

5 things human resource officers wish you knew

Teachers often find human resource offices in their school districts mysterious. But HR can better serve teachers if teachers better understand how HR operates. The HR office can support you in both positive and challenging times. Yet it also must look out for the interests of the school and obey the law. Here are 5 things that an HR director wishes teachers knew.

1. What our role is and is not:



HR can

- Help interpret contracts, salary schedules, and benefits.
- Explain district policies and procedures.
- Support leave requests (Family Medical Leave Act requests, sick leave, parental leave, etc.).

- Connect staff to employee-assistance programs or outside resources for their mental or physical well-being.
- Facilitate workplace accommodations needed for health reasons.
- Address concerns about workplace conduct.
- Navigate conflicts and identify next steps.

HR cannot

- Provide therapy or professional counseling.
- Diagnose mental health concerns.



2. We hear much more than than we share or act on but we must act when:

- A policy is being violated.
- A law may be broken.
- A student or staff safety is at risk.
- There is potential liability for the district.



4. We have a supportive and informational side. We can and want to be a resource for:

- Navigating life changes (medical issues, family needs, caregiving).
- Clarifying evaluation, tenure, or certification questions.
- Planning career growth within the district.



3. We value confidentiality but it has limits. Situations where reporting to authorities is required:

- Suspected child abuse or neglect
- Threats to self or others
- Allegations of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation
- Criminal activity
- Violations of district policy or local, state, and federal law



5. Communication and documentation matter more than you think. Some hard truths:

- Reporting issues months later, with no documentation, limits what HR can do.
- Verbal concerns without written follow-up are difficult to act on.

“Everyone knows this is happening”

is not the same as a formal report.

SOURCE: Anthony Graham
Images by Getty

Now that you know this, learn more by familiarizing yourself with district policies on grievances, harassment and discrimination, workplace concerns.

You can consult: school board policies, staff handbooks, and reporting protocols.