

Cedar Rapids Community School District  
Purchasing Card Program Manual  
Effective July 1, 2004  
Revised September 15, 2014

### **Executive Summary**

**Purpose:** Use of Purchasing Cards is a cost-effective way to reduce the administrative costs associated with making frequent and low dollar purchases. The purpose of the Purchasing Card program is to provide a cost effective purchasing tool to authorized District staff to efficiently and effectively expedite the purchasing process. Purchasing Cards will be made available to employees based upon need as determined by the appropriate District Administrator.

**History:** The District began the Purchasing Card Program officially in September 2004. The program has grown from a few Purchasing Cards used by the Purchasing and Accounting Departments, the Five Seasons Day Care program, and District Special Services to a program with 259 cards in circulation and an annual spend for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2014 of \$1,180,919.56.

**Purchasing Card Administration:** Due to the size of this program, it is essential that effective internal controls are in place to provide assurances to the Board of Education and the school community at large, that the Cedar Rapids Community School District is managing a program of fiscal integrity at the highest level with emphasis on responsible stewardship of public funds.

Effective administration of the Purchasing Card program is critical in maintaining a program of integrity. It is reliant on the responsible actions of all District staff who are involved in the program as listed below.

- The Purchasing Card Administrator within the Purchasing Department will have overall District responsibility for the Purchasing Card program and will be responsible for all day-to-day operations of the program.
- The Accounting Department will be responsible for review of the Purchasing Card program at the transaction level. All Purchasing Card activity is reviewed for appropriateness.
- The Purchasing Cardholder and Cardholder's direct supervisor bear responsibility for appropriate use and oversight.

**Related Policies:** These guidelines are intended to work in conjunction with other relevant District policies including, but not limited to:

- Purchasing – Bidding , Proposal and Quotation: Procedure 702.1a
- District Purchasing Cards: Regulation 704.6
- Expense Reimbursement: Policy 705
- Guidelines Governing Expenses: Regulation 705.1

The accompanying Purchasing Card Program Manual, as well as all related policies above, is available on the District Website at:

<http://intranet.cr.k12.ia.us/purchasing/purchasing.asp>

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### **Guidelines**

It is the intent of the District's Purchasing Card program to establish a set of operating rules, guidelines, and procedures to minimize instances of card misuse and maximize its benefits to the organization. It is incumbent upon all employees who wish to maintain their privilege of using the District Purchasing Card to act as good stewards of public funds.

These program guidelines govern the process by which Purchasing Cards are issued, utilized, and processed. These guidelines also detail the responsibilities of the Cardholders, supervisors, and management in ensuring that all Purchasing Card transactions are appropriate, authorized, and recorded in a timely manner.

### **Issuance**

Issuance of a Purchasing Card will be initiated by the potential Cardholder's supervisor and will require employee training and a signed **Purchasing Card Employee Agreement**.

### **Purchasing Card Limits and Restrictions**

Unless otherwise requested and approved, Purchasing Cards will have a single item transaction limit of \$5,000 and a monthly limit of \$20,000. Purchases are not to be split into multiple transactions in order to circumvent single transaction limits.

To request higher limits, the desired limits and the reason for the higher limits should be stated on the Purchasing Card Employee Request Form. To increase limits after a card has been issued, contact the Purchasing Card Administrator. For specific transactions or events, limits can be increased on a temporary basis by contacting the Purchasing Card Administrator and providing the specific information.

#### **Acceptable uses**

- Office supplies (after first checking for the availability through district contracted pricing)
- Professional/Educational subscriptions
- Educational supplies
- Books
- Instructional games and classroom activities
- Professional education or training seminars
- Buildings and Grounds Cardholders: Maintenance supplies, repairs, & services
- Travel related expenditures (Do not use the Purchasing Card to refuel personal vehicles.)
- Other instructional related supplies and materials. (No items are to be purchased if available through the warehouse. e.g., toilet tissue/copy paper)

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All Purchasing Cardholders should use Procedure 702.1a “Purchasing – Bidding, Proposal and Quotations” as a guide for appropriate Purchasing Card use. Select a vendor based upon best price, quality and service. Employees are expected to compare multiple vendors whenever possible and practical in an effort to ensure that the best value is obtained.

### **Use of the District Purchasing Card for Registration Fees and Travel Expenses**

- The Purchasing Card may be used for registration fees and travel expenses following guidelines established in Board Policy 705: Expense Reimbursement, and Board Regulation 705.1: Guidelines Governing Expenses. If the Purchasing Card is used to pay for meals when traveling, the District meal limits apply.
  - Meal tax: As long as the total cost of the meal, including sales tax and reasonable tip (suggested to be for no more than 15% of the food bill), do not exceed District established rates as detailed in Board Regulation 705.1, the use of the card is acceptable under these circumstances.
- A detailed itemized receipt must be scanned in PDF file format and electronically attached to each transaction. The receipt must match the dollar amount of the single transaction.
- No personal purchases at a hotel: Movie charges, personal phone calls, water, or bar charges should NOT be charged to the Purchasing Card.
- Lodging documentation required: Final Check Out statement, showing an itemization of all nightly room charges, taxes, and other business related expenses.
- Airfare documentation required: Itinerary showing routing, dates, and class of service.
- Rental cars documentation required: Final itemized receipt given upon return of car, showing an itemization of all charges, including daily/weekly rate, refueling charges, etc. The rental agreement given at the time of rental is not sufficient. Additional/optional insurance coverage is NOT an allowable charge.

### **Inappropriate Purchasing Card Use and Consequences**

The following categories constitute inappropriate use of a Purchasing Card:

- 1. Personal Use:** Use of District Purchasing Cards to pay for expenditures not specifically related to official school business shall be deemed personal expenditures and are strictly prohibited. There may be instances where separating personal expenditures from approved District expenditures on a vendor/merchant invoice is not possible. In those instances, personal expenditures shall be reimbursed to the District immediately. (Refer to Credit Cards/Purchasing Cards: Regulation 704.6)
- 2. Use in Violation of Public Purpose:** District funds are to be expended only for legitimate public purposes and not for private personal gain for which services of comparable value have not been rendered to the District. (See details on page 5.)

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- 3. Failure to Provide Appropriate Documentation:** Every month an email notification is sent to all Cardholders and the Cardholder's online approver stating that electronically reconciled and approved transactions are due to Accounting by the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month, NO EXCEPTIONS. (See details on page 8.) Cardholders are expected to monitor transactions and allocate expenses on a regular basis to ensure accuracy and efficiency. Regular monitoring of your transactions (recommended twice per week) will detect fraud early and reduce the additional time needed to address any discrepancies. Purchasing Card and Fuel Card transactions post within 1-3 business days.

### CONSEQUENCES

The following consequences will be enforced for inappropriate use of a Purchasing Card

- **First violation:** The Cardholder's account will be placed on hold status and will not be reactivated until all charges have been reimbursed and all appropriate documentation is received. Cardholder's supervisor will be notified.
- **Second violation:** The Cardholder's account will be suspended for six months. Cardholder's supervisor will be notified and will be encouraged to provide the employee with a verbal warning.
- **Third violation:** The Cardholder's account will be terminated. Cardholder's supervisor will be notified. A written reprimand by the supervisor will be put in the Cardholder's employee personnel file.

Loss of Purchasing Card privileges includes acting as an approver for other Cardholder's purchasing activity.

**Loaning a Purchasing Card is strictly forbidden.** In the event of violation, the Cardholder's account will be immediately terminated. Cardholder's supervisor will be notified. A written reprimand by the supervisor will be put in the Cardholder's employee personnel file.

### Consequence Appeal process

In the event that a Cardholder feels that a levied consequence for card misuse can be appropriately defended based upon unique circumstances, the Cardholder has the right to appeal for reconsideration. The Cardholder may request an appeal hearing to defend their position. Please direct all requests for appeals to the Purchasing Card Administrator who will arrange for an appeal hearing.

**Appeal Hearing:** An appeal hearing will include an opportunity for the Cardholder to provide an explanation of the circumstances related to their card usage in question. The Purchasing Card Administrator will first state the findings of fact that led to the

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consequence for card misuse. The employee will then follow with an explanation of the circumstances.

A Purchasing Card Appeal Panel composed of the Superintendent or designee, a member of the Superintendent's Cabinet whose supervisory responsibilities are most closely aligned with the Cardholder in question, and the Executive Director – Business Services, will have sole voting rights to make the appropriate determination under the circumstances.

If a member of the Purchasing Card Appeal Panel is the Cardholder who is the subject of the appeal hearing, then another member of the Superintendent's Cabinet will be chosen by the Superintendent or designee to act as a voting member of the Purchasing Card Appeal Panel and participate in the decision making process. The number of voting members on the Purchasing Card Appeal Panel will be three in all circumstances and be composed of the Superintendent or designee and two other members of the Superintendent's Cabinet. The decision of the Purchasing Card Appeal Panel shall be final.

**Detail regarding Purchasing Card use in violation of Public Purpose:**

All funds received by the District are considered public funds and must be used to support the educational mission of the District. The best test to use when determining whether the expenditure is appropriate is called the "public scrutiny test." The test is simple and merely asks whether the tax-paying public would view the expenditure as necessary to support public education. **If you are already questioning whether the expenditure is appropriate, it may very well not be appropriate.** Contact your supervisor if you have any questions about appropriate expenses.

This section identifies specific practices and procedures to be followed by all District employees when using public funds. The following list is intended to provide examples and may not be all inclusive.

## **I. Food and Refreshments**

### **A. Alcohol**

The purchase of alcohol is never an acceptable use of public monies.

### **B. Meetings and Conferences**

Meals and snacks are normally a personal expense. Any meal or snack paid for with public funds must be a reasonable price and an integral part of employment duties.

Meals and snacks can be paid for with public funds if:

- A. The meeting is four (4) hours or more and separate breaks would be disruptive to the meeting objectives.

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- B. The meeting is a breakfast, lunch or dinner meeting where the meeting is shorter than four hours in duration and attendance during meal time(s) is a requirement of an employee's job duties.

**The number of District employees in attendance for this meeting where food is provided must be noted on the receipt.** All food receipts must be itemized – this includes catered meals.

**C. Coffee and Beverages**

Coffee and other beverages are normally a personal expense. A voluntary collection can be made from those who desire to have coffee and other beverages in the school/department. Except for meetings and conferences (Item B), public areas (Item G), and School Board meetings (Item H), coffee and beverages shall not be purchased with public funds.

**D. Employee Break Room Supplies**

Public funds should not be used to stock supplies such as plastic ware and paper products in employee break rooms. A voluntary collection can be made from those who desire to have such supplies.

**E. Individual Receptions**

Receptions for individual employees should never be paid from public funds. This includes retirement dinners, staff meals, welcome aboard receptions, and similar gatherings where food and/or refreshments may be served. Voluntary collections can be taken from those attending such gatherings.

**F. Acceptable Occasions**

The School Board and/or Superintendent may determine that the serving of food or refreshments is appropriate for selected occasions. The annual retirement reception for all District employees is one example.

**G. Public Areas**

In some cases, a building or part of a building is routinely open to the public for conducting District business. The Superintendent's Office and school principals' offices are such locations. Having refreshments of nominal value available to members of the public, such as coffee and other nominal snacks/beverages, are considered a courtesy and are authorized in these specific locations.

**H. School Board Meetings**

The School Board meets at a time that is intended to be convenient for the general public. Meetings routinely span the normal dinner hour. Serving meals of reasonable value to Board members and staff required to attend Board meetings is considered an appropriate expense.

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## **I. Student Incentives**

Incentives purchased for qualifying groups of students from public funds as part of an initiative, program, or recognition (e.g., rewards, honor roll) shall be of nominal value and authorized by the school principal.

## **II. Gifts**

### **A. Employee Gifts**

Expenditures of public funds for gifts, or gift cards to staff and employees are not authorized. This includes gifts purchased for staff birthdays or other personal occasions. Voluntary collections from staff would be an acceptable way of purchasing employee gifts.

### **B. Tokens/Clothing**

The purchase of tokens of appreciation, or personal clothing (e.g., coffee mugs, pens, tote bags, T-shirts/apparel, etc.) is not authorized.

## **III. Flowers**

### **A. Sympathy and Congratulations**

The use of public funds for the purchase of flowers is restricted to the few occasions where a public expression of sympathy or congratulations has been determined by the School Board or the Superintendent to be in the best interests of the District. Personal donations can be made in lieu of flowers if requested by the family. Written expressions of condolence are encouraged for all other occasions where flowers are not appropriate.

### **B. Individual Achievements**

Unless they are part of the award ceremony, flowers are not appropriate for individual achievements. Graduations have been an exception to this provision.

### **C. School Activities**

Flowers/decorations purchased for proms, dances, homecomings, etc., may be purchased out of school activity funds if authorized by the school principal.

## **IV. Awards and Recognition**

### **A. District Awards and Recognition**

At times, awards or tokens of recognition are appropriate for presentation to District staff in recognition of service. District awards or tokens of recognition shall be determined by the School Board and/or the Superintendent or designee in advance and shall be paid for with "central" District funds under the control of the Superintendent or designee. Public funds should not be used for the purchase of department or building level staff awards or tokens of recognition.

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**B. External Awards and Recognition**

At times, awards are appropriate for presentation to people (e.g., volunteers) or organizations external to the District. External awards or tokens of recognition shall be determined by the School Board and/or the Superintendent in advance.

**V. Break Room Equipment**

Microwaves, refrigerators, coffee pots, toaster ovens and other similar equipment items may be procured with public funds for use in public reception areas and employee break rooms. Otherwise, these items must be purchased with personal funds. In all instances, all fire marshal safety restrictions must be observed. These items are not authorized in classrooms and offices.

**VI. Holiday Decorations, Cards, and Parties**

**A. Holiday Decorations**

Office holiday decorations shall not be purchased with public funds.

**B. Holiday Cards**

Holiday cards shall not be purchased with public funds.

**C. Holiday Parties**

Staff holiday parties and meals are a personal expense. Voluntary collections may be taken to fund holiday events. Public funds shall not be used for holiday parties.

**VII. Student Activity Funds**

Student Activity Funds are public funds and are to be used to finance a program of co-curricular school activities supplementing, but not replacing, the activities provided by the District. Student Activity Funds are derived from the student body as a whole and shall be so expended to benefit the student body as a whole. General principles governing the appropriate use and management of Student Activity Funds is found within the District's Secondary School Activity Fund Accounting Manual at the following link.

<http://www.cr.k12.ia.us/services/businessServices/Accounting/Documents/Activity%20Fund%20Manual%20Revised%20July%202013.pdf>

**Detail regarding incomplete receipts or no receipts:**

Every month an email notification is sent to all Cardholders and the Cardholder's online approver stating that electronically reconciled and approved transactions are due to Accounting by the 7<sup>th</sup> of the month, NO EXCEPTIONS.

A detailed itemized receipt must be scanned in PDF file format and electronically attached to each transaction. The single receipt must match the dollar amount of the transaction. An acceptable receipt must include the vendor name, date, dollar amount, description of items purchased, and confirming payment made. Receipts for meals should always include the number of staff served and should be noted on the receipt

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before scanning. If a detailed itemized receipt is not obtained, or is lost, you must contact the vendor to request a detailed receipt/invoice. Only after all contact with the vendor has failed to provide the necessary receipt, you must then complete a substitute receipt form which is available from the Accounting Department. This completed form must be scanned and attached to the transaction.

## **The Purchasing Process**

### **How To: Make a Purchase**

The Purchasing Card may be used to purchase goods/services in person, over the phone or on the Internet (see **Internet Guidelines**).

1. Determine if the purchase is appropriate for a Purchasing Card transaction and within your dollar limits.
2. Select a vendor based upon best price, quality and service. **It is incumbent upon all employees who wish to maintain their privilege of using the District Purchasing Card to act as good stewards of public funds.** Employees are expected to compare multiple vendors whenever possible and practical in an effort to ensure that the best value is obtained.
3. **Sales Tax Exempt Purchases:** State that you are with Cedar Rapids Schools, that you will be using a Visa Card and that the District is **sales tax exempt**. If the vendor requests the tax-exempt number, it is **57-024028** and is printed on the Purchasing Card. If the vendor requests a tax-exempt certificate, they can request it directly from the Purchasing department at (319) 558-2321. If taxes are charged, the Cardholder is responsible for contacting the vendor and requesting a credit. If the vendor will be issuing a credit transaction, state this on the receipt before scanning and check subsequent transactions to be sure this credit has posted. **Always check the receipt before leaving the store.** If tax has been charged, the transaction will need to be canceled and reissued. Cash refunds are strictly prohibited. Keep both receipts for verification and scan and attach the matching receipt to the appropriate online transaction.

**Until all sales tax charged to your Purchasing Card has been credited or personally reimbursed, your Purchasing Card account will be placed on hold. When the credit receipt or the personal reimbursement has been received in Accounting, your Purchasing Card privileges will be reinstated.**

4. Clearly define your purchase requirements, determine availability, agree on a price (including shipping and handling costs) and order the item(s).

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5. Give the vendor the Purchasing Card number and expiration date, as well as your name, your school/department and complete delivery address. The billing address will always be: 2500 Edgewood Rd NW, Cedar Rapids IA 52405
6. Obtain a receipt. A detailed itemized receipt must be scanned in PDF file format and electronically attached to each transaction. The single receipt must match the dollar amount of the single transaction. An acceptable receipt must include the vendor name, date, dollar amount, description of items purchased, and confirming payment made.  
The following items, listed in priority order, will serve as a receipt.
  - Invoice
  - Register Receipt
  - Web Page Print Out

When receiving a shipment, it is the Cardholder's responsibility to promptly inspect the shipment to ensure that the order is complete and that the items are in an acceptable condition. Any visibly damaged goods should not be accepted. Suspected damaged goods should be noted on the bill of lading.

All packing slips and/or bills of lading should be retained as part of the purchase transaction documentation.

### **Internet Guidelines**

Cardholders must exercise discretion in selecting Internet vendors that are reputable in order to minimize the possibility of fraud. All guidelines apply for Internet purchases. Do not give out your Purchasing Card number online unless you have read and understand the vendor's privacy statement, disclaimer, warranty, terms and conditions. This will allow the Cardholder to understand the vendor's policies on purchases, deliveries, returns, etc. and provide an additional layer of protection for both the Cardholder and the District.

Prior to entering the Purchasing Card number onto an Internet website, the Cardholder should ensure that the site is secure. To identify whether an Internet website supports secure transmissions, the URL identifying the current page will always begin with https:// ("s" stands for secure) in lieu of the normal http://, and a secure symbol (solid key or closed yellow lock) will be displayed on your Internet browser. The https and secure symbol may not appear until you are at the checkout screen. All relevant information should be printed from the ordering screens if available.

An acceptable receipt and/or invoice for an internet purchase includes vendor name, date, dollar amount, description of item(s) and payment type. You may receive this receipt and/or invoice immediately following the submission of your order or it may be sent to you via email at a later date.

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Ex: AMAZON.com users will go to [www.amazon.com/your-account](http://www.amazon.com/your-account) and click to view their orders. Click “view order” next to the appropriate order. A button to print an invoice will appear on the next page.

Please be aware that not all vendors are the same. You may need to contact the vendor directly in order to obtain a complete receipt and/or invoice.

**Order confirmations are not a guarantee of the final purchase and are NOT an acceptable receipt and/or invoice.**

If you have placed an online order with a vendor and any of the following take place:

1. You do not receive the order within a reasonable amount of time after the promised delivery date (generally one week) and you are unable to contact the vendor
2. The phone number on the website is no longer in service
3. The vendor goes out of business

Call US Bank Customer Service at 800-344-5696 immediately to determine if cancellation of your Purchasing Card is necessary. The Cardholder will receive assistance from US Bank and/or the Purchasing Card Administrator in processing the dispute. If US Bank notifies you that your Purchasing Card account has been cancelled and a new card will be issued, notify the Purchasing Card Administrator immediately.

**How To: Handle Returns or Exchanges**

The Cardholder is responsible for managing any returns and exchanges directly with the vendor and for ensuring that the proper credit is received from the vendor for returned merchandise.

1. Cash refunds are strictly prohibited. Any credits or returns MUST be handled as an online credit transaction. Contact the vendor directly and obtain instructions for returns and exchanges.
2. Return or exchange the item in person at the store or ship it.
3. Review future online transactions to ensure that your Purchasing Card account is properly credited.
4. Credits must be reconciled the same as any online transaction. If an item was returned to the vendor for credit, the transaction showing receipt of the item and the subsequent transaction showing credit for the returned item must be charged to the same account code.

**How To: Handle Disputed Charges**

If there is a charge that is not recognized by the Cardholder or if it appears to be incorrect, the Cardholder must seek resolution with the vendor immediately. Common examples of disputes are: goods not received, damaged items, merchandise was returned,

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duplicate or incorrect charges. Please note the reason for the discrepancy on the receipt before scanning.

If the problem cannot be resolved with the vendor, call US Bank Customer Service at 800-344-5696. The **Cardholder Dispute Form** must be completed and forwarded to the Purchasing Card Administrator within 10 days. The Dispute Form will be sent to US Bank for review and temporary credit if needed. When US Bank has completed its investigation, the Cardholder will be informed of the resolution and any corrections that were made to their account.

**How To: Reconcile Your Online Purchasing Card Transactions**

The Purchasing Card is designed to facilitate point-of-sale purchases and streamline payment procedures for authorized Purchasing Cardholders. With this authority comes the responsibility for maintaining adequate documentation for each purchase. All purchases, whether in person, by telephone, fax or Internet must have a detailed itemized receipt.

US Bank provides an online system called Access Online for reporting and reviewing Purchasing Card transactions. All Cardholders will receive training on the use of Access Online. Transactions are updated daily and can be accessed by Cardholders and the Cardholder's online approver at any time. Cardholders are expected to monitor transactions and allocate expenses on a regular basis to ensure accuracy and efficiency. Regular monitoring of your transactions (recommended twice per week) will detect fraud early and reduce the additional time needed to address any discrepancies. Purchasing Card and Fuel Card transactions post within 1-3 business days.

On a monthly basis each Cardholder with a transaction for that billing cycle will receive an email from US Bank stating the availability to view a new online statement. It is strongly recommended that you **not** wait for this notification before reconciling your transactions. **Monitor your transactions often.** Reconciled and approved transactions may be electronically sent to Accounting upon completion, but **all transactions within a billing cycle** (which is the 26<sup>th</sup> of the month to the 25<sup>th</sup> of the following month) must be electronically sent to Accounting by the 7<sup>th</sup> day of the month.

The reconciled online transaction must include:

- A detailed itemized receipt scanned in PDF file format and electronically attached to the transaction. The dollar amount of the single receipt scanned for that transaction must match the amount of the transaction.
- An expense description.
- An account code allocated for each transaction.
- If a description of a charge is not clear as to what was ordered, please provide further clarification on the receipt before scanning and attaching.

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The Cardholder's online approver must review and electronically approve each online transaction receipt and account number that has been assigned. The Cardholder's online approver may electronically reject the transaction for any reason which will then send the transaction back to the Cardholder. The Cardholder's online approver will notify the Cardholder of the reason for the rejection in order for the transaction to be electronically reconciled with necessary changes and resubmitted for approval.

The Accounting department will review each Purchasing Card transaction.

All original Purchasing Card receipts must be retained in the school/department for two years. Do not send paper receipts and documentation to the Accounting department.

### **Purchasing Card Security**

The Purchasing Card is District property. Keep your Purchasing Card in a secure location and guard the card number against use by unauthorized individuals in the same manner you would safeguard your personal credit card. The only person entitled to use a Purchasing Card is the person whose name appears on the face of the card. **Do not lend your card or give the number to another employee to use.**

If the Cardholder is expected to be absent for 30 days or more, please notify the Purchasing Card Administrator. The card will be inactivated to safeguard the account.

### **How To: Report a Lost or Stolen Card**

In the event of a lost or stolen card, the Cardholder must notify US Bank by calling 800-344-5696 immediately. The Purchasing Card Administrator must also be notified. US Bank will immediately close the account, transfer account information to a new account number and issue a replacement card. A Purchasing Card may also be replaced by calling the Purchasing Card Administrator directly.

### **Employee Leave of Absence, Transfers, Terminations and Retirements**

The Cardholder's supervisor must notify the Purchasing Card Administrator in writing in the event a Cardholder takes a leave of absence for 30 days or more, transfers to another school/department, is terminated, or retires. In the event of a leave of absence, the Purchasing Card account will be put on hold until the Cardholder's return. It is the supervisor's responsibility to collect the Purchasing Card from transferred, terminated and retired employees. Cut the card in half and send to the Purchasing Card Administrator.

Upon notification of a Cardholder's assignment to another District position, the Purchasing Card Administrator will notify the new supervisor of the need for a new Purchasing Card Employee Request Form to be completed and approved if it is deemed necessary for the transferred employee to use a Purchasing Card in their new position.