



2024-2025  
Staff Handbook  
Cottonwood School District #242



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# COTTONWOOD JOINT SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 242

## FACULTY HANDBOOK

Each of you is hired because you possess special and specific talents and training which meet particular needs of the District; therefore, every employee is important and we appreciate the contribution each makes toward the educational goals of the District. Congratulations on being a part of our team; good luck, and we hope that you will enjoy and profit from your experiences in the District.

This handbook is intended to serve as a guide for district employees. Its purpose is to help you to become acquainted with policies, procedures, and processes within the district and possibly help you to avoid some potentially harmful pitfalls of which you might otherwise be unaware. It is your responsibility to become aware of the contents of this handbook. This handbook does not replace the District Policy Handbook; the District Policy Handbook is much more comprehensive and contains materials not found in this handbook. Please become familiar with those parts of the District Handbook that are relative to your job assignment.

You are encouraged to provide input for upgrading this handbook and for improving operations within the district. Written suggestions will be kept on file and, except in emergency situations, will be considered during the review and revision of both handbooks.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

The Cottonwood School District #242 is an equal opportunity employer. No decisions to hire, not to hire, or to place or assign individuals, shall be made on the basis of race, color, creed, national origin, religion, age, sex, or handicap, except insofar as such bases are valid occupational qualifications.

## OUR MISSION, OUR VALUES AND OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

### OUR MISSION:

We will create, deliver and responsibly manage opportunities for all children to learn every day and become contributing citizens. These opportunities will be developed in partnership with the community and will be provided in a safe and supportive environment utilizing current technology.

### OUR VALUES:

Respect, Dignity, Honesty, Responsibility and Teamwork

### OUR STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

- I. Preparing students for the future: We recognize the unique potential of each student and the ever increasing level of educational competence required for his/her success. We share responsibility with the student, the family and the community in preparing each individual for the next educational or career stage.
- II. Parental/Guardian involvement: We expect and encourage parents/guardians to be involved in their children's education, both at home and at school.
- III. Collaboration with the community: We are open to and expect participation in our efforts to education children. We will serve as the catalyst in utilizing our community resources to educate students.
- IV. Human resources: We value our employees and the contributions they make in educating our children. We expect and encourage our employees to achieve high performance.
- V. Learning and working conditions: We will provide an educational environment which supports learning and teaching.
- VI. Change: We will anticipate and respond to changes in our community as they affect the education of children

## STUDENT GOALS

The vision of the Cottonwood Joint School District, in partnership with the community, is that each student will graduate from Prairie public schools with:

- \* The ability to read for a variety of purposes
- \* Effective oral and written communication skills
- \* The ability to apply mathematical and scientific concepts and processes
- \* Responsibility and respect for oneself and others
- \* The ability to analytically apply cumulative knowledge to solve problems and make decisions
- \* The ability to locate, manage and use information for life-long learning
- \* An awareness of diverse social, cultural, political, environmental and economic issues
- \* The ability to work cooperatively
- \* The ability to utilize available technology
- \* The ability to structure a healthful lifestyle
- \* An awareness of creative expression in the form of Fine and Performing Arts, and the Humanities
- \* An awareness of vocational and academic career opportunities
- \* The ability to set and achieve goals

## GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

To the public, you are the school district; people judge the district by your actions and attitudes. We must realize that we are expected by parents, patrons, the board of trustees and the administration to be role models for the young people with whom we associate each day. Our behavior must be above reproach; inappropriate behavior may be a basis for dismissal.

As much as we would sometimes like, we cannot divest ourselves of our title and responsibilities as we leave the job each day; we are always seen as "school people" and we must constantly play the part. The attitude and behavior we display within the community must be positive and supportive to the District.

When any gripes or discontents arise, they should be taken up first with the school administrators and then with the board, not with the general public. The District Policy Handbook contains a section on grievance procedures for use in such cases.

## CLOSED CAMPUS AND DUTY HOURS

Most consider the closed campus policy for students a great idea. It makes supervision and control much easier than it would be if students were allowed to leave campus at noon and at other times. There is one catch however, those outside the school assume that the policy also applies to the staff; and in a sense, it does. The only time staff members are really "duty free" is during their short duty free lunch period. You are on duty at all other times, including assigned prep time. Even though you may have a legitimate need to go to the store or post office, please check with your immediate supervisor to make sure you can leave campus. If at all possible plan your schedule so that you can take care of duties off campus either before or after school. There are always exceptions for emergencies however; please check with the principal before leaving. Public relations is a very important part of your job; please give it due consideration.

## ABSENCE FROM WORK

Every employee has a prescribed amount of sick leave, personal leave and bereavement leave which can be used when necessary. The district requests adequate advance notice for all planned leaves. Sick leave may be taken on short notice, however, as much notice as possible is appreciated. It is very difficult to get a substitute for the day when notice is not given until 8:00 or later. We need you!

## STAFF AND FACULTY MEETINGS

Staff and faculty meetings are held for a specific purpose; they are not optional unless so stated. The district advocates teamwork and team planning in the operation of the school and its programs. Your creative and critical thoughts are needed and appreciated. Meetings should

be scheduled on a regular meeting date, or, scheduled with enough advance warning so that you can adjust your plans accordingly. If, for some reason, it becomes impossible to attend a scheduled meeting, discuss it with your supervisor.

## DRUGS, ALCOHOL AND TOBACCO

The district has adopted very strict policies regarding the use, possession and trafficking of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol on school grounds and at any school activity and/or showing up for work while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. No smoking or tobacco use is allowed in any building in the district at any time.

## SUPERVISION AND EVALUATION

Our philosophy is to hire the best people we can, make sure they understand their job and their responsibilities, and then get out of their way and let them work. We must, however, according to district and state policies, provide supervision and evaluate each individual's performance. Evaluations normally cover such areas as job skill, work habits, personal relations, judgment, quality and quantity of work, and certain general characteristics that relate to the job; interest, attention to responsibilities, leadership, etc. The purpose of such supervision and evaluation is to help each individual to become more effective in his/her work, and to insure that students are learning the State Standards, not to find fault. (Charlotte Danielson Evaluation Model)

Each employee, at the beginning of the school year, is expected to set personal goals and to design tasks for meeting these goals. Such goals are the result of a self evaluation of your skills and performance; they must be determined by you. The goals and tasks will be discussed between you and your supervisor and you will be expected to work actively toward achieving the goals during the school year. (IPLP is required at the start of the new year)

When it does become obvious that an employee's performance is sub-standard in some way, he/she may be placed on a plan of assistance in an effort to help remediate the deficiency.

The supervisor will provide the employee a written statement describing deficiencies and then help the employee to work out different alternatives that may tend to correct the deficiencies. Resources and help available to the employee also will be suggested. Time lines will be established which will provide limits for making adjustments and improvements. A more extensive supervision and evaluation period will follow with written documentation at each step.

## PURCHASING ITEMS FOR THE SCHOOL

All purchases must be authorized. The most common and acceptable authorization is a signed purchase order. Responsible accounting procedures require that invoices or other proof of purchase be given to the clerk as a basis for issuing payment. We are asking that these invoices

be backed up by an authorized purchase order. Individuals may be reimbursed for purchases they make with their own funds providing prior approval is given for the purchase and appropriate invoices are attached to the request for payment. Invoices showing the nature of the purchase are to be turned in when any school credit card is used.

### KEYS, FOBS AND SECURITY

The school belongs to the public, but its security is our business. The keys that are issued to you are your responsibility. DO NOT lend them out to students or to those outside the system; do not duplicate them. **No group, student or adult, is to use school facilities WITHOUT PERMISSION from the administration, and in the case of students, WITHOUT SUPERVISION.** Be sure that windows are closed and locked and that doors are locked when you leave for the day.

School cars and buses also need security. Lock them if they are lockable and always secure the keys so that the vehicle cannot be taken for a joy ride.

Fobs are checked out to staff. The office staff has the form for fob checkout.

### MAINTENANCE AND CARE OF FACILITIES

Each employee is responsible for the appearance, cleanliness and general serviceability of their work area and the equipment he/she is using. This does not mean that you must fix the plumbing, repair a computer or replace a fuel pump, but it does mean that you are to help keep the area and equipment clean, in order, free from fire and safety hazards and to notify those in charge when things need attention or repair. Students and other people will not hesitate to add clutter and debris to a room, building or vehicle that is already dirty, but they tend to respect one that is clean and neat. If you work with students, adopt a policy that says "If you mess it up, clean it up." Remember also that your professional attitude and ability are reflected in the appearance of your work place.

Custodial and maintenance request forms are available in the building offices. Use them to provide written notice to both the administration and the maintenance and custodial staff of work needed in your area.

When supervising groups who are decorating or preparing for an activity DO NOT USE NAILS IN the woodwork or TAPE THAT PEELS THE PAINT from walls and doors. Do not use a lot of flammable materials in your decorating; a room full of paper and other timber materials is a sure accident waiting to happen. Do not use water (ponds, pools, fountains, dunking tanks, etc.) on any wooden floors without more than adequate protections, and permission from the building administrator. If you are the supervisor, you are the boss (and also responsible); let the group know what is acceptable and what is not acceptable, then stick to your guns.



## STUDENT SUPERVISION RESPONSIBILITIES

Both certificated and classified personnel may be assigned duties supervising students. This task must be taken very seriously so we are both morally and legally responsible for those we are assigned to supervise. Teachers should never, except in cases of real emergencies, leave students unsupervised. Telephone calls, visits from sales representatives and other such interruptions must be postponed until the staff member is free to leave the duty station. Supervisory responsibilities at activities and on buses is equally important. Headcounts and other means of keeping track of students and their whereabouts at activities should be used. You would normally not be held responsible for accidents or trouble if your actions are reasonable and prudent, but if negligence can be shown as a contributing factor in an accident or mishap, you will be liable; and certainly, being absent or non-caring in supervisory duties is neither reasonable nor prudent.

One or more certificated staff members must be used as chaperones on activity buses and field trips. If the supervisor or coach is driving, another staff member must also be on the bus. Parents and/or volunteers may be used in addition to the required staff member. An exception may be granted regarding required chaperones if there is a small number of students involved, normally ten (10) or less.

All district employees have the authority to discipline students who are violating school policy; in fact, it is their duty to do so. Staff members are always on duty in this respect whether they are in or out of their normally assigned work station.

Bus drivers have the "ultimate command" of their vehicle (even when a certificated employee is on board) and can take the necessary steps, short of dropping a student off short of his/her assigned destination, to maintain discipline on the bus. Every driver is expected to enforce all the published policies regarding bus rules for students.

## SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Student and staff safety and procedures for coping with various emergencies are important. Each staff member should have a definite plan of action in mind for meeting such emergencies. What would you do if a student suddenly became unconscious, suffered a broken bone or deep laceration in your classroom or on your bus? What would you do if there were a chemical or toxic substance incident? What about a building or a bus fire? Who is responsible for filling out incident reports? When must these be done? As the person responsible, some type of positive action is required in each of these cases and in others like them.

The district requires fire drills in each building where students are in attendance at least once each month. Bus drivers are required to hold emergency evacuation drills at least once during the fall and spring of the year (more are advised). Bus drivers and athletic coaches are to have current first aid training and CPR cards. Science and shop teachers are to teach and enforce

strict safety procedures in their classrooms. Fire extinguishers should be close to each work station; know where they are and how to use them. Safety as a subject should be taught in all appropriate settings (all elementary classrooms, on buses, in all shops and labs, in driver training classes, in P.E. classes, on athletic fields and floors, etc.). Such training should be documented. Every staff member is to be watchful for and report unsafe instances and materials that could cause harm to students or employees.

Another hazard we must deal with is that of potential infections from the HIV/AIDS virus. Fortunately, our danger in this area is very low; however, every case where blood or body fluids are involved must be treated as a potentially infectious incident. Neither you nor a student should attempt to clean up or treat injuries where blood or body fluids are present without protection from rubber gloves and disinfectants. Your judgment must be used in the case of serious emergencies. Each work station should have a blood spill kit or have one in the near vicinity. If yours doesn't, ask for one.

Accident and incident reports are REQUIRED whenever there is any form of accident or incident involving either a student or an adult in any school related situation. The incident may be very minor (a fall from a swing with no apparent injury or a slip on the sidewalk or when entering or leaving a bus, etc.); file a report anyway.

Report ONLY what you actually saw or what was reported to you ("It was reported that . . ."). Don't make statements that you can't verify.

Such reports shall be made the same day of the incident or, if during an evening or weekend activity, the very next school day. If the incident requires medical attention, the parents must be notified as soon as possible. However, it is a good idea to notify them of any incident on which you make a report.

## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND INSTRUCTION

Teachers are expected to be in control of their classrooms at all times. Management procedures are often the key to both control and effective learning.

Strategies should be developed to cause the students to become actively engaged in the lesson as soon as the bell rings; there should never be a period of time after the bell to visit or "to get ready to get started". Likewise, students (and the teacher) should not "close up shop" before the end of the period.

## STUDENT GRADING

Teachers are given a fairly wide latitude in procedures for determining student grades, however, there must also be a fair degree of uniformity in the grading criteria and procedures between teachers, especially within individual buildings. Individual principals will be responsible to insure that a uniform, fair and equitable grading process is in place within their building.

The following criteria are district policy:

Kindergarten - Letter grades are not used. A descriptive notation is used to explain the level of competency development.

1<sup>st</sup> grade- Grading procedures will follow Kindergarten students except that individual subjects and competencies shall be graded as follows:

3 = Proficient--Student's work meets the grade level standard. It is acceptable work that demonstrates application of essential knowledge and skills. Minor errors or omissions do not detract from overall quality.

2 = Developing--Student is working towards developing the skills needed to meet grade level standard. It shows basic, but inconsistent application of knowledge and skills. Minor errors detract from overall quality.

1 = Emergent--Student is beginning to grasp the skill(s). Partial application of knowledge or skill is shown.

NA = Not applicable at this time

Grades 2-12 - Letter grades are used in conjunction with notations to explain student progress. The grading scale is as follows:

A = 90-100%

D = 60-69%

B = 80-89%

F = 59% and lower

C = 70-79%

Teachers must be aware that students in Special Education who are working under an IEP are legally entitled to a modified grading system. Please see the grading and homework sections of the District Policy for more on grading. Also check with your building principal and the Resource Room Teachers for additional guidelines.

## CURRICULUM

The district curricula were designed by Prairie faculty members to incorporate those facets of learning considered to be important for our district. The individual curricula are to be reviewed. If staff members feel that there are some parts of their curriculum that need changed prior to the next adoption cycle, they can meet with the administrator and the teachers in that subject area and, upon consensus, make necessary changes.

Teachers are responsible for the content of the district curriculum they are teaching and are expected to structure their teaching to incorporate the goals and objectives of that curriculum.

## GENERAL EMPLOYMENT INFORMATION

Teachers will be employed on a contract for a specified number of days each year.

Although our school year is normally set at 172 teaching days, the 186 day contract includes inservice days and activities such as parent-teacher conferences. You may be asked to attend other workshops and inservice meetings to fill out the contract.

As professional employees, you are not paid by the hour or asked to "punch a time clock". However, you are required to be on duty at least one half hour before school starts and one half hour after school ends. As a faculty member, you will also be asked to assume other responsibilities outside your classroom or office. Chaperones, advisors, activity helpers, bus riders, and other such activities may be assigned to faculty members at each of the schools. It is even possible that faculty members from one building may be called upon to help supervise or help with activities in another building. Certain extracurricular duties with extended involvement and responsibility will be compensated, other less assignments should be considered a part of your professional responsibility and will not be compensated.

Salaries and benefits for teachers shall be determined by the salary schedule. Salaries and benefits for administrators will be determined by the board. A schedule has also been developed for classified personnel that will provide for an annual increment.

Keeping your teaching certificates and endorsements (credential) current is the employees responsibility. Legally a district is not permitted to issue payroll checks to any employee whose state teaching credential has expired. The district office personnel may not always catch an expiration date on a teachers credential. As professional educators you are responsible for renewing your credential prior to its expiration date.

### WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION

All employees are covered by Worker's Compensation Insurance for bodily injury, disease or death caused by accidents arising from and in the course of their employment with the district. Notice of injury must be reported to the district office as soon as possible. A report and claim form will be filled out in the office and submitted to the state.

### PAYROLL

District paychecks will be issued on the 25th of each month (unless the 25th falls on a weekend or holiday in which case the checks will be issued on the Friday immediately preceding). Standard deductions for income tax, retirement, FICA, etc., will be made automatically. Employees also may authorize voluntary deductions from their checks for items such as annuities, supplemental insurance programs, etc.)

A "Section 125" cafeteria plan is available which allows employee to have money taken from their check before taxes to be used for insurance premiums, child care and medical costs.

## REIMBURSEMENT CLAIMS

District personnel may be reimbursed for certain preapproved district business expenses such as attendance at conference, chaperoning trips, etc. Please plan accordingly, to use a district credit card or purchase order for purchases. **We want to avoid transactions on personal credit cards if at all possible. You may not get reimbursed if you do not check with your building supervisor prior to the purchase.**

Rates will be reimbursed to district employees for approved per diem and travel expenditures. Receipts are to be submitted to show actual costs of meals and lodging. Receipts are also required as backup for district credit card purchases.

## STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

Efforts will be made to assign both certificated and classified staff members in assignments of their choice, however, this is not always possible. The district reserves the right to assign staff members to a different position or location within the member's area of training or preparation when it is believed the reassignment is in the best interest of the district and/or the employee.

## PERSONNEL RECORDS

All personnel records shall be kept secured at all times. No information from an individual's file shall be released without that person's permission except by a court order or subpoena. Each individual has the right to inspect his/her file and to have copies made of the materials in the file. The employee is allowed to attach a rebuttal to any materials in the file with which he/she disagrees.

## STUDENT RECORDS

Student records are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, and are restricted from public viewing. All staff members must assume responsibility for maintaining the confidentiality of student records

and information. NEVER talk about individual student information except in professional and appropriate settings. Only those with a "need to know" and those authorized by the parents (or the child if over 18 years of age) are allowed to view files. A written record is to be kept of those unauthorized persons who request and are given permission to view files.

## DRESS AND GROOMING

The district has no formal dress or grooming codes for employees; however, as "role models and school ambassadors," you have an obligation to dress and groom appropriately. What is

meant by "appropriately"? Clean, neat and professionally representative of you position. Certain positions, such as food service workers, should meet state standards for health reasons. Others should meet standards for safety reasons, and all others should simply meet standards.

## SCHOOL CLOSURES

Emergency closures of the schools may occur because of weather, power failures, equipment failures or other such causes. District personnel will be notified via the . Bus drivers are encouraged to notify or to make arrangements for helping to notify families on their routes when closures occur. Announcements will be made on radio stations and the sd242.org website and sent through our family email chain. One school may be shut down because of equipment failure while others continue to operate. Normally, when there is a closure, district office, custodial and maintenance personnel will report for duty. Others will not be required to work unless asked specifically to do so.

We will not normally close school during the day because of the dangers involved when small children go home to an empty house. When a closure is unavoidable, every effort (by both the administration and the bus drivers) will be made to insure that students are not placed in this dangerous situation. If necessary, young students will be delivered to the homes of relatives or friends and the parents notified of their whereabouts.

## STAFF DONATIONS FOR OTHER STAFF MEMBERS OR A COMMUNITY PATRON

Staff who would like to collect money for another staff member or community patron, (i.e. retirement gift, birthday gift, funeral expenses, etc.) must be deposited in a designated personal account or fund set up at a banking institution of the staff's choosing, separate from school or district accounts. The school may be used as a collection point for monies collected (i.e. main offices), but all account activity must be operated separate from an school or district accounts.

## SALESPERSONS AND OTHER VISITORS

Salespersons and others often ask to speak to an employee during times when the employee is not free to leave a class or other duty station. Our first obligation is to our assigned work, especially if this includes supervising or teaching students.

Please refrain from using such times to meet with visitors.

Ask them to schedule a meeting with you during a time when you can visit without interfering with your responsibilities.

## VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers within the district are held to the same standard as district staff. You are entering our buildings to assist in various ways and we ask that you uphold the integrity of the

Cottonwood School District. In order for community members to continue to serve our district, we ask that you abide by the rules of the district so we can continue to utilize your volunteer services. We appreciate people who take the time to come into our buildings to volunteer in many capacities.

### INSERVICE WORKSHOPS AND OTHER TRAINING

All employees, certificated and classified, are encouraged to participate in professional growth activities. The district will, when possible, help to defray costs for approved training when it is directly related to job requirements.

All employees, will be reimbursed to the extent possible for costs for travel, meals and lodging when participating in training activities. Registration fees will also be reimbursed when possible. Each employee should check on reimbursement possibilities prior to attending the activity. Receipts or invoices must accompany requests for reimbursement

### PROFESSIONAL LEAVE

Staff personnel are allowed two (2) days of elective professional leave each year. This is professional training or workshops which the staff member wishes to take for personal or professional reasons, but has not been requested to do so by the administration. when the staff member is requested to take some professional training by the administration, such will not count against the individual's elective professional leave time.

### USE OF SCHOOL OWNED PROPERTY AND FACILITIES

Facilities Being an employee of the district does not extend automatic rights or privileges for the use of district owned facilities and property. You must arrange for the use of facilities (school gyms, buildings or classrooms, etc.) and property (athletic equipment, shop equipment, projectors, etc.) with the building administrator just as other patrons do. Children of employees, when using school facilities, are to be supervised as are others who use our facilities.

Rules apply for use of facilities. The expectations for facility use are as follows but not limited to:

- Sweep gym floors before and after each use
- Turn all lights off that were turned on upon building entry
- Check all bathrooms- toilets need to be flushed, garbage picked up off floors
- Ceiling fans turned off (if used)
- No propped doors at anytime (if you need a timer set on a door, please contact the district office)
- All occupants should stay in designated areas that were approved (no roaming hallways throughout the buildings).

- Empty garbage cans (if trash accumulation exceeds normal use)
- The individual with the fob to access the building is the responsible party for all individuals using the facility.
- If above rules are not followed or there are continuous problems, individuals risk the chance of having their facility use revoked.

## TRANSPORTATION

Activity buses Permission must be obtained for taking children other than those from the designated group on activity buses. Those other than the designated group may ride activity buses only by request from parents and special permission from the activity director or bus chaperon, and only when there is space available.

Private vehicles Please note that students on official school business or participating in official school activities are NOT ALLOWED to drive their own vehicles; they must be transported in a school vehicle by a school employee. Parents may transport their students when special permission is granted from the administration and the activity advisor.

## TELEPHONE USE

District telephones are business phones. Please do not plan to accept personal calls during your duty time other than for serious emergencies. Teachers are not to leave the classroom to talk with salespersons, other coaches, etc. The secretary or office aides will be instructed to ask callers to call back at a time when you are free to accept calls.

Likewise, do not use class or duty time to make calls. If an emergency comes up, ask another staff member to cover your duty station while you are away.

## THE DISTRICT POLICY HANDBOOK

There are several policies contained in the District Policy Handbook that are of importance to you as a member of the staff that have not been listed in this handbook or have been addressed only in part. Rather than reprinting these materials here, we ask that you go through the District Policy Handbook and become familiar with those areas that affect your job. Though you are responsible for becoming familiar with all of the district handbook, Section 5000, PERSONNEL, Section 6000, STUDENT PERSONNEL and Section 7000, INSTRUCTION will be of particular importance to you. Also, you should become familiar with appendices which contain the drug and alcohol policies, the child abuse policy, the dangerous weapons policy, the sexual harrassment policy, the communicable disease policy, emergency procedures policy and others what will have a direct bearing on your employment. The District Policy Handbook is on our website, [www.sd242.org](http://www.sd242.org), please review those sections that may apply to your employment in their entirety.