For the purpose of this regulation, the following definitions will apply:

**GIFT**

a. A gift is any benefit or item of value received, except for trinkets of minimal value (i.e., coffee mugs, key chains, caps, and the like). Plaques and like commemorative items are not considered to be gifts. See Reference (c).

**ADMINISTRATIVE EMPLOYEE**

b. An administrative employee will be defined as any HISD employee in pay grade 14 and above. See Reference (c).

**VENDOR**

c. An individual, organization, or agency with an interest in selling a product or service to HISD, either their own or that of another as their agent, for a price or pecuniary equivalent.

**PARTNER**

d. An individual, organization, or agency associated with HISD as a contributor in a joint endeavor. One that is united or associated with HISD in an activity or area of common interest.

Upon completion of new employee orientation, each administrative employee will complete a Conflict of Interest Training Acknowledgement Form for New Administrative Employees indicating that he or she understands the District's policies and procedures regarding conflict of interest. See References (a), (b), (c), and (d), and Exhibit (3).

Each administrative employee will execute the Semi-Annual Conflict of Interest Statement (Exhibit 4), certifying that he or she will conform to the requirements of Section 16 of Reference (f) that created HISD as hereinafter set forth. After completion, this form will be submitted to Human Resources by the employee's supervisor for further processing.

In the case of E-Rate matters, governance provided at CAA supersedes these requirements. All E-Rate employees, regardless of pay grade, will complete the conflict of interest form semi-annually.

Procedures for conflict of interest requirements are as follows:

**PROHIBITED GIFTS**

a. No gift, favor, loan, service, or anything of value will be accepted or solicited by employees. Specific examples of prohibited gifts from District vendors and prospective vendors include, but are not limited to:

- Game tickets (i.e., football, basketball, baseball, soccer, and any other sporting events);
POTENTIAL CONFLICT OF INTEREST

b. If an employee has a question regarding a potential conflict of interest or ethical issue, he or she must complete the Conflict of Interest Question Form and submit it to his or her immediate supervisor. See Exhibits (1) and (2). The supervisor sends a copy of the Conflict of Interest Question Form and a preliminary recommendation to the deputy superintendent for human talent for approval. Human Resources will refer any unresolved questions or problematic recommendations to the Conflict of Interest Review Committee for review of possible violations. The employee, appropriate direct report to the superintendent, and superintendent are notified of the decision of the Conflict of Interest Committee. See Reference (f) and Exhibit (1) for more information.

REPORTING ITEMS OF VALUE

c. The direct reports to the Superintendent will provide to administrative employees before March 1 and September 1 of each year copies of the HISD Semi-Annual Conflict of Interest Statement and Semi-Annual Disclosure Statement. See Exhibits (4) and (5). Each administrative employee must complete the HISD Semi-Annual Conflict of Interest Statement and attach it to Semi-Annual Disclosure Statement indicating that he or she will conform to the requirements of Section 16 of Reference (f) and this regulation. These forms must be completed semi-annually and submitted to the employee’s supervisor, who forwards the forms to the appropriate direct report to the Superintendent. The direct report reviews the completed forms and forwards them to Human Resources. See Reference (d). Human Resources reviews the forms and
forwards problematic issues or possible violations to the Conflict of Interest Review Committee. The employee, appropriate direct report to the Superintendent, and the Superintendent are notified of decisions of the committee.

LEGAL BASIS

4. Pertinent text of Section 16 of Reference (f) is as follows:

No superintendent, business manager, or any other person holding any position or employment under said board, shall be directly or indirectly interested in any purchase, sale, business, work, or contract, the expense, price, or consideration of which is paid from the school funds of said District; nor shall any such officer or employee purchase any warrants or claims against said board or District, or any interest therein, or become surety for any person or persons having a contract or any kind of business with said board, for the performance of which security may be required. Anyone violating this provision shall be discharged from services…

STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

EXCEPTIONS

5. Employee standards of conduct are as follows.

a. As a general rule, no gift, favor, loan, service, or anything of value will be accepted by HISD employees from vendors or prospective vendors seeking to do business with HISD. See Reference (a). The only exceptions to this rule include trinkets of minimal value (see GIFT above), meals, conference registration fees, or travel expenses as outlined in CONFERENCE FEES OR EXPENSE-PAID TRIPS AND SPECIAL PRIVILEGES AND EXEMPTIONS.

MEALS

b. Meals that exceed $50 per meal or up to $100 in the aggregate per year (September 1 through August 31) from any single source will be reported on Exhibits (4) and (5). Meals exceeding $100 in the aggregate from any single source are strictly prohibited. See References (a) and (d).

Supervisors may impose more strict standards with written notice to their staff members.

CONFERENCE FEES OR EXPENSE-PAID TRIPS

c. No employee will accept payment of conference registration fees nor trips financed by a company or firm without securing advance written guidance from the Superintendent. Upon approval, an employee may accept payment of conference registration fees and or associated travel expenses from partners if it serves the general benefit of the District. An employee may accept meals, transportation, and lodging expenses in connection with services (i.e., addressing an audience or engaging in a seminar) to
SPECIAL PRIVILEGES AND EXEMPTIONS

d. Employees may not accept anything of value from a current or prospective vendor. If the party is both a nonprofit vendor and a partner, an exception may be requested. Examples of items for which an exception might be requested include free/discounted training services or expenses associated with site visits. Such requests should be submitted in writing, using the exemption request form. See Exhibit (6). This form should be submitted to the Superintendent with a clear statement of how the requested exception serves the general benefit of the District. Approval of such requests will be rare and approved only in extenuating circumstances as determined by the Superintendent. Completed exemption forms should be submitted to Human Resources in conjunction with Exhibits (4) and (5).

An employee’s official position will not be used to secure special privileges or exemptions for the employee or others except as may be otherwise provided by law. If an employee is in doubt concerning a potential conflict, he or she must ask for written clarification from his or her immediate supervisor by submitting a Conflict of Interest Question Form. See Exhibit (2). This written clarification should pertain to a specific potential conflict of interest.

gifts FROM SUBORDINATES

e. No gift, favor, loan, service, or anything of greater than $50 in value will be accepted by HISD employees from subordinates. See Reference (a). See GIFT, above.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

f. No employee will disclose confidential information gained by his or her official position or use such information for his or her personal gain or benefit. This pertains to any confidential information to which an employee might have access, including but not limited to:

- Information from confidential student records;
- Confidential information from employee records;
- Impending real estate transactions as they relate to the District; and
- Purchases contemplated by the District when such information might give an unfair advantage to one company.
OTHER EMPLOYMENT

g. No administrative employee of HISD will accept other employment that might impair his or her independence of judgment in the performance of his or her public duties.

CONTRIBUTIONS

h. Nothing in this regulation will prohibit contributions of any sort to the HISD Foundation or to the District trust, agency, special revenue, or permanent funds.

CLARIFICATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

i. If an employee has a question about whether his or her personal activities might in any way be in conflict with the best interests of the District or established legal, moral, or ethical principles, he or she will seek written clarification of these points from his or her immediate supervisor. See paragraph REPORTING ITEMS OF VALUE, above.

CONSULTATION

6. This regulation has been through consultation (Administrative: December 9, 2008; Instructional: December 4, 2008; Non instructional: December 9, 2008).

MAINTENANCE RESPONSIBILITY

The executive general manager, Human Resources, is responsible for maintenance of this regulation.

REFERENCES:

(a) Board Policy BBFA(LEGAL)
(b) Board Policy CAA(LOCAL)
(c) Board Policy DBD(LEGAL)
(d) Board Policy DBD(LOCAL)
(e) DBD1(REGULATION)
(f) Special Act of 1923

EXHIBITS:

(1) Houston Independent School District Conflict of Interest Question Flowchart
(2) Form – Conflict of Interest Question Form
(3) Form – Houston Independent School District Conflict of Interest Training Acknowledgement Form for New Administrative Employees
(4) Form – Houston Independent School District Semi-Annual Conflict of Interest Statement
(5) Form – Semi-Annual Disclosure Statement
(6) Form – Exemption Request