

TLS Policy Alignment and AY 27 Staff Handbook Compliance Gap Analysis

An analysis of the **TLS Board Policies and Bylaws** alongside the **TLS Staff Handbook 2026-2027** reveals several critical gaps, misalignments, and compliance risks. These findings have been categorized below to help align staff guidelines with board mandates and state regulations.

1. Critical Compliance Gaps & Policy Conflicts

These are areas where the Staff Handbook actively contradicts or misaligns with Board Policy, presenting immediate legal or operational risks:

- **Physical Restraint Reporting Timelines (Severe Risk):**
 - *Board Policy:* Mandates that staff must notify a student's parent or guardian **no later than one hour after the end of the school day** in which physical restraint was used. A full written report must be provided to the parent **within five school days**, and a copy must be sent to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) **within thirty days** of the incident.
 - *Staff Handbook:* Incorrectly states that physical restraint incidents must be thoroughly documented and reported to both DESE and the student's parents **within thirty (30) days**.
 - *Gap/Conflict:* The Staff Handbook's 30-day reporting window for parents is a severe compliance violation of the Board's strict 1-hour/5-day notification mandates. - Verified as addressed (RL 9.3.26)
- **Admissions Lottery Priorities:**
 - *Board Policy:* Outlines the lottery priority order as: (1) **Currently enrolled students**, (2) Children of faculty and staff, (3) Siblings, (4) All other eligible students.
 - *Staff Handbook:* Outlines a different order: (1) **Children of full-time faculty and instructional staff**, (2) Returning students, (3) Siblings of current students, (4) Priority zone students.
 - *Gap/Conflict:* The handbook prioritizes children of staff over returning students, which directly contradicts the hierarchy formally established by the Board. Verified (RL 9.3.26)
- **Distinct Sick Leave Policy and Retirement Payout:**

- *Board Policy*: Establishes that full-time employees are eligible for up to **10 days of sick leave**, with the option to roll over **5 days** into the next fiscal year. Upon retirement (which requires **90 days' notification**), employees will be compensated for unused sick leave hours **up to 1,000 hours**.
 - *Staff Handbook*: Discusses Paid Time Off (PTO) accruals and rollovers of **5 or 6 days** but limits "Sick Time" strictly to a note about requiring a doctor's certification for absences of 3+ consecutive days.
 - *Gap/Conflict*: The Staff Handbook fails to outline the actual Sick Leave allocation policy and completely omits the massive **unused sick leave compensation benefit at retirement**. Verified (RL 9.3.26)
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2. Major Omissions of Staff & Teacher Responsibilities

These are Board-mandated operational rules that staff are responsible for executing but are completely missing from the Staff handbook:

- **Third-Party Classroom Observations:**

- *Board Policy*: Establishes strict rules for classroom observations. Outside educational or clinical professionals must submit a written request **two weeks in advance**, provide credentials, specify their purpose/data collection, and certify **FERPA compliance**. Teachers and administrators must notify parents in writing. Visits by private service providers of current students are limited to **one hour** and must have a signed **FERPA Release** on file.
- *Staff Handbook*: Completely silent.
- *Gap*: Because teachers are the direct point of contact for classroom visits, they must be aware of these strict rules to prevent unauthorized access or FERPA violations. Verified (RL 9.3.26)

- **Student Self-Administration of Medication:**

- *Board Policy*: Students with chronic health conditions (e.g., asthma or anaphylaxis) have a legally protected right to possess and self-administer medication at school, events, or in transit, provided they have a physician's signed treatment plan and a parental liability waiver.
- *Staff Handbook*: Only states that prescribed medication can only be administered by the school nurse or approved designee.

- *Gap:* Teachers must know that authorized students are permitted to carry and self-administer their own emergency inhalers or epinephrine to avoid dangerous and illegal confiscation of medications. Verified (RL 9.3.26)
 - **Student Personal Electronic Devices (Cell Phones):**
 - *Board Policy:* Imposes a complete prohibition on student display or use of personal devices from the beginning to the end of the school day, with highly precise exceptions (IEPs, 504 plans, individualized emergency health care plans, ADA, Civil Rights Act, or English Language Learners).
 - *Staff Handbook:* Lacks any mention of this student device policy, which is a major gap since instructional staff are responsible for daily enforcement in classrooms. Verified (RL 9.3.26)
 - **Chaperone and Field Trip Supervision Rules:**
 - *Board Policy:* Chaperones may not bring siblings, leave the group, drink alcohol, use tobacco, or use profanity. Staff members must escort students to public bathrooms and **must take roll themselves** (cannot delegate to chaperones).
 - *Staff Handbook:* Omits these critical, legally binding chaperone and trip supervision protocols. Verified (RL 9.3.26)
 - **Transportation Policies & Walking/Biking Prohibitions:**
 - *Board Policy:* Prohibits children under 18 who are not enrolled at TLS from riding on school-provided vehicles. It also prohibits unaccompanied minors under 18 from walking or biking to school if established crosswalks, crossing guards, or street signage are not present within 1 mile.
 - *Staff Handbook:* Restricts staff from transporting students in personal vehicles, but omits these strict policies on school bus ridership and walk/bike prohibitions for students. Verified (RL 9.3.26) - Need to check if parallel information is given in the Caregiver Handbook.
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3. Omissions of Employee Leaves and Rights

These are Board-established benefits, leaves, and employee protections that are absent from the Staff Handbook:

- **Religious and Military Leaves:**

- *Board Policy:*
 - **Religious Leave:** Employees may take up to **three (3) days** of leave per year for religious holidays, which must be made up at a mutually agreed time and **shall not be deducted** from sick or personal leave.
 - **Military Leave:** Guarantees paid leave for up to **18 working days** for ordered military duty.
- *Staff Handbook: Completely omits both of these mandatory leave protections. Verified (RL 9.3.26)*
- **Extended Unpaid Leaves of Absence:**
 - *Board Policy:* Grants extended unpaid leaves of absence of up to **12 months** for employees who have completed at least **three (3) full years of service** for reasons such as continuing education, health issues, childcare, or running for political office.
 - *Staff Handbook: Completely silent on this long-term leave option. Verified (RL 9.3.26)*
- **Wage Garnishment and credit check protections:**
 - *Board Policy:* Explicitly protects employees by stating that "an employer may not discharge an employee on the basis that the creditor is garnishing the employee's wages". It also outlines Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) protections (written consent, and providing copies of credit reports and rights summaries before adverse action).
 - *Staff Handbook: Fails to communicate these rights to staff. Verified (RL 9.3.26)*
- **Strip Searches & Religious Garments:**
 - *Board Policy:* Strictly prohibits any employee or volunteer from performing a strip search unless a law enforcement officer is unavailable and there is an "imminent threat of physical harm". Violation leads to **immediate suspension without pay**. It also prohibits staff from directing a student to remove an emblem, insignia, or garment (including religious garments) as long as it isn't disruptive.
 - *Staff Handbook: Completely silent on strip searches, the severe penalty for violations, and the protection for student religious garments. Both the question of student searches and the issue of religious garments still need to be*

addressed. What is present came out jumbled and incomplete. See p. 12 - RL 9.3.26

4. Academic & Instructional Compliance Gaps

These are major educational mandates that should appear in the Staff Handbook to ensure instructional alignment:

- **Reading Instruction Act & Reading Success Plans:**
 - *Board Policy:* Mandates reading programs based on scientific research for grades K-5. Requires reading readiness assessments for K-3 (and new 1st-5th graders) at the beginning and end of the year. Crucially, teachers must provide a **Reading Success Plan** to any student exhibiting a substantial reading deficiency or identified as at risk for dyslexia. Parents must receive annual written notifications and home reading plans.
 - *Staff Handbook:* Contains no mention of the Reading Instruction Act, K-3 assessment schedules, or the mandatory creation of Reading Success Plans by teachers. This is a critical gap for elementary educators. Verified (RL 9.3.26)
- **English Language Learners (ELL) Policy:**
 - *Board Policy:* Dictates the mandatory identification of ELL students via home language surveys or enrollment forms (using specific required questions), English proficiency assessments, and annual progress monitoring. It names the **Director of Student Support Services** as the coordinator.
 - *Staff Handbook:* Completely silent on ELL coordination, identification, and instructional requirements. Partially present. See notes on p 14)
- **Dyslexia Screening & Staff Training:**
 - *Board Policy:* Mandates dyslexia screenings for students and requires the school to offer all teachers **two (2) hours of training** on dyslexia and related disorders (counting as professional development).
 - *Staff Handbook:* Missing this specific training and screening mandate.
- **Missouri Course Access and Virtual School Program:**
 - *Board Policy:* Students are legally permitted to enroll in virtual courses. The policy outlines exact conditions under which the school pays for these courses,

the "Good Cause" denial appeal process, credit transfer acceptance, and pro-rata payment rules to content providers.

- *Staff Handbook*: Lacks information regarding virtual course access, enrollment, and credit acceptance. (See notes on p. 15)
- **Student Attendance Rules & Extracurricular Eligibility:**
 - *Board Policy*: Students are expected to bring a written excuse the day they return from an absence. For each absence beyond ten (10), they must bring a medical/court excuse. Additionally, "in order to participate in an extracurricular or after school activity, a student must be in attendance on the school day of the activity."
 - *Staff Handbook*: Completely omits these specific student attendance rules and extracurricular attendance requirements. Verified (RL 9.3.26)
- **Check Requests and Financial Controls:**
 - *Board Policy*: Details check request procedures, stating that requests must be completed by the requestor, signed by the Executive Director and Treasurer, and include the payee, date, amount, description, and specific funding source.
 - *Staff Handbook*: Does not outline this specific process for staff who need to submit check requests or reimbursement requests. Verified (RL 9.3.26)
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Recommendation

A coordinated review should be conducted to align the Staff Handbook with the Board Policies, prioritizing the correction of the **Physical Restraint Reporting timeline** and the **Admissions Lottery Priorities** to eliminate immediate legal and compliance risks.