

Gwinnett
County
Public
Schools

Personnel Handbook

Division of Human Resources

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Foundational Elements of Gwinnett County Public Schools

Last revised July 2010

GCPS' Vision: What we aspire to be...

Gwinnett County Public Schools will become a system of world-class schools where students acquire the knowledge and skills to be successful as they continue their education at the postsecondary level and/or enter the workforce.

GCPS' Mission: Why we exist, our core business...

The mission of Gwinnett County Public Schools is to pursue excellence in academic knowledge, skills, and behavior for each student, resulting in measured improvement against local, national, and world-class standards.

GCPS' Strategic Goals: The plan for achieving our mission

- Ensure a world-class education for all students by focusing on teaching and learning the Academic Knowledge and Skills (AKS) curriculum.
- Ensure a safe, secure, and orderly environment for all.
- Optimize student achievement through responsible stewardship of its financial resources and the proactive pursuit of all resource necessary to meet current and future demands.
- Recruit, employ, develop, and retain a workforce that achieves the mission and goals of the organization.
- Meet the continuing and changing demand for essential information through technological systems and processes that support effective performance and desired results.
- Provide and manage the system's facilities and operations in an exemplary manner as determined by programmatic needs and best management practices.
- Apply continuous quality improvement strategies and principles as the way the organization does business.

Core beliefs of the Gwinnett County Board of Education

- Our core business is teaching and learning.
- All children can learn at or above grade level.
- All children should reach their learning potential.
- The school effect is important and has a profound impact on every child's life.
- A quality instructional program requires a rigorous curriculum, effective teaching, and ongoing assessment.
- All children should be taught in a safe and secure learning environment.

Commitments of the Gwinnett County Board of Education

- Gwinnett County Public Schools will give its core business, teaching, and learning, priority over all other functions of the organization.
- All GCPS students will learn at or above grade level.
- All GCPS students will reach their learning potential.
- The school effect is important and Gwinnett County Public Schools will have a positive impact on every child's life.
- GCPS will have a quality instructional program that includes a rigorous curriculum, effective teaching, and ongoing assessment.
- All GCPS students will be taught in a safe and secure learning environment.

Message from the CEO/Superintendent

Last revised July 2010

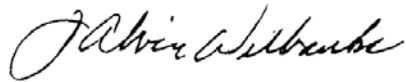
Gwinnett County Public Schools is the centerpiece of our vibrant community. In fact, the quality of our school system contributes greatly to the economic, cultural, and social vitality of Gwinnett County. That said, our employees play a critical role in the success of the school district. Let me welcome you and encourage you, as a new employee, to learn more about this outstanding organization.

Our core business is teaching and learning, and we believe the quality of our personnel is the most important factor in providing a quality education for the students of our community. Whether you are a teacher or someone who supports teaching and learning, you were selected as an employee because we believe the knowledge and skills you possess will assist our school system in meeting its mission.

This handbook highlights opportunities available to GCPS employees, communicates compensation and benefits information, and summarizes Gwinnett County Board of Education policies and procedures. Complete policy and procedure manuals are available and your supervisor can advise you of their location at your work site. As is characteristic of all dynamic organizations, changes in policies and procedures will occur. These changes are communicated to all employees in an effort to keep you fully informed about matters that affect you on the job. I urge you to read the Personnel Handbook and other information available to you as you take steps to be an engaged employee.

Again, thank you for being a part of our GCPS team and for all that you will do to support Gwinnett County students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "J. Alvin Wilbanks". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

J. Alvin Wilbanks
CEO/Superintendent

Communication with Employees and the Community

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Employees are recognized for their honors, promotion, and teaching techniques through internal communication vehicles, including publications such as *Torch*, *Education Briefs*, and *Spotlight*; the district's website (<http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us>) and portal; and on GCPS TV. In addition, employee achievements are publicized through press releases prepared by the Department of Communication & Media Relations for distribution to all metro-area media. Any employee may submit information for recognition by sending it to the Department of Communication & Media Relations at the Instructional Support Center (ISC).

The Teacher Advisory Council (TAC), composed of one teacher representative from each school and the Local School Administrators Association (LSAA), an organization of principals and assistant principals, meet with the CEO/Superintendent at various times during the school year. Professional development advisory groups exist for both certified and classified employees. In addition, Cross Functional Action Teams, or XFATs, are convened to address specific concerns or solve problems in a collaborative manner.

During budget preparation, Gwinnett County Public Schools provides employees opportunities for input on financial matters through a number of channels. Representatives from the Gwinnett County Association of Educators (GCAE), the Gwinnett Chapter of the Professional Association of Educators (PAGE), TAC, and the LSAA make recommendations to the Board of Education and CEO/Superintendent as part of the budget-setting process. Any employee may give input on the budget by attending the School Board's public hearings or by sending recommendations to the Chief Financial Officer for the Business and Finance Division.

Parents and citizens have direct channels to provide input to their School Board representatives through attendance at monthly Board meetings and at Area Board meetings held throughout the county. Gwinnett County Public Schools shares information through the system wide parent newsletter, *Communiqué*, through e-newsletters, and via the district's website and GCPS TV. Additionally, each school produces its own newsletter. Ongoing, two-way communication between the school system and its internal and external publics and positive media relations are continually stressed throughout Gwinnett County Public Schools.

Opportunities

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Individuals employed by Gwinnett County Public Schools are selected by a systematic personnel screening process designed to identify highly qualified candidates. This same commitment to quality is reflected as the system plans for enhancement of the skills and competencies of employees. Professional growth opportunities are coordinated by the Department of Staff Development.

Staff Development

The Department of Staff Development provides professional growth opportunities, products, and services that are designed to advance the system's vision, mission, and goals; to enhance employee performance; and to develop employee capacity to lead in a system of world-class schools. We are committed to the development and support of professional learning that is research-based, data-driven, student-focused, continuous, and sustainable over time.

GCPS offers a plethora of staff development experiences and opportunities for teachers in content, pedagogy, and processes. These opportunities are sponsored and offered by the central office curriculum departments and/or the local school. Teachers will have multiple venues for gaining the knowledge and skills necessary to provide exceptional instruction to the students of our district.

Our commitment and belief that learning is a life-long journey is evident in our Board Policy, [Policy GAD](#), which requires all GCPS employees to earn 20 staff development contact hours annually. These contact hours should align directly to the vision, mission, and goals of the district, LSPI goals, RBES goals, and/or area of certification. They are earned through participation in local school staff development sessions, district-sponsored opportunities, and/or external offerings from approved agencies. For information on upcoming district wide staff development opportunities, refer to the online staff development catalog via the Lotus Notes database or contact the Staff Development Department at 678-301-7095.

Leadership Development

The Leadership Development Department provides training and development for GCPS leadership staff under the umbrella of the Quality-Plus Leader Academy (QPLA). School and district-level leaders participate in varied activities such as the Certified Quality Leader Training (CQLT), Leadership Seminars, and Just-In-Time Training. Monthly leadership development meetings cover a range of topics pertinent to principals, assistant principals, and district-level leaders. Additionally, the QPLA Aspiring Principal Program (APP) and Aspiring Leader Program (ALP) prepare future principals and assistant principals for GCPS. These programs develop leaders, readying them to lead 21st century schools focused on pursuing improvement and raising student achievement. New assistant principals and administrative interns participate in New Administrator Orientation and evaluation training (GTEP) in July. Each year, the professional learning for school and district-level leaders culminates with the annual Summer Leadership Conference. The conference provides leaders with the opportunity to learn from distinguished, nationally known leaders as well as from other administrators and teachers.

Performance Appraisal

Gwinnett County Public Schools is committed to performance assessment that encourages continuous quality improvement for all employees. All personnel shall have their performance evaluated annually as required by Georgia Code §20-2-210. Certified educators are assessed under state and/or locally developed evaluation programs. Classified employees are assessed through a locally developed evaluation program.

Certification

It is the responsibility of all certified employees to obtain and maintain Georgia certification. Certification forms and information are available at the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) website, <http://www.gapsc.com/>.

All paraprofessionals must hold a Paraprofessional Certificate issued by the Georgia PSC. Certification requirements may be found at the Georgia PSC website, <http://www.gapsc.com/>.

Questions regarding certification should be directed to the GCPS Certification Office. Please see the GCPS Directory on the PikeLN03 server for phone numbers and addresses.

Licensing

All vehicle operators covered by the commercial driver's licensing laws must have a valid Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and must successfully complete the training course prescribed by the State Department of Transportation and Gwinnett County Public Schools. Other specialized positions may also require licensing.

Employee Recognition

Gwinnett County Public Schools employees frequently receive recognition for awards and achievements of various national, state, and local accomplishments. Professional associations regularly recognize GCPS teachers for their excellence. Additionally, each school chooses a Teacher of the Year nominee, from which a GCPS Teacher of the Year is named.

School system newsletters prepared by the Communication and Media Relations Department, highlight employee honors and promotions. In addition, the school system shares employee and school/system accomplishments with the local news media.

Compensation

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To attract and retain the most qualified teachers and support personnel, Gwinnett County Public Schools maintains competitive salaries by conducting regular individual job and market analysis of Metro Atlanta school districts as well as Metro Atlanta employers.

Payday/Direct Deposit

Most employees are paid monthly with earning statements issued online through the go.gwinnett portal at <https://go.gwinnett.k12.ga.us> on the last workday of the month. *Employees may sign up for direct deposit through the Payroll Office.*

Penalty for Failure to Provide Certification

The employment contracts issued to certified staff are contingent upon the employee securing and continuing to hold a valid certificate issued by the State of Georgia. Salary adjustments will be made to conform to the certificate level approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Certificated staff are required to hold a valid Georgia certificate in the field to which assigned. If a person is unable to be appropriately certified, the daily rate of pay may be adjusted to the substitute teacher rate from the date of employment or the date the certificate became invalid, whichever is most recent.

Penalty for Failure to Meet Contractual Obligation

If fewer than twenty days of service are rendered under contract, the daily rate may be equal to the substitute teacher rate.

Vacations and Holidays

Employees who earn vacation will accumulate hours based on the schedule below. Other employees follow the holiday schedule on the annual GCPS Employee Calendar.

Vacation

Continuous Years of Service in Gwinnett County Public Schools	Time Accumulated Each Year
Years 1 - 5	96 hours (12 days)
Years 6 - 10	120 hours (15 days)
Years 11 - 15	144 hours (18 days)
Years 16 - 20	160 hours (20 days)
Over 20 years	184 hours (23 days)

Holidays

- New Year's Day (1)
- Martin Luther King Jr. Day (1)
- Spring Holiday (1)
- Memorial Day (1)
- Independence Day (1)
- Labor Day (1)
- Thanksgiving (2)
- Winter Holidays (See Calendar)

Benefits

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Benefits are a large part of the total compensation package for Gwinnett County Public School employees. In order to meet the ever-changing needs of our employees, we are continuously reviewing and updating these benefits and their features. The following is an overview of the benefits provided by GCPS. Because of the importance of the benefits package, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the details of the various plans from a variety of sources, including the Employee Benefit Highlights booklet, State Health's New Employee Decision Guide, and Benefit Bulletin newsletters. These publications, along with other detailed information, can be found on the GCPS Benefits Center website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/benefits>.

Open Enrollment (OE) is the period each year when employees may enroll or change options or coverage, subject to the conditions described in the plan. The OE period, unless otherwise announced, occurs mid-October through mid-November of each calendar year. Coverage changes or enrollments become effective the following January 1.

It is the responsibility of the employee to notify the Benefits & Leave Administration Office of any changes in the number of dependents and/or the names of beneficiaries.

Insurance Plans

Insurance benefits become effective on the first day of the month following the completion of one full calendar month of employment. Temporary employees (regular substitutes and miscellaneous employees) or employees who work less than 20 hours per week are not eligible for benefits.

Health Insurance

Benefit eligible employees have the opportunity to enroll in group health insurance provided by the State Health Benefit Plan. Individual and dependent coverage options are available. Information on all plans is available from the Benefits & Leave Administration Office or the Benefits Center website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/benefits>.

Dental Insurance

Optional dental coverage may be purchased for the individual employee and his/her family. Two plans are available: Basic or Premium Direct Reimbursement. Both plans offer a voluntary MetLife network of preferred dental providers. The Premium plan also offers orthodontia benefits. Be sure to contact Metlife at 1-800-942-0854 **before** beginning orthodontia treatment, as reimbursement rules for orthodontia treatment are different from those for routine dental care. Late entrant restrictions may apply to employees who decline enrollment at the time of hire and enroll through a subsequent Open Enrollment.

Vision Insurance

Vision insurance covers the cost of eye exams and other services and materials through the EyeMed vision care network. Using in-network providers allows enrollees to receive care at no cost or minimal out-of-pocket expense. The plan also includes an out-of-network benefit that allows enrollees to use any eye care professional. The out-of-network feature reimburses 50% of eligible expenses up to a total reimbursement of \$300. A complete description of services provided by the plan is available on the Benefits Center website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/benefits>.

Disability Insurance

Voluntary Short-Term Disability coverage is available on a payroll deduction basis. An employee must have paid six monthly premiums in order to receive benefits for a medical disability. There are three levels of coverage: Basic (\$225 weekly benefit), Plan A (\$300 weekly benefit), and Plan B (\$500 weekly benefit). The weekly salary benefit may not exceed two-thirds of an employee's current salary. Short-term disability benefits begin the eighth day of disability and may continue for up to 26 weeks, provided an appropriate health care provider certifies the disability. Childbirth and complications of pregnancies are also covered. Short-Term Disability benefits may be received in conjunction with sick leave usage.

GCPS employees contribute 1% of their salary to the Gwinnett Retirement System (GRS) for mandatory Long-Term Disability coverage. The benefit is 60% of the employee's salary at the time of disability. However, benefits do not begin until at least six months from the actual date of disability. Disability benefits from GRS will be reduced dollar for dollar by income received from other sources, such as, but not limited to, Worker's Compensation, pension plans, and Social Security. Complete information about the LTD plan and GRS is available from the GCPS Retirement Department or the website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/grs>.

Life Insurance

Benefit eligible employees are automatically covered by a \$15,000 group term Life and Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy provided by the Board at no cost to the employee, and underwritten by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company (MetLife). Additionally,

an employee may purchase Supplemental Life insurance up to six times his/her annual salary, up to \$500,000. Employees may also purchase a \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000 dependent life insurance policy.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

GCPS employees may deduct up to \$5,000 in pre-tax dollars per plan year to pay for eligible non-reimbursed health care expenses and qualifying dependent care expenses. Special care must be taken in predicting out-of-pocket expenses for either the health care or dependent care plans as any unused portion of both FSA will be forfeited at the end of the plan year. The entire election for the health care FSA is available on the first day of the plan year as services are provided. Dependent Care expenses are reimbursed up to the accumulated payroll deductions, as services are provided. Detailed information on both FSA plans, and lists of eligible expenses, can be found on the Benefits Center website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/benefits>.

Critical Illness/Cancer Plus

Benefit eligible employees may enroll in the Critical Illness/Cancer Plus insurance plan, which supplements health care and disability plans by helping with costs associated with a critical illness. Benefits are paid directly to the employee in a lump sum when diagnosis of a covered illness is confirmed. The specific covered illnesses include heart attack, stroke, major organ transplant, end-stage renal failure, and internal cancer. Coverage amounts are in \$5,000 increments, ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000, and rates are age-banded.

Group Legal Insurance

Benefit eligible employees may enroll in their choice of two plans. Both plans provide access to professional legal assistance for employees and family members. The Access Plan provides toll-free telephone access to a network attorney for help with legal questions. The Ultimate Advisor Plan is a comprehensive service that provides face-to-face consultation and legal assistance.

Employee Relocation Assistance

New and current GCPS employees may contact the Storey Morrow Company (SMC) to inquire about relocation assistance. SMC services include home sale and marketing assistance, home finding assistance, household goods transportation coordination, and area orientation tours. Storey Morrow may be contacted directly at 678-584-5435 or 1-877-325-1010, or accessed through the Benefits Center website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/benefits>.

Other Benefits

Additional benefits are available to employees on an anytime basis. These include Universal Whole Life, Savings Bonds, AAA Auto Club South, Auto and Home Insurance, Credit Union, and Long-Term Care Insurance. Perkitz and Sparkfly websites also contain valuable service and entertainment information for employees. For information and contact numbers for these plans and services, access the Benefits Center website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/benefits>.

Tax Deferred Annuity and Other Investment Opportunities

GCPS offers employees the opportunity to participate in two tax deferred retirement savings plans - the 403(b) Plan and the 457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan. These plans allow employees to exclude a portion of their salary from taxable income. Payment of taxes on this money and on the investment income it earns is deferred until the money is withdrawn, generally at retirement. The Board has approved Lincoln Financial and VALIC to market these plans to employees. Further information about these companies may be obtained from the agent listed in the directory at the Retirement Center website <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/GRS/GRSWeb-App.nsf/pages/RetirementSavingsPlans>.

Gwinnett Federal Credit Union

As a convenience for employees of GCPS, payroll deductions are provided upon request for contributions or payments to the Gwinnett Federal Credit Union (FCU). For more information and phone numbers, please visit the Gwinnett FCU website at <http://www.gwinnettfcu.org/>.

Gwinnett Retirement System (GRS)

Effective January 1, 1983, Gwinnett County Public Schools elected to withdraw from the Social Security System. The Gwinnett Retirement System was developed to offer employees benefits comparable to Social Security benefits at a greatly reduced cost to the employee. This plan provides a retirement income that supplements the state retirement programs. Further details can be found at the website <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/grs>.

Some highlights of the Gwinnett plan are:

- Lifetime income at retirement.
- Benefits may increase up to 3% annually based on cost of living index.
- Full benefits begin at age 65.
- An employee is vested after five years of service.
- Survivor benefits.

- If disabled while employed, an employee can collect benefits which, when added to benefits from other sources, equal 60% of salary.
- The Board contributes 4.88% of an employee's salary for retirement benefits and the employee contributes 1% of earnings to provide for long-term disability coverage.

Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS)

Teachers, administrators, supervisors, clerical employees, paraprofessionals, and various Central Office staff are eligible members of TRS. Benefits become available after 30 years of service, regardless of age, at 25 years of service with early retirement penalties, or at age 60, after ten years of service. Employees who have 9 ½ years of service earn disability retirement benefits if permanently disabled, as well as survivor's benefits that are paid to a beneficiary. Effective July 1, 2010, employees contribute 5.53% of their eligible earnings and the school system contributes 10.28%. Additional information about TRS is available at <http://www.trsga.com>.

Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS)

Bus drivers, food service employees, some non-supervisory maintenance and custodial personnel, and other employees not eligible for membership in TRS are eligible for membership in the Public School Employees Retirement System. Retirement benefits are available for members who are 60 years of age with at least ten years of creditable service. Members contribute \$4.00 per month for nine months each year, and the state makes the employer's contribution. Further information is available at <http://www.ers.ga.gov>.

Medicare

All employees hired after April 1, 1986, are required to pay Medicare contributions, which provide the medical benefits within the Social Security Administration.

Liability Insurance

The Board of Education provides professional liability insurance for its employees, which may provide for legal expenses and damages that may arise from suits brought against employees for incidents that occur while they are carrying out assigned duties of the district.

Workers' Compensation

Employees may be entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits if injured on the job. The injury must arise out of and in the course of employment. The injured employee must provide notice of the injury immediately, but no later than 30 days after the accident, to the employer, the employer's representative, or the employee's immediate supervisor. Failure to do so may result in the loss of benefits. The injured employee may select a medical care provider from the list posted by the Board of Education. Only those providers listed are authorized to provide medical care for a work-related injury. The Panel of Physicians is posted in conspicuous places in all locations maintained by the Board of Education and may be obtained through the Risk Management Office.

Generally, employees are not eligible for Workers' Compensation benefits for injuries sustained: going to or coming from work; during deviations from the scope of employment (e.g., employee making a delivery drives to a place unconnected to the employment); as a consequence of imported danger (e.g., employee's own attire or a personal weapon causes injury to self); an employee engaging in a prohibited act; an employee engaging in horseplay; during recreational or social activities; and during times in which the employee is not subject to the employer's control (e.g., not on the premises, not during the regularly scheduled work day). Questions may be addressed to an immediate supervisor or Risk Management personnel.

Leave

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Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) recognizes that our employees will encounter personal situations that may require employees to take time away from their job. Our leave options are designed to not only be flexible and consistent with employee needs but also to comply with state and federal laws.

Sick Leave

Sick leave for full-time employees is earned at the rate of 10 hours per month times the number of months worked. Sick leave may be accumulated up to a maximum of 1200 hours (150 days). An employee must be at work or on paid leave at least 13 days within a month to earn sick leave for that month. Employees working less than 40 hours per week earn a prorated share of sick leave. Temporary employees (substitutes and miscellaneous employees) or employees who work less than 20 hours per week are not eligible to accrue leave.

With the supervisor's approval, an employee may use sick leave for absences due to the following reasons:

- Illness (including childbirth) or injury;
- Adoption;
- Exposure to contagious diseases which might endanger others; or
- Illness, injury, or death in employee's immediate family (spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, in-law equivalents of the aforementioned and any relative residing in the employee's home). This provision also covers *in loco parentis* relationships.

Employees absent for unapproved reasons or absent after sick leave has been exhausted, will have their pay reduced based on the schedule appearing in Board [Policy GBRI](#).

Certified employees and bus drivers who transfer to GCPS from other Georgia public school systems may transfer up to 45 days of sick leave earned after July 1, 1978. In accordance with state statute, the transfer of leave must take place within one year of termination from the previous school system.

An employee may donate up to 10 days per year of sick leave to his/her spouse, who is also a GCPS employee, if the spouse's sick leave has been exhausted, and the following conditions are met:

- Must be for the purpose of maternity leave, illness, or death of a family member;
- Both employees must be contributing members of the GCPS Sick Leave Bank; and
- If requested, employees must provide certificate of illness or death.

Accrued sick leave balances at the time of retirement may be purchased from employees according to current Board policy with the following stipulations:

- Employee must have been employed full time for a minimum of nine months;
- Employee must request payment for unused leave within one year or forfeit all monies due; and
- Employees who have transferred sick leave from another Georgia school system must have worked for GCPS for at least one full contract year to be paid for unused sick leave.

Sick Leave Bank

The Sick Leave Bank (SLB) was established to provide additional sick leave to SLB members who have catastrophic personal illness, non-elective surgery, elective surgery with complications, or injury with debilitating consequences beyond their control, and who have exhausted their sick leave, vacation, and compensatory leave. The SLB is available to eligible employees who earn sick leave. Only those enrolled in the SLB for at least 90 days may apply to withdraw time from the bank. Applications for withdrawal of days from the SLB shall be sent to the Benefits and Leave Administration Office for approval. For detailed information regarding the Sick Leave Bank, please refer to Procedure P.GBRIB located on the Lotus Notes database.

Personal Leave

Up to three days of accumulated sick leave may be used each year for personal or professional reasons. Supervisory approval is required prior to the date of the planned absence. The employee is not required to disclose the specific purpose for the leave. Personal leave may not be taken when the presence of the employee is considered essential for effective school/school system operation. Teachers may not take personal leave on the day before or after a student holiday. Specific dates when personal leave is not permitted are published each year in the administrative bulletin. Personal leave may not be carried over from year to year; therefore, unused personal leave will be carried over as accumulated sick leave.

Personal Disability Leave

Except in emergency cases, a completed Leave Request Form, accompanied by a physician's statement, must be submitted to the Benefits and Leave Administration Office at least 30 days before the anticipated date of disability. Childbirth is classified as a disability.

If an employee wishes to discontinue work before the anticipated date of disability, the employee must notify, if possible, the Benefits and Leave Administration Office in writing 30 days before the leave is to begin. The employee will not be eligible for sick leave or short term disability benefits.

If an employee has been absent 10 consecutive working days and has not notified the Benefits and Leave Administration Office by completing a Leave Request Form, along with a written attending physician's statement or FMLA form certifying the disability and anticipated return to work date, his/her position is subject to being declared vacant and may result in employment termination.

Extended Leave of Absence

Employees who have completed at least three full years of service with GCPS are eligible for an extended leave of absence. No extended leaves of absence may exceed more than one calendar year unless approved by the CEO/Superintendent. Extended leaves may be granted for educational leave, health, and child-care, military, and political leave. Employees are entitled to return to active employment, contingent upon a vacancy in the field in which they were employed at the time leave was granted.

Military Duty Leave

Employees will be paid for a maximum period of 18 working days for ordered military duty as defined in Georgia Code §38-2-279, and while going to and returning from such duty.

Religious Leave

Leave for religious holidays may not exceed three days per fiscal year. The employee should make up the leave at a time mutually agreed upon by the employee and the supervisor.

Professional Leave for Certified Personnel

An employee may request leave to attend specific professional activities or to receive in-service training. Leave requests must be approved by the supervisor and submitted to the CEO/Superintendent or his designee for approval at least two weeks prior to the requested absence. Approval of the request does not commit the system to payment of any expenses. Professional leave may not total more than three days and will be deducted from the employee's three days of personal leave.

Returning From Leave

An employee who is returning to work after leave must notify the Human Resources Division in writing by March 15 of his/her intention to return for the following school year. The employee will be placed in a job comparable to the one held before the leave was taken. Employees, who have been on an extended leave without pay and did not participate in the annual benefits Open Enrollment process, must contact the Benefits and Leave Administration Office and schedule a *Return from Leave Benefits Orientation Session*.

When returning from disability leave, the employee must submit to the supervisor a release to work statement from the physician stating that the employee is able to perform the essential functions of the job.

Jury Duty, Subpoena, and Other Court Order

All district employees shall be allowed a leave of absence without loss of pay when they attend a judicial proceeding in response to a subpoena, summons for jury duty, and other court orders that require their attendance. Employees with jury duty shall not have the jury leave deducted from sick or personal leave, and no employee using jury duty leave shall be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute. Employees may also retain juror compensation.

Family and Medical Leave Act

GCPS is in full compliance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. The FMLA may grant qualified employees 60 working days of unpaid leave every twelve months, which may be used for the following purposes:

- Birth of a child;
- Adoption of a child or the placement of a foster child;
- Care for a sick spouse, child, or parent;
- Employee's own serious health condition; or
- Military service.

To be eligible for FMLA, an employee must have been employed by the district for at least 12 months and must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the prior twelve-month period.

The district requires that any leave request based on a family member's health condition, the employee's own health condition, or military caregiver status, be supported by the appropriate FMLA form. Additionally, an approved health care provider's release to return to work will be required for all employees who were on leave due to their own health condition.

The employee must provide at least 30 days notice of the employee's intention to take leave when possible. The employee should make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment in a manner that will not overly disrupt the operations of the district. With limited exceptions, any eligible employee who takes leave under FMLA is entitled to be restored to his/her job or an equivalent position.

Detailed information concerning FMLA is available through GCPS [Policies and Procedures](#), and the Benefits and Leave Administration Office.

Policies and Procedures

Last revised July 2010

Gwinnett County Public Schools recognizes the importance of meeting employee needs and utilizing employee abilities. For effective district operations, it is necessary that sound personnel policies are known and understood by all employees. These policies ensure consistency and fairness for all employees.

Policy modifications and clarifications are subject to change. These changes are communicated to employees through memos, administrative bulletins, meetings, electronic retrieval, and system publications. Policies summarized in this book are meant to provide employees with only a general overview of Board policy related to personnel.

This handbook, the salary schedule, and references to the number of days to be worked should not be considered an employment contract. Since it is the responsibility of each employee to understand GCPS Board policies and administrative procedures, if clarification of information contained in policies and procedures is needed, an immediate supervisor should be contacted for assistance.

A listing of each section of Board policies may be accessed on the GCPS website at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/polproc.nsf>. Employees may also access the Board policies and administrative procedures using the Lotus Notes database system on the PikeLN03 server.

Equal Opportunity Employment ([Policy GAAA](#))

It is the policy of the Board not to discriminate based on gender, age, race, color, disability, religion, or national origin in any educational program or other program, activity, or service or admissions to facilities operated by the Board or in the employment practices of the Board. It is the express policy of the Board to comply with all appropriate laws and regulations relating to discrimination now in effect or hereafter enacted including Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and all accompanying regulations.

Employee Background Checks ([Policy GAK](#))

All personnel employed on or after July 1, 2000, must be fingerprinted and successfully complete a criminal background check. Teachers, principals, and other certified personnel renewed after July 1, 2000, will also have a criminal background check made upon any certificate renewal application to the Professional Standards Commission. Non-certified personnel shall also have criminal background checks on a periodic basis, not to exceed every five years, using procedures and schedules to be determined by the CEO/Superintendent or his/her designee.

Contracts

Contracts for certified employees and other Board-approved personnel are issued for no more than one school year. For new, certified employees, a temporary contract for up to 200 days is issued pending the results from the criminal background check.

May 1 will be the deadline for release from contract. June 1 will be the deadline for release from contract for school years 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13. Exceptions may be made by the Chief Human Resources Officer, Division of Human Resources in emergency situations.

An employee who is fulfilling a full year contract for the current year must be notified by April 15 if a contract for the ensuing year will not be offered. May 15 will be the deadline for notification for school years 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13. An employee who holds a contract for less than one full year will not necessarily be offered a full contract for the ensuing year.

Transfers – Certified Personnel

Assistant Principal and Teacher Transfer Requests

The Placement Preference Process provides an opportunity for assistant principals and teachers to express interest for a lateral transfer to a different location for the next school year. It is not necessary to determine the existence of a vacancy to list a school as a preference. Principals receive electronic notification regarding all transfer requests to and from their schools. Transfer requests will be considered as principals fill positions for the coming year. Certified teachers and assistant principals must complete their third consecutive, complete, contractual year in the current school to be eligible for a transfer. Detailed information on the process and deadline for assistant principals and teachers is communicated in the spring.

Lateral Transfers to New or Existing Schools

The Board has the right to make lateral transfers in personnel when it becomes necessary due to:

- Overstaffing within the teaching field or grade level;
- Change in attendance areas;
- Change in program or staffing within a program; and/or
- Any reason that the Board (within the limits of its authority to manage and control the school system) deems necessary for the orderly and effective management of the school system.

The following criteria will be observed in effecting these transfers.

- The needs of the instructional program and after-school activities of the school(s) involved must be considered.
- A teacher must hold a valid GCPS contract and teaching certificate in the field where the transfer is needed.
- When the need for a transfer is known, volunteers will be given top priority. Principals must inform qualified teachers of the vacancy and accept voluntary transfers when offered.
- If there are no volunteers, involuntary transfers will be based upon seniority* within teaching field, certification, or subject matter where the transfer is needed. Teachers receiving or scheduled to receive a supplement for after-school activities may not be required to transfer.

* Seniority within the system takes precedence over seniority within the school.

Reduction in Force

A reduction in force could result from changes in the size or nature of the student population; changes in curriculum; consolidation of positions; budgetary limitations and/or elimination of positions within a program or department. The determination of employees to be demoted or terminated is based upon approved procedures established by the Board and school system administration.

Employees who do not have a written contract are classified as “at-will.” Either the employee or GCPS may terminate the employment of “at-will” employees at any time with or without cause.

Identification and Security Badges

All full-time employees of GCPS will have picture identification badges. The badge allows the employee to be admitted to Gwinnett High School Association activities and to receive certain specified merchant discounts. When an employee terminates, his/her direct supervisor should inform the Internal Resolution office to ensure any security access is canceled upon termination. Badges for terminated employees should be returned to the Human Resources Department, located at the Instructional Support Center.

Conflicts of Interest ([Policy GAG](#))

Employees should be aware of situations and activities that may be construed as a conflict of interest.

Endorsements

GCPS employees carry the responsibility of being a representative of the district. Employees should be aware that decisions and actions that could be interpreted as written or oral endorsements of a product or service should be considered in the light of whether the action may be interpreted as a conflict of interest.

No employee of the Gwinnett County Board of Education shall give a written or oral endorsement to any company or representative for promotional purposes for any periodical, book, or product that may be offered for sale to schools, parents, or pupils in his/her charge. Actions that could be construed as a conflict of interest or a violation of the Code of Ethics for Educators may jeopardize the staff member's employment relationship with GCPS.

Non-School Employment

GCPS employees are reminded that their job assignments within the district are their first obligation and if outside employment is taking time or energy from this position or affecting their performance, they will be asked to choose one or the other.

Each principal/supervisor has direct responsibility for evaluating the effects of outside employment on personnel assigned. Employees seeking employment in any private business or outside activity during the term of their contract shall first receive permission from their respective principal/supervisor before entering into such supplementary employment.

Tutoring

Teachers may not offer private instruction on a fee basis to any student who is presently enrolled in their classes. It is incumbent upon professional staff members to assist students in their classes after school and whenever feasible.

It is preferred that a tutor be a person who is not on the staff of the school in which a student is enrolled. Tutoring must be done in such a way as not to interfere with the orderly routine of the teacher's regular day and school responsibilities.

Dual Pay

Employees shall be prohibited from receiving dual pay for services rendered during the regular working hours. The employee must forfeit the regular pay or the pay from another agency, organization, or individual. Employees may receive payment for services rendered while on non-medical leave or for services performed other than during the regular working day.

Political Involvement

The Board recognizes that employees have the same civic responsibilities and privileges as any other citizen including the privilege of campaigning for and holding public office and actively supporting candidates and causes in the political arena. The Board also recognizes that the district is entrusted by the citizens of the county and the state of Georgia with a vitally important public mission and that an employee's political activities must not interfere or conflict with an employee's job or with the best interest of the district.

An employee who participates actively in a political activity cannot be promoted, demoted, transferred, or terminated solely because of his/her political participation as long as such actions follow the guidelines stated in this policy.

Personnel Attire ([Policy GBRC](#))

The expectation of the Board is that all staff members dress in a professional manner. Dress should be appropriate for the position.

Personnel Time Schedule ([Policy GBRC](#))

All full-time employees of the Board of Education work a minimum 40 hours per week. The principal or program manager sets a schedule within this policy for the time of arrival and departure of all employees assigned to his/her operation.

In order for an organization to achieve its desired goals, good attendance, and punctuality are necessary. Therefore, regular and prompt attendance is expected and required of all employees. If it is necessary to be absent or late to work, employees are responsible for contacting their supervisor at least one day in advance, if possible.

In case of emergency or other circumstances when it is impossible to give advance notice, employees are responsible for contacting their supervisor or designee before time to report to work.

Staff Meetings ([Policy GBRC](#))

Regular staff meetings are a necessary part of the district operations. Each school shall have a schedule for staff meetings on a regular basis. The principal shall call special staff meetings for professional learning, accreditation, and/or workshops as deemed necessary. All staff members are required as part of their teaching/employment responsibilities to attend any or all such meetings as designated by the principal.

Health and Safety

The Board recognizes the responsibility for ensuring the safety of all employees. Therefore, it is the policy of the Board to take all practical steps to develop and implement a safety program for all employees, which will provide and maintain safe and healthful working conditions, adequate protection equipment and develop operating procedures and practices that comply with federal, state, and local legislation pertaining to accident prevention.

To help ensure safe working conditions, an employee is responsible for:

- Knowing the potential hazards of the job.
- Learning and following the safety practices required by management.
- Using health and safety devices required by the job (the Gwinnett County Board of Education has adopted a policy regarding Infectious Diseases; all employees are required to be familiar with this policy). Detailed information can be found in [Policy GANA](#).
- Correcting and/or reporting safety hazards immediately.
- Immediately reporting any accident or injury to supervisor.
- Obeying “No Smoking” regulations. All students are prohibited from tobacco use on campus or at school activities, functions, or events. While fulfilling their duties as district employees, staff members shall not use tobacco in the presence of students or on school system property. Please refer to the section titled “Personnel Smoking” for additional information.
- Operating machinery or equipment only if qualified to do so.
- Maintaining good housekeeping practices including keeping all fire exits clear and fire fighting equipment accessible.

Drug Free Workplace ([Procedure P.GAMA](#) located on the Lotus Notes database)

The Board provides a drug-free workplace and professes that the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of tobacco and alcohol are wrong and harmful. The unlawful possession, use, manufacture, distribution, or dispensation of illicit drugs, tobacco, and alcohol by employees on school premises, in school vehicles, or at any school-sponsored activities is prohibited. Compliance with these standards is mandatory. Disciplinary sanctions up to and including termination of employment and referral for prosecution will be imposed on employees who violate these prohibitions.

Employees are prohibited from using or displaying drug, alcohol, and tobacco products in front of students while the employee is on duty, during the normal school day, or while on duty at any school- or system-sponsored function.

Personnel use of Illicit Drugs

For criminal drug statute convictions of employees for violations occurring in the workplace, the following steps must be followed:

1. Employees must notify GPCS in writing of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace (in GPCS facilities, vehicles, and at school-sponsored activities) no later than five calendar days after such conviction.
2. GPCS will notify all appropriate federal agencies in writing within ten calendar days after receiving notice under subparagraph 4(a) from an employee or otherwise receiving actual notice of such conviction.

GCPS will take one of the following actions, within 30 calendar days of receiving notice with respect to any employee who is so convicted:

1. Take appropriate personnel action against such an employee, up to and including termination, consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and/or
2. Require such employee to participate satisfactorily in drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state, or local health, law enforcement, or other appropriate agency.

An on-going drug-free awareness program is provided to inform employees about:

- the dangers of drug abuse;
- GPCS Drug-Free Workplace [Policy GAMA](#) and the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act for Students and Employees;
- the penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug abuse violations occurring in the workplace; and
- drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, and re-entry programs.

Personnel Smoking

No employee, student, nor school visitor is permitted to use any tobacco product while in any building, facility, or vehicle owned or leased by GCPS. This includes all school grounds and property as well as athletic fields and parking lots. Tobacco use is prohibited at all school- or system-sponsored events 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

An on-going program is provided to inform employees about the dangers of smoking and the penalties that may be imposed upon employees. Information concerning the penalties is outlined in Procedure P.GAMA located on the Louts Notes database.

Drug and Alcohol Testing Procedure ([Policy GCRA](#))

In recognition of its responsibilities to take reasonable measures to ensure that the students it undertakes to transport are transported safely; and in further recognition that safe transportation depends on the driver/employee's physical dexterity, reflex action, unimpaired judgment, and unimpaired senses of sight and hearing; and in recognition of the fact that certain drug and/or alcohol use can impair an employee's ability to transport students safely; the Board of Education hereby implements a controlled substance and alcohol testing program for all employees engaged in safety-sensitive functions.

As part of the Board's continuing effort to provide an environment for students and employees that promotes health and safety, the Board will not tolerate the use, possession, or sale of any controlled substances, alcohol, or misuse of any legally prescribed or obtained medications by employees engaged in safety-sensitive functions. The Board will provide training, education, and other assistance to employees to help them understand their responsibilities in achieving an environment free of alcohol and controlled substances.

Information concerning Drug and Alcohol Testing is outlined in Procedure P.GCRA located on the Lotus Notes database. Noncompliance with this policy or violation of the regulations may result in severe disciplinary action including suspension or dismissal.

Complaint Procedures ([Policy GAE](#))

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a way for the Board and its employees to reach solutions to problems, disputes, or controversies that may occur and to provide a mechanism for employees or applicants to complain about unlawful discrimination or harassment. It is the intent of this policy to provide in a clear and concise way for the solution of complaints at the lowest possible administrative level, as fairly, and as expeditiously as possible.

This policy may also be used specifically as a procedure by employees who allege discrimination or harassment based on age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability. In the case of alleged discrimination based on age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability, employees may complain directly to the Division of Human Resources, who will make a prompt investigation. Any supervisor who becomes aware of such a complaint should notify the Equity Compliance Director of the Division of Human Resources no later than on the business day immediately following his/her knowledge of the complaint.

Please refer to the Gwinnett County Board of Education Procedure P.GAE, located on the Louts Notes database, for specific steps. Complaint Procedure forms may be obtained from a supervisor or by calling the Human Resources Division.

Scope of Complaint: Exclusions

This complaint and grievance procedure is applicable to any claim by any employee of the Gwinnett County Board of Education who is affected in his/her employment relationship by an alleged violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of statutes, policies, rules, regulations, or written agreements of this school district or with which the district is required to comply.

Exclusions - Unless the complaint is based on unlawful discrimination, this procedure shall not apply to:

- Performance ratings contained in personnel evaluation and professional development plans;
- Job performance;
- Termination, non-renewal, demotion, suspension, or reprimand of any employee; and/or
- The revocation, suspension, or denial of certificates of any employee.

An employee, who chooses to appeal under Code §20-2-1160, shall be barred from pursuing the same complaint under this policy.

Procedure: Initiating a Complaint and Requesting a Hearing

In order to resolve matters in a fair, equitable, and expeditious manner, the Board of Education has developed a procedure outlined in [Policy GAE](#). This policy is designed to identify all parties involved, provide timelines, and assist in organizing complaint information.

Sexual Harassment Policy ([Policy GAEB](#))

The Board is committed to providing a workplace free from distractions caused by sexual harassment; all forms of discrimination based on race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin, or handicap; or inappropriate or offensive conduct. It is the Board's expectation that all personnel conduct themselves in a highly professional manner and respect coworkers, students, parents, and customers. In this regard, the Board prohibits sexual harassment, all forms of discrimination, and other unprofessional conduct.

It shall be the responsibility of the CEO/Superintendent or his/her designee to ensure that a procedure consistent with this policy and applicable law is implemented.

Sexual harassment includes repeated unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature which:

1. Is made a term or condition of an individual's employment;
2. Is used as the basis for employment decisions such as promotions or benefits; and/or
3. Substantially interferes with an individual's work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Examples of sexual harassment and unprofessional conduct include:

- Making sexually oriented remarks such as jokes, inquiries, or innuendo;
- Making inappropriate sex-based comments, gestures, or insults and sex-based stereotyping;
- Making inappropriate comments or compliments about physical appearance or attire;
- Making inappropriate sexual terms of endearment or demanding forms of address;
- Offering employment or other benefits in exchange for sexual favors;
- Making or threatening reprisals after a negative response to sexual advances;
- Asking a coworker repeatedly to spend time with you after being turned down;
- Displaying offensive sexual material in the work place;
- Touching, pinching, grabbing, patting, kissing, or hugging unnecessarily or inappropriately;
- Having inappropriate discussion of personal sexual activities; and/or
- Sending inappropriate sexually explicit photos, poems, stories, jokes by electronic media or courier or any other internal means of communication.

Filing a Complaint of Sexual Harassment (Procedure P.GAEB located on the Louts Notes database)

A person should report complaints of sexual harassment to his/her supervisor or any manager. If, for any reason, the person prefers not to share the complaint with the supervisor, or any manager, he/she may file a complaint or consult with the appropriate Director/Manager in the Division of Human Resources; or, the person may file a complaint with the Equity Compliance Director in the Division of Human Resources. A person who has a concern about the handling of his/her complaint is encouraged to discuss those concerns with the Equity Compliance Director.

Personnel Records ([Policy BE](#))

It is the responsibility of employees to inform the Human Resources Division of any change in home address and/or phone number so that the employee file may be updated accordingly.

Information contained in an employee's personnel file is kept strictly confidential except as may be required by law, requested by the employee, or requested by authorized school officials on a need-to-know basis. Otherwise, requests for information not specifically approved by the employee will be referred to the Chief Human Resources Officer or his/her designee. There are specific document types that are protected from public disclosure, as stated in the Georgia Open Records Act. These documents include medical records, home address information, Social Security numbers, insurance information, and confidential evaluations.

GCPS will release, with written approval from the employee, information about the employee's current salary, dates of employment, job title, and work location.

An employee may review his/her personnel records by making an appointment with the appropriate Human Resources Staffing Director, as required. Confidential reference documents are not available for review.

Any employee records maintained by supervisory personnel shall also be kept confidential, with access limited only to authorized school officials on a need-to-know basis. The immediate supervisor of an active employee may retain the individual performance and evaluations records.

Use of Electronic Resources ([Policy IFBG](#))

The Board recognizes that electronic media, including the internet, provides access to a wide variety of instructional resources in an effort to enhance educational opportunities. Use of electronic resources must be in support of, and consistent with the vision, mission, and goals established by the Gwinnett County Board of Education and for the purpose of AKS instructional support or administrative functions.

All users of the district wide area network and/or other electronic informational services must maintain strict compliance with all applicable ethical and legal rules and regulations regarding access. Please refer to [Policy IFBG](#) and Procedure P.IFBG, located on the Louts Notes database, for further information.

The Code of Ethics for Educators

Last Revised July 2010

Introduction

The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Professional Standards Commission has adopted standards that represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction and provides guidance for protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of students and educators, and assuring the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.

Definitions

“Certificate” refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate, license, or permit issued by authority of the Professional Standards Commission.

“Educator” is a teacher, school, or school system administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission and persons who have applied for but have not yet received a certificate. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, “educator” also refers to paraprofessionals, aides, and substitute teachers.

“Student” is any individual enrolled in the state’s public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual under the age of 18. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the year of graduation.

“Complaint” is any written and signed statement from a local board, the state board, or one or more individual residents of this state filed with the Professional Standards Commission alleging that an educator has breached one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators. A “complaint” will be deemed a request to investigate.

“Revocation” is the invalidation of any certificate held by the educator.

“Denial” is the refusal to grant initial certification to an applicant for a certificate.

“Suspension” is the temporary invalidation of any certificate for a period of time specified by the Professional Standards Commission.

“Reprimand” admonishes the certificate holder for his/her conduct. The reprimand cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action.

“Warning” warns the certificate holder that his/her conduct is unethical. The warning cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action.

“Monitoring” is the quarterly appraisal of the educator’s conduct by the Professional Standards Commission through contact with the educator and his/her employer. As a condition of monitoring, an educator may be required to submit a criminal background check (GCIC). The Commission specifies the length of the monitoring period.

“No Probable Cause” is a determination by the Professional Standards Commission that, after a preliminary investigation, either no further action need to be taken or no cause exists to recommend disciplinary action.

Standards

Standard 1: Legal Compliance - An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the commission or conviction of a felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude; of any other criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, sale, or possession of a controlled substance or marijuana as provided for in Chapter 13 of Title 16; or of any other sexual offense as provided for in Code §16-6-1 through 16-6-17, 16-6-20, 16-6-22.2, or 16-12-100; or any other laws applicable to the profession. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought; a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted; and a situation where an adjudication of guilt or sentence was otherwise withheld or not entered on the charge or the charge was otherwise disposed of in a similar manner in any jurisdiction.

Standard 2: Conduct with Students - An educator shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. committing any act of child abuse, including physical and verbal abuse;
2. committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
3. committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
4. engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student that would violate state or federal law;
5. soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student; and
6. furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or
7. failure to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by students who are under the educators supervision (including but not limited to at the educator's residence or any other private setting).

Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs - An educator shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. being on school premises or at a school-related activity while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs;
2. being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcohol. A school-related activity includes, but is not limited to, any activity sponsored by the school or school system (booster clubs, parent-teacher organizations, or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum i.e. Foreign Language trips, etc; and

Standard 4: Honesty - An educator shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

1. professional qualifications, criminal history, college or staff development credit and/or degrees, academic award, and employment history;
2. information submitted to federal, state, local school districts and other governmental agencies;
3. information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel;
4. reasons for absences or leaves;
5. information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation; and
6. information submitted in the course of professional practice.

Standard 5: Public Funds and Property - An educator entrusted with public funds and property shall honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. misusing public or school-related funds;
2. failing to account for funds collected from students or parents;
3. submitting fraudulent requests or documentation for reimbursement of expenses or for pay (including fraudulent, or purchased degrees, documents, or coursework);
4. co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts;
5. using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and

Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct - An educator shall maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee;
2. accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;

3. tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
4. coaching, instructing, promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involves students in an educator's school system and from whom the educator receives remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee. These types of activities must comply with all rules and regulations of the Georgia High School Association.

Standard 7: Confidential Information - An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material, and other information.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law;
2. sharing of confidential information restricted by state or federal law;
3. violation of confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items, etc.; and
4. violation of other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

Standard 8: Abandonment of Contract - An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or education agency for the duration of the contract.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. abandoning the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the employer, and
2. willfully refusing to perform the services required by a contract.

Standard 9: Required Report - An educator should file reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5), or any other required report.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. failure to report all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission;
2. failure to make a required report of a violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner; and
3. failure to make a required report of any violation of state or federal law soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. These reports include but are not limited to: murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, kidnapping, any sexual offense, any sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving a controlled substance and any abuse of a child if an educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.

Standard 10: Professional Conduct - An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the teaching profession.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his/her employment position, or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students.

Standard 11: Testing - An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. committing any act that breaches Test Security; and
2. compromising the integrity of the assessment.

Reporting

Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of legal requirements and local policies and procedures for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the Professional Standards Commission must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, personnel director, superintendent, etc.). The Commission notifies local and state officials of all disciplinary actions. In addition, suspensions and revocations are reported to national officials, including the NASDTEC Clearinghouse.

Disciplinary Action

The Professional Standards Commission is authorized to suspend, revoke, or deny certificates, to issue a reprimand or warning, or to monitor the educator's conduct and performance after an investigation is held and notice and opportunity for a hearing are provided to the certificate holder. Any of the following grounds shall be considered cause for disciplinary action against the holder of a certificate:

1. unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11;
2. disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators;
3. order from a court of competent jurisdiction or a request from the Department of Human Resources that the certificate should be suspended or the application for certification should be denied for non-payment of child support;
4. notification from the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan;
5. suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate;
6. violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession; and
7. any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.

An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not serve as a volunteer or be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, substitute teacher or in any other position during the period of his/her revocation, suspension, or denial for a violation of The Code of Ethics. The CEO/Superintendent and the CEO/Superintendent's designee for certification shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the CEO/Superintendent and the CEO/Superintendent's designee must hold GaPSC certification.

Student Assessment in Georgia Schools

Standardized testing has become a basic component of accountability for students, teachers, administrators, schools, and school systems in Georgia and other states. Communities rely on their schools' standardized test scores to determine the success of their schools and to compare them to other communities. New industries use test scores as a major factor in selecting locations for new facilities. As a result of national and state accountability ratings, standardized testing has become important to all states. When tests are properly administered, scored, and interpreted with a high degree of professionalism, all of the aforementioned stakeholders can be guided to make reliable and appropriate decisions. A good testing program provides the following benefits:

- Students, based on their individual test scores, will know the skills and knowledge they have mastered and how they compare to other students.
- Parents can evaluate whether their children are obtaining the skills and knowledge they need to be successful during and after their school experiences.
- Teachers can determine if students have mastered the skills and knowledge needed to advance to the next level and if not what skills and knowledge are weak and should be improved.
- Community members have a measuring stick to compare year-to-year improvement and to compare local student performance with performances of students in other locations.

Georgia relies on state-mandated assessments as a key component of the state accountability program as well as using the test results to fulfill national requirements for educational accountability. For reliable and valid reporting, tests must be administered fairly and ethically. In the pursuit of fair and ethical testing for all stakeholders of Georgia, the following areas shall be addressed before, during, and after testing.

- Test Security – Test materials should be secured before, during, and after testing and scoring to ensure fair assessment of all students.
- Test Preparation – The test should reflect the curriculum being taught, and should be developmentally appropriate for the age and level of the test-taker. Teachers should be trained on proper administration procedures and testing practices.
- Test Administration – Policies and procedures should be developed to implement fair and ethical testing procedures and practices. All eligible students should be assessed.
- Test Data – Test scoring should be reliable and valid. Test data interpretation shall be appropriately given to stakeholders. Curriculum improvement should be guided by adequate data analyses.

Georgia Student Assessment Program Responsibilities

Standardized tests results are the basis for many reports and accountability measures. Because of the priority in national and state expectations, the administration of tests shall be held to the Code of Ethics. An essential component is that all personnel perform their assigned responsibilities to maintain test integrity and for the process to be appropriately implemented.

CEO/Superintendent - The CEO/Superintendent has ultimate responsibility and accountability for all testing activities within the local school system.

- Develops local policies and procedures based on Georgia Department of Education guidelines and test publisher's directions to maintain test security.
- Supervises and monitors Principals to ensure that they fulfill their specific roles and responsibilities for the administration of tests.
- Ensures that all personnel involved with testing receive training on appropriate test administration, policies, and procedures including accommodations for each assessment given.
- Informs the local Board of Education, state test coordinator, and Professional Standards Committee of any breach of security by employees of the system.

Principal - The Principal has ultimate responsibility and accountability for all testing activities within the local school.

- Ensures test security within the school building.
- Ensures distribution of test materials occurs immediately prior to test administration.
- Supervises all testing activities.
- Ensures that all school personnel have been appropriately trained on test administration, procedures, and policies, including accommodations for each assessment given.
- Ensures that accommodations have been given to only those students who appropriately need accommodations and have documentation of such need.
- Implements system's testing policies and procedures and establishes needed local school policies and procedures to ensure all students are tested fairly and appropriately.
- Reports immediately any breach of security to the CEO/Superintendent.

Code of Ethics Guidelines for Student Assessment

The chart below provides guidance for sanctions of Ethics violations by educators. The sanctions (1, 2, 3, 4 & 5) listed below are intended to be progressive. Repeated violations have escalating consequences, which shall include additional sanctions at the local system level. Proposed sanctions are as follows:

1. System Reprimand.
2. PSC Reprimand.
3. PSC Suspension w/out pay.
4. PSC Revocation.
5. PSC sanction based on situation

Before the Test Session – It is inappropriate and unethical to:	Sanctions
1. Reveal all or any part of copyrighted tests to students or others, in any manner, oral or written, prior to test administration unless directed by the DOE.	3 - 4
2. Use of test items and prompts prior to administration for instructional purposes.	3
3. Discourage students from putting forth optimal effort based on purpose of the test.	1 - 2 - 3
4. Review or provide answers to test questions.	3 - 4
5. Possess unauthorized copy(ies) of state tests.	3 - 4
6. Reclassify students solely for the purpose of avoiding state testing.	3 - 4
During the Test Session – It is Inappropriate and Unethical to:	Sanctions
7. Vary from the directions outlined in the administration manual (i.e. time, reading verbatim, etc.)	1 - 2 - 3 - 4
8. Read any parts of the test to students except where indicated in the directions (unless indicated by an IEP, IAP, or TPC).	1 - 2 - 3 - 4
9. Fail to provide state approved accommodations as prescribed in a student’s IEP, IAP, or TPC plan OR provide accommodations that are not included in the IEP, IAP, or TPC plan.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4
During the Test Session – It is Inappropriate and Unethical to:	Sanctions
10. Interpret, explain, or paraphrase the test items.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4
11. Define or pronounce words used in the test.	1 - 2 - 3 - 4
12. Coach (comments or gestures of any kind) students during the test, including remarks about quality or quantity of student work.	2 - 3 - 4
13. Provide answers to test questions.	3 - 4
14. Reveal all or any part of copyrighted tests to students or others, in any manner, oral or written, prior to test administration unless directed by the DOE.	3 - 4
15. Use test items and prompts prior to administration for instructional purposes.	3
16. Fail to provide an appropriate testing environment (e.g. instructional materials removed/covered).	1 - 2
After the Test Session– It is Inappropriate and Unethical to:	Sanctions
17. Make inaccurate reports, unsubstantiated claims, inappropriate interpretations, or otherwise false and misleading statements about assessment.	5
18. Discuss test items or answers.	1 - 2 - 3
19. Erase or change student answers.	3 - 4
At Any Time During Test Administration, It is Inappropriate and Unethical to:	Sanctions
20. Not account for all secure test materials as provided by the school test coordinator at any time during test administration.	3 - 4
21. Compromise the integrity of the assessment.	5
22. Fail to report possible ethical violations by any professional.	5

***“Test session” means any time during the test administration process. This could include training sessions, test sessions over multiple days of the same test, or the time following test administration when materials are still in the school buildings/systems.*

In the event of a violation of the Code of Ethics for Testing, the PSC may, in accordance with its rules, impose any one or more of the following: Reprimand, Suspension, or Revocation.