Principal's Investigation Checklist

I. Authority to Investigate

- ☐ Determine whether you will investigate or refer the matter.
  - ☐ Confirm whether school district rules and practices authorize the principal to investigate the issue.
- ☐ If beyond principal's authority, refer to appropriate authority:
  - ☐ Superintendent
  - ☐ HR Director
  - ☐ Title IX Coordinator
  - ☐ ChildLine
  - ☐ Law Enforcement
  - ☐ PDE (Pennsylvania Department of Education)

II. Understand Relevant Legal and Policy Framework

- ☐ Review federal and state laws relevant to the misconduct.
- ☐ Review applicable school board policies and codes of conduct.
- ☐ If sexual harassment and a *Formal Complaint* under Title IX is involved:
  - ☐ **Do NOT proceed** unless trained and designated as Title IX Investigator.

III. Initial Response

- ☐ Mandatory Reporting Obligation:
  - ☐ If there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse, immediately report:
    - ☐ Via the Child Welfare Portal; or
    - ☐ Call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313.

- ☐ If the alleged conduct qualifies as a Safe Schools Act reportable offense:
  - ☐ The Superintendent or designee must promptly notify local law enforcement following applicable School District procedures and legal requirements.
- ☐ These steps must be taken immediately and must not be delayed pending further school-based investigation.

- ☐ Document the initial report (date, time, source, substance). [Form 1]
- ☐ Assess immediate safety risks to students/staff. [Form 2]
- ☐ Document any immediate protective or safety actions taken.

IV. Plan the Investigation

- ☐ Define scope:
  - ☐ Identify rule/policy potentially violated.
  - ☐ List complainant, respondent, and witnesses.
  - ☐ Note relevant locations and timeframe.
- ☐ Develop investigation plan:
  - ☐ Identify documents and evidence to gather.
  - ☐ Timeline for tasks and interviews. [Form 3]

V. Interview Preparation & Execution

- ☐ Schedule interviews in private, neutral, and confidential setting.
- ☐ Prepare open-ended and follow-up questions. [Form 4]
- ☐ Be ready to adapt to gather full facts.
- ☐ Maintain professional tone; avoid bias or assumptions.

Interviewing Students

- ☐ Consider maturity, disability, and emotional readiness.

- ☐ If student under 18 and allegations involve sensitive topic, prior notice to student's parent may be required.
- ☐ Provide necessary supports (e.g., special ed staff, visual aids).
- ☐ Review IEP or 504 Plan if applicable.

Interviewing Employees

- ☐ Provide written notice and description of issue. [Form 5]
- ☐ If requested, provide a union representative for employee accused of misconduct who is in a collective bargaining unit.
- ☐ If serious discipline is possible (e.g., suspension without pay), ensure Loudermill rights are preserved.

VI. Interview Documentation

Choose appropriate method(s):

- ☐ Handwritten notes signed by interviewer. [Form 6]
- ☐ Interview summary form or structured template. [Form 7]
- ☐ Verbatim transcription (e.g., by designated note-taker or stenographer, if appropriate)
- ☐ Audio recording (with prior written or verbal notice and consent). [Form 8]
- ☐ Video recording (with prior written or verbal notice and consent). [Form 9]
- ☐ Signed witness statements, if appropriate. [Form 10]
- ☐ Save any post-interview email clarifications.
- ☐ Maintain interview attendance log. [Form 11]
- ☐ Secure all records in confidential location (either digital or physical) that is consistent with School District requirements.

VII. Gather & Preserve Evidence

- ☐ Collect all documentary evidence (emails, texts, social media, reports, disciplinary records, etc.).

- ☐ Preserve physical evidence (clothing, objects, etc.). [Form 12]
- ☐ Review and retain relevant video surveillance footage. [Form 12]
- ☐ Conduct searches only if in accordance with applicable laws and school board policies:
  - ☐ For students: requires reasonable suspicion and proportionate scope.
  - ☐ For employees: requires reasonable suspicion; scope must be limited and job-related.
    - ☐ Obtain consent when possible.
    - ☐ Ensure compliance with collective bargaining agreements, if applicable.
- ☐ Follow chain-of-custody procedures for drug testing or sensitive evidence.
- ☐ Do NOT use polygraphs or voice stress tests unless clearly authorized and consented to in writing.
- ☐ Avoid threats, coercion, or promises of immunity.

VIII. Investigation Report [Form 13]

- ☐ Summarize allegations and parties involved.
- ☐ Summarize interview contents.
- ☐ List and analyze all evidence collected.
- ☐ Identify findings of fact.
- ☐ Conclude if policy violation occurred.
- ☐ If appropriate, provide any recommendations (e.g., referral for discipline).

IX. Confidentiality & Retaliation

- ☐ Remind all parties of confidentiality requirements.
- ☐ Instruct that retaliation is strictly prohibited.
- ☐ Monitor for signs of retaliation and intervene as needed.

X. Closing the Investigation

- ☐ Determine whether to share findings summary (per school board policy and confidentiality requirements).
- ☐ If student discipline results, notify parents/guardians if required.
- ☐ File all documents per retention policy.