

Employee handbook spells out new rules

Written by CAROL POMEDAY

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Performance is key to layoffs, raises as teachers, other school staff proceed without master contract

Student handbooks are must reading every school year, but this year teachers and support staff also have a handbook that makes it clear that performance will be the determining factor in awarding raises and issuing layoff notices.

The Cedar Grove-Belgium School Board recently approved a handbook that includes a salary schedule that sets the pay for a first-year teacher with a bachelor's degree at \$37,329 and the maximum pay at \$64,763 for a teacher with a master's degree, 24 additional credits and 14 years experience. All continuing employees received a 2% increase for the 2011-12 school year, but future raises will not be automatic.

Seniority will no longer be considered when laying off or filling vacancies, a privilege that had been protected in previous teacher contracts.

Performance will be the criteria for determining layoffs. All teachers eligible for a position will be evaluated. The teacher with the lowest performance rating will be laid off. Only if two teachers are equally qualified and rated will seniority be a factor. Teachers may appeal the decision.

Teachers will be on probationary status for three years and other employees for 90 days.

The board may withhold a yearly increment if a teacher's performance is considered deficient. If the teacher corrects the deficiencies to the board's satisfaction by March 1 of that year, the increment will be granted. If the deficiencies are not corrected, the teacher's contract will not be renewed the next year.

Teachers will receive eight sick days per year cumulative to 90 days and two personal days. Eligible support staff will receive 10 or four sick days per year depending on the number of hours they work.

All new teachers will be assigned a mentor. When possible, the mentor will be a volunteer and be paid \$1,300 this year.

Teachers who break their contracts before the start of the school year will forfeit \$700. Those who resign after the school year starts will pay \$1,500. Individual contracts may set different amounts.

Earlier this fall, a technical-education teacher who quit after only a few days in the district paid \$3,000 in liquidated damages because he agreed to that in his contract. The district that hired him paid the forfeiture.

Teachers who are at least 55 and eligible for early retirement will receive one year of

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post-retirement insurance coverage for every five years they were employed in the district up to a maximum of five years. The district will pay 55% of the premium for life, dental or health insurance.

Just as students have a dress code, so too do teachers, who cannot wear jeans or shirts without collars on days they are in the classroom. Exceptions may be made of technical-education and art teachers.