work location, and Courier Route designation along with the sender's name and work location. Packages or envelopes not clearly marked cannot be delivered.

Packages in excess of 50 pounds cannot be delivered by the courier service.

Couriers cannot wait at stops for mail to be processed. The outgoing mail must be in the designated location prior to the courier's arrival.

Courier routes are published annually and are provided at the beginning of each school year. Routes can also be accessed via the Support Services homepage (<http://www.pcsb.k12.fl.us/transportation/>) under helpful docs.

DRESS CODE

Our school has a strong emphasis on uniforms and dress codes for our students. All employees can help by modeling good choices through appropriate and professional attire. Neatness and cleanliness are also important. **All adults are role models for students.** Each employee shall maintain a neat, professional appearance appropriate for his/her specific assignment. Jeans may be worn on Friday only.

ELECTRONIC MAIL

Polk County School electronic mail (e-mail) accounts are granted to employees. Accounts shall be used to enhance communication for work-related duties. The use of e-mail accounts must be in support of education and/or research that is consistent with the educational goals and policies of the Polk County School Board. The employee in whose name the account is issued is responsible at all times for its proper use. Behavior that is inconsistent with this policy may result in disciplinary action, which may include possible termination or legal action.

Policies:

- Unauthorized use includes, but is not limited to:
 - The creation and exchange of messages that are offensive, harassing, obscene, or threatening
 - The exchange of privileged, confidential, or sensitive information outside of the organization or outside the defined privileged group

- The creation and exchange of advertisements, solicitations, chain letters, and other unsolicited e-mail
- The creation, storage, or exchange of information in violation of copyright laws
- Reading or sending messages from another user's account, except under proper delegated arrangements
- Altering or copying a message or attachment belonging to another user without the permission of the originator
- The principal/supervisor must be notified immediately of any unauthorized use of your account or any other breach of security. Polk County Schools is not liable for any loss you may incur as a result of someone else using your password or account, either with or without your knowledge.
- Users must not compromise the privacy of their password by giving it to others or exposing it to public services. Passwords should be changed at least every 90 days.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

As a benefit to all employees and their dependents, the School provides a program of personal counseling and/or referral. The Ridgeview Academy School Board has arranged with GUARDIAN to provide you and your eligible dependents with assistance in the following areas: emotional health, at home, wellness, finance/legal, on the job and for managers.

INJURY AND ILLNESS IN THE LINE OF DUTY

Leave for Injury/Illness in the Line of Duty is granted for up to 10 days per year when an employee (eligible for benefits) is absent because of personal injury that occurred while working or because of illness from a contagious or infectious disease contracted while working. Contagious or infectious disease refers to those normally related to children, such as measles, chicken pox, mumps, etc.

In order to be eligible for this protection, the injury must be reported to the Workers' Compensation carrier. Treatment must be provided by an approved Workers' Compensation doctor.

The Illness/Injury in the Line of Duty form should be filed within 24 hours. The employee must provide documentation from the Workers' Compensation doctor in order for time to be approved.

PERSONAL MAIL AND TELEPHONE CALLS

Please have all personal mail delivered to your residence. Telephones in the school and offices are for school business only. Of course, it is understood that emergencies arise, and you must either call or be called while at work. However, for purely personal messages, please make other arrangements for calls during your workday. **Cell phones are not to be used during student contact time.**

PERSONNEL RECORDS

Personnel/employment records are processed and maintained in the Finance Office. All personnel files are public records and as such are available for public inspection. If you would like to review your personnel file, please feel free to contact the principal.

The Finance Office should be notified in writing of any changes in personal status such as changes in name, address or marital status. Please notify the Finance Office regarding any changes in beneficiary for life insurance purposes and/or changes in the number of dependents.

RESIGNATIONS

When an employee leaves a position, proper notice should be given. A letter of resignation indicating the date you plan to leave and the reasons should be submitted to the principal. Please give at least two weeks notice to ensure you leave in good standing. It is important that you leave the School in good standing to protect your eligibility for rehiring. If you are absent from work without permission from your supervisor, this may be considered as your having resigned and could result in the forfeiting of all rights to reemployment.

RETIREMENT

The Florida Retirement System (FRS) is an employee-noncontributory system. This means that your employer, Ridgeview Global Studies Academy, makes the total contribution for you. No money is deducted from your salary to pay for your retirement. The employer contributions are not refundable. The FRS has been employee noncontributory since January 1, 1975. Social Security contributions are automatically deducted from your salary and matched by the Ridgeview Academy School Board on your behalf.

The Florida Retirement System now makes available two retirement plans, the Defined Benefit Plan and the Investment Plan. Under the **Defined Benefit Plan**, you are vested after you have completed six (6) years of creditable service. Vesting refers to your earned right to receive a retirement benefit when you reach normal or early retirement age, even though you may have terminated before that age. Normal retirement is 62 years of age OR 30 years of service regardless of age. If you have at least six years of creditable service but have not reached your normal retirement age as described above, you can take early retirement. The amount of your benefit is reduced 5% for each year you are under age 62.

Under the Investment Plan, you are vested after you have completed one (1) year of creditable service. This benefit is based on return of investments or progress. It is more portable and is better for employees who are short term.

If you are preparing to retire, certain steps should be taken to ensure that there will be no loss of benefits to you. The following is a description of steps you may wish to follow:

PLAN AHEAD

Decide when you intend to retire. To be eligible for benefits, you must terminate all relationships with ALL FRS employers and not be reemployed by any FRS employer within the next calendar year following your initial retirement. There are exceptions to the reemployment law for retirees reemployed in certain positions with educational institutions.

REQUEST AN ESTIMATE

Within two years of your proposed termination date, you are encouraged to request an audit of your years of service, and you may request an estimate of benefits by obtaining Form FR 9 from the Finance Office. The Division of Retirement will send you the estimate of benefits. It will show the estimated retirement benefits to which you are entitled.

APPLY FOR RETIREMENT BENEFITS

Three to six months before your termination date, request a retirement application from the Finance Office. Questions regarding retirement options should be forwarded to the principal.

DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PROGRAM (DROP)

The Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) is a program which became effective July 1, 1998, and allows you to retire and begin accumulating your retirement benefits without terminating employment for up to 60 months from the date you first reach normal retirement (age 62 or 30 years of service). While participating in DROP, your monthly retirement benefits remain in the FRS Trust Fund, earning tax-deferred interest, while you continue to work (but you do not earn additional service credit for retirement). When the DROP period ends, you must terminate all employment with FRS employers. At that time, you will receive payment of the accumulated DROP benefits and begin receiving your monthly retirement benefit (in the same amount as determined at retirement, plus annual cost-of-living increases).

SICK LEAVE

Any member of the staff who is unable to perform his/her duty in school because of illness or death in the family shall be entitled to sick leave. Employees earn one day of sick leave for each month they are employed. For example, employees working 9 months will earn 9 days or 63 hours per year (9 x 7 hrs. per day); 10 month employees will earn 10 days or 80 hours per year (10 x 8 hrs. per day); 11 month employees will earn 11 days or 88 hours per year (11 x 8 hrs. per day); and 12 month employees will earn 12 days or 96 hours per year (12 x 8 hrs. per day). Sick leave is cumulative from year to year. Sick leave will be posted to pay stubs monthly, 1 day per month (posted in hours), up to the maximum days for employee class per year.

Employees shall be permitted to be absent six days each school year for personal reasons, and the days shall be charged against accrued sick leave when used. Personal leave days shall be non-cumulative.

SMOKE-FREE ENVIROMENT

All school system buildings became smoke-free after June 30, 1991.

SUSPENSIONS/DISMISSALS

Under certain conditions, the principal may recommend to the Ridgeview Academy School Board the suspension or dismissal of an employee.

TELEPHONE USAGE

While occasional personal telephone calls may be made during work hours, such calls should not interfere with performance of job responsibilities, emergencies excepted. Preferably, such calls should be made during planning time, break time, before and after the official workday, or during lunch. Employees should remember that the district telephone system, including long distance telephone calls, and the various school telephone systems, is not to be used for personal long distance telephone calls, unless the calls are billed to a personal credit card or a personal telephone number. Employees are reminded that long distance calls are logged.

TOXIC SUBSTANCES AT WORK

Employees have a right to know about exposures to toxic substances in the workplace. Under the Florida Right-to-Know Law, Chapter 442, Florida Statutes, employers must provide employees with information about the toxic substances with which they work and train employees in safe handling practices and emergency procedures. A list of toxic substances is listed at each school.

UNPAID LEAVE AND EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

If you go on official unpaid leave, you are entitled to any and all of your benefits. However, for as long as you are on leave, to the extent permitted by law, the Board does not contribute to your health or life insurance coverage. The Finance Office will bill you monthly for your unpaid leave coverage. The billing will be based upon the payroll deductions that you would have paid if you were still on active status, plus the amount the Board would have contributed. If you fail to pay your bill, the Finance Office may cancel the coverage. Leave employees are entitled to the same annual enrollment that active employees have.

USE OF RIDGEVIEW ACADEMY SCHOOL BOARD PROPERTY

The Ridgeview Academy School Board provides you with necessary equipment and materials to carry out the job assigned to you. If you are assigned any equipment, it becomes your responsibility to exercise care in its operation.

VISITORS ON CAMPUS

Parents have the privilege to visit the campus at any time, and they are encouraged to use this privilege. Teachers will receive advance notice before parents are allowed to visit the classroom. Teacher-parent conferences should be scheduled through the teacher. Parents must sign in before visiting a teacher for a parent conference.

Parents must sign in at the office before being allowed to eat lunch with their child.

All visitors will check in through the Main Office and will be given an ID badge/visitor's pass.

WEAPONS/FIREARMS

It is the expressed policy of the Ridgeview Academy School Board that no weapons/firearms shall be taken upon school property by any one other than law enforcement personnel. All persons, including school personnel, violating the provisions of this policy, while on School Board property or while attending school activities, wherever located, shall be immediately reported to the proper law enforcement authority. Employees violating the above provisions shall also be reported to the Ridgeview Academy School Board and to the Professional Practice Commission. The Principal shall report any Employee violation of the provisions hereof to the Ridgeview Academy School Board and shall also include a recommendation for disciplinary action, which may include suspension or dismissal. Authorized school programs requiring the usage of firearms shall be exceptions.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

If you are injured on the job, you are protected by the Florida Workers' Compensation Law. If you are hurt on the job, regardless of how slight an injury, report it to the principal or his designee. You may think the injury insignificant at the time, but it could develop into something that requires medical care, and a report should be on file for you to receive treatment.

This benefit is provided by state statute, and there are rules and procedures both you, as the employee, and your employer must follow. Further, there are stiff penalties for fraud.

The Ridgeview Academy School Board provides safety equipment that must be used when engaging in certain activities. Be sure to use this protection because you could be penalized if you are injured while not doing so.

As stated in the Ridgeview Academy School Board Policies, drug testing will be conducted for all on the job injuries.