

# NPS Employee Resources

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### Introduction

Welcome to the Needham Public Schools Staff Resources Site. This resource serves as a guide for ethical and professional conduct, outlining expectations for employee behavior and performance.

Our goal is to provide all staff with a high-quality education that fosters success by cultivating a supportive and collaborative environment. We embrace a culture where everyone is valued, respected, and accountable.

This resource will be a site that outlines professional expectations, emphasizing the importance of professional conduct and a respectful workplace. It also provides an overview of key policies and procedures to ensure a safe and inclusive environment for all.

Please note:

- The information on this site is intended to provide a general overview and may be subject to change.
- Specific details regarding employee benefits and leave policies may be found in collective bargaining agreements or individual contracts.

We encourage all staff members to familiarize themselves with the information contained on this site and to utilize it as a resource throughout their employment with Needham Public Schools.

### **Hiring Practices**

Through its employment policies, the Needham Public Schools will strive to attract, secure, and hold the highest qualified personnel for all professional positions. The selection process will be based on the awareness of candidates who will devote themselves to the education and welfare of the children attending the schools. It is the responsibility of the Superintendent, and of persons to whom he or she delegates this responsibility, to determine the personnel needs of the school district and to locate suitable candidates. The district's goal is to employ and retain personnel who are motivated, will strive always to do their best, and are committed to providing the best educational environment for the children. It will be the duty of the Superintendent to see that persons considered for employment in the schools meet all certification requirements and the requirements of the Committee for the type of position for which the nomination is made.

The following guidelines will be used in the selection of personnel:

1. There will be no discrimination in the hiring process due to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, disability, age, genetic information, active military/veteran status, marital status, familial status, pregnancy, or pregnancy-related condition, homelessness, ancestry, ethnic background, national origin, or any other category protected by state or federal law.
2. The quality of instruction is enhanced by a staff with a wide variation in background, educational preparation, and previous experience.

3. The administrator responsible for the hiring of a staff member is directed to establish a representative screening committee. It is expected that the screening committee's input will be a factor in the decision. The administrator will recommend candidates for certified positions to the Superintendent for final hire. In the case of district-wide positions, for the position of Principals, it is the Superintendent; for building-based personnel, it is the Principal. For those positions where the hiring authority rests with the School Committee, a representative screening committee may be established by the School Committee, or the School Committee may direct the Superintendent to establish a screening committee to assist the Superintendent in making their recommendation to the School Committee.

The Needham Public Schools is dedicated to building a diverse and inclusive workforce that reflects our student population and growing community. We strive to create an equitable and welcoming environment for all employees, where every individual feels valued and respected. Our hiring practices are guided by the following principles:

- **Equity and Inclusion:** We are committed to fair and equitable treatment of all candidates, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, or any other protected characteristic under law.
- **Diversity:** We actively seek to attract and hire qualified individuals from diverse backgrounds and experiences to enrich our learning community.
- **Excellence:** We are dedicated to hiring the most qualified and talented individuals who are passionate about education and committed to student success.

### **The Hiring Process**

1. **Job Posting:** Open positions are posted internally and externally through various channels to ensure wide dissemination.
2. **Application Review:** Applications are reviewed carefully and objectively based on the essential qualifications and desired skills outlined in the job description.
3. **Screening Interviews:** Qualified candidates may be invited for initial screening interviews, which may be conducted by phone or video conference.
4. **On-Site Interviews:** Candidates who successfully pass the initial screening may be invited for on-site interviews. Interviews may include:
  - **Panel Interviews:** Interviews are conducted by a panel of individuals, including administrators, teachers, and support staff, to ensure a diverse perspective.
  - **Observations:** Opportunities for candidates to observe classroom settings or other relevant work environments.

- **Presentations or Demonstrations:** Opportunities for candidates to showcase their skills and experience.
- 5. **Reference Checks:** Background checks and reference checks are conducted for all finalist candidates.
- 6. **Offer and Onboarding:** The selected candidate is extended a formal offer of employment. A comprehensive onboarding process is provided to ensure a smooth transition into the role and the school community.

## Candidate Experience

We strive to provide a positive and informative candidate experience throughout the hiring process. This includes:

- Prompt communication regarding the status of their application.
- Clear and concise job descriptions.
- Structured interviews with a focus on professional and relevant questions.
- Opportunities for candidates to ask questions and learn more about the school district.
- A welcoming and inclusive environment for all candidates.

## Non-Discrimination Policy

The Needham Public Schools does not discriminate against students, parents, employees or the general public based on race, color, sex, homeless status, gender identity, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, disability, or age. Discrimination or harassment by administrators, teachers, certified and support personnel, students, vendors and other individuals at school or at school-sponsored events is unlawful and is strictly prohibited.

## Reference and Background Checks

The Needham Public Schools' employment verification process includes comprehensive background checks. These checks may include:

- **Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) checks:** Including both state and national criminal background checks.
- **Sex Offender Registry Information (SORI) checks:** Checks information regarding convicted sex offenders to the public, allowing for better community awareness and potential prevention of further victimization.
- **Statewide Applicant Fingerprint Identification Services (SAFIS) checks:** To obtain a comprehensive criminal history record.
- **Personal and professional references:** To verify character, work history, and professional skills.

- **Educational and employment background checks:** To verify degrees, certifications, and previous employment history.

All offers of employment are contingent upon the satisfactory completion of all required background checks.

**Employees may NOT begin employment until all requested documentation is complete, including CORI, SORI, and SAFIS results, and is received by the Needham Public Schools.**

- **CORI Updates:** NPS is required to update CORI records every three years for all employees.
- **SORI Updates:** NPS is required to update CORI records every three years for all employees
- **Federal Conviction Reports:** NPS will be provided with updated federal reports of convictions linked to an employee's fingerprints.

**Note:**

- An unsatisfactory background check report may result in termination of employment.
- Employees who are involved in criminal proceedings that may affect their employment are required to promptly notify the Superintendent and take appropriate action to update their employment records.

### **Dress Expectations**

All employees represent Needham Public Schools and are expected to maintain a professional appearance appropriate to their role and our school environment. This includes clothing that is consistent with instructional assignments, such as allowing for flexibility and safety when working with students, as well as being suitable for various environmental conditions and special events like field trips or performances. If you have questions regarding this, please consult your supervisor.

### **Social Media Policy and Guidelines**

From engaging in conversations to sharing valuable resources, the Needham Public Schools community benefits from authentic connections made through social media. These platforms allow us to share information, learn together, inspire one another, and even extend the classroom experience beyond the walls of our schools

However, while social media can be a fun and enriching tool, it's important to remember that in the online world, the lines between personal and professional, public and private, can sometimes blur. To help navigate this digital landscape responsibly and represent our school

community with pride, we've created these social media guidelines for you to follow. Let's work together to harness the power of social media for good, fostering a safe, positive, and enriching online environment for all.

Staff are encouraged to review the School Committee Responsible Use of Digital Resources [Policy \(IJNDB-1\)](#)

**Required Reading:** [NPS Staff Social Media Guidelines](#)

### **Cell Phone/Personal Device Usage**

Employees are expected to exercise discretion when using personally owned electronic devices such as cell phones, smartphones, iPads, tablets, and laptops for personal business. Such device usage during work hours can interfere with safety and may be distracting to others. Employees are encouraged to limit the use of devices for personal use to break times and lunch periods.

### **Attendance, Punctuality, & Leave**

#### **Attendance**

***At the start of the contractual workday, staff are expected to be present, prepared, and actively engaged in their professional responsibilities, including instructional preparation, student supervision, or other assigned duties.***

Punctuality is the foundation for a productive school environment. It's more than just being on time; it's about setting the stage for student well-being and achievement and demonstrating our commitment to the entire school community.

#### **Benefits of Punctuality:**

- **Maximizes Student Experience:** When staff arrive on time, the school day begins promptly and proceeds without interruption. This ensures that every valuable minute is dedicated to supporting students, directly contributing to their positive experience and overall success.
- **Establishes Routines and Expectations:** Consistent arrival and departure times create a predictable and stable schedule for students. This predictability fosters a sense of discipline and responsibility, helping them develop essential life skills.
- **Reduces Disruptions:** Late arrivals can significantly disrupt daily operations and services, pulling focus away from our primary mission and negatively impacting the experience for

everyone. Similarly, early departures can cause confusion for students and lead them to miss important information or support.

- **Demonstrates Professionalism and Respect:** Your punctuality shows a deep respect for your colleagues, our students, and the entire school process. It underscores your commitment to your role and the mission of Needham Public Schools.

## Attendance Expectations

- **Regular Attendance:** Regular and consistent attendance is required for the support of all students; therefore, all employees are expected to maintain regular and punctual attendance.
- **Notification of Absence:**
  - Employees should notify their supervisor as soon as possible in the event of an absence or tardiness and provide a reason if applicable.
  - All staff are expected to submit their absence requests to our absence management system.
  - For emergencies, notify your supervisor directly through email or text, depending on established expectations.
- **Doctor's Verification:** A doctor's note may be required for absences exceeding **three (3)** days, especially in cases of recurring or prolonged illness. Please submit this to NPS Human Resources Team.
- **Jury Duty:** If a staff member is selected for jury duty, submit your request for jury duty on our absence management system. Jury duty is a category that can be selected. Once you have completed your jury duty, submit your completion of jury duty to the HR/Payroll office using [hrpayrollhelpdesk@needham.k12.ma.us](mailto:hrpayrollhelpdesk@needham.k12.ma.us).

## Documentation and Record-Keeping

- **Accurate Records:** The district will maintain accurate records of employee attendance, including the reasons for absences.
- **Regular Review:** Attendance records will be reviewed periodically to identify trends and potential issues.

## Managing Absenteeism (Excessive and Chronic)

### Excessive Absenteeism

- **Definition:** Excessive absenteeism is defined as a pattern of frequent absences, regardless of the reason for the absences.
- **Intervention and Support:** The district will provide early intervention and support services for employees exhibiting signs of chronic absenteeism. This may include:

- Meet with the Building Principal and Director
- Meet with a member of the Human Resources team
- Counseling or referral to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Performance improvement plans

### **Chronic Absenteeism**

- **Definition:** Chronic absenteeism is defined as fourteen (14) or more absences within a school year.
- Should the excessive absences not be covered by FMLA, then the employee may be subject to progressive disciplinary action. Failure to submit the required documentation explaining the reason behind the absence or abuse of sick days will lead to progressive discipline, which may include:
  - Verbal warnings
  - Written warnings
  - Suspension
  - Termination

Be sure to review your collective bargaining agreement or your individual contract for specific details regarding employee benefits and leaves.

### **Family and Medical Leave (FMLA) and Other Protected Leaves**

#### **Family Medical Leave Act**

The FMLA entitles eligible employees of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance coverage under the same terms and conditions as if the employee had not taken leave. Eligible employees are entitled to twelve workweeks of leave in a 12-month period for:

- The birth of a child and caring for the newborn child within one year of birth;
- The placement with the employee of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one year of placement;
- To care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- A serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job;
- Any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on "covered active duty;" or
- Twenty-six work weeks of leave during a single 12-month period to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the eligible employee is the service member's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin (military caregiver leave). Massachusetts Parental Leave Act An Act Relative to Parental Leave expands the current maternity leave



law, G.L. c. 149, § 105D, which is enforced by the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD). Currently, Massachusetts law requires employers with six or more employees to provide eight weeks of unpaid maternity leave for the purpose of giving birth or for the placement of a child under the age of 18, or under the age of 23 if the child is mentally or physically disabled, for adoption. The new law goes into effect on April 7, 2015 and expands the current leave law in the following ways:

- The parental leave law is now gender-neutral. All new parents, regardless of gender, are entitled to parental leave.
- If the employer agrees to provide parental leave for longer than 8 weeks, the employer must reinstate the employee at the end of the extended leave unless it clearly informs the employee in writing before the leave and before any extension of that leave, that taking longer than 8 weeks of leave shall result in the denial of reinstatement or the loss of other rights and benefits.
- The law clarifies that the right to leave applies to employees who have completed an initial probationary period set by the terms of employment, but which is not greater than 3 months.
- The law expands the notice requirements, mandating that employers keep a posting in a conspicuous place describing the law's requirements and the employer's policies as to parental leave.
- The law provides that if two employees of the same employer give birth to or adopt the same child, the two employees are entitled to an aggregate of 8 weeks of leave.
  - The law clarifies that an employee seeking leave must provide at least 2 weeks' notice of the anticipated date of departure and the employee's intention to return, but also permits the employee to provide notice as soon as practicable if the delay is for reasons beyond the employee's control.
- The law clarifies that an employee on parental leave for the adoption of a child shall be entitled to the same benefits offered to an employee on leave for the birth of a child.

## Parental Leave

The Needham Public Schools is committed to supporting all families within our employee community. Parental Leave provides eligible employees with time away from work for the purpose of giving birth to and/or receiving a child into their family. This includes, but is not limited to, receiving a child through adoption, surrogacy, fostering with the intent to adopt, or court-ordered placement.

**Please note:** The information below provides a high-level summary. For complete details, specific eligibility criteria, and your full rights and responsibilities, all employees should refer to their individual employment contract and/or their applicable collective bargaining agreement.

### Key Aspects of Parental Leave:

- **Eligibility:** Parental leave is available to employees for the birth of a child, or the placement of a child through adoption, surrogacy, fostering with intent to adopt, or court-ordered placement.
- **Statutory Leave:** Eligible employees may take time for up to twelve (12) weeks of leave in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 149, Section 105D, and the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). All parental leave runs concurrently with FMLA.
- **Notice Requirements:** Employees are generally expected to provide written notice of their intent to take parental leave, with specific timelines depending on the circumstances (e.g., typically at least two weeks for birth, and as soon as practicable but at least 30 days for child placement).
- **Paid Leave Provisions:** Eligible employees may receive a period of paid parental leave provided by the District, the length of which may vary based on their role and circumstances (e.g., birthing vs. non-birthing parent). Employees may also utilize their accrued sick and/or personal leave to extend the period of paid leave, as permitted by their contract. For more information, please refer to your contract.
- **Unpaid Leave:** Any days of parental leave beyond the paid provisions, or after accumulated leave is exhausted, will be unpaid. All unpaid leave taken must generally be within one (1) year of the child's birth/arrival/home placement.
- **Extended Leave (for eligible employees):** For professional teacher status members with three full years of satisfactory service, requests for leave longer than the statutory 12 weeks may be granted without pay, typically expiring on September 1st following the birth/arrival of the child. Specific notification requirements apply for return or resignation from extended leave.

### Employee Assistance Program

The Needham Public Schools is committed to supporting the holistic well-being of its employees, including their mental and emotional health. To this end, we are pleased to partner with Human Relations Service (HRS) to provide confidential counseling services as a valuable resource for NPS employees.

HRS is a private, non-profit mental health agency. Their mission is clear: to heal lives and strengthen communities by treating, reducing, and preventing mental illness, and supporting the well-being of children, families, and institutions.

As part of this partnership, eligible NPS employees may access up to five (5) counseling sessions at no cost. This program is designed to provide timely support for a variety of personal and professional challenges.

### **Confidentiality**

Needham Public School employees may have access to sensitive personal or otherwise confidential student or employee information. It is expected that employees will protect others' rights to privacy by not releasing such information to unauthorized individuals. This information must be held in strict confidence and should never be discussed outside the workplace or with employees who have no right to the information. All inquiries for employee information from outside sources should be referred to your Supervisor or the Human Resource Department for an appropriate response. Employees should consult their supervisors with any questions regarding confidentiality. Failure to comply with confidentiality requirements may be grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. This provision is not intended, and should not be construed, to limit or prevent an employee from exercising rights under the M.G.L. c. 150E Labor Relations: Public Employees.

### **Grievance Procedure**

Grievance procedures are subject to negotiated agreements with the Needham Education Association. Employees who are subject to Units A, B, C, D, and E. should refer to their [contracts](#).

All individual contract employees shall state their concerns to the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources. Requests will be responded to within five (5) school calendar days. If the concern(s) are not satisfactorily resolved at this level, the concern(s) may be addressed with the Superintendent at the employee's request.

### **Retaliation**

Retaliation against any individual who, in good faith, reports harassment, discrimination, or other inappropriate behavior, or who participates in an investigation of such a complaint, is strictly prohibited and unlawful. Any employee found to have engaged in retaliation will be subject to prompt and appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. The Needham Public Schools is committed to fostering an environment where all individuals feel safe and encouraged to report concerns without fear of reprisal.

### **Employee Discipline**

All Needham Public Schools employees are expected to uphold the highest standards of professional conduct, both in person and online. As representatives of the district, employees must exercise sound judgment and maintain appropriate professional behavior and boundaries.

Staff actions contribute directly to ensuring a safe and optimal learning environment for all students. Any conduct that is inconsistent with our professional standards or the district's mission, state or federal laws may be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

## Investigations

The Needham Public Schools is committed to ensuring a safe, fair, and respectful environment for all students and staff. To uphold this commitment, the district may conduct investigations into sensitive or complex matters, including but not limited to allegations of harassment, discrimination, bullying, or other serious misconduct.

The purpose of any investigation is to gather relevant facts, determine what occurred, and recommend appropriate action.

### The Investigatory Process:

Should you be involved in or impacted by an investigation, here is a general overview of the process:

- **Defining the Scope:** The investigation will clearly define the allegations and the specific issues to be addressed.
- **Fact-Finding:** An investigator, typically an internal staff member from administration or Human Resources, will gather information. This usually involves:
  - Interviews with involved parties and relevant witnesses.
  - Review of documents, communications, and other relevant evidence.
- **Confidentiality:** Efforts will be made to maintain the confidentiality of all parties and information to the extent possible, consistent with the need to conduct a thorough investigation and take appropriate action.
- **Findings and Recommendations:** Upon completion, the investigator will present a report detailing factual findings and, where applicable, recommendations for corrective action.
- **Outcome and Action:** The district will review the findings and determine appropriate next steps, which may include disciplinary action, policy changes, or other interventions, while respecting privacy rights.

The Needham Public Schools ensures that all investigations are conducted thoroughly, impartially, and in accordance with applicable laws, policies, and collective bargaining agreements.

#### **When an Independent Investigation May Occur:**

While many investigations are handled internally, an **independent investigation** (conducted by a neutral external professional) may be initiated when circumstances warrant a higher level of impartiality or specialized expertise. This typically occurs if:

- The allegations are particularly serious (e.g., sexual harassment, discrimination, potential violence).
- There is a potential conflict of interest involving internal staff.
- Neutrality and external credibility are paramount, especially in complex cases.

*Please also refer to the [Discrimination and Harassment policy](#).*

#### **Suspension, Dismissal, and Termination (Non-Renewal)**

The Superintendent will strive to assist personnel in performing their duties efficiently. However, the Superintendent may dismiss any employee in accordance with state law. Further, the Committee recognizes the constitutional rights of the District's employees and assures them the protection of due process of law. To guarantee such rights, a system of constitutionally and legally sound procedures will be followed in each case of suspension or dismissal of an employee. When any report is made to a Principal that may result in a professional employee being suspended or dismissed, the Principal shall consult the Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent for Human Resources. If a report is made directly to the Superintendent, they may include the Principal in the investigation. After an investigation, if the Superintendent and/or Principal determines that sufficient cause exists for a professional employee to be suspended or dismissed from service in the school system, he or she will:

1. Be certain that each such case is supported by defensible records.
2. Determine if the individual is to be suspended immediately, with the understanding that the suspension will be subject to restoration of salary and position if an appeal is decided in favor of the individual.
3. Follow the procedures for dismissal or suspension that are contained in applicable laws as well as those included in the current agreement with the professional employees' bargaining unit.
4. Provide the individual involved with a written statement that will:
  - a. Indicate whether the action being taken is dismissal or suspension.
  - b. State the reason for the suspension or dismissal.

- c. Guarantee that all procedures will be in accordance with due process of law.
- d. Inform employees who have a right to request a hearing under appropriate laws that they may be represented at such a hearing by counsel of their choice.

### **Termination of Employment**

The Needham Public Schools is committed to fair and consistent practices regarding employment. The termination of employment may occur for various reasons, and the specific procedures and rights involved are primarily governed by Massachusetts state statutes, relevant collective bargaining agreements, and individual employment contracts.

Generally, termination of employment can be either:

- **Voluntary Termination (Resignation):** When an employee chooses to leave their position. Employees are expected to provide reasonable notice to their supervisor and the office of Human Resources to ensure a smooth transition and minimize disruption to students and school operations.
- **Involuntary Termination:** When the Needham Public Schools ends an individual's employment. This may occur for reasons including, but not limited to, unsatisfactory performance, misconduct, restructuring, or other legitimate operational needs. In such cases, the process will strictly adhere to all applicable state and federal laws, collective bargaining agreements, and individual contract terms, which may include provisions for notice, progressive discipline, and due process rights.

Employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the terms of their specific employment contract and/or collective bargaining agreement regarding termination. For any questions or specific circumstances, employees should consult with their supervisor or the Human Resources Department.