

Personnel Handbook

2014-15

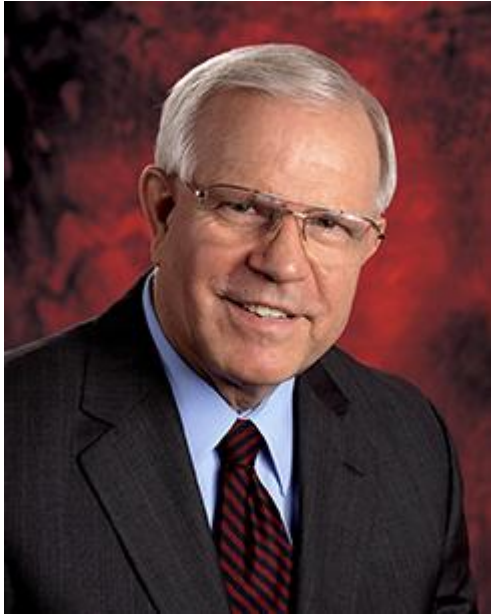
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Message from the CEO/Superintendent



In Gwinnett County Public Schools, our core business is teaching and learning, and we believe the quality of our employees 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 a GCPS employee because we believe you have the knowledge and skills that will assist our school system in fulfilling its vision of becoming a system of world-class schools.

As is characteristic of all dynamic organizations, our school district is constantly improving. It is important for you as a new employee to learn more about this outstanding organization and matters that affect you on the job. This handbook highlights opportunities available to GCPS employees, communicates compensation and benefits information, and summarizes Gwinnett County Board of Education policies and procedures. I urge you to read the Personnel Handbook and other information available to you as you take steps to become an informed and engaged employee. Our school system website and employee portal

also serve as critical resources, providing access to policies, forms, general information, and more.

Again, thank you for joining our GCPS team and for all that you will do to support Gwinnett County students. Your work makes a difference in the lives of children and has a positive impact on the future of Gwinnett County, our state, and our nation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Alvin Wilbanks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

J. Alvin Wilbanks
CEO/Superintendent

Foundational Elements of Gwinnett County Public Schools

Gwinnett County Public Schools' foundational elements have been in place for more than a decade. However, in the spirit of continuous quality improvement, these elements are reviewed periodically to ensure that they best reflect our school district and our community. Starting in April of 2014, GCPS invited feedback on these elements from staff, students, and community members. District leaders and the School Board will review feedback and make any needed updates. Watch for more about this important work in 2014-15.

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.

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.

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 resources 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.

GCPS' Strategic Priorities for 2010-2020

Gwinnett County Public Schools is a high-performing school district. To sustain this record of success, we must review our plans and our progress year after year, and envision what the school district must be in the future to educate and prepare students for the demands of the 21st century. **The Strategic Priorities for 2010–2020** play an integral role in that essential work. They are not a “strategic plan.” Rather, they communicate the direction in which the school district is moving for the next 5 to 10 years. The Strategic Priorities keep the school district focused on its core business— teaching and learning— and they drive continuous improvement in all that we do. They are one of the foundational pieces of the district’s strategic direction, linking its vision, mission, and beliefs to the goals, initiatives, and operational management plans/local school plans for improvement. Most importantly, the Priorities help ensure the school district will do its part in building a better Gwinnett for all of us. **The Strategic Priorities for 2010–2020** reflect Gwinnett County Public Schools’ ongoing commitment to excellence, instructionally and operationally. They outline the qualities and characteristics stakeholders believe are desirable for 10 major components of the school district:

- **Students**
- **Employees**
- **Parents and Guardians**
- **Governance and Leadership**
- **Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment**
- **Facilities and Operations**
- **Financial Stewardship**
- **Information Management and Technology**
- **Communication**
- **Public Image and Community Pride**

We believe that pursuing these attributes will move us closer to our vision of being a system of world-class schools.

Introduction to Gwinnett County Public Schools

As Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) strives to become a system of world-class schools, we pride ourselves on our continuous quality improvement initiatives regarding our curriculum, classroom instruction, support for students, professional development for our workforce, GCPS' accountability system, technology and digital resources, maintenance of our facilities, and the district's fiscal management.

Gwinnett County Public Schools is the largest school system in the state of Georgia and 13th largest in the country, made up of 77 elementary schools, 27 middle schools, 19 high schools, five charter schools, and six other special schools. GCPS is a growing system, with a projected enrollment of 172,383 students for the 2014-15 school year.

Gwinnett County Public Schools is financially sound with a FY2015 budget of \$1.86 billion. On average, the cost of educating one child in Gwinnett County is \$7,804 per year, with the direct costs of instruction accounting for 71.2% of that amount. Putting it in perspective, of the state's 10 largest school systems, GCPS had the 7th lowest per-pupil expenditure in FY13, yet GCPS' average SAT score was 5th highest among the 10 systems and 61 points above the state average, with 56% of students qualifying for free or reduced lunch.

Gwinnett County Public Schools has received the highest possible bond rating (AAA) from the nation's two leading rating agencies, evidence of the district's stellar financial stewardship. Gwinnett remains one of only two large systems in the nation with a AAA rating, and one of only 12 districts nationwide to hold the top rating from both Moody's Investors Service and Standard & Poor's. In 2013, GCPS also was named Georgia's Green Ribbon District for its energy conservation and green initiatives, including the district's 125 ENERGY STAR certified buildings which operate using less energy.

Gwinnett County Public Schools is the largest employer in Gwinnett County, employing more than 21,000 staff members, including full- and part-time positions and the pool of substitutes. GCPS takes pride in its veteran professional educators. In FY2015, the average teacher will hold a master's degree or higher advanced degree and have 15 years of teaching experience.

With our highly qualified workforce, we prepare our students for the future. The vast majority of 2014 graduates (84%) plan to continue their education by attending college or postsecondary schools. Seniors were offered a record-breaking \$148 million in scholarships, not including the HOPE scholarships or full-ride scholarships awarded to 15 Gates Millennium Scholars and 24 QuestBridge Scholars. Fourteen student leaders were offered appointments to one of the country's military service academies.

For more information concerning GCPS, please visit www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us.

Communication with Employees and the Community

Employees' achievements and best practices in the classroom are recognized through internal communication vehicles, including publications such as *Torch*, *Education Briefs*, and *Spotlight*; the district's website (www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us) and employee portal (publish.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcps/home/gcpslogin); and on GCPS TV (available on cable television stations and on the web (www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/gcpstv)). In addition, employee achievements at the state and national level may be publicized through press releases prepared by the Department of Communication and Media Relations for distribution to all metro-area media. Any employee may submit information for recognition by sending it to the Department of Communication and 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 with 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 Georgia 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 district's Chief Financial Officer.

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 during the spring. Gwinnett County Public Schools shares information through the systemwide parent newsletter, *Communiqué Essentials* or the systemwide online magazine called *Communiqué*; through e-newsletters; and via the district's website, the employee and parent portals, and GCPS TV. Additionally, each school produces its own newsletter. Ongoing, two-way communication between the school system and its internal and external audiences and positive media relations are a continued focus for Gwinnett County Public Schools.

Strategic Priority for Communication

The school district will promote open, honest, reliable, two-way communication that builds trust and confidence within the school community. We will share accurate, timely, and relevant information with stakeholders through appropriate communication vehicles. We will be committed to public engagement so that students, parents, staff, and community members will be well informed and able to provide meaningful input regarding district issues. The school district will overcome communication challenges such as those associated with growth, language differences, and access to technology. Communication will promote and reinforce the school system's reputation, conveying a clear and compelling story of our instructional and operational success. Effective communication will be everyone's responsibility.

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 during the fall. From the pool of local school Teachers of the Year, level winners and the GCPS Teacher of the Year are named.

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

Opportunities

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 district 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 hours annually. These 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

Effective leadership is second only to effective teaching in impact on student achievement. The GCPS Leadership Development team identifies and trains emerging leaders and supports all school and district leaders with continuing development opportunities to drive world-class performance.

The district's Quality-Plus Leader Academy, has three components. These include the Aspiring Principal Program, a selective year-long program that prepares high-potential assistant principals to be the next generation of effective GCPS principals through classes, case studies, leadership simulations, and a 90-day residency. Now in its eighth cohort, the Aspiring Principal Program has trained the principals of approximately 76% of GCPS's schools. The newer Aspiring Leader Program prepares emerging leaders at the teacher level for assistant principal roles through a half-year academy. The recently-launched District Leader Program ensures that GCPS has well-qualified leaders at the district office and that new district level leaders have the foundational knowledge needed to serve the system effectively in their new capacity. In addition to these programs, the department collaborates with partner universities to provide cohort preparation programs that are specific to the needs of Gwinnett County for future and current school leaders.

The Leadership Development team also provides support for leaders once they are in position. The team coordinates ongoing support for first and second-year principals and assistant principals through a comprehensive leader mentoring program and just-in-time training modules. It also manages the School Administrative Manager (SAM) program, which supports principals in prioritizing time for instructional leadership over operational tasks. Other leadership training managed by the team includes Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) training, new administrator training, and leadership seminars. The department plans, organizes, and directs the district's annual Summer Leadership Conference, the signature learning event for school and district level leaders. The team also provides leadership skills assessment as a tool for leader development.

The work of the Department of Leadership Development is supported, in part, through funding provided by The Wallace Foundation.

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 using the Gwinnett Teacher Effectiveness System, the Gwinnett Leader Effectiveness System, or other appropriate evaluation programs as determined by the district. Classified employees are assessed through a locally developed evaluation program.

Certification

It is the responsibility of all certified employees to obtain and maintain valid in-field Georgia certification. Employees may contact the Certification Department at 678-301-6070 for certification forms and requirements. Teachers must be “highly qualified” to teach in the assigned subject area(s) as required by the *Elementary and Secondary Education Assistance Act of 1965*.

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

Questions regarding certification should be directed to the Certification Department at 678-301-6070.

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.

Compensation

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

Pay Statement/Direct Deposit

Employees may access their pay statements online via the [Employee Portal](#). Employees may also initiate a new direct deposit, change banking information, or inactivate their direct deposit via the [Employee Portal](#).

Name/Address/Phone Number Changes

It is the responsibility of employees to inform the Human Resources and Talent Management Division of any change in home address and/or phone number. Employees may update their name, personal address, and phone number online via the [Employee Portal](#). Address and phone number changes may be completed directly on the [Employee Portal](#) at any time. Name change requests must be accompanied by a copy of the signed social security card reflecting the new name, before the request may be completed.

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 in-field certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Salary adjustments may be made to conform to the certificate level approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. If an employee is unable to be certified properly, the daily rate of pay may be adjusted to that of a substitute employee retroactive to the beginning of employment under the contract. The employee must be 'highly qualified' to teach in the assigned subject area(s) as required by the *Elementary and Secondary Education Assistance Act of 1965*.

Penalty for Failure to Meet Contractual Obligation

If fewer than 20 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 GCPS | 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

Benefits are a large part of the total compensation package for Gwinnett County Public School employees. In order to meet the 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 *GCPS New Hire Benefits Guide*, *State Health Benefit Plan New Hire Guide*, and *Benefits Bulletin* newsletters. These publications, along with other detailed information, can be found on the GCPS Benefits Center website at 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 and 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. Information on the health plan is available from the Benefits and Leave Administration Office or the Benefits Center website at 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, or for those employees who dropped dental coverage and re-elected coverage at a later 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 by calling 1-866-723-0514 or by accessing the Benefits Center website at www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/benefits.

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 MetLife. Additionally, an employee may purchase Supplemental Life insurance up to six times his/her

annual salary, up to \$500,000. Rates for Supplemental Life insurance are age-banded. Employees may also purchase a \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$15,000 dependent life insurance policy.

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 15th day of disability and may continue for up to 180 days, 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 accrued 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, pension plans and Social Security. Employees cannot collect Long-Term Disability benefits if receiving Workers' Compensation benefits from GCPS. Complete information about the Long-Term Disability plan and GRS is available from the GCPS Retirement Department or the website at www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/grs.

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. Rates are age-banded and are not changed once enrolled in the plan.

Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)

GCPS employees may deduct up to \$2,500 in pre-tax dollars per plan year to pay for eligible non-reimbursed health care expenses. Employees may deduct up to \$5,000 in pre-tax dollars per plan year to pay for 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 www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/benefits, by clicking on the Medcom FSA link under the Employee Benefits Center heading.

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 LawPhone 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 at 1-877-325-1010 or accessed through the Benefits Center website at 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, Peach State Federal Credit Union, and Long-Term Care Insurance. For information and contact numbers for these plans and services as well as Employee Perks, access the Benefits Center website at 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. Both plans offer traditional and Roth options for accumulating retirement savings. The traditional plans allow employees to exclude a portion of their salary from taxable income and defer taxes on this money and on the investment income it earns until the money is withdrawn, generally after retirement. The Roth options allow employees to contribute after-tax income and exclude distributions from taxable income when the money is withdrawn, generally after 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 [www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/GRS/GRSWeb-App.nsf/pages/SavingPlans&O~403\(b\)&457\(b\)SavingsPlans](http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/GRS/GRSWeb-App.nsf/pages/SavingPlans&O~403(b)&457(b)SavingsPlans).

Peach State Federal Credit Union

As a convenience for employees of GCPS, payroll deductions are provided upon request for contributions or payments to the Peach State Federal Credit Union. For more information and telephone numbers, please visit the Peach State Federal Credit Union website at www.peachstatefcu.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 (GRS) 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 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 hired prior to July 1, 2012 who remains continuously active is vested after five years of service. Employees hired or rehired on or after July 1, 2012 will become vested after ten 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.
- Board of Education contributions fund 100% of an employee's GRS 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 the Teachers Retirement System (TRS). Benefits become available after 30 years of service, regardless of age, at 25 years of service with early retirement adjustments, or at age 60,

after ten years of service. Employees who have 10 years of TRS service are eligible to apply for disability retirement benefits if permanently disabled, as well as survivor's benefits that are paid to a beneficiary. TRS retirement benefits are funded by a combination of employee and employer contributions. Current contribution rates and additional information about TRS is available at 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 (PSERS). For members with at least 10 years of creditable service, normal retirement benefits may commence at age 65, and reduced early retirement benefits may commence as early as age 60. Members hired before July 1, 2012 contribute \$4.00 per month for nine months each year. Members hired or rehired on or after July 1, 2012 contribute \$10.00 per month for nine months each year. The state makes the employer's contribution. Further information is available at 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.

Not every injury that occurs on GCPS premises or during the work day is covered under Workers' Compensation. 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 voluntary participation in recreational or social activities; and during times in which the employee is not subject to the employer's control. Each report of injury is reviewed in detail by Risk Management staff, and a decision on coverage is made based on the available information. Questions may be addressed to an immediate supervisor or Risk Management personnel.

Leave

Gwinnett County Public Schools 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 1,200 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 Board [Policy GBRI](#).

Teachers, student services support personnel, administrative or supervisory personnel, and bus drivers who transfer to GCPS from other Georgia public school systems may transfer up to 45 days of sick leave. 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 all their accrued 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 SLB, please refer to [Policy GBRIB](#).

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 health care provider'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.

If an employee has been absent ten consecutive working days and has not notified the Benefits and Leave Administration Office by completing a Leave Request Form, along with a written attending health care provider's statement or FMLA form certifying the illness 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, childcare, 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, per federal fiscal year, 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/her 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 for the beginning of the new school year after extended leave must notify the Human Resources and Talent Management Division in writing of his/her intention to return for the following school year. Every effort will be made to place an employee in the field held prior to the leave and at the location where the employee worked prior to the leave. Such placement will depend on

the availability of openings. The Personal Leave Policy of the Gwinnett County Board of Education (GBRI) states that, “The employee shall be entitled to return to active employment upon written request for reassignment and contingent upon a vacancy in the field in which he/she was employed when the leave was granted.” Employees, who have been on an extended leave without pay and did not participate in the annual benefits Open Enrollment process, will be contacted by the Leave Administration Office regarding the process for making benefit election changes.

When returning from disability leave, the employee must submit to the Leave Administration Office and supervisor a release to work statement from the health care provider stating that the employee is able to perform the essential functions of the job. If an employee is released with work restrictions, the work restrictions must be approved by an HR Staffing Director and Principal/Program Manager.

Jury Duty, Subpoena, and Other Court Order

All district employees shall be allowed leave without loss of pay when they respond to a summons for jury duty, or attend a judicial proceeding in response to a job-related subpoena or other court order that requires their attendance. Employees with jury duty shall not have the jury leave deducted from sick or personal leave, and no employee using legal 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.

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 60 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

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 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 PikeLNO3 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, Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008, 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 completed 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 20 days is issued pending the results from the criminal background check.

A contract of employment is made by and between an employee and the Gwinnett County Board of Education for a position within the district and not for a specific location. Employment contracts of teachers, principals, and other Board-approved personnel shall be in writing, and such contracts shall be signed by such personnel on their own behalf and by the CEO/Superintendent on behalf of the Gwinnett County Board of Education.

An employee who is fulfilling a full year contract for the current year must be notified by May 15 if a contract for the ensuing year will not be offered. 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 ([Policy GBM](#)) ([Procedure P.GBM](#))

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 ([Policy GBM](#)) ([Procedure P.GBN](#))

Certified and classified employees may be displaced from their current school due to a reduction in staff allotment, approved changes in curriculum, or budgetary limitations. Principals will identify any employees “displaced” based on tentative staff allotment. All displacements are subject to review and approval by the Human Resources Director. All displacement forms must be submitted to a Human Resources Director according to the timeline established by the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management.

The following criteria will be observed in effecting these transfers:

- The needs of the instructional program.
- Volunteers will be given top priority.

Transfers to New Schools ([Procedure P.GBCA](#))

This procedure is designed to establish guidelines for making routine staffing decisions; however, it must be construed in light of the Board’s ultimate responsibility to control and manage the school system. Consequently, notwithstanding any other provision of this procedure, the Board expressly reserves its right and responsibility to place within the limits of its discretion employees at any school within the system to the extent the Board deems it necessary for the orderly and effective management of the school system.

The following guidelines will be adhered when accepting transfers to a new school:

- The needs of the instructional program and after school activities of the school(s) involved.
- Teachers must hold a valid in-field educator’s certificate in the field where the transfer is needed.
- When the staffing plan for the new school is finalized, volunteers from schools affected by redistricting will be given consideration.
- If there are insufficient volunteers, involuntary transfers will be based on GCPS seniority.
- Interviews will be conducted with volunteers if there are too many teachers volunteering to leave a school affected by redistricting.
- One assistant administrator from the principal of the new school’s current school will be allowed to transfer if vacancies exist after allotments are balanced at schools affected by the redistricting.
- One additional staff member from any other personnel category from the principal of the new school’s current school will be allowed to transfer if vacancies exist after allotments are balanced at schools affected by the redistricting.
- Teachers who are currently receiving the full supplement from that category and scheduled to receive the same supplement next school year may not be required to transfer.
- Employees who are currently on a Professional Development Plan (PDP) or received an overall Ineffective, Needs Development, or Unsatisfactory evaluation are not eligible for a transfer to new schools.

Reduction in Force ([Policy GBN](#)) ([Procedure P.GBNAA](#)) ([Procedure P.GCN](#))

A reduction in force may occur for the following reasons: inadequate funds; loss of funding that includes the reduction or expiration of grant generated funds; insufficient student enrollment to merit continuation of a program or service; decline in average daily attendance; decline in need for services rendered by a position classification; return of contractual personnel from extended leave; discontinuation of a program by action of the Board; change in class sizes; closure or change in purpose of a school or program; reorganization; legislative mandates; judicial decrees; other exigencies. 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 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 Benefits and Leave Administration Office to ensure any security access is canceled upon termination. Badges for terminated employees should be returned to the Benefits and Leave Administration Office, located at the Instructional Support Center.

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

All employees shall avoid any conflict of interest or the appearance of such conflict with their professional responsibilities. The board provides the policy written below with the full knowledge that the good judgment of each employee is essential, and that no list of rules or guidelines can provide direction for all circumstances that arise. Employees who have questions about a potential conflict of interest must discuss the situation with the immediate supervisor and/or the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management.

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.

Employment of Relatives

No two relatives of the immediate family may be employed in the same school or unit when one of the two serves in an immediate supervisory capacity.

- Husband
- Wife
- Mother
- Father
- Brother
- Sister
- Daughter
- Son
- Mother-in-Law
- Father-in-Law
- Sister-in-Law
- Brother-in-Law
- Daughter-in-Law
- Son-in-Law

For purposes of this policy, the principal, assistant principal(s), and community school director of a school are deemed to be direct supervisors of all employees assigned to the school.

The practice of assigning married couples or other persons within the immediate family to the same school is strongly discouraged and should be avoided whenever possible. Persons who are common-law married or who are living together in a meretricious relationship are also subject to this policy.

If employees become related in a form otherwise prohibited by this policy is disruptive or otherwise detrimental to the effective and efficient operations, the district may elect to resolve such issue by transferring individuals to other locations.

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 of 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, excellent 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 firefighting equipment accessible.

Responsibility to Report Criminal Charges ([Procedure P.GAM](#))

Any employee of the Gwinnett County Board of Education who is arrested, charged, indicted, bound over by or to a grand jury, convicted, enters a plea or is nolle prossed for or to any crime or criminal offense in the State of Georgia or elsewhere, whether the crime or criminal offense is a felony or misdemeanor, shall report each and all of these events, occasions, or developments to his/her principal/supervisor within 48 hours after the arrest or legal action, or immediately upon the employee's return to work, whichever comes first. The principal/supervisor shall immediately notify the Human Resources and Talent Management Division.

In making the report the employee shall:

Provide a copy of the arrest warrant, citation, motor vehicle accident report, indictment, or any other narrative explanation of the arrest generated by the arresting officer/jurisdiction; Disclose all court dates and the disposition of the matter within **48 hours** after that information becomes available to the employee.

Drug-Free Workplace ([Policy GAMA](#)) ([Procedure P.GAMA](#))

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 GCPS in writing of any criminal drug statute arrest and/or conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace (in GCPS facilities, vehicles, and at school-sponsored activities) no later than five calendar days after such conviction.
2. GCPS 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;
- GCPS 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*.

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*. Noncompliance with this policy or violation of the regulations may result in severe disciplinary action, including suspension or dismissal.

Complaint Procedures (*Policy GAE*)

Purposes

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 Director of Equity and Compliance, Title IX Section 504/Title II Coordinator, who will make a prompt investigation. Any supervisor who becomes aware of such a complaint should notify the Director of Equity and Compliance, Title IX Section 504/Title II Coordinator of the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management 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* for specific steps. Complaint Procedure forms may be obtained from a supervisor or by calling the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management.

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 age, gender, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability; or inappropriate or offensive conduct. It is the Board's expectation that all personnel conduct themselves in a highly professional manner and respect co-workers, 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 co-worker repeatedly to spend time with you after being turned down;
- Displaying offensive sexual material in the workplace;
- 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](#))

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 written complaint or consult with the appropriate Director/Manager in the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management; or, the person may file a complaint with the Director of Equity and Compliance, Title IX Section 504/Title II Coordinator in the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management. A person who has a concern about the handling of his/her complaint is encouraged to discuss those concerns with the Director of Equity and Compliance, Title IX Section 504/Title II Coordinator.

Personnel Records ([Policy BE](#))

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 officials on a need-to-know basis. Otherwise, requests for information not specifically approved by the employee will be referred to the Associate Superintendent, Human Resources and Talent Management 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.

Employees may review their personnel records by contacting the Division of Human Resources and Talent Management to schedule an appointment. A request form must be completed and signed for employees who request copies of records from their personnel file. Confidential reference documents are not available for review.

Use of Electronic Resources ([Policy IFBG](#)) ([Procedure P.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 Academic Knowledge and Skills (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](#) for further information.

Social Media ([Policy IFBG](#))

Responsible Use of Technology

Gwinnett County Public Schools recognizes that the use of technology is prevalent in society. Students and staff have access to the Internet, cell phones, games, and a variety of personal technology devices. Students and staff utilize social media websites and applications as well as a variety of other digital resources that allow them to interact, share, create, and innovate. Staff members use these same resources as a means to effectively engage and motivate student learning and collaborate with colleagues.

Access to more technology leads to more data access, as well. Regardless of the source, GCPS staff and students are reminded to follow the policies and procedures that protect data access, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA), and the Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000 (CIPA), which are detailed in the Student/Parent Handbook. For more information on data privacy, please see [Procedure P.EBCA](#): Passwords and Data Privacy, especially sections 4 and 5. While the School Board supports anytime/anywhere access to GCPS business-related data, all staff members share the responsibility to protect sensitive data in a professional manner. Regardless of the device or the computer with which GCPS data is retrieved, staff members are expected to protect GCPS-related personal and sensitive information at all times. This includes GCPS-purchased devices as well as devices owned, rented, or used by GCPS employees.

Staff Members' Social Media Use

As online technologies become more interactive, GCPS is providing new methods for supporting teaching and learning, including social media, home access to learning activities, and enhanced online resources. Social media includes all types of communication shared in an electronic format, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, wikis, e-mail, social networks, instant messaging, and video-hosting sites, as well

as emerging technology that encourages sharing and electronic collaboration. Each vehicle has its own style and privacy options. These technologies must meet GCPS standards and expectations for communication with students, parents, staff, and community members. Information regarding FERPA and the school district's media release expectations are detailed in the Student/Parent Handbook. Some additional guidelines around social networking are important to remember:

- **Treat school-related social media as a secondary form of communication with parents and students.** District-approved or district-hosted communication tools (such as e-mail and the school website) are the primary resources for communication to parents and students about school-related matters.
- **Communicate with students and parents about school-related matters through district-approved or district-hosted electronic accounts and applications, such as district e-mail and the school or department website.**
- **Do not share information, pictures, or work examples of GCPS students unless parents have approved such use of their child's information, images, and work examples on social network sites.**
- **Do not share information, pictures, or work examples of GCPS staff members on social network sites without their approval.**
- **Consider the information being distributed and its impact on your credibility as a staff member and your ability to perform your duties.**
- **Only allow "true friends" access to your personal information, and carefully consider what you post about your professional activities and environment on personal social networking sites.**
- **Directly connect the use of social networking to the academic purpose of the classroom when maintaining a site for teaching and learning purposes.**
- **Remember that staff members are expected to follow the ethical and professional standards for educators and associated procedures.** If you choose to post information about your work, strive to post only information that is a positive reflection of your efforts to educate students and interact with others.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Schools and school districts are mandated by Federal law, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), to protect educational records. "Educational records" refers to those data elements that are (1) directly related to a student; and (2) maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting on behalf of the agency or institution.

FERPA permits school districts to disclose information designated as "Directory Information" without consent of parent or student. Directory information is considered information which is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if disclosed. It includes student information found in athletic and extracurricular programs, yearbooks, honor roll, and other recognition lists, graduation programs, etc.

Extra care must be taken to protect "non-directory" student information as well as personally identifiable information contained within student records, either in electronic or paper form. Among the items considered non-directory information are:

- Advisement records
- Courses taken
- Disciplinary actions
- Grades
- Schedule
- Student number
- Test scores

Personally identifiable information in education records is defined as a student's first and last name with one or more of the following data elements:

- A list of personal characteristics that would make the student's identity easily traceable.
- Any other information or identifiers that would make the student's identity easily traceable.
- Name of student's parent(s) or other family member(s).
- Social security number.

15 Useful Social Media Tips

1. **Do not share confidential information.**
2. **Obey applicable laws and the Code of Ethics for Educators.**
3. **Respect GCPS time and Property.** You should participate in personal social media conversations on your own time.
4. **Use your best judgment.** What you write may have serious consequences. Once you post something on social media, you can't "get it back." Even deleting the post doesn't mean it's truly gone. Ultimately, you bear sole responsibility for what you post.
5. **Replace error with fact.** When you see misrepresentations made about your school or district in social media, you may certainly identify and correct the error. Always do so with respect and with the facts.
6. **Be aware of the image you present.** Any time you engage in social media, you're representing yourself and GCPS. Don't do anything that discredits you or your service as a professional educator or employee.
7. **Be cautious with information sharing.** Maintain privacy settings on your social media account, change your passwords regularly, and don't give out personally identifiable information. Be cautious about the personal details you share on the Internet.
8. **Avoid the offensive.** Don't post any defamatory, libelous, vulgar, obscene, abusive, profane, threatening, racially or ethnically hateful, or otherwise offensive or illegal information or material.
9. **Don't violate privacy.** Don't post any information that would infringe upon the proprietary, privacy, or personal rights of others.
10. **Don't violate copyright.** Don't post information or other material protected by copyright without permission of the copyright owner.
11. **Don't misuse trademarks.**
12. **Make no endorsements.** Don't use your school or the district's name to endorse or promote products, political positions, or religious ideologies.
13. **Do not misrepresent yourself.** Don't disguise, impersonate, or otherwise misrepresent your identity or affiliation with any other person or entity.
14. **Don't promote yourself for personal or financial gain.** Don't use your school system affiliation to promote, endorse, or benefit yourself or any profit-making group or agency.
15. **Follow terms of service.** Be familiar with a social media site's terms of service and follow them. For example, having two personal profiles on Facebook violates its terms of service.

(These tips include information from a number of resources, including GCPS Procedure P.IFBG, "Voices of the Staff" from the University of Michigan, and "The Air Force Social Media Guide.")

505-6-.01 The Code of Ethics for Educators

Effective October 15, 2009

(1) 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.

(2) Definitions

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

(b) “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.

(c) “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.

(d) “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.

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

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

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

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

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

(j) “Monitoring” is the quarterly appraisal of the educator’s conduct by the Professional Standards Commission through contact with the educator and his or 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.

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

(3) Standards

(a) **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 Section 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.

(b) **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 a state or federal law;
5. Soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student;
6. Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or
7. Failing to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by students who are under the educator's supervision (including but not limited to at the educator's residence or any other private setting).

(c) **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; and
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).

(d) **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.

(e) **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; and
5. Using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee.

(f) **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 be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the Georgia High School Association.

(g) **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.

(h) **Standard 8: Abandonment of Contract** - An educator shall 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.

(i) **Standard 9: Required Reports** - An educator shall 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.

(j) 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 or her employment position, or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students.

(k) 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.

(4) Reporting

a) 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.).

(b) 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.

(5) Disciplinary Action

(a) 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 (PSC Rule 505-6-.01);
2. Disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 (PSC Rule 505-6-.01);
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 (O.C.G.A. § 19-6-28.1 and §19-11-9.3);
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 guaranteed by the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation (O.C.G.A. § 20-3-295);
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.

(b) 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 or her revocation, suspension or denial for a violation of The Code of Ethics. The Superintendent and the 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 Superintendent and the Superintendent's designee must hold GaPSC certification.

Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200; 20-2-981 through 20-2-984.5

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 – 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.

- Appoints the System Test Coordinator.
- Supervises Principals System Test Coordinator to ensure that they fulfill their specific roles and responsibilities for the administration of tests.
- Maintains contact with System Test Coordinator to become thoroughly informed of all testing activities.

- Conducts investigations of reported testing irregularities (e.g. student cheating, unethical professional conduct). Reports unethical professional conduct to the Educator Ethics Division of the Professional Standards Commission.
- Monitors testing activities in the local school system to guarantee compliance with regulations established by the State Board of Education and current legislation.
- Informs local board members, parents, and other citizens about requirements pertaining to statewide testing.
- Ensures that appropriate local personnel attend GaDOE workshops concerning state assessment programs.
- Reviews and returns certification/verification forms to the Office of Assessment and Accountability at the GaDOE by the due dates.
- Ensures that Principal's Certification Forms are completed after each test administration and retained as required.
- Approves all special administrations.
- Informs citizens residing within the local system's area concerning the collective achievement of enrolled students by school and system.
- Ensures that local calendars are planned so that all tests are administered according to the published testing calendar.

System Test Coordinator

- Coordinates all test administration activities within the school system.
- Serves as liaison between the system and the GaDOE for all test administration activities.
- Assumes responsibility for carrying out the approved plan for administration of all tests.
- Furnishes all information and submits all forms required by the GaDOE by specified dates.
- Ensures principals complete the Principal Certification Form for each administration and maintains these forms for five years.
- Orders special format tests (Braille or large print).
- Receives test materials from GaDOE at a designated time and place and maintains them in a secure location.
- Reviews and follows all procedures in all administration manuals and is familiar with administrators' roles and proctors' roles.
- Adheres to test dates, time schedules, and specified instructions set by the GaDOE.
- Ensures that each test setting (room) is suitable, has an assigned examiner, and has the appropriate number of proctors.
- Accounts for all test materials delivered to the school system and for the disposition of specific materials.
- Attends statewide testing program meetings.
- Arranges schedule for staff to monitor schools during testing sessions.
- Trains all system/school personnel involved in test administration, including School Test Coordinators, examiners, proctors, the system Special Education Coordinator (on the administration of the GAA), the system ESOL Coordinator (on the administration of ACCESS for ELs/Alternate ACCESS), and any others who have responsibilities related to testing and/or testing materials.
- Ensures that Principals and School Test Coordinators are aware of and follow the protocols/procedures prescribed in Student Assessment Handbook, testing manuals, and other ancillary materials.
- Maintains a portfolio of all training session materials and rosters of attendees.
- Answers questions of all School Test Coordinators and Principals and makes decisions regarding testing, when appropriate.
- Ensures that School Test Coordinators account for all students in terms of testing requirements.
- Ensures strict test security and reports to the CEO/Superintendent concerning testing irregularities (i.e., student cheating, unethical professional conduct).
- Communicates to the Assessment Administration Division when testing irregularities occur.
- Distributes test results to the CEO/Superintendent and to the schools in a timely manner and ensures that students are informed of the expected date for the return of the test results.
- Interprets test results to school personnel and appropriate others.

- Ensures that local calendars are planned so that all tests are administered according to the state-published testing calendar that provides testing dates for the current and future academic years.
- Ensures that students, parents, and the general public have access to information concerning all test administrations and utilization of test results.
- Works with system personnel to communicate to parents of students with IEPs, IAPs, and EL/TPC plans pertinent information regarding all statewide tests.
- Facilitates the transfer of GAA portfolios when students withdraw from or enrolls in the school system.

System Special Education Coordinator

- Acquires and maintains current information on the statewide testing program, including the section for Students with Disabilities, which is found in the Assessing Special Populations section of the Student Assessment Handbook and the Accommodations Manual.
- Acquires and maintains current information of IDEA, state rules, and waiver process for students with disabilities.
- Provides technical assistance to special education teachers on test administration.
- Ensures that all due process rights pertaining to the testing programs are provided for students with disabilities.
- Ensures that IEP teams understand the appropriate selection of approved accommodations and the selection of the Georgia Alternate Assessment for state-mandated tests.
- Ensures that appropriate documentation is maintained for all students with disabilities.
- Ensures that students with disabilities have the appropriate test-taking experience or have been taught test-taking skills prior to taking the tests.
- Informs System Test Coordinator of the number of special format tests (e.g., Braille, Kurzweil, or large print) needed to test students with disabilities for all test administrations.
- Informs the System Test Coordinator of the number of students who must receive each accommodation allowed by state regulations.
- Acquires and maintains current information about the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA).
 - Discuss the GAA with students and parents/guardians.
 - Informs parents and students of participation in the GAA and the requirements for graduation and diploma eligibility.
- Ensures that the following activities are completed by special education personnel in preparation for all state-mandated assessments.
 - Discusses the state-required tests with the students and parents/guardians.
 - Informs IEP students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) of pertinent test information and the role of the IEP team in identifying test accommodations, if any, which the student may require in order to participate.
 - Discusses with the student and parents/guardians the consequences of the student not passing a state-mandated assessment. Such a discussion should include the state rule (e.g., implications of the Secondary Assessment Transition Plan for high school students, students must pass the GHSWT to receive a regular diploma, must pass the CRCT/CRCT-M in certain grades and content areas for promotion) and relevant local policy, if any. Document the occurrence of this discussion.
- Ensures that all special education teachers have been trained to administer the GAA.
- Collaborates with Title III/ESOL colleagues to train the appropriate teachers to administer the Alternate ACCESS for ELs.

System Title III/ESOL Coordinator

- Ensures that all assessments and, in certain cases, conferences relating to a student's ESOL eligibility (Rule 160-4-5-.02) are documented prior to assigning EL or EL-M status.
- Acquires and maintains current information on the statewide testing program, including the section on accommodations for EL or EL-M students which is found in the Accommodations section of the SAH.
- Acquires and maintains current information of state rules and the deferment/accommodation process for EL or EL-M students.
- Provides technical assistance to teachers on test administration.

- Ensures that appropriate documentation is maintained for all EL or EL-M students.
- Ensures that EL or EL-M students have appropriate test-taking experience or have been taught test-taking skills prior to taking the tests. EL-M students should not be administered the ACCESS.
- Informs the System Test Coordinator of the number of students who must receive each accommodation allowed by state regulations.
- Ensures that the following activities are completed by EL/ESOL personnel in preparation for all state-mandated assessments:
 - Discusses the state-required tests with the students and parents/guardians.
 - Informs EL or EL-M students and their parent(s)/guardian(s) of pertinent test information and the role of the EL/TPC in identifying test accommodations, if any, which the student may require in order to participate.
 - Discusses with the student and parents/guardians the consequences of the student not passing a state-mandated assessment. Such a discussion should include the state rule (e.g., implications of the Secondary Assessment Transition Plan for high school students, students must pass the GHSWT to receive a regular diploma, students must pass the CRCT/CRCT-M in certain grades and content areas for promotion) and relevant local policy, if any. Document the occurrence of this discussion.
 - Informs System Test Coordinator of the names of EL students receiving deferments. This list should specify which tests or subtests are subject to deferment.
- Trains Title III/ESOL teachers to administer ACCESS for ELLs and collaborates with special education colleagues to train the appropriate teachers to administer the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

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

- Ensures proper environment for test administration.
- Ensures that all testing sites are appropriately prepared: adequate student workspace, proper lighting, good ventilation, sufficient number of desks in good repair, instructional materials (e.g. posters, word walls, etc.) removed or covered, etc.
- Ensures that the test accommodations identified in students' IEPs, IAPs, and EL/TPC plans are provided for each student as specified.
- Ensures that testing sites are free of interruptions during test administration (e.g. intercom messages, visitors, wandering student).
- Designates a School Test Coordinator to coordinate the testing program. The School Test Coordinator must hold a PSC-issued certificate.
- Assigns personnel to serve as Examiners and Proctors.
- Arranges appropriate schedules for teachers who will be Proctors and Examiners and for those who will be teaching other students not involved in testing.
- Informs students and parents/guardians about the purpose of testing, dates and times for testing, and expected dates for return of test results.
- Creates an atmosphere in which all staff members know that their cooperation is needed and expected for successful test administration.
- Advises School Test Coordinator, Examiners, and Proctors if emergency situations arise.
- Monitors the administration of test.
- Supervises all testing activities to ensure strict test security.
- Maintains test materials in a secure location, with restricted access.
- Ensures that only staff members who have been trained on the proper management of secure test materials handle such materials.
- Notifies the System Test Coordinator of testing irregularities and provides explanation of circumstances.
- Ensures that the school calendar is planned so that all tests are administered according to the system's testing calendar.
- Monitors test preparation activities to ensure that secure testing materials are not misused.
- Verifies all special education teachers have been trained to administer the GAA.
- Verifies all ESOL teachers have been trained to administer the ACCESS.
- Verifies all kindergarten teachers have been trained to administer the GKIDs.
- Validates the content and procedures of students' portfolios by signing the GAA validation form.

- Reviews and returns the Principal's Certification Form to the System Test Coordinator after each administration.

School Test Coordinator

- Receives test materials from System Test Coordinator and verifies numbers received.
- Determines the number of test booklets to be assigned to each testing site and accounts for material distribution and return.
- Prepares all testing sites.
- Assists Principal in assigning Examiner(s).
- Assigns Proctors appropriately in accordance with state guidelines.
- Accounts for the security of all test materials during the time the materials are in the building.
- Under supervision, ensures the accuracy of student FTE and GTID numbers on each answer document.
- Ensures all materials are stored in a secure, locked location with restricted access. Confirms access is restricted by accounting for keys.
- Conducts orientation and training sessions for Examiners and Proctors.
- Ensures that only staff members who have been trained on the proper management of secure test materials handle such materials.
- Adheres to system testing schedule.
- Distributes test materials to and collects from each Examiner on the testing days.
- Ensures Examiners sign out (date and time) materials each testing day shortly before testing begins each day.
- Ensures Examiners return (sign, date, and time) materials immediately after testing each day.
- Ensures that a minimum of one certified administrator is present and witnesses the transcription of student responses when/where necessary (e.g. such as when a student has the accommodation of marking answers in the test booklet). Documentation of this process must be retained.
- Provides each Examiner with a list of student FTE and GTID numbers.
- Gives Examiners extra No. 2 pencils, pens for writing tests, and resource materials, if appropriate.
- Accounts for all students in terms of testing requirements.
- Notifies Principal and System Test Coordinator of any emergency situation and helps to decide what action needs to be taken.
- Conducts, coordinates, and supervises inspection of all completed answer document before delivering them to the System Test Coordinator for the following purposes only: to ensure that the student demographic/identification information is accurate, that necessary coding/labeling is complete, and that documents are in good condition for scanning.
- Coordinates and supervises inspection of all completed answer documents before delivering them to the System Test Coordinator.
- Completes State Required Codes (SRC) on answer documents.
- Counts materials returned from Examiners each day and accounts for all materials distributed each day of testing.
- Packages and returns materials to System Test Coordinator according to directions and time line.
- Notifies Principal and System Test Coordinator of any testing irregularities and provides explanation of circumstances.
- Maintains dated student sign-in/sign-out sheets for each GHSGT administration.
- Ensures that students have only one opportunity to test during each window.
- Ensures that for any students not currently enrolled in their local school, the following protocol is applied:
 - Contacts students' schools for verification of test eligibility; and
 - Requires photo ID and maintains photocopy record.
 - The decision to test out-of-system students is a local one. The burden of identification, establishment of eligibility, and record-keeping ensuring score reports are returned to the appropriate school must be borne by the administering school/system.

Examiner (person administering the assessment) - Certified educators (teachers, counselors, administrators) must administer all assessments. Educators without Georgia certification from the Professional Standards Commission may not administer state assessments.

- Participates in training.
- Reviews and follows all procedures in handling all administration materials.
- Counts materials prior to testing and after testing to verify accuracy.
- Ensures the security of test booklets while they are in the testing site before, during, and after testing.
- Provides No. 2 pencils, erasers, pens for writing tests, and resource materials (if appropriate).
- Ensures the accuracy of student FTE and GTID numbers on each answer document.
- Follows procedures for testing as given in Examiner's Manual, including reading all directions to students.
- Maintains control of testing situation and keeps students on task. **Examiners should actively circulate and monitor students throughout the testing session(s).**
- Confirms that all assigned students have entered and bubbled in the test form number correctly if one is required.
- Allows no student to leave the test room unless there is an emergency.
- Counts and verifies all testing materials each day prior to dismissing students.
- With direct administrator supervision, at the conclusion of testing, inspects answer documents for the following purposes only: to ensure that student demographic/identification information is accurate, that necessary coding/labeling is complete, and that documents are in good condition for scanning.
- Returns all test materials to School Test Coordinators immediately after testing each day, including special format tests, such as Braille or large print.
- Documents the daily receipt (date, time, and number received) of test materials and the daily return of test materials.
- Ensures that no content-related instructional materials are displayed in the testing site. Charts, diagrams, and posters should not be visible. Boards should be free of any writing except for test procedure information. Electronic devices are not allowed in the testing site.

Proctor

- Participates in training.
- Assumes responsibility for assigned students.
- Monitors a specific area if a large testing site is used.
- With Examiner supervision, assists in preparing test materials for distribution to students in a classroom on days of testing.
- Ensures that desks are clear of everything except test materials.
- With Examiner supervision, assists in distributing and collecting classroom test materials.
- With Examiner supervision, answers questions regarding test procedures but does not explain items or answer any questions regarding the content of the test.
- Remains in testing site during entire testing time.
- With Examiner supervision, observes students during test to monitor that they are: (a) marking answers completely and correctly; (b) choosing only one answer per item; (c) marking answers which have the same number as the corresponding item number in the booklet; (d) using only specified test materials; e) no using calculators unless permitted on specific subtests; and (f) using appropriate materials such as correct test formats and answer documents. Reports student actions to examiner immediately.
- Reports any unusual circumstances to Examiner immediately (e.g. suspicion of cheating).
- Circulates among students during testing to discourage misconduct and to be available to answer student questions.
- Avoids standing by a student's desk too long or touching a student, as this may be distracting.
- Monitors students with disabilities, 504 students, or EL students who may require closer observation than other students or who need special assistance.
- With Examiner supervision, assists in accounting for all classroom test materials (test materials should be returned to the School Test Coordinator by the Examiner).
- Assists the Examiner in maintaining strict test security.

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 and 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 without 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 (e.g. 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.

Employee Resources

[Benefits Center](#)

[Certification](#)

[Employee Perks](#)

[Employee Portal](#)

[GCPS Board Approved Policies](#)

[GCPS Foundation](#)

[GCPS Publications](#)

[Georgia Department of Community Health](#)

[Georgia Department of Education](#)

[Georgia Professional Standards Commission](#)

[Gwinnett Effectiveness Initiative](#)

[Gwinnett Retirement System \(GRS\)](#)

[Leadership Development](#)

[Leave Center](#)

[Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia \(PSERS\)](#)

[Retirement Manager](#)

[Retirement Savings Plans](#)

[Salary Schedules](#)

[Staff – Notices for Employees](#)

[Teachers Retirement System \(TRS\)](#)

[United States Department of Labor](#)

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