

Stephen F. Austin State University

SFA Charter School

Employee Handbook

2020-2021

The purpose of this handbook is to provide information that will help answer questions for SFA Charter School employees and pave the way for a successful year. Not all policies and procedures are included.

This handbook is neither a contract nor a substitute for the official SFA University policies and procedures, nor is it intended to alter the at-will status of SFA Charter School employees in any way. Rather it is to be used as a guide and reference, offering a brief explanation of SFA Charter School policies. These policies can change at any time. Changes shall supersede any handbook provisions that are not compatible with the change.

Questions regarding these policies and procedures should be addressed to the SFA Charter School administration and/or the Stephen F. Austin State University Director of Human Resources.

Equal employment opportunity – The SFA Charter School does not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, genetic information, citizenship, veteran status, or on any other basis prohibited by law. Employment decisions will be made on the basis of each applicant’s job qualifications, experience, and abilities.

<http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/affirmative-action-11.1.pdf>

At-Will Employment - SFA Charter School Teachers are at-will employees and serve at the discretion of the SFA Charter School. Their employment may be terminated with or without cause at any time by the SFA Charter School or the employee. <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/at-will-employment-11.2.pdf>

Probationary Period of Employment - The first 180 calendar days of employment are a probationary period for all SFA Charter School employees. Additionally, employees who apply for a posted, vacant position and who transfer to the new position will begin a new probationary period of 180 calendar days. During a probationary period the SFA Charter School is free to terminate an employee at any time with the approval from the Stephen F. Austin State University Director of Human Resources.

<http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/probationary-period-of-employment-11.21.pdf>

Performance Evaluation - Evaluation of an employee’s job performance should be a continual process that focuses on improvement. Performance evaluation is based on an employee’s assigned job duties and other job related criteria. All employees will participate in the evaluation process with their assigned supervisor at least annually. <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/performance-management-plan-11.20.pdf>

Professional Development – Professional personnel shall attend events that will assist the SFA Charter School in improving the instructional program. Attendance at such professional development or curriculum development events may be recommended or required by administration.

Compensation - SFA Charter School Teachers and Teacher Aides are paid in accordance with administrative guidelines and a pay structure established for each position. The pay plan is reviewed annually and adjusted as needed.

Salaries and wages are reviewed on an annual basis and adjusted according to the budgeted amounts approved by the SFA Board of Regents. All employees will receive written notice of their pay and work schedules.

Teachers will be paid no less than the minimum state salary schedule. Merit increases to employee salaries will be based on their performance evaluation and the availability of funds.

SFA Charter School Teachers are exempt from overtime pay and are employed on a 9 ½ month basis (187 days). SFA Charter School Teacher Aides are paid on an hourly basis and employed on a 9 ½ month basis (180 days). A school calendar is adopted each year designating the work schedule for teachers and all school holidays. Notice of work schedules including required days of service and scheduled holidays will be distributed each school year.

Teachers will be paid monthly. Teacher Aides will be paid semimonthly. All employees are encouraged to have their checks direct deposited.

Health, dental, and life insurance - Group health, dental and life insurance options are described in the SFA University policy “Insurance and Other Benefits”. <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/insurance-and-other-benefits-12.10.pdf>

Teacher retirement - Retirement options are described in the SFA University policy “Retirement Programs”. <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/retirement-programs-12.15.pdf>

Teacher assignment – Employees are subject to assignment and reassignment of positions or duties, additional duties, or changes in responsibilities or work, for which the employee is professionally certified or otherwise qualified to perform.

Leaves and absences – Teachers and Teacher Aides will accrue five (5) days of sick leave at the beginning of each year. A day of earned sick leave is equivalent to an assigned workday. There is no limit on the accumulation of sick leave. Sick leave with pay may be taken when sickness, injury, or pregnancy and confinement prevent the employee’s performance of duty or when a member of the employee’s immediate family is actually ill. For these purposes, immediate family is defined as those individuals related by kinship, adoption or marriage, which are living in the same household or if not in the same household are totally dependent upon the employee for personal care or services on a continuing basis. An employee who is the legal guardian of a child by court appointment may use sick leave to care for the child. Sick leave may be used for the adoption of a child under the age of three.

Sick leave can be used only in whole day, half-day or one (1) hour increments except when coordinated with family and medical leave (See “Family and Medical Leave” at <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/family-and-medical-leave-12.9.pdf>.) taken on an intermittent or reduced-schedule basis or when coordinated with workers’ compensation benefits. An employee who must be absent from duty because of illness shall notify their supervisor or cause the supervisor to be notified of that fact at the earliest practical time.

If an employee uses more sick leave than has been earned, the cost (at daily rate) of unearned sick leave will be deducted from the employee’s next paycheck. In the event an employee suffers a catastrophic injury or illness, application may be made for an award from the sick leave pool. See “Sick Leave Pool” at <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/sick-leave-12.18.pdf>.

Teachers and Teacher Aides will accrue two (2) days of personal leave per year. This is leave that is taken at an employee’s discretion and that can be scheduled in advance. An employee wishing to take personal leave must submit a notice of the request five days in advance of the anticipated absence to their supervisor. Personal leave will be granted on a first-come, first-served basis. The effect of the employee’s absence on the educational program and the availability of substitutes will be considered by the supervisor. Any personal leave hours remaining at the end of a school year will be credited to the employee’s sick leave balance.

Teachers are also eligible for emergency leave which is described as either bereavement leave or administrative leave and is described in detail under “Leave of Absence (Non-Academic)” at <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/administrative-leave-faculty-staff-12.11.pdf>

Complaints and grievances – In an effort to hear and resolve employee complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest administrative level possible, a policy has been developed which allows employees to bring formal complaints and grievances. Employees are encouraged to discuss problems or complaints with their supervisor at any time. The “Grievance and Appeals” policy at <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/grievance-and-appeals-11.15.pdf> should be followed in the event the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved at the supervisor level.

Solicitation of funds – No parents, organizations, or companies may be solicited for any gift or fundraising projects by any employee or student of the SFA Charter School until responsible parties have secured approval before-the-fact, in writing. All fundraising projects shall comply with SFA policies and procedures, as well as federal and state laws.

Employee conduct and welfare – Standards of conduct – All employees are expected to work together in a cooperative spirit to serve the best interests of the SFA Charter School and to be courteous to students, one another, and the public. Employees are expected to observe the following standards of conduct:

- Recognize and respect the rights and property of students and coworkers and maintain confidentiality in all matters relating to students and coworkers.
- Report to work according to the assigned schedule.
- Notify their immediate supervisor in advance or as early as possible in the event that they must be absent or late. Unauthorized absences, chronic absenteeism, tardiness, and failure to follow procedures for reporting an absence may be cause for disciplinary action.
- Know and comply with SFA Charter School and university procedures and policies. This includes the ECHL and SFA Charter School Dress Code (attached).
- Express concerns, complaints, or criticism through appropriate channels.
- Observe all safety rules and regulations and report injuries or unsafe conditions to a supervisor immediately.
- Observe the “family style” dining procedures by sitting at the table to eat lunch with the students.
- Use SFA Charter School time, funds, and property for authorized business and activities only.
 - SFA Charter School time (7:40AM – 3:40PM) includes the entire assigned school workday schedule including the conference time. Teachers leaving campus during the school workday schedule must use one of the approved sick leave/personal leave increments (whole day, half day, or one hour) and sign out at the office.
 - Employees are responsible for the proper care and maintenance of the center, equipment, and materials at all times. Any damage resulting from the careless or willful acts of any employee or as a result of a teacher’s lack of supervision of children shall be repaired or replaced at the employee’s expense. Employees shall use SFA Charter School equipment or property for school-related use only. All materials and information created, transmitted, or stored on systems are the property of the school and may be accessed by authorized personnel and treated as confidential to the extent allowed by law.
 - Employees are not permitted to make outgoing, personal calls during the assigned workday schedule unless authorized. All cell phones should be turned off and stored while on campus during the school day. Personal phone calls will be forwarded to a classroom during the conference time only. In the event of an emergency, every effort will be made toward immediate notification.
 - If an employee family member must enter the classroom during the school workday schedule, that family member is required to sign in at the front desk.
- All SFA Charter School employees should perform their duties in accordance with state and federal law, SFA Charter School and university policy, and ethical standards for professional educators, 19 TAC 247.1(b). Violation of policies, regulations, or guidelines may result in disciplinary action, including

termination. See “Discipline and Discharge” at <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/discipline-and-discharge-11.4.pdf>

Health and Safety Standards:

- Report any accidents while the child is in attendance at the SFA Charter School on an accident/illness report form to be sent home and a copy filed in the classroom. If an accident is more serious, but not requiring immediate attention from a physician the parent should be notified by phone and the front office notified.
- Contact a parent or designated person to pick up a child with vomiting or a temperature over 100 degrees. An accident/illness report form should be sent home and a copy filed in the classroom.
- Know and comply with emergency procedures including location of fire extinguishers and knowledge of use. (Fire drills are held monthly without teachers’ prior knowledge.)
- Maintain a first aid kit and follow procedures for use.
- Never leave children unattended in the classroom or on the playground. All employees should always be alert and circulating in the classroom and on the playground.

Discrimination/Sexual Misconduct – Employees shall not engage in prohibited discrimination or sexual misconduct toward other employees, students, or other persons including board members, vendors, contractors, volunteers, or parents. See “Discrimination Complaints” at <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/discrimination-complaints-2.11.pdf>. See “Sexual Misconduct” at <http://www.sfasu.edu/policies/sex-gender-based-discrimination-violence-harassment-misconduct-2.13.pdf>

Employees who believe they have experienced sexual misconduct or been discriminated against are encouraged to promptly report such incidents to the Stephen F. Austin State University Director of Human Resources as described in the policy.

Reporting suspected child abuse – All employees are required by state law to report any suspected child abuse or neglect to a law enforcement agency, Child Protective Services, or appropriate state agency (e.g.: state agency operating, licensing, certifying, or registering a facility) within 48 hours of the event that led to the suspicion. Reports to Child Protective Services can be made to a local office or to the Texas Abuse Hotline (800-252-5400). Under state law, any person reporting or assisting in the investigation of reported child abuse or neglect is immune from liability unless the report is made in bad faith or with malicious intent.

An employee’s failure to report suspected child abuse may result in prosecution for the commission of a Class B Misdemeanor. In addition, a certified employee’s failure to report suspected child abuse may result in disciplinary procedures by SBEC for a violation of the Code of Ethics and Standard Practices for Texas Educators.

Employees who suspect that a student has been or may be abused or neglected should also report their concerns to the principal. Employees are not required to report their concern to the principal before making a report to the appropriate agencies. In addition, employees must cooperate with child abuse and neglect investigators. Reporting the concern to the principal does not relieve the employee of the requirement to report to the appropriate state agency. Interference with a child abuse investigation by denying an interviewer’s request to interview a student at school or requiring the presence of a parent or school administrator against the desires of the duly authorized investigator is prohibited.

The SFA Charter School Employee Handbook has been accepted and approved by the SFA Charter Board.

Charter School Employee Handbook Policy Receipt

Name: _____

Classroom: _____

I hereby acknowledge receipt of my copy of the SFA Charter School Employee Handbook. I agree to read the handbook and standards and abide by the standards, policies, and procedures defined or referenced in this document.

The information in this handbook is subject to change. I understand that changes in policies may supersede, modify, or eliminate the information summarized in this handbook. As updated policy information is given, I accept responsibility for reading and abiding by the changes.

I understand that no modifications to contractual relationships or alterations of at-will relationships are intended by this handbook.

I understand that I have an obligation to inform the front office personnel of any changes in personal information, such as phone number, address, etc.

I understand I am employed in a professional occupation and am expected to act as such. Unprofessionalism, negative attitude, and breach of confidentiality will not be tolerated.

I understand that violation of any of the policies may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Signature

Date