

Carroll County Education Association Frequently Asked Questions:

1. I'm overwhelmed with work and it's negatively impacting my personal life. What do I do?

Article XX. D. 3. states, "Upon request from the educator, the principal, the supervisor and special educator shall collaborate to determine how the assigned duties can be completed during the instructional day."

CCEA believes that the first step is to have a conversation with your school administrator regarding the unsustainability of your workload. Ask them to help prioritize your duties and work-related expectations.

2. I've gotten conflicting messages from administration about how to enforce or handle a particular situation. How do I avoid getting into trouble?

CCEA would encourage that the individual email their administrator asking for confirmation (print and keep a copy of this email for further protection and be sure that it has a time and date on it). Even if the administrator does not respond, you have a record of expressing the concern and looking for confirmation.

3. I heard that certain rules and procedures are handled differently in other schools? Why is that allowed and how do we approach our administration about this?

The 38 Special: The Carroll County Public School system has 38 different schools and because of the culture of "site-based decisions" and managerial rights, this often results in having 38 different interpretations of any one message coming out of Central Office.

If your administration is implementing a CCPS policy or initiative that is different than what you believe the intent was, first ask your building rep(s) to have a conversation with your principal to get it sorted. If this doesn't work, contact the CCEA UniServ Director or CCEA President for assistance.

4. What should I expect or anticipate when I'm being called in for a meeting?

We would always recommend that you ask what the meeting is about prior to the meeting but we know that is not always possible.

More often than not, your principal will indicate whether or not you should consider bringing representation (if it could be disciplinary). If, during the course of the meeting, it takes a "bad turn" and appears to be heading toward discipline, you should ask for the meeting to be continued only after you've had the chance to get representation.

5. Why won't HR tell me what I'm being investigated for? Isn't this an infringement of my rights?

This is common practice to ensure due process for students and staff. In addition, this also helps prevent an individual from "meddling" or interfering with HR's investigation.

While it often feels like "guilty until proven innocent," an employee does not have a legal right to this information (unless it becomes a legal matter).

7. How do I protect myself in the event that I feel targeted by either an administrator or a supervisor?

Documentation is critical to establishing a paper trail. Please note that all email correspondence is subject to public inquiry so you should not expect confidentiality in anything sent through school email.

The individual who feels targeted should first provide an objective narrative (w/o ascribing any motives to others) of all related incidents. Contact your CCEA UniServ Director (UD) and explain the situation. More often than not, your UD will encourage you to reach out to CCPS Human Resources.

If this is a discrimination issue, the most appropriate place to report this is the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). While the union

does not represent cases to the EEOC, we can certainly help guide you along the way.

8. Am I required to produce a sick note when utilizing my contractual sick leave?

Maybe. Article XVI.B.3. states, “The Board [or representative of] may require proof of illness whenever there is a reasonable cause to believe that an absence is not due to a bona fide illness.” In other words, if an individual is taking every Friday off, that could be deemed a reasonable suspicion.

During the pandemic, it is not unreasonable to allow for further queries around health and symptoms that could overlap with being COVID positive.

9. How many Personal Business Days can I take consecutively?

An employee may take up to 3 days consecutively but not adjacent to a holiday, the beginning or ending of the school year. Employees have the right to write to the superintendent to request an exception.

10. Am I required to be on an unpaid committee?

Not if it goes beyond your duty day.

11. What can I do if I feel unsupported by admin regarding a disciplinary issue/consequence?

First, we would always recommend that you keep a hard copy of any referral that you write. It is completely within your rights to ask for an explanation in the event that an administrator changes a referral. If you aren’t given an explanation, you should share this with your building representative (to determine whether or not there is a trend at your school) and reach out to CCEA.

12. Are salaries negotiated each year? How do steps work?

Salaries are negotiated each year, unless an automatic increase was negotiated for a multi-year cba (collective bargaining agreement). Steps should be automatic but if the funding isn’t there, school systems have

the right to not award steps. In most situations, steps should be reflective of years of service.

13. How do non-tenured educators protect themselves?

Since non-tenured staff are effectively “at will” hires, they do not have the same “just cause” rights that tenured staff have. With that said, non-tenured teachers should self-advocate for themselves and reach out to the union for assistance when facing a difficult situation. We would always encourage educators to start with their building representative/s since these are employees who have a stronger and closer relationship with their building administrators.

14. Are teachers/staff compensated for substituting during duty-free time?

CCEA currently (as of 2021-22 school year) has a MOU (Memorandum of Understanding—a temporary extension of the CBA) that requires that educators are compensated when having to give up their planning time to cover for a colleague. However, this is not permanent language in the CBA and administration has the right to pull an individual to substitute to meet operational needs (in an emergency situation). Once it becomes a pattern, CCEA would no longer consider it to be an “emergency.”

15. After being reprimanded, what steps would the union suggest a member take?

Well, of course, the member has already reached out to the union for representation, right? If so, the member then has some options for redress. The individual can write a Letter of Rebuttal, appeal the decision, or potentially grieve the incident if administration did not provide due process.

16. What is the difference between a grievance and a gripe? How do you handle each?

A grievance is a contractual violation and a gripe is everything else. A grievance should be handled by CCEA (and please know that there is a strict timeline required for a grievance). A gripe should be handled by

speaking directly to your building administrator/s and/or to your building representative.

17. What happens if I don't have my evaluation conference within 5 days of the observation?

If your evaluation is positive, you should leave it alone. If it is not a positive result, contact CCEA.

18. Can my administration reschedule before or after school meetings if they've been cancelled due to weather?

Yes. However, your administration should also allow for individuals who had prior obligations during the rescheduled meeting.

19. Are we required to post all of our lessons to our Google Classroom/Schoology?

This could be a site-based issue but there is no district-wide requirement that all lessons be posted online (i.e. either Google Classroom or Schoology).

20. Where can I find information about candidates and the endorsement process?

First, I'd recommend first going to the Maryland State Board of Elections (<https://www.elections.maryland.gov/>). Secondly, for county-specific races, CCEA will be posting the completed questionnaires received during the endorsement process. Finally, if you are a political junkie, consider joining the Government Relations Committee (GRC) for up-close, first-hand information and participation in this process.

21. How much are union dues?

For the 2021-2022 school year, dues are \$32.21 per pay period (this includes dues for CCEA, MSEA, and NEA) if you are a ≥51% Full Time Equivalency (FTE).

22. How much planning time can they [presumably, this refers to administration] take?

In the event of an emergency, management can take your entire planning period. Once this becomes either a pattern or if it occurs too regularly, please reach out to the CCEA office (and inform your building representatives in case a “class action” grievance is required).

23. What step am I on?

Every individual can find out what “step” they are on by going to the CCPS Web Portal → Human Resources → Salary Information. Voila!!

Or, click on the link below for video instructions:

[CCEA How To Check Your Information on Web Portal](#)

24. Do I have to say who the sick day is for?

The short answer: No. However, in Absence Management, you may need to put a character (punctuation, letter, etc.) to move ahead.

However, “The Board may require proof of illness whenever there is a reasonable cause to believe that an absence is not due to a bona fide illness” (Article XVI. B. 3.). So, if an educator is taking a sick day every Friday, it is not unreasonable for administration to inquire about it.

25. Do we need to fill in the “notes to administrator” on Absence Management?

No. It is not required, however, there may be times when adding notes is advantageous. If you aren’t allowed to move ahead, feel free to type in “none.”

26. What is the flexibility of conference dates and times?

A site-based leadership team (ex. SIT) puts forth potential dates for PT conferences and the bargaining unit staff at that school votes on the preferred dates (this does need Superintendent approval).

Also, you are expected to make up conferences if you are unavailable during the scheduled time. How this is made up is a site-based decision.

27. Will we ever make up the steps from the ‘seven-year gap?’

I certainly wouldn't say that it's out of the realm of possibility but the funding for public education is always short of what it should be. The CCEA negotiation team could make this a priority but it will undoubtedly be at the expense of another area or group of our bargaining unit who also deserve it.

28. Are there any limitations on how much I can be pulled to cover other classes?

There is no prescriptive number that is "too many" hours, but you are entitled to the planning time that the Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) provides. While there is a provision for emergencies, it should be used only when there are no other viable options.

29. What is the process for collective bargaining ("negotiations") between CCEA and CCPS?

CCEA usually submits a "Demand to Bargain" letter to the superintendent. From that point, the Chief Negotiators from both CCEA and CCPS begin exchanging initial meeting dates. Ground rules and initial proposals are usually offered in the first meeting and then each subsequent meeting is made up of conversations to determine what both sides can agree to.

30. What are the procedures for resigning mid-year from extra duty assignments?

One can resign from extra duties at any point in time. However, if an educator is already being paid for the extra duty, the resignation cannot go into effect until the following school year.

There are exceptions to this but are usually handled on a case-by-case basis.

31. When does a student's disruption to learning in the classroom warrant removal (temporary and permanently)?

This is a tough one because it's a judgement call. Article X. "Maintenance of Classroom Control and Discipline" addresses this for temporary situations. Long-term situations are more challenging because as public

educators, we are obliged to provide an appropriate education for all children.

32. What do I do if I receive a call from Child Protective Services or law enforcement (regarding a work-related incident)?

If called by Child Protective Services (CPS) or the police, you are encouraged to take a name and phone number and contact our office immediately. You shouldn't do the interview without MSEA legal.