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MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

With great pleasure, I welcome you to Gordon County Schools. We are excited for you to join us and share our commitment to providing high quality educational experiences to every student in every classroom in every school across our county.

Serving in public education is truly a calling and requires great commitment and dedication on the part of each employee. Understanding that, know that we are here to support you as you serve in your position and continue to grow professionally.

This guide has been carefully developed over time to be a resource for you today and in the future. Please carefully read your GCS Employee Handbook and let us know if you have questions.

Our greatest resource for our children is you! I look forward to working alongside you as we transform teaching and learning. We have so much to explore and accomplish. Some things we have only begun to imagine.

Again, welcome to Gordon County Schools!

Proud to serve you, the students, and families of Gordon County,

Kimberly M. Fraker
Kimberly M. Fraker, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Our Vision
Gordon County Schools is a unified school system with strong community partnerships committed to the growth of all students, individual empowerment, and the transformation of public education resulting in graduates ready for college, career, and life.

Our Daily Mission
Our mission is to build a collaborative culture that engages all students and staff in learning experiences leading to growth, empowerment, and transformation.

Our Collective Commitments
· We are committed to providing a quality education to all students as individuals recognizing students learn in multiple ways and define success differently.

· We are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and well-maintained learning environment.

· We are committed to hiring, developing, and supporting high quality, effective staff.

· We are committed to increased student success through continuous collaboration of faculty, staff, students, parents, and our community and by leveraging the expertise and talents of our staff.

· We are committed to effective, ongoing internal and external communication to build positive relationships with all stakeholders and address individual student progress.

GCS Strategic Goals 2021-2026

Goal Area I: Learning and Growth for All
Objective 1: Increase success by addressing specific achievement gaps
Objective 2: Increase teacher and leader effectiveness
Objective 3: Implement systematic student advisement

Goal Area II: Quality Classroom Instruction and Experience
Objective 1: Strengthen and align resources for teaching and learning
Objective 2: Expand integration of technology
Objective 3: Implement the PLC process system wide

Goal Area III: Family and Community Engagement
Objective 1: Improve outgoing communication
Objective 2: Expand opportunities for students, parents, and community partners
Objective 3: Strengthen intergovernmental collaboration
Goal Area IV: Operational Excellence and Efficiency
Objective 1: Operate a continual cycle of improvement for buildings and grounds
Objective 2: Maintain safe, clean learning environments that meet state/system standards
Objective 3: Increase efficiency and effectiveness of transportation services

Goal Area V: Fiscal Stability and Integrity
Objective 1: Sustain excellent financial stewardship
Objective 2: Maintain a healthy fund balance
Objective 3: Uphold best practices for financial operation of the system

Introduction to Gordon County Schools
Gordon County Schools is a state public charter system, a status obtained from the Georgia Department of Education in 2011. In Georgia, charter system status allows districts flexibility from state rules and regulations in an effort to increase innovation to foster student achievement. Charter also focuses on local control and decision-making at the local system and school level. Charter systems are required to include the community and schools in the decision-making process. Gordon County does this through Local School Governance teams in each school community. The College and Career Academy operates under a Board of Directors, which meets monthly to determine needs and improvements. Each school governance team advises system leadership on best practices for its school, and it is made up of parents, teachers, and community and business leaders. Under the system charter, Gordon County Schools has implemented several innovative practices to meet the needs of our community and students, and student achievement continues to increase. Among those innovations are our academic coaching program, and the Gordon County College & Career Academy, which opened a new, state-of-the-art facility to students in August 2014. Gordon County Schools is a district of approximately 7,000 students in 12 facilities; 6 elementary schools, two middle schools, 2 high schools serving 9-12, and the College and Career Academy.

Gordon County School System is located in Northwest Georgia along the natural gateway where the first railroad was located in our region. Gordon County has historically been an area of leadership and southern culture. The county seat is the City of Calhoun. Gordon County, named for William Gordon, was the 94th of Georgia’s 159 counties and was formed in 1850. Its total area is 355.81 square miles. We are the home of New Echota, the last seat of the Cherokee Nation and the location of key battles fought during the Civil War, namely the battle of Resaca. The economy is rooted in manufacturing, including Mohawk Industries’ corporate headquarters, Shaw Industries, and Mannington Carpets. Farming is also prevalent in Gordon County. The total land area is 355.81 miles, and the population gathered in the 2013 Consensus information totaled 55,757 people. There are 19,066 households and the mean income is $40,926. The racial makeup of the county includes 77.9% white, 4.4% black, 0.6% American Indian, 1.1% Asian, 14.6% Hispanic, and 1.4% two or more races. The percentage of families living in poverty is 21%. It is located almost exactly halfway between Chattanooga, TN and Atlanta, GA—two thriving metropolitan cities. Seventy three percent of residents have a high school diploma or equivalent and 14.2% of Gordon County citizens have a Bachelor’s Degree or
higher. Gordon County has a county and city public school system, as well as a private school and a satellite campus of Georgia Northwestern Technical College.

**Strategic Priority for Communication**

The Department of Communications advances GCS reputation, mission, priorities and values through an integrated communication approach that includes the following:

- **Brand development and management** – Cultivating an emotional connection and loyalty to the district by articulating the district’s distinctive qualities, encouraging a positive experience, and developing and protecting the district’s identity, marks and graphic assets.
- **Media relations** – Establishing mutually beneficial relationships with members of the media – from digital publications and social networks to production studios and news organizations – to support the accurate, appropriate and fair use of district information worldwide.
- **Marketing** – Developing effective tools and services to convey the district’s message, including advertising, presentations, promotional pieces and events.
- **Publications and digital properties** – Creating magazines, newsletters, websites and other digital content that advance the district’s mission.
- **Visual communication** – Providing photography, videography, graphic design and other visual assets that create a compelling story.
- **Internal communications** – Providing outreach assistance and information for GCS students, faculty and staff.

The Department of Communications is the district’s storyteller, providing information in a way that’s accurate, credible, engaging and influential. It uses a wide range of platforms to share the district’s story – websites and social networks, district news and features in prominent media outlets, advertising and marketing materials, and visual assets such as photography, videography and graphics – all designed to build connections with multiple constituents.

The office also develops and monitors communication policies, procedures and standards to ensure a consistent, accurate and appropriate presence throughout the district and with external publics. It provides strategy, counsel, services and support to the district’s schools, programs and units.

The following procedure will be followed concerning public release of information about Gordon County Schools:

**School-related Releases**

Each school will appoint a Public Relations (PR) contact who will disseminate information for his/her respective school to the Director of Communications on a regular basis. All such information should be sent to PR@GCBE.ORG for distribution to local media sites. When possible, the story should come in the form of a link to a story on the school website. This will ensure that any changes that are made to correct omissions or errors are made in only one place, not to multiple sources. The school webmaster is responsible for keeping new stories at
his/her respective school current and should utilize the district posting option to allow the story to be shared to the district site.

Each submission will be checked for completeness of information and to ensure that any photographs are appropriately identified. It will be the responsibility of the school PR contact to ensure that any students mentioned or pictured in the submission are not prohibited from being photographed or identified as protected under FERPA. All complete submissions will be sent to local media sources, including but not limited to the *Calhoun Times* and local radio stations.

**District Website and Social Media Postings**

In general, website postings for each school will be shared from the school sites to the district events section on the system homepage. In the same manner, any social media posts originated by the school will be shared to the district sites, where available. The following circumstances will warrant a post that will be originated from the district level:

- Region, State, or National accomplishment by a teacher or a school as a whole.
- First or second place recognition at the State level made by a student or a team.
- A top ten finish at the National level by a student or team.
- News that pertains to the entire district or someone not directly affiliated with a school where the story would be covered.
- Any other information deemed appropriate at the discretion of the Director of Communications or Superintendent.

**EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION**

Gordon County Schools employees frequently receive recognition for awards and achievements of various national, state, and local accomplishments. Professional associations regularly recognize GCS teachers for their excellence. Additionally, each school chooses a Teacher of the Year Nominee during the year. From the pool of local school Teachers of the Year, finalists and the GCS Teacher of the Year are named.

**PROFESSIONAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (GCBE POLICY GAD)**

Individuals employed by Gordon County Schools are selected by a systematic personnel screening process designed to identify professionally qualified candidates. The Gordon County Board of Education is committed to the establishment and implementation of a comprehensive improvement plan designed to improve educator effectiveness and result in increased student achievement.

A component of the comprehensive improvement plan shall be a professional learning plan detailing the professional learning process that is needed to support the major components of the improvement plan. The professional learning plan shall organize and direct all professional
learning that enhances the knowledge, skills and practice of district personnel, regardless of the funding source.

The Superintendent shall appoint a professional learning coordinator to facilitate the development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the district's professional learning. The plan for professional learning should be based on multiple data sources including, but not limited to, student achievement and teacher/leader effectiveness measures. The plan and its implementation shall be aligned to rigorous standards for professional learning and shall be consistent with all requirements of the State Board of Education. Each school principal shall appoint a professional learning leader to facilitate the school's professional learning designed to support and be an integral part of the school improvement plan.

School principals and district leaders shall be responsible for engaging teachers and other district personnel in on-going professional learning as part of the district's comprehensive improvement plan.

Personnel who successfully complete conferences, workshops or courses approved by the professional learning coordinator may be reimbursed for expenditures by submitting such requests in accordance with district procedures established by the Superintendent or designee.

The district's multi-year comprehensive improvement plan, budget, and annual report shall be submitted to the Georgia Department of Education at a time and in a manner identified by the Department.

The Superintendent or designee is authorized to establish such administrative procedures or regulations as may be needed to implement this policy.

PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL

Gordon County 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. Teachers of record shall be evaluated through the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES). Principals and assistant principals shall be evaluated through the Leaders Keys Effectiveness System (LKES). Certified personnel not evaluated by TKES or LKES and all classified staff shall be assessed through a locally developed evaluation program. All certified staff will be required to develop one professional development goal and maintain documentation supporting those goals in the TKES platform.
CERTIFICATION

It is the responsibility of all certified employees to obtain and maintain valid in-field Georgia certification. Gordon County Schools waives certification upon entry with the expectation that certification be completed within three years of employment as outlined in the district improvement plan. Employees may contact the GCS Department of Human Resources for certification forms and to discuss requirements. Teachers must be professionally qualified to teach in the assigned subject area(s) as required by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

All paraprofessionals must hold a Paraprofessional Certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC). Certification requirements may be found on the GaPSC website (www.gapsc.com).

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 Gordon County Schools. Other specialized positions may also require licensing (e.g., nursing staff, occupational therapists, physical therapist, speech pathologists, and audiologists).

COMPENSATION

To attract and retain professionally qualified teachers and support personnel, Gordon County Schools maintains competitive salaries by conducting regular job and market analysis of Northwest Georgia school districts as well as other not for profit employers in the Southeast region.

All classified personnel hired may be awarded up to 10 years of creditable service for relevant work experience.

PAY STATEMENT/DIRECT DEPOSIT

Employees may access their pay statements online via Employee Docs. During the onboarding process, all new employees will complete a direct deposit authorization form and provide GCS with a voided check in order to route their pay to the appropriate financial institution. Changes to banking information can be made through the Employee Docs portal.

NAME/ADDRESS/PHONE NUMBER CHANGES

It is the responsibility of employees to inform the Department of Human Resources of any change in home address and/or phone number. Employees may update their name, personal address, and phone number online via Employee Docs. Address and phone number changes may be completed directly on the Employee Docs 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 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. Depending on circumstances surrounding the individual’s failure to meet his /her contractual obligation, the GCS Department of Human Resources may make an ethics violation referral to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

BENEFITS

Benefits are a large part of the total compensation package for Gordon County Schools’ employees. GCS offers employees and eligible family members a comprehensive and valuable benefits program. We encourage you to take the time to educate yourself about your options and select the best coverage for your family. 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 GCS. Because of the importance of the benefits package, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the details of the various plans from a variety of sources, including the Employee Benefits Guide and the State Health Benefits Plan Guide. These publications, along with other detailed information, can be found on the employee benefits portal, www.mygordonbenefits.com.

Cafeteria Plan

A flexible benefit plan is available that allows employees to select non-taxable benefits according to Section 125 of the IRS code. The cafeteria plan also enables eligible employees to convert their premium contributions for health, dental, vision, cancer, critical illness, accident and flex medical/dependent reimbursement care from an after-tax expense to a pre-tax expense. All employees will default to the cafeteria plan unless you opt out in writing to the Benefits Department.

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.

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.

GCS plan year runs on a calendar year from January 1 to December 31, with the exception of flexible spending accounts that run from July 1 to June 30 of each year.

If you have a qualifying event during the plan year, you must notify the Benefits Coordinator to make a change to your election. The request must be in writing/email within 31 days of the event. Changes requested after this time will not be permitted until the next open enrollment period.
**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 State Health Benefit Plan website.

**Dental Insurance**
GCS offers a low, high, and a MAC (in network plan) dental plan for full-time eligible employees to choose. Each full-time employee is eligible for the Board paid low - employee only dental plan at no charge to the employee. 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. Be sure to contact Ameritas before beginning orthodontia or a major treatment, as reimbursement rules are different from those of routine dental care. Please see the policy for specific information. Dental plan is currently offered through Ameritas.

**Vision Insurance**
All full-time employees working 20 hours or more per week are eligible to purchase Vision insurance. The vision plan is a direct reimbursement plan managed through Simple.

**Group Life Insurance**
All full-time employees working 20 hours or more per week are automatically covered by a $10,000 term Life and Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy provided by the Board at no cost to the employee. Please see the policy for specific information. Board paid life plan is currently offered through Unum.

**Voluntary Life & Accidental Death and Dismemberment**
GCS offers coverage for the employee, spouse, and children for voluntary life. Coverage can be purchased from $10,000 to $500,000, or up to five times your salary. Please see the policy for specific information. Voluntary Life plan is currently offered through UNUM.

**Disability Insurance (Short & Long Term)**
All full-time employees working 20 hours or more per week are eligible for Short- & Long-term disability. Coverage begins on the 15 day out and after all sick days are used. Covers accidents and sicknesses for up to 11 weeks for short term and to age 65 or normal age of retirement for long term. Short and long term will pay 60% of your salary. Please see the policy for specific information. Disability plan is currently offered through Sun Life.

**Accident Insurance**
Accident insurance also complements traditional health coverage by providing a lump sum payment that can help pay expenses not typically covered by other insurance. The payment can be used to offset medical deductibles, out-of-pocket maximums, and/or living expenses. Employees have a choice of two comprehensive plan options, which provide payments in
addition to any other insurance payments employees may receive. Accident plan is correctly offered through Unum.

**Critical Illness/Cancer rider Insurance**
The plan pays a lump sum benefit upon the first approved diagnosis of a covered cancer/critical illness condition. GCS offers a plan and coverage is portable. Specific definitions and coverage can be found in the policy. Cancer/critical Illness plan is currently offered through Unum.

**Flexible Spending Accounts (FSA)**
GCS employees may deduct up to $2,650 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. FSAs are currently offered through CAS. Detailed information on both FSA plans and lists of eligible expenses can be found on the [www.mygordonbenefits.com](http://www.mygordonbenefits.com) website.

**Supplemental Retirement Opportunities**
GCS offers employees the opportunity to participate in two tax deferred savings plans: the 403(b) and the 457 deferred compensation plan. The 403(b) plan also offers a Roth option for accumulating additional retirement savings. Supplemental Retirement plan is currently administered through Lincoln Financial Group.

**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 of Georgia (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 on the [Teachers Retirement System of Georgia website](http://www.gordonbenefits.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 of Georgia (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 on the Employees’ Retirement System of Georgia website.

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 GCS Benefits Coordinator.

Not every injury that occurs on GCs premises or during the workday 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 the Director of Human Resources, and a decision on coverage is made based on the available information. Questions may be addressed to an immediate supervisor or the Department of Human Resources.

The Gordon County Board of Education is self-insured to cover the cost of work-incurred injury or illness. If you sustain an injury that arises out of and during the course of employment:

- report the injury immediately to your supervisor, or the person designated in your location;
- fill out a first report of injury and select a physician from the approved posted panel;
- the Workers' Comp Coordinator in the Central Office will call and obtain an appointment, if necessary;
- understand that accommodations will be made for any physician-ordered restrictions to allow for return to work as soon as possible;
- contact Angel Dawson in the Benefits Department at 706-879-5026, or extension 8107.

Any missed days of work due to an injury will result in the employee using their personal sick days or if the injury exceeds seven workdays, the employee may qualify for workers' compensation pay.
LEAVE (GCBE POLICY GARH)

Employees of the Gordon County Board of Education are expected to report to work as required. The following procedures outline categories of leave that all employees shall follow when taking leaves and absences. To the extent that any provision in this policy conflicts with or is superseded by the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"), the regulations promulgated thereunder, or any other federal or state law, the provisions of the applicable law or its regulations, as the case may be, shall control.

Annual Leave and Holidays

Employees who earn annual leave will accumulate days based on the schedule below. Other employees follow the holiday schedule on the annual GCS Employee Calendar.

Annual Leave

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuous Years of Service in GCS</th>
<th>Time Accumulated Each Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 – 9 Years</td>
<td>10 Days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10+ Years</td>
<td>15 Days</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A maximum of five (5) unused annual leave days may be carried forward to the next employment year. Otherwise, annual leave is non-cumulative. Employees who leave the employment of the Gordon County School System with unused earned annual leave may utilize these days as terminal leave. This is limited to the maximum earned during a year and does not include unused annual leave carried forward. Annual leave will not be approved during pre-planning and post-planning. Also annual leave will not be approved for more than five consecutive days. Exceptions must be approved by the Superintendent. The year of record for determining earned annual leave will be July 1 through June 30. New hires must have completed one year of employment before annual leave will be granted. However, if an employee changes to a 12-month position and has been employed with the system for more than a year, the employee may take annual leave prior to July 1 so long as the time has been earned and the request approved. A detailed work calendar will be created annually which will identify workdays for all twelve-month employees.

Holidays

New Year’s Day (1)
Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (1)
Winter Break (See annual school calendar)
Spring Holidays (See annual school calendar)
Memorial Day (1)
Independence Day (1)
Labor Day (1)
Thanksgiving (See annual school calendar)
Winter Holidays (See annual school calendar)
**Sick Leave**

Benefit eligible employees are eligible to receive sick leave with full pay computed on the basis of one and one-fourth working days for each completed month of service (a maximum of 12 1/2 days for a ten month employee; 13 3/4 days for an eleven month employee; and 15 days for a twelve month employee), cumulative to 120 days. For non-hourly employees, leave may only be taken in one-quarter day increments.

Sick leave may be taken for absence due to illness, injury or other temporary disability necessitated by exposure to contagious disease in which the health of others would be endangered by such attendance, or for serious illness or death in the employee's immediate family.

For the purposes of absences for medical and related reasons, the immediate family shall be interpreted to mean: spouse, children, parents, siblings, such in-law equivalents, grandparents, grandchildren, or relatives living in the employee’s household. Extenuating circumstances will be left to the discretion of the Superintendent, taking into account the recommendation of the principal.

In addition, a medical examination may be required in order to establish an employee's ability to perform his or her duties. In such cases, the independent practitioners shall be selected and compensated by the Board; however, the Board will bear no responsibility for any treatment required.

Employees who work at least 10 days of the first month (20 days of their contract) will be allowed to use their full current year’s sick leave earnings before they accrue at the discretion of the Superintendent. However, if the employee uses the full year's allowable sick leave days and terminates employment with the Gordon County School System, the unearned portion of sick leave will be deducted from summer pay.

For absences above those entitled by this policy, an amount equal to one day's salary for each day's absence shall be deducted.

Personnel injured by a physical assault while in the performance of duties shall not have the first seven sick leave days due to injury caused by such assault charged. Such personnel shall not be required to pay for a substitute or have pay reduced.

Employees are required to provide sufficient advance notice of any planned absence in order to allow for appropriate arrangements to be made for a replacement with a minimum of disruption to the academic mission, and to provide notice of unplanned absences as soon as possible. The School District may require acceptable documentation or other proof of reasons for absence whenever there is any doubt whether an employee has violated leave policies.
Compensation of Unused Sick Leave for Employees Participating in PSERS
In an effort to improve attendance, Gordon County Schools’ employees retiring under the Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) are eligible for a payment of unused sick leave at a rate of $15 per day. Eligible employees will receive compensation for a maximum of 120 days. The following conditions must be met:

- The employee must work for the system a minimum of 10 consecutive years.
- The employee must provide proof of retirement with PSERS.
- The employee must leave in good standing with the system (not terminated).

Any money paid to employees for unused sick leave will be considered regular income and will have all mandatory deductions taken.

Personal Leave
Personal leave absences are financed from sick leave funds. A maximum of three days per year may be taken as personal leave.

No personal leave shall be granted by the principal on a day preceding or following a holiday or on a day which has been designated a pre-planning, in-service, or post-planning day unless approved in advance by the Superintendent or designee. No certified personnel shall be granted personal leave during state assessment as defined by the state testing schedule. In the event that circumstances do necessitate an employee's being absent due to personal reasons, the employee must submit a written request to the Superintendent explaining the circumstances that make the absence necessary.

Unapproved absences for personal reasons will be charged at the full daily rate or when the allowable three days have been used.

Employees may receive discipline for a violation of this or other leave policies, including possible termination of employment. It is a violation of leave policies and the PSC Educator Code of Ethics to misrepresent the reasons for the nature of an absence.

Military Leave
All employees of the Board of Education are entitled to paid leave not to exceed eighteen days in any one federal fiscal year for the purpose of complying with ordered military duty with the armed forces of the United States or State of Georgia, including duty as a voluntary member of the National Guard or any reserve component of the United States or State of Georgia. In the event the Governor declares an emergency that results in an employee being ordered to military duty as a member of the National Guard, the employee is entitled to leave not exceeding thirty days in any one federal fiscal year. Employees who have military commitments shall inform the Superintendent or designee annually and shall cooperate to the extent possible in scheduling such leave so as to minimize the disruption in those employees' duties and the mission of the Board of Education.
Observance of Religious Holidays
Employees may use personal leave for the observance of recognized religious holidays. If an employee desires to take leave for the observance of recognized religious holidays in excess of the days allowed for personal leave, the employee may take unpaid leave for such purposes provided that such leave is not excessive and does not interfere with fulfilling the obligations of his or her job.

Leave Without Pay (Long-Term Leave)
This benefit is provided to employees who:

1. Are unable to return to work due to a personal medical necessity or that of a spouse or child; or, wish to take maternity leave; or, do not wish to return to work due to a medical condition or family situation related to a pandemic; and
2. Are at the end of an approved FMLA leave, or are not FMLA-eligible; and
3. Have exhausted all paid leave; and
4. Provide appropriate medical documentation.

If the unpaid leave is granted, the leave will be from the system and not from a specific job assignment.

Any benefits-eligible employee who meets the above criteria may request unpaid leave, which will begin when all paid leave is exhausted or at the end of an approved FMLA leave, whichever occurs later. Unpaid leave may be granted for a period of time up to one school year.

The employee on unpaid leave may continue as an active employee of the school district with all rights afforded to active employees with the exception of benefit premium payments, which must be paid by the employee and is inclusive of both the employee premium and any appropriate employer subsidy rate or employer contribution. Failure to make such payments will result in a lapse and forfeiture of the benefit in question.

Upon designation of unpaid leave status, the employee's previous position will be declared a vacant position and may be filled.

Prior to returning to work, employees on unpaid leave may be required to submit a health care providers certification that verifies the employee's ability to return to work and perform the essential functions of his/her position.

An employee who has been granted unpaid leave may return to active employment upon written request for reassignment and contingent upon a vacancy for which he/she is qualified. Requests should be submitted as soon as an employee knows that he/she plans to return to work.
An employee granted unpaid leave will be considered for any vacancy for which he/she is qualified. Return to work may be delayed until the beginning of a semester or fiscal year as deemed appropriate by the school system. Employees who are unable to return to work at the end of the unpaid leave may be separated from employment.

**Professional Leave for Certified Personnel**

Professional leave may be used for attending professional meetings, visitations to other schools for the purpose of observing teaching practices as recommended by the district, approved professional study, meetings, and workshops or when subpoenaed by the Professional Standards Commission or when serving as a member of the Professional Standards Commission. There shall be neither a deduction in salary nor a deduction from accrued leave days for Professional leave that is approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee. A request for Professional leave must be approved by the principal/supervisor and submitted to the Superintendent or his/her designee for consideration.

**Jury/Witness Leave**

Each person employed by the Board shall be allowed leave with pay for the purposes of serving as a juror in any court or when attending a judicial proceeding in response to a subpoena or other court order or process that requires the employee's attendance at the judicial proceeding arising out of the person's responsibility as a school district employee. Jury and/or witness leave shall not be deducted from an individual's accumulated personal, professional or sick leave. No employee utilizing jury and witness leave shall be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute to serve during his or her absence for such leave. Employees who serve on juries or who are subpoenaed to attend a judicial proceeding must remit any jury/witness pay they receive to the Board of Education in accordance with school district procedures unless the employee takes personal leave.

**Classified Personnel Merit System**

The Gordon County Schools shall provide a $125.00 stipend for classified employees who have perfect attendance on the job. In implementing this procedure, the following rules apply:

- An absence is missing any part of a day due to sickness and/or personal reasons.
- Approved professional leave, required jury duty, and subpoenas are not counted as absences under this plan.

For the purpose of this procedure an absence will mean:

- Absent for a full day for sick or personal reasons.
- Absent any part of a day.

- The year for 12 month employees will be from July 1 to June 30. All other employees’ year will coincide with their scheduled work year.

**Family and Medical Leave Act (GCBE Policy GBRIG)**

It is the purpose of this policy to set out in summary form the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act (“the Act” or “FMLA”) and its implementing regulations. This Board does not
intend by this policy to create any additional rights to leave not provided by the Act; provided, however, the Board does wish to extend the rights of the Act to certain employees who have worked at least 12 months for the Board. The Board does intend to elect certain options as the Act authorizes. Any portion of this policy inconsistent or contrary to the Act is unintentional and shall not be given effect. As to the interpretation of this policy, the Board’s employees should look to the Act itself and its regulations.

A. Eligible Employees
Employees of the Gordon County Board of Education ("Board of Education") who have been employed by the Board of Education for at least twelve (12) months and who have worked at least 1250 hours for the Board of Education during the twelve month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave are eligible to take unpaid leave under the FMLA.

B. Definitions
"Covered Active Duty" means, for members of the regular Armed Forces, duty during deployment to a foreign country; for members of a Reserves component of the Armed Forces, duty during deployment to a foreign country under a call or order to active duty pursuant to federal law.

"Covered Service member" (for qualifying exigency leave) means the employee's spouse, child or parent under a federal call or order to covered active duty. "Covered Service member" (for military caregiver leave) means the employee's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin who is:

- a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness or

- a veteran who was a member of the Armed Forces at any time during the five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes such medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

“Instructional employee” means an employee whose principal function is to teach and instruct students in a class, small group, or an individual setting.

"Next of Kin" of a covered service member means the nearest blood relative other than the covered service member's spouse, parent, son or daughter, in the following order of priority: blood relatives granted legal custody, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and first cousins, unless the covered service member has specifically designated in writing another blood relative for purposes of FMLA caregiver leave.
"Outpatient Status," with respect to a covered service member, means the status of a member of the Armed Forces assigned to either a military medical treatment facility as an outpatient; or a unit established for the purpose of providing command and control of members of the Armed Forces receiving medical care as outpatients.

“Parent” means a biological, adoptive, step or foster mother or father or one who acted in place of a parent when the employee was a child. The term “parent” does not include parent “in law”.

"Parent of covered service member" means a biological, adoptive, step or foster mother or father or any other individual who acted in place of a parent of the covered service member. The term does not include parents "in law".

“Serious health condition” means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care requiring an overnight stay in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility or continuing treatment by a health care provider, all as further defined in the FMLA regulations.

"Serious Injury or Illness" means, an injury or illness incurred by a covered service member in the line of duty on active duty (or that existed before active duty and was aggravated by line of duty active service) that may render the service member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member’s office, grade, rank, or rating. In the case of a veteran, "serious injury or illness" means a qualifying injury or illness, as defined by the Secretary of Labor, incurred during or aggravated by active duty during the five years before undergoing treatment, recuperation, or therapy, and that manifested itself before or after the member became a veteran.

“Son or daughter” means a biological, adopted or foster child, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee acts as a parent. The son or daughter must be under age 18 or, if the son or daughter is age 18 or older, he/she must be incapable of self-care due to a mental or physical disability at the time FMLA leave is to begin.

"Son or daughter of a covered service member" means a covered service member's biological, adopted, or foster child, stepchild, legal ward, or a child for whom the covered service member acted in the place of a parent, and who is of any age.

“Spouse” means a husband or wife as defined or recognized under Georgia law.

C. Amount and Type of Leave Taken

An eligible employee may request leave for one or more of the following reasons:

• Birth of a son or daughter and to care for the newborn child;
• Adoption or foster placement with the employee of a son or daughter and to care for the newly placed child;
• To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent, if that person has a serious health condition;
• Serious health condition of the employee that prevents the employee from performing his/her job functions;
• Any qualifying exigency arising from the fact that the employee's family member (the covered service member) is on covered active duty. Qualifying exigencies are defined as short-notice deployment (seven or less calendar days); military events and related activities; childcare and school activities; financial and legal arrangements; counseling; rest and recuperation (up to fifteen (15) calendar days per instance); parental care; post-deployment activities; additional activities where the employer and employee agree that the leave is an exigency and agree to both timing and duration of the leave; and
• Military caregiver leave to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the service member.

In the event of the birth, adoption or foster placement of a son or daughter, all leave must be completed within twelve months after the birth, adoption or foster placement.

Except as provided below, an employee may take a total of twelve weeks leave during any twelve-month period. A “rolling year” shall be used to determine the twelve-month period during which the twelve weeks of leave entitlement may occur. That is, each time an employee takes FMLA leave, the remaining leave entitlement would be any balance of the number of weeks that has not been used during the immediately preceding twelve months. See 29 C.F.R. § 825.200 (b) (4).

If both spouses work for the Gordon County Board of Education and both are eligible for FMLA leave, they are authorized to take only a combined total of twelve weeks leave during any one twelve month period to care for a newborn or adopted child, a child placed with the employee for foster care, or a parent with a serious health condition. Both spouses are authorized to take leave to care for a spouse or child with a serious health condition for twelve (12) weeks.

An eligible employee is eligible to up to twenty-six (26) weeks of military caregiver leave during a "single twelve-month period". The "single twelve-month period" begins on the date the employee first takes military caregiver leave and ends twelve months after that date, regardless of the method used to determine the leave entitlement period for other FMLA reasons.
If both spouses work for the Gordon County Board of Education and both are eligible for FMLA leave, they are authorized to take only a combined total of twenty-six weeks during the "single twelve-month period" described above for military caregiver leave or a combination of military caregiver leave and leave taken for other FMLA reasons.

The Gordon County Board of Education will require that any accrued paid leave (sick, personal, vacation, or any other paid leave) be substituted for all or a part of the otherwise unpaid FMLA leave under the terms and conditions of the Board's normal leave policies. Because leave pursuant to an employee's disability benefit plan or workers' compensation absence is not unpaid, the provision for required substitution of accrued paid leave is not applicable in such cases.

D. Intermittent or Reduced Leave

An employee may take leave on an intermittent or reduced leave schedule where it is medically necessary due to the serious health condition of a covered family member, the employee, or the serious injury or illness of a covered service member, or when necessary because of a qualifying exigency. The Board of Education will require a certification, in the form described in Section G below, to document the medical necessity of such intermittent leave or schedule leave.

E. Notification of Leave

If the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, an employee requesting leave must provide at least thirty (30) days advance notice to the Superintendent or his or her designee. If such advance notice is not possible, the employee must give notice to the Superintendent or his or her designee as soon as practicable, which means as soon as both possible and practical, taking into account all of the facts and circumstances in the individual case. If an employee does not provide at least 30 days notice of foreseeable leave, he or she must explain why such notice was not practicable if so requested by the District. When the need for leave is not foreseeable, an employee must provide notice upon incurring 10 or more (consecutive and/or cumulative) days of leave/absences. When planning medical treatment, the employee should make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment, subject to the approval of the health care provider, so that any corresponding leave will not disrupt unduly the operations of the District.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the Superintendent or his or her designee to reasonably determine whether the FMLA may apply to the leave request. When an employee seeks leave due to an FMLA qualifying reason for which the District has previously provided FMLA leave, the employee must specifically reference either the previous qualifying reason or the need for FMLA leave.
F. Benefits and Return to Work

Employees will be eligible to maintain health care benefits provided by the school district while on FMLA leave. The board of education will pay the employer’s portion, if any, of such benefits. The employee will pay the same portion, if any, of such benefits as the employee paid before beginning the leave.

The Board of Education may recover any health care benefit premiums paid on behalf of an employee if the employee does not return to work after the leave period has expired, unless the employee who did not return died as a result of a serious health condition of the employee or the employee’s spouse, parent or child, or a serious injury or illness of a covered service member or other circumstances beyond the employee’s control. The Board of Education may require certification from the health care provider that a serious health condition of the employee of family member, or the covered service member’s serious injury or illness, prevented the employee from returning to work.

With the exception of paid vacation, personal, medical or sick leave required to be substituted for unpaid leave under Section C above, the employee’s absence during leave will not alter benefits which the employee accrued before taking leave. Any accrued benefits will not be lost during the leave.

Upon return from leave, the employee is entitled to be reinstated to a position equivalent to the one the employee held when he/she left on FMLA leave, with equivalent pay, benefits and other terms and conditions of employment. Upon proper notice, however, the Board of Education may deny reinstatement under this policy to an employee whose salary is in the highest ten percent of the employees employed by the school district if such denial is necessary to prevent substantial and grievous economic injury to the District’s operation, as determined by the Board of Education.

G. Required Certification and Reporting

The Board of Education requires that a request for leave due to a serious health condition of an employee or an employee's family member or a serious injury or illness of a covered service member be supported by certification by the appropriate health care provider of the eligible employee or family member on a form to be provided by the Board of Education.

This certification must include:

- The name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the healthcare provider and type of practice/specialization;
- The approximate date on which the serious health condition commenced, and its probable duration;
• A statement or description of appropriate medical facts regarding the patient's health condition for which FMLA leave is requested;

• If the purpose of the leave is to care for a family member, a statement that the employee is needed to care for the family member and an estimate of the frequency and duration of the leave required for such care;

• If the leave is due to the employee's own serious health condition, a statement that the employee is unable to perform his/her essential job functions, the nature of other work restrictions, and the likely duration of such inability;

• If intermittent or reduced schedule leave is requested, information sufficient to establish the medical necessity for the same and an estimate of the dates and duration of treatments and any periods of recovery.

The employer may require that the eligible employee obtain subsequent re-certification on a reasonable basis as requested by the Board of Education in accordance with the FMLA regulations.

The Board of Education, at its own expense, may obtain the opinion of a second health care provider of the Board of Education’s choice, if the Board should choose to do so. If a conflict exists between the opinion in the certification and the second opinion, the Board of Education may, at its own expense, obtain a third opinion from a health care provider upon which the Board of Education and the employee jointly agree. Such a third opinion as to the necessity for the leave is binding on both the Board of Education and the employee.

Upon an employee’s return to work after leave for employee’s own serious health condition, the Board of Education may require the employee to obtain certification from his/her health care provider that the employee is able to resume work.

The Board of Education may require that a first request for leave because of a qualifying exigency arising from active duty or a call to active duty be supported by a copy of the covered service member’s active duty orders or other documentation issued by the military. A certification form requesting the required information to support a request for exigency leave will be provided by the Board of Education upon request.

The Board of Education may require an employee on FMLA leave to report periodically to his/her principal or supervisor on the employee’s status and intent to return to work.

H. Special Provisions
When an instructional employee seeks intermittent leave or leave on a reduced schedule in connection with a family or personal serious health condition or to care for a covered service member that would constitute at least twenty percent of the total number of working days in the period during which the leave would extend, the Board of Education may require the employee to elect to take leave in a block (not intermittently) for the entire period or to transfer to an available alternative position within the school system that is equivalent in pay, for which the employee is qualified, and which better accommodates the intermittent situation.

If an instructional employee begins leave more than five weeks before the end of a semester, the Board of Education may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if:

- The leave will last at least three weeks; and
- The employee would return to work during the three-week period before the end of the term.

If an instructional employee begins leave for a purpose other than the employee’s own serious health condition during the five-week period before the end of the semester, the Board of Education may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if:

- The leave will last more than two weeks; and
- The employee would return to work during the two-week period before the end of the term.

If an instructional employee begins leave for a purpose other than the employee’s own serious health condition during the three-week period before the end of a semester, and the leave will last more than five working days, the Board of Education may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester.

**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

The Department of Human Resources has overall responsibility for maintaining district policies and procedures, and is responsible for keeping the policy and procedures manual up-to-date. The manual only exists on the web. The website is intended to function as a convenient reference for all members of the Gordon County Schools community. Although the site is updated regularly, it is impossible to guarantee complete accuracy at all times. In the event of any discrepancy between the documents formally approved and those listed on the GCS website, the former shall be the governing version. Please contact the Department of Human Resources for further information.
Equal Opportunity Employment (GCBE Policy GAAA)

Gordon County Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, or sex in its employment practices. It is the policy of the Board of Education to comply fully with the requirements of Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and all accompanying regulations.

Any employee, applicant for employment, or other person who believes he or she has been discriminated against or harassed in violation of this policy must make a complaint in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

Complaints made to GCS regarding alleged discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color or national origin in violation of Title VI; religion or sex in violation of Title VII; sex in violation of Title IX; disability in violation of Section 504 or the ADA, or on the basis of age in violation of the ADEA, will be processed in accordance with the following procedure:

1. Any employee, applicant for employment, or other person with a complaint alleging a violation as described above shall promptly notify, in writing or orally, either the principal for his/her school or the appropriate coordinator designated from time to time by the Board of Education. If the complaint is oral, either the coordinator or school principal to whom the complaint is made shall promptly prepare a memorandum or written statement of the complaint as made to him or her by the complainant and shall have the complainant read and sign the memorandum or statement if it accurately reflects the complaint made. If the complaint is made to a school principal, he or she shall be responsible for notifying the appropriate coordinator of the complaint.

2. If the alleged offending individual is the coordinator designated by the Board of Education, the complaint shall either be made by the complainant to the Superintendent or, if the complaint is initially made to the school principal, reported by the principal to the Superintendent. If the alleged offending individual is the Superintendent, the complaint shall be made to the designated coordinator, who shall, without further investigation, report the complaint to the Board chairperson.

3. The coordinator or his or her designee shall have fifteen work days to gather all information relevant to the complaint made, review the information, determine the facts relating to the complaint, review the action requested by the complainant, and attempt to resolve the complaint with the complainant and any other persons involved. The coordinator or designee shall prepare a written response to the complaint detailing any action to be taken in response to the complaint and the time frame in which such action will be taken and copies of this response shall be furnished to the complainant, the appropriate coordinator and the Superintendent or his or her designee.

4. If the complaint is not resolved at the conclusion of this fifteen-day period or if the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the complainant shall have the right, within five work days of receiving a copy of the written response, to have the complaint referred to the Superintendent of Schools. If the alleged offending individual is the Superintendent, the complainant may have the complaint referred to the Board of Education, rather than the Superintendent.
5. The Superintendent shall have fifteen work days to review the complaint and the response of the coordinator or designee and attempt to resolve the complaint. The Superintendent shall furnish to the complainant a written response setting forth either his or her approval of the action recommended by the coordinator or designee or the action to be taken by the School District in response to the complaint in lieu of that recommended by the coordinator or designee and the time frame in which such action shall be taken.

6. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response of the Superintendent, then the complainant shall have the right, within fifteen work days of the receipt of the written response of the Superintendent, to have the complaint referred to the Board of Education. In order to have the Board review the Superintendent's decision, the complainant must file with the Superintendent a written statement setting forth the reasons he or she disagrees with the response of the Superintendent and the action the complainant is requesting the School District to take. The complainant shall also include in the written response a request that his or her complaint be referred to the Board of Education.

7. Within thirty work days of receipt of the written request of the complainant, the Superintendent shall present the matter to the Board of Education at its regular meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose. The Board shall review the original complaint, the response of the coordinator or designee, the response of the Superintendent, and the response of the complainant. In addition, the Board may, but is not required to, hear directly from any individuals with knowledge of any relevant facts relating to the complaint.

8. The Board of Education will either uphold the recommendation of the Superintendent or require the School District to take some other action in response to the complaint. A copy of the action of the Board will be furnished to the complainant, either as a part of the minutes of the Board of Education or as a separate written statement. The Board shall be the final reviewing authority within the School District.

9. This policy is not intended to deprive any employee of any right they may have to file a grievance pursuant to any other policy of the local Board of Education, specifically the policy designed to implement Official Code of Georgia Annotated 20-2-989.5, where appropriate. This policy is not intended to provide an alternative process for resolving evaluation and employment disputes where there already exists a due process procedure mandated by state law or State Department of Education regulations, specifically including, but not limited to, hearings to be conducted pursuant to the Fair Dismissal Act of Georgia. The complainant retains at all times the right to contact the Office of Civil Rights, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or any other appropriate state or federal agency with regard to any allegations that the system has violated the statutes described above.

10. The School District shall be responsible for distributing and disseminating information relevant to this policy and procedure to employees through appropriate procedures.

11. No reprisal shall occur as a result of reporting unlawful discrimination or harassment under this policy, and any attempt to retaliate against a complainant shall be disciplined as is appropriate.

12. The confidentiality of any individual making a complaint or report in accordance with this policy, to the extent it is reasonably possible and in compliance with law, shall be protected, although the discovery of the truth and the elimination of unlawful harassment shall be the overriding consideration.
Employee Background Checks (GCBE Policy GAK(1))
A criminal record check will be conducted at or prior to employment on every person who is employed by the Board of Education for the first time to fill either a full-time or part-time certified or classified position with this School District.

For initial hiring purposes, the employee either shall be fingerprinted or shall provide a signed and notarized consent on a form designated by the School District, including the employee's full name, address, social security number and date of birth, based upon the requirement of state law or applicable rule or regulation. A clearance certificate verifying a satisfactory criminal background check may be required based on the requirements of state law and rules of the Professional Standards Commission.

Subsequent criminal record checks will be conducted on all personnel in accordance with state laws, state board rules, and rules of the Professional Standards Commission. All certified personnel whose employment is continued with this School District shall have a criminal record check made upon any certificate renewal application to the Professional Standards Commission. All classified employees whose employment is continued with this School District shall have subsequent criminal record checks on a periodic basis, not to exceed every five years, using procedures and schedules to be determined by the Superintendent or designee.

Criminal record check information shall be used by the school district and its officials and employees only for the purpose of determining whether to grant regular employment, and in any administrative or judicial proceeding calling such employment into question. Such information shall be stored, restricted, and disposed of in such manner as may be required by federal and state authorities. A breach of confidentiality or the inappropriate use of criminal background check information may constitute a workplace violation and may be grounds for disciplinary action including, but not limited to, termination and/or reporting to the Professional Standards Commission.

Contracts
Contracts for certified employees and other Board approved personnel are issued for no more than one school year. A contract of employment is made by and between an employee and the Gordon 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 electronically by such personnel of their own behalf and by the Superintendent on behalf of the Gordon County Board of Education.

An employee who is fulfilling a full year contract for the current school 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 & Classified Personnel
The Declaration of Intent Process provides an opportunity for certified (excluding principals) and classified staff to express interest for a lateral transfer to a different location for the next school year. Staff should apply for the position available at the school that has the vacancy where they would like to transfer to through the employment link on the GCS website.

Transfers to New Schools
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 school is finalized, volunteers from schools affected by redistricting will be given consideration.
- If there are insufficient volunteers, involuntary transfers will be based on GCBE 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 the 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 transfer to new schools.

Fraud, Waste, Abuse & Corruption Administrative Regulations - Reporting Suspicion of Fraudulent Activities
- Purpose: The Gordon County School System adheres to the Code of Ethics for Georgia Educators. Any detected or suspected fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption must be reported immediately to the Superintendent of Schools. Such fraud, waste, abuse or corruption applies to any fraudulent activity involving not only employees but also directors, vendors, outside agencies, and/or unknown parties. Investigations will be performed without regard to length of service, title/position, or relationship.
• Definitions:
  o Fraud: A false representation of a matter of fact, whether by words or by conduct, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed, that is used for the purpose of misappropriating property and/or monetary funds from federal grants.
  o Waste: “Waste” means the thoughtless or careless expenditure, consumption, mismanagement, use, or squandering of resources owned or operated by the school system to the detriment or potential determent of the system. Waste also includes incurring unnecessary cost because of inefficient or ineffective practices, systems or controls.
  o Abuse: “Abuse” means the excessive, or improper use of something, or the use of something in a manner contrary to the natural or legal rules for its use; the intentional destruction, diversion, manipulation, misapplication, maltreatment, or misuse of resources owned or operated by the school system; or extravagant or excessive use so as to abuse one’s position or authority.

• Statement of Administrative Regulations: The Board thoroughly and expeditiously supports the investigation of any and all reported cases of suspected fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption to determine if disciplinary, financial recovery, and/or criminal action should be taken.

• Confidentiality: All reports of suspect fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption shall be handled in the strictest manner of confidentiality possible. Only those directly involved in the investigation should be given information. Informants may remain anonymous if and when possible but should be encouraged to cooperate with investigators and should provide as much detail and evidence of alleged fraudulent act as possible.

• Procedures:
  o Anyone suspecting fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption concerning federal, state or local programs should report their concerns to the Superintendent or his/her designee. If the suspected fraud implicates the Superintendent, the informant shall report the information directly to the Board Chair (Gordon County Board of Education, 205 Warrior Path, Calhoun, GA 30701 or 706-629-7366).
  o Any employee (temporary staff, full-time staff and contractors) of the school system who receives a report of suspected fraudulent activity shall report this information within the next business day to the Superintendent or his/her designee. Employees have the responsibility to report suspected fraud immediately. All reports can be made in confidence.
  o The Superintendent or his/her designee shall conduct or cause to be conducted an investigation of employees, providers, contractors, or vendors as necessary and appropriate.
  o Periodic communication should emphasize the responsibilities and channels to report suspected fraud, waste, or abuse.

Reduction in Force (GCBE Policy GAKA)
The most important functions of the Board of Education are to employ personnel and manage resources within the limitations defined by the funding sources of the school system. Consequently, it shall be the prerogative of the Board of Education (hereinafter the "Board") to
abolish job positions, to reduce the length of the work year and salary (hereinafter "to downgrade") and/or to reduce the number of employees when seeking to cope effectively with program changes or financial exigency.

The Board shall consider a reduction in the professional work force to include the abolition of job positions, the downgrading of an employee's position, and/or the reduction of the number of employees, as a response to the following:

- A decrease in student enrollment in the School District which would necessitate a decrease in personnel or a discontinuation of programs;
- A change in state or local curriculum, personnel, or financial practices which would necessitate a change in or elimination of programs or services provided by the School District;
- A loss of funds due to a reduction in state funds, reduction in local funds or other funds that make necessary a reduction in spending;
- A lack of funding for programs, personnel, or services provided by the School District;
- Any reasonable reorganization plan, to include the elimination of programs, or services, to achieve a more efficient school district.

Nothing in this policy shall be construed to extend to any employee substantive or procedural rights not required under state law. Specifically, nothing in this policy shall extend to professional personnel any expectation of re-employment or due process rights greater than are available under state law. This policy is not to be construed to mandate the promotion, transfer or reassignment of an employee to any other position with the School District, even though the employee who is to be terminated or non-renewed may be qualified or certified for a higher or other position.

When the Superintendent determines that the application of this reduction in force policy is necessary, it shall be his or her responsibility to prepare for presentation to the Board of Education a plan for the reduction in force (RIF). In proposing the plan, the Superintendent may:

1) determine the group(s) of employees to which the RIF will be applied,
2) select individuals or positions to be subject to the RIF, or
3) any combination of (1) and (2).

The primary factor to be considered by the Superintendent in devising a RIF plan shall be the performance of the educator, one measure of which may be student academic performance; provided, however, that this provision shall not apply if the board of education eliminates an entire program. Other factors to be considered may include, but shall not be limited to, the professional expertise, effectiveness, professionalism, performance of duties and responsibilities, relationship with students, parents and staff, tenure status, level of certification, fields of certification, length of continuous service with the Board, number of successful years in public education, performance of extra responsibilities, and performance of extracurricular responsibilities.
If the Board accepts the recommendation of the Superintendent, the Superintendent shall notify any employee affected by the application of the plan in a manner consistent with the provisions of Georgia law and he or she shall have whatever rights the Fair Dismissal Act provides for such employee. When a termination or non-renewal is based solely on O.C.G.A. §20-2-940(a)(6), the basis for the employment action will be the necessary reduction in staff and not the performance issue of the employee.

Identification and Security Badges
All employees of Gordon County Schools (including those hired through a temporary staffing agency) will have picture identification badges. Employee badges may be printed as needed, upon request, by the Department of Human Resources located at the district office. Lost badges are replaced at a cost of $5.00 to the employee. Because identification badges allow employees free admission to school athletic events, badges of terminated employees should be collected by the school principal and returned to the Department of Human Resources.

Conflicts of Interest
No employee of GCS shall engage in or have a financial interest, directly or indirectly, in any activity that conflicts or raises a reasonable question of conflict with assigned duties and responsibilities. Employees shall not engage in work of any type where the source of information concerning customer, client, or employer originates from any information obtained through the school system.

No employee, officer, or agent of GCS may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by a Federal award if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. In addition, no employee, officer or agent of the district may neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors or parties to subcontractors. All employees shall comply with the Code of Ethics for Educators by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Violators of the Code of Ethics shall be subject to disciplinary action, including but not limited to, termination of employment with the district.

Gordon County Schools Complaint Procedures under Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary education Act of 1965 (ESEA)
Section 9304 – General Applicability of State Educational Agency Assurances
Section 9503 – Complaint Process for Participation of Private School Children

A. Grounds for a Complaint
Any individual, organization or agency (complainant) may file a complaint with the Gordon County Board of Education if that individual, organization or agency believes and alleges that a local educational agency (LEA), the state educational agency (SEA), or an agency or consortium of agencies is violating a federal statute or regulation that applies to a program under the Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA). The complaint must allege a violation that occurred not more than one year prior to the date that the complaint is received, unless a longer period is reasonable because the violation is considered systemic or ongoing.
B. Federal Programs for Which Complaints Can Be Filed
   a. Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies
   b. Title I, Part B, Subpart 3: Even Start Family Literacy
   c. Title I, Part C: Education of Migrant Children
   d. Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
   e. Title I, Part F: Comprehensive School Reform
   f. Title I, School Improvement Grant 1003(a)
   g. Title II, Part A: Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund
   h. Title II, Part D: Enhancing Education Through Technology
   i. Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement
   j. Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1: Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities
   k. Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2: Community Service Grants
   l. Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers
   m. Title V, Part A: Innovative Programs
   n. Title VI, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 6111: State Assessment Program
   o. Title VI, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 6112: Enhanced Assessment Instruments Competitive Grant Program
   p. Title VI, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income Schools
   q. Title IX, Part E, Subpart 1, Section 9503: Complaint Process for Participation of Private School Children
   r. Race To The Top, RT3
   s. SIG 1003(g)
   t. McKinney-Vento/Homeless
   u. IDEA

C. Complaints Originating at the Local Level
   As part of its Assurances within ESEA program grant applications and pursuant to Section 9306 within the Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA), an LEA accepting federal funds also agrees to adopt local written procedures for the receipt and resolution of complaints alleging violations of law in the administration of covered programs. Therefore, for complaints originating at the local level, a complaint should not be filed with the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) until every effort has been made to resolve the issue through local written complaint procedures. If the complainant has tried to file a complaint at the local level to no avail, the complainant must provide the GaDOE with written proof of their attempt to resolve the issue at the local level.

D. Filing a Complaint
   A complaint must be made in writing and signed by the complainant. A complaint form can be obtained from the GCS Director of Title I 205 Warrior Path Calhoun GA 30701 or by
contacting the GCS Director of Title I at 706-629-7366. The complaint must include the following:

a. A statement that the LEA, SEA, agency or consortium of agencies has violated a requirement of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to an applicable program;
b. The date on which the violation occurred;
c. The facts on which the statement is based and the specific requirement allegedly violated (include citation to the Federal statute or regulation);
d. A list of the names and telephone numbers of individuals who can provide additional information;
e. Whether a complaint has been filed with any other government agency, and if so, which agency;
f. Copies of all applicable documents supporting the complainant’s position; and;
g. The address of the complainant. The complaint must be addressed to:

Gordon County Schools  
Director of Title I  
205 Warrior Path  
Calhoun, GA 30701

Once the complaint is received by the Director of Title I, it will be copied and forwarded to the district Superintendent’s office as documentation of complaint being received and investigated.

E. Investigation of Complaint

Within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint, the Director of Title I or his or her designee will issue a Letter of Acknowledgement to the complainant that contains the following information:

a. The date the district received the complaint;
b. How the complainant may provide additional information;
c. A statement of the ways in which the district may investigate or address the complaint; and

d. Any other pertinent information.

The Department will have thirty (30) days from receipt of the information or completion of the investigation to issue a Letter of Findings.

Appropriate Department staff will review the information and determine whether:

• Additional information is needed;
• An on-site investigation must be conducted;
• Other measures must be taken to resolve the issues raised in the complaint; or
• A Letter of Findings can be issued.
If additional information or an investigation is necessary, the Department will have sixty (60) days from receipt of the information or completion of the investigation to issue a Letter of Findings. If the Letter of Findings indicates that a violation has been found, corrective action will be required and timelines for completion will be included. Either the 30-day or the 60-day timelines outlined above may be extended, if exceptional circumstances exist. The Letter of Findings will be sent directly to the complainant, as well as the other parties involved.

F. Right of Appeal
If an individual, organization or agency is aggrieved by the final decision of the district, that individual, organization or agency has the right to request review of the decision by the Georgia Department of Education. For complaints filed pursuant to Section 9503 (20 U.S.C. §7883, complaint process for participation of private school children), a complainant may appeal the Department’s decision to the United States Secretary of Education no later than thirty (30) days from the date on which the complainant receives the Letter of Findings. The appeal must be accompanied by a copy of the Department’s decision and include a complete statement of the reasons supporting the appeal.

The complaint must be addressed to:
Georgia Department of Education Office of Legal Services
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE
2052 Twin Tower East
Atlanta, GA 30334

Endorsements
GCS 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 Gordon 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 GCS.

Non-School Employment
Employees of the Gordon County Board of Education have a primary obligation to the job for which they were employed and assigned. However, the Board recognizes the right of each individual to improve oneself financially. Personnel of the school system may receive compensation for outside activities as long as these activities do not interfere with the proper discharge of assigned duties or cause poor public relations in the community. However, employees shall not perform any duties related to non-school employment during the regular working hours or during the additional time that is needed to fulfill the responsibilities of their
positions held with the Gordon County School System. Also, the use of school system facilities, equipment or materials is strictly prohibited while performing non-school work.

**Tutoring**
Professional and classified staff should provide reasonable assistance without charge to students in their own classrooms. To avoid any conflict of interest, such employees shall not accept payment for tutoring any student currently assigned to their classroom. Further, no employee may use any school facility to do any tutoring for which payment is accepted.

**Overtime Pay**
The Gordon County School District’s workweek begins on Sunday night at 12:01 a. m. and ends at midnight on Saturday.

The Principal of each school and Department Supervisor will maintain records for hours worked. The employee and the Principal or Supervisor shall sign the time sheets. The retention period for the records will be three years. A summary sheet will be filed monthly with the payroll department at the central office.

Compensation of employees by overtime and compensation time has been authorized by the Board of Education within the limits imposed by law and the approved budget. The building administrator or his/her designee must approve such overtime services. In emergency situations, supervisors may approve overtime up to 8 hours. This must be reported to the superintendent within 24 hours after the work is initiated.

Unless previously approved, any hourly employee who does not have authorization to work overtime and who believes that he or she cannot accomplish his or her job duties within a forty hour week, is directed to inform his or her supervisor of this fact in writing prior to working more than forty hours during any week and is to state the reason(s) he or she cannot accomplish his or her weekly work assignments within a forty hour period.

Overtime and compensation time shall be calculated and recorded on the basis of “time and one-half” for each hour or portion of the hour of overtime work performed. An employee who has accrued compensatory time and requests use for the time, will be permitted to use the time off within a “reasonable period” after making the request if it does not unduly disrupt (defined as more than “inconvenience”) the operations of the school system.

Organizations renting school facilities shall be informed that they will be obligated to pay any personnel cost incurred by the district pursuant to their renting school facilities, including payment of hourly personnel costs and overtime compensation.

At the end of each quarter, any compensatory time owed to an employee will be paid at time and one-half for each hour of overtime work performed and will be included in the regular payroll check.
The School District may elect to substitute payment, in whole or in part, for compensatory time. Multiplying the number of compensatory hours by the employee’s pay rate at the time the compensatory time was earned.

Upon termination of employment, an employee must be paid for unused compensatory time figured at the rate received by such employee during the time the compensatory time was earned.

**Personnel Attire**
Gordon County Schools’ employees are expected to dress in a professional and appropriate manner at all times. All staff should wear their school or system issued ID badge. The dress code guidelines are meant to be applied for all the days students are present including field trips and other off campus school related events unless otherwise specified by a building or system level administrator.

Only on special days designated by the district and/or building administration are jeans to be worn.

- **Unacceptable Attire**
  - Skirts or slits in skirts/dresses that are shorter than 3 inches above the knee
  - No spaghetti straps, no sleeveless less than two (2) inches, unless covered by a jacket or top
  - Neckline inappropriate dresses or tops
  - Sweat pants, yoga pants, or athletic pants
  - Clothing with tears, holes, etc. that reveal skin in an inappropriate manner
  - Backless or strapless dresses
  - Visible body piercings, except for earrings
  - Clothes worn too tight, too loose, or are transparent and show undergarments
  - Visible tattoos are discouraged
  - Hats
  - Leggings unless the top garment can meet dress code without the leggings
  - Outfits that show midriff
  - Rubber flip-flops
  - Apparel with any reference to alcohol, drugs, tobacco, sexual or vulgar remarks, or racist comments, is not permitted.

- **Specific Exceptions**
  - P. E. coaches are allowed to wear shorts during instruction only.
  - Custodians are allowed to wear shorts and blue jeans.
  - For bus drivers, professional dress is defined as the following:
    - Monogramed GCS Transportation short sleeved polo shirt
    - Monogramed GCS Transportation long sleeved t-shirt
    - Knee length denim or khaki shorts
    - Blue jean or denim pants
- Khaki pants
- Shoes with a closed toe and closed heel

**Personnel Time Schedule**

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**

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 procedure 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 Gordon 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 Tobacco Use” 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
Any employee of the Gordon 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 Director of Human Resources.

Drug-Free Workplace (GCBE Policy GAMA)
The Gordon Board of Education declares that the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of controlled substances, marijuana and other dangerous drugs in an unlawful manner or being at work under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances, marijuana or other dangerous drugs is a serious threat to the public health, safety and welfare. With this in mind, the Board declares that its work force must be absolutely free of any person who would knowingly manufacture, distribute, sell or possess a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug in an unlawful manner. This prohibition specifically includes, but is not limited to, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance or alcohol in the employee's workplace. This prohibition also includes, but is not limited to, an employee being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances while on duty.

Any employee who is convicted for the first time, under the laws of this state, the United States, or any other state, of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug shall be subject to disciplinary action. At a minimum, such an employee shall be suspended for a period of not less than two months and shall be required to complete, at his or her own expense, a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the board. At a maximum, such an employee may be terminated from his employment with the school system. Any employee who is convicted for a second or subsequent time under the laws of this state, the United States, or any other state, of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug shall be terminated from his or her employment and shall be ineligible for employment for a period of five years from the most recent date of conviction.

If, prior to an arrest for an offense involving a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug, an employee notifies the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee that the employee illegally uses a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug and is receiving or agrees to receive treatment under a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the
Board, the employee shall be entitled to maintain his or her employment for up to one year as long as the employee follows the treatment plan. During this period, the employee shall not be separated from employment solely on the basis of the employee's drug dependence, but the employee's work activities may be restructured if practicable to protect persons or property. No statement made by an employee to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee in order to comply with this code section shall be admissible in any civil, administrative or criminal proceeding as evidence against the public employee. The rights granted by this policy shall be available to an employee only once during a five year period and are intended to be and shall be interpreted as being the same as those minimum rights granted pursuant to the Georgia Drug-Free Work Force Act and any subsequent amendments thereof.

As a condition of employment, each employee must abide by the terms of this policy and must notify the Board within five days after any arrest on any drug-related criminal charge and further notify the board within five days of any conviction of a drug-related offense.

A copy of this policy shall be disseminated to all employees either directly or through employee handbooks.

The Board of Education shall not consider for employment any applicant who has been convicted for the first time of any drug offense as described above for a three month period from the date of conviction nor shall the Board of Education consider any applicant for employment who has been convicted for the second time of any drug offense as described above for a five year period from the most recent date of conviction.

For purposes of this policy, "conviction" refers to any final conviction in a court of competent jurisdiction, specifically including acceptance of a plea of guilty, nolo contendere, or any plea entered under the First Offenders Act of Georgia or any comparable state or federal legislation.

No certified employee or employee with a contract for a definite term shall be subject to suspension or termination pursuant to this policy except in compliance with the provisions of the Fair Dismissal Act of Georgia, Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-2-940 through 947. This policy is not intended and shall not be interpreted as prohibiting the school system from taking appropriate disciplinary action against any employee where there exists evidence that an employee uses, distributes or sells illegal drugs even though the employee has not been convicted of any criminal offense or where there exists evidence that an employee is under the influence of alcohol while on duty, except that the school system may not use the statement of any employee to the superintendent requesting treatment as described in this policy.

The School District shall provide such staff development as required by state or federal law to inform employees of the dangers of drug abuse, the availability of employee assistance and drug counseling and treatment and the terms of this policy.
Drug Screening of Bus Drivers (GCBE Policy GCRA (1))

The Gordon County Board of Education is dedicated to providing safe and efficient transportation for students transported on school buses. The Board recognizes that safe student transportation depends on unimpaired judgment, physical dexterity, reflex action, and unimpaired senses of sight and hearing, of employees in safety-sensitive functions. The goal of this Board is to provide our employees and students with an environment which promotes health and safety. Operating a school bus or other commercial vehicle requires a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and is considered a safety-sensitive function. Individuals who are employed by the Board of Education to operate safety-sensitive vehicles include, but are not limited to: mechanics, school bus drivers, substitute school bus drivers, maintenance workers, coaches, teachers, and administrators.

In order to meet this goal, we hereby endorse the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's anti-alcohol and controlled substances policies and regulations. This Board will not tolerate unauthorized use, abuse, possession or sale of alcohol or controlled substances by its employees. Individuals who have positive controlled substance test results shall be terminated, as shall individuals whose test results reveal blood alcohol concentrations 0.04 and above and individuals who refuse to submit to a required alcohol or controlled substance test. Individuals whose tests results reveal blood alcohol concentrations of at least 0.02, but less than 0.04, and individuals who engage in other conduct prohibited by the regulations may, in the Board of Education's discretion, be terminated. Drivers must inform their immediate supervisor of any therapeutic drug use, whether by prescription or "over the counter", and must provide a statement from their treating physician that the substance does not adversely affect the driver's ability to operate the bus.

Personnel Tobacco Use

The Board of Education recognizes that the use of tobacco products is a health, safety and environmental hazard for students, employees, visitors and school facilities.

Smoking shall be prohibited at any time in any school building or property owned or leased by the school district, or at any time in any school-owned vehicle, including any school bus. In addition, this prohibition includes the use of other tobacco products and electronic cigarettes and vapor products.

This policy shall apply when on duty for the school district, including when employees are directly instructing or supervising students. Direct supervision includes coaching, band directing, acting as a sponsor or advisor of a club or similar school organization and other instructional roles.

This prohibition shall include: unlawful use, cultivation, manufacture, distribution, sale, purchase, possession, transportation or importation of any controlled drug or narcotic substance, being under the influence of any controlled drug, narcotic substance, or any mind-altering substance or intoxicant (illegal or legal), specifically including any product with
cannabidiol (CBD), whether hemp or cannabis and regardless of the amount of THC in the product or the extent to which it is legal or illegal under state law.

School district employees who violate this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Complaint Procedures (GCBE Policy GAE (2))

I. PURPOSE; INFORMAL RESOLUTION PREFERRED

It is the purpose of this policy to implement the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-989.5 et seq. In accordance with the foregoing, it is the policy of the Board of Education that certified personnel should have the right to present and resolve complaints relating to certain matters affecting the employment relationship at the lowest organizational level possible. The Board of Education encourages all employees to resolve their complaints informally in the spirit of collegiality where possible. This policy and procedure is available where such efforts do not succeed or, where for any other reason, the certificated employee desires to pursue this procedure.

II. DEFINITIONS

a. “Level one administrator” means the principal of a school with respect to teachers and other certificated personnel assigned to that school. With respect to the certified administrators supervised by the superintendent, the “level one administrator” shall be the superintendent. In any case not covered by this paragraph, the “level one administrator” shall be the supervisory certificated person designated by the board or in the absence thereof, by the superintendent.

b. “Central office administrator” means the local school system superintendent.

c. “Complaint” means any claim or grievance by a certificated employee of this school district which is filed pursuant to this policy and which comes within the scope of the policy.

d. “Notification” means delivery in person to the party entitled to notification by statutory overnight delivery, or deposit in the United States mail, certified mail, return receipt requested, to the last known address of the party notified.

III. SCOPE OF COMPLAINT; EXCLUSIONS

a. Scope – Unless excluded by paragraph (b) hereof, this complaint and grievance procedure is applicable to any claim by any professional employee certificated by the Professional Standards Commission who is affected in his or 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.

b. Exclusions – This procedure shall not apply to:
   iii. Termination, non-removal, demotion, suspension, or reprimand of any employee, as

v. The revocation, suspension, or denial of certificates of any employee, as set forth in O.C.G.A.

c. A certified employee, who chooses to appeal under O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1160, shall be barred from pursuing the same complaint under this policy.

IV. SECTION 4: HEARING RIGHTS; EVIDENCE; REPRESENTATION; DECISIONS; RECORDS

a. Hearing; Evidence – The complainant shall be entitled to an opportunity to be heard, to present relevant evidence, and to examine witnesses at each level, but the complainant may not present additional evidence at the second or third hearing levels unless notice of complainant’s intention and the evidence to be presented are submitted in writing five (5) days prior to the hearing to the administrator who will preside at such level, and the appeal from a prior level, the local board of education shall hear and decide all appeals de novo.

b. Representation – The complainant and the administrator against who the complaint is filed or whose decision is appealed shall be entitled to the presence of an individual, including an attorney to assist in the presentation of the complaint and the response thereto, at the central office administrator and the local board of education level. The presence of any individual other than the complainant and the administrator at level one is prohibited, except witnesses who present testimony or documents.

c. Hearing Officer – The local board of education may appoint a member of the state bar to serve as law officer who shall rule on all issues of law and other objections, but such attorney shall not assist in the presentation of the case for either party.

d. Overall Hearing Time Schedules – The overall time frame from the initiation of the complaint until rendition or the decision by the local board and notification thereof to the complainant shall not exceed sixty (60) days.

e. Automatic Referral to Next Level – Any complaint not processed by the administrator or the local unit of administration within the time frame required by this policy shall be forwarded to the next level for determination.

f. Records – Accurate records of the proceedings at each level shall be kept. The proceedings shall be recorded by mechanical means. All evidence shall be preserved and made available to the parties at all times. All costs and fees shall be borne by the party incurring them unless otherwise agreed upon. Preserving the record of the proceedings shall be borne by the local board of education; provided, however, the cost of transcribing the transcript of evidence and proceedings before the local board shall be borne by the party requesting same. The party required to do so by the laws relating thereto shall pay all costs of the record on appeal to the superior courts and appellate courts.

g. Decisions – Each decision shall be made in writing and dated, and shall contain findings of fact and reasons for the particular decision reached.

h. Notice – The decision at each level shall be delivered to the complainant by a person designated by the Superintendent by being hand delivered, sent by statutory overnight delivery, or being deposited in the U.S. Mail (certified mail,
return receipt requested). Notice to the complainant shall be deemed to have been made on the date of hand delivery or delivery to overnight delivery service, or on the date of deposit in the U.S. mail by certified mail, return receipt requested to the address stated in the complaint or, if not contained in the complaint, to the last known address of the complainant on file with the board of education.

V. SECTION 5: FIRST LEVEL; PRESENTATION; TIME; CONTENTS
   a. The complaint shall be presented in writing to the level one administrator within ten (10) calendar days after the most recent incident upon which the complaint is based. The complaint shall include the following:
   
   b. The mailing address of the complainant to which all notices and other documents may be mailed.
   c. The intent of the complainant to utilize this complaint procedure clearly stated.
   d. A reference or description of the statute, policy, rule, contract provision or regulation that is alleged to have been violated, misinterpreted or misapplied.
   e. A brief statement of the facts reasonably calculated to show how such statute, policy, rule or regulation was violated or misapplied, and how it substantially affects the employment relationship or the complainant.
   f. A statement of the relief desired.
   g. The Superintendent shall prepare forms for use in accordance with the foregoing requirements.

VI. SECTION 6: FIRST LEVEL HEARING AND DECISION
   The level one administrator shall record the date of filing on the complaint, and shall give notice to the complainant of the time and place of the hearing, either by mail or hand delivery. When notice is given by mail, it shall be sent by first class mail to the address set forth in the complaint. If no address was included in the complaint, then the notice shall be sent of the last known address of the complainant on file with the board of education. The level one administrator shall conduct a hearing on the complaint and render a decision thereon within ten (10) days of the filing of the complaint. The decision shall be dated and a copy shall be sent to the complainant as provided in Section 4 above.

VII. SECTION 7: SECOND LEVEL; APPEAL FROM FIRST LEVEL TO CENTRAL OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR
   A complainant dissatisfied with the decision of the first level shall be entitled to appeal to the central office administrator by filing written notice of appeal with the office of the superintendent. The appeal must be filed within ten (10) calendar days after the complainant is notified of the level one decision. The central office administrator shall record the date of the filing on the appeal and shall notify the complainant in writing of the time and place of the hearing by mail or hand delivery. The level two administrator shall obtain copies of all minutes, transcripts, documents and other records relating to the complaint and shall conduct a hearing and render a decision within ten (10) calendar days of the date of the filing of the appeal, or the hearing may be conducted by any designated representative of the level two administrator who shall promptly submit his or her recommendations and findings to the level two administrator for final decision. The
decision shall be rendered and served on the complainant and his attorney in accordance with Section 4(h).

VIII. Section 8: THIRD LEVEL; APPEAL TO BOARD OF EDUCATION
A complainant or level one administrator dissatisfied with the decision of the central office administrator may appeal to the board of education by filing written notice of appeal with the office of the superintendent. The appeal must be filed within ten (10) calendar days after the date of the decision as provided in Section 4. The superintendent shall record the date of filing on the appeal, and shall promptly give notice to the complainant in writing of the time and place of hearing by mail or by hand delivery. The complainant and the administrators against whom the complaint is filed or whose decision is being appealed shall be entitled to appear before the board of education and be heard. The board of education may direct that a pre-hearing conference be held prior to the hearing to identify issues and facilitate presentation. The local board shall conduct a hearing and render its decision in writing within twenty (20) calendar days after the hearing, and perfect service thereof on the complainant and his attorney, all in accordance with Section 4(h).

IX. SECTION 9: APPEALS TO STATE BOARD
Appeals from the decision of the local board to the state board of education shall be governed by the state board rule (BCAEA) governing appeals and O.C.G.A. § 20-2-1160.

X. SECTION 10: REPRISALS PROHIBITED
No certificated personnel shall be subjected to reprisals as a result of filing any complaint under this policy. Any reprisals may be referred to the Professional Standards Commission.

XI. SECTION 11: COLLECTIVE BARGAINING DISCLAIMER
Nothing in this policy shall be construed to permit or foster collective bargaining.

XII. SECTION 12: REPEALS
All policies and parts of policies in conflict herewith are repealed.

**Sexual Harassment Policy (GCBE Policy GAEB)**
It is the policy of this School District to prohibit any act of harassment of employees by other employees based upon race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity. Any such act shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment.

Sexual harassment may include conduct or speech which entails unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, taunts, threats, comments of a vulgar or demeaning nature, demands or physical contact which creates a hostile environment. There may be other speech or conduct which employees experience as inappropriate or illegal harassment which should also be reported; harassment can take many forms and it is not possible to itemize every aspect of the harassment forbidden by this policy.

Any employee or applicant for employment who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination as prohibited by this policy should promptly report the same to the principal of their school or to the appropriate coordinator designated in policy GAAA, who
will implement the board’s discriminatory complaints procedures as specified in that policy. Employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination.

It is the duty of all employees to promptly report harassment forbidden by this policy. All supervisors will instruct their subordinates as to the content of this policy and, through appropriate professional learning activities, enlighten employees as to the varied forms or expression of prohibited harassment. The principals of all schools shall ensure that employees are informed through handbooks, training materials and verbally that such harassment is strictly forbidden, how it is to be reported and the consequences for violating this policy.

**Personnel Records**

It is the procedure of the Gordon County Board of Education that the provisions of the Open Records Act found in the Official Code of Georgia at Section 50-18-70 and the following sections shall be complied with by this school district. The Superintendent of Schools or designee shall make every reasonable effort to respond to the provisions of any request for documents or other information covered by the Open Records Act within the time provided by that Act. The school system, as a matter of procedure, should redact certain information from employees’ personnel records before furnishing such documents in compliance with a request for records under the Open Records Act: the home address, home telephone number, Social Security number, insurance information, evaluations, medical information, mother’s birth name, day and month of birth, credit card or debit card numbers, bank account information and financial data or information. The school system may furnish any of such information to a third party under the Open Records Act upon consent of the affected employee.

**Employee Computer and Internet Use - Proper and Ethical Use**

It is important that in dealing with the Internet, students and staff understand and practice proper and ethical use. Conditions and Rules for Use:

1. **Acceptable use**
   a. The purpose of the Internet is to facilitate communications in support of research and education by providing access to unique resources. Use by any student or staff member must be in support of and consistent with the educational objectives of the Gordon County School System.
   b. Transmission of any material in violation of United States or state regulation is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, or material protected by patent.
   c. Use for commercial activities is generally not acceptable. Use for product advertisement or political lobbying is prohibited.

2. **Privilege**

   The use of the Internet is a privilege, not a right. Inappropriate use, including any violation of these conditions and rules, may result in cancellation of the privilege. Under this agreement, the Gordon County School System is delegated the authority to determine appropriate use and may deny, revoke, or suspend any user’s access at any time based upon determination of inappropriate use.

3. **Monitoring**
The Gordon County School System reserves the right to review any material by any user and to monitor fileserver space in order to make determinations as to whether specific uses of the network are inappropriate. The system shall use appropriate filtering software to block access to inappropriate sites/resources.

4. Network Etiquette
   a. Users shall be polite, not abusive in messages to others.
   b. Users shall use appropriate language. Profanities and vulgarities or any other inappropriate language is prohibited.
   c. Users under no circumstances may send material that is intended to threaten, harass, annoy or alarm another person without legitimate purpose—this includes chain mail. Communications that include political, sexual, religious, or other inappropriate content are considered inappropriate and should not be sent.
   d. Users shall not buy and sell non-school resources in online auctions.

5. Warranties
   The Gordon County Board of Education makes no warranties of any kind, whether express or implied, for services through the Internet. The school system shall not be responsible for any damages a user suffers, including loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, or service interruption. Use of information obtained via the Internet is at the user's own risk. The Gordon County Board of Education specifically denies responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through Internet services. All users should consider the source of any information they obtain as well as the validity of that information.

6. Security
   a. Security of any computer system is a high priority, especially when the system involves many users.
   b. Any user who identifies a security problem must notify an adult teacher/supervisor or administrator immediately.
   c. Users shall not use another individual's access account without express permission of the account holder.
   d. Any attempt by a student to log on to the Internet or network as a system administrator or teacher/supervisor will result in cancellation of user privilege.
   e. Any user identified as a security risk for having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access to the Internet through the resources offered by the Gordon County School System.

7. Vandalism
   a. Vandalism and harassment shall result in cancellation of user privileges.
   b. Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm, modify, or destroy data of another user. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creating of computer viruses.
   c. Harassment is defined as the persistent annoyance of another user or the interference in another user's work. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, the sending of unwanted E-mail.

8. Procedures for Use
a. Student users must always get permission from a teacher or adult computer lab supervisor before using the network or accessing any specific file or application.
b. All users have the same right to use the equipment; therefore, users shall not play games or use the computer resources for other non-academic purposes. Users shall not waste nor take supplies such as paper, CDs, and diskettes that are provided by the school system.
c. Student users may use Email, chat room, or other direct electronic communication in a manner approved by the supervisor.
d. Hacking or other unlawful activities are prohibited.
e. Personal identification of minors is prohibited.

9. Encounter of Controversial Material
Users may encounter material which is controversial and which users, parents, teachers, or administrators may consider inappropriate or offensive. The Gordon County School System has a right and will make every effort to control the content of data accessed through the Internet by use of filtering software and teacher monitoring as outlined in the CIPA law. Efforts to unblock a website must be approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee. Unfortunately, however, on a global network it is impossible to control every piece of data, and an industrious user may discover controversial material accidentally. It is the users' responsibility not to initiate access to such material purposely. If such material is accessed accidentally, the student-user shall notify an adult teacher/supervisor immediately to ensure such an accident does not happen again.

10. Penalties for Improper Use
a. Any user violating these rules or any other state or federal laws or classroom or school system policies is subject to lose network and/or computer use privileges. Furthermore, school disciplinary action, including in-school suspension and/or suspension or expulsion, may be imposed. If the actions of a user cause or contribute to the loss of service, applications, and/or data, school disciplinary action commensurate with the magnitude of the infraction shall be administered. In the event that such action causes the need for technical assistance to restore the service, application, or data, restitution may be charged.
b. Any unauthorized access or breach of state or federal law is subject to criminal prosecution.

11. Procedures
a. Procedures for access to the Internet by Gordon County employees and students:
b. Supervision of student access to telecommunications at various ages and grade levels. All student access to the Internet shall be under the direct supervision of a teacher or designated professional staff member.
c. Selection and screening of electronic communication resources. Any computer connected to the Internet through a school-wide network will have appropriate filtering/screening software installed to prevent access to unauthorized material according to current CIPA laws.
d. Employees who are granted access privileges must first read and sign the Staff Agreement form.
e. Denial of Internet Use by Parent/Guardians: Parents may request, in writing, that their child(ren) not use any form of electronic communication, including the Internet and Email. In such cases, the teacher will provide appropriate alternative instruction.

Staff Members’ Social Media Use
Personal social media use, including off-hours use, has the potential to result in disruption at school and/or the workplace, and can be in violation of local policies/procedures, FERPA, and the Code of Ethics for Educators (Standard 7). GCS employees should exercise caution and common sense when using personal social media sites -- the posting or disclosure of personally identifiable student information or confidential information on personal social media sites is prohibited.

Employees engaging in the use of professional social media sites for the purposes of instruction and extra-curricular program matters, should treat professional social media space and communication like a classroom and/or a professional workplace. Care should be given always to respect the confidentiality rights of students and employees, especially those students who have enacted their rights under FERPA.

No image or other identifiable information of a student- in a group or individually- shall be posted on a school-related social media site OR to a personal account without the consent of the parent or guardian, or the student when he/she is 18 years of age or older. Each school maintains a “Do Not Photo” list. All photographs that are publicized should be checked against that list to ensure no student information or image is being published without permission. Additionally, student names or other identifying information should not be released without the same permission. This is to protect students in the event that such information would put them or their families in danger, so this is not to be taken lightly.

Access to Social Media through System Networks
Any employee who wishes to maintain a social media page on behalf of the school district must be placed on the minimum content filter list. Such access is made available through an approved Social Media Access Form sent to the Director of Communications.

Privacy and Confidentiality (GCBE Policy JR)
It is the policy of the Board of Education that all employees shall comply with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The Superintendent shall implement procedures whereby every principal is directed to develop a means to notify, on an annual basis, students and parents, including non-English-speaking parents, of their rights under the FERPA, either by letter or through a student handbook distributed to each student in the school.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)
Confidentiality of student records shall be preserved while access is provided to parents, eligible students (those over eighteen years of age or enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions), school officials with legitimate educational interests, and those federal or state
officials whose access is authorized in connection with an audit or evaluation of federal or state supported education programs or for the enforcement or compliance with federal legal requirements related to those programs. Records will be sent to a school where the student seeks or intends to enroll or has already enrolled upon request of the school.

With the exception of directory information as defined below, personally identifiable information will not be released by the school system from an education record without prior written consent of the parent or eligible student, except where authorized by the regulations governing the FERPA. In accordance with the regulations, disclosures will be made to comply with state law, Internal Revenue Service laws and regulations, judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, in which case a reasonable effort will be made to notify parents or students in advance of such disclosures, unless otherwise required by a judicial order or federal grand jury subpoena; to accrediting institutions to carry out their accrediting functions; to organizations conducting studies on behalf of the school system; or in connection with a health or safety emergency.

The Board of Education designates the following information as "directory information." Unless a parent or eligible student makes a timely request to the principal of the school where the student is enrolled that such information not be designated directory information on the individual student, such information will not be considered confidential and may be disclosed upon request.

1. Student’s name, address and telephone number;
2. Student’s date and place of birth;
3. Student’s e-mail address;
4. Student’s participation in official school clubs and sports;
5. Weight and height of student if he/she is a member of an athletic team;
6. Dates of attendance at schools within the school district;
7. Honors and awards received during the time enrolled in the district's schools;
8. Photograph; and
9. Grade level.

The Code of Ethics for Educators
(505-6-.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS, Effective January 2018)

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 Georgia 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 Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
   b. “Child endangerment” occurs when an educator disregards a substantial and/or unjustifiable risk of bodily harm to the student.
   c. “Educator” is a teacher, school or school system administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the Georgia 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.
   d. “Student” is any individual enrolled in the state’s public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual between and including the ages of 3 and 17 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.
   e. “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 Georgia 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.
   f. “Revocation” is the invalidation of any certificate held by the educator.
   g. “Denial” is the refusal to grant initial certification to an applicant for a certificate.
   h. “Suspension” is the temporary invalidation of any certificate for a period of time specified by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
   i. “Reprimand” admonishes the certificate holder for his or her conduct. The reprimand cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action.
   j. “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.
   k. “Monitoring” is the quarterly appraisal of the educator’s conduct by the Georgia 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.
   l. “No Probable Cause” is a determination by the Georgia 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:
      i. committing any act of child abuse, including physical and verbal abuse;
      ii. committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
      iii. committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
      iv. engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student that would violate a state or federal law;
      v. soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student;
      vi. furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or
      vii. 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:
      i. being on school or Local Unit of Administration (LUA)/school district premises or at a school or a LUA/school district-related activity while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs; and
      ii. being on school or LUA/school district 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:
i. professional qualifications, criminal history, college or staff development credit and/or degrees, academic award, and employment history;

ii. information submitted to federal, state, local school districts and other governmental agencies;

iii. information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel;

iv. reasons for absences or leaves;

v. information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation; and

vi. 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:

   i. misusing public or school-related funds;

   ii. failing to account for funds collected from students or parents;

   iii. submitting fraudulent requests or documentation for reimbursement of expenses or for pay

   iv. (including fraudulent or purchased degrees, documents, or coursework);

   v. co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts; and

   vi. using school or school district property without the approval of the local board of

   vii. 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:

   i. soliciting students or parents of students, or school and/or LUA/school district personnel, 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;

   ii. accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;

   iii. tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and

   1. 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:

i. 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;

ii. sharing of confidential information restricted by state or federal law;

iii. 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

iv. 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:

i. abandoning the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the employer, and

ii. 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:

i. failure to report all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission;

ii. 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

iii. 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 education 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:
   i. committing any act that breaches Test Security; and
   ii. 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 Georgia Professional Standards Commission must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, or other LUA/school district employee, 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 Georgia 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:
      i. unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
      ii. disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
      iii. 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);
      iv. 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);
      v. suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate;
      vi. violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession; and
xii. any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.

xiii. 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 educator designated by the superintendent/Local Board of Education 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. Should the superintendent’s certificate be revoked, suspended, or denied, the Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that the superintendent whose certificate has been revoked, suspended, or denied is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district (Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200; 20-2-981 through 20-2-984.5).

**STUDENT ASSESSMENT IN GEORGIA SCHOOLS**

Gordon County Schools will follow all assessment procedures and policies set by the Georgia Department of Education.

System Test Coordinator: Melissa McNeese Ext. 8112 mmcneese@gcbe.org
Assessment Assistant: Kerri Chatman Ext. 8114 kchatman@gcbe.org

**Test Security & Accountability**

1. Plans & Procedures – Procedures for test security, administration, and materials distribution are provided and implemented by GCS. These procedures are designed to be consistent with guidance provided in the Georgia Department of Education *Student Assessment Handbook* and strict adherence to the *Code of Ethics for Educators* by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

2. Training – GCS utilizes a train-the-trainer model to disseminate information regarding student assessment. As part of the training, special attention is given to issues related to test security and integrity pertaining to all assessment programs administered by the system. The System Test Coordinator provides training to School Test Coordinators, who in turn, provide training to test examiners and proctors in two primary areas – test security and test administration.

**Prior to Receiving Test Materials in the School**

1. School Test Coordinator (STC) will be assigned by the Principal. The STC must participate in all training, test preparation activities, and other responsibilities as assigned by the Principal.

2. The School Test Coordinator will receive training from the System Test Coordinator.
   a. Will have initial training on State Assessment Handbook policies and procedures.
b. Training will include locally developed procedures.
c. Will conduct training immediately prior to each test administration on specific test procedures and policies related to the upcoming test.
d. Confidentiality/security requirements in State Assessment Handbook are explained and appropriate forms signed indicating that this information was reviewed.

3. The System Test Coordinator and the School Test Coordinators will keep a testing log to document anything related to testing.

4. All school level Test Examiners, Proctors, and Monitors will be trained in proper test administration. All Examiners, Proctors, and Monitors will be employed by the Gordon County School District.
   a. STC will prepare agendas and training material for training sessions. (Retain a file copy of documentation)
      i. Include confidentiality training as presented in the State Assessment Handbook and assure that appropriate forms are signed indicating each Test Examiner, Proctor, and Monitor reviewed this information.
   b. Train all Test Examiners on the procedures for each test administration.
      i. Training must be done prior to each test specific to the test being administered.
         1. Each test has different requirements.
         2. Previous training or previously giving the test does NOT substitute for current training.
         3. Everyone needs a review of procedures and needs to know changes for the current year.
   c. Train all Proctors in their roles and responsibilities.
      i. Proctors need to know what to look for and what they can do and cannot do during a testing session.
      ii. Train proctors on appropriate ways to address issues or incidents that they think are inappropriate in their testing site.
   d. Train all Monitors in their roles and responsibilities.
   e. Have participants sign the appropriate Training Certification forms for all training sessions. (Retain for documentation)
   f. Participants should sign the form to verify participation.
   g. Verify that all potential Test Examiners, Proctors, and Monitors have been trained.

5. Establish testing roster for each Test Examiner listing Test Examiner, Proctor, and students assigned.

6. Prepare a master list of students and their accommodations before each test administration that is verified and signed by the School Test Coordinator.

7. Train in a second session Test Examiners who will be giving test accommodations.
   a. Ensure sign in documentation.
   b. Review the accommodations to be given.
   c. Review how the accommodations are to be given.
i. Detailed instruction should be given for how to give an “oral reading” accommodation which means the Test Examiner is reading the test to the student.

ii. It is important that “oral reading” has been done this way in the regular classroom so that the student is familiar with this testing accommodation.

iii. Practice in the oral reading of the math test is necessary for appropriate administration.

iv. The use of this accommodation in the regular classroom should closely follow the testing procedure to ensure students are not confused during the testing by the “oral reading” directions.

v. How many times an item, passage, or answer choices may be read should be clarified.

vi. Proper voice tone and inflections, as well as timing, should be reviewed.


d. Review who will receive those accommodations.

e. Provide in writing to the Test Examiners a list of students and the accommodations that are to be given to each.

i. Have Test Examiner sign and date that he/she received the accommodations notification.

ii. Emphasize that accommodations may not be altered but must follow IEP, 504, or TPC plans.

iii. Test Examiner must give the accommodation written in the plan.

iv. Some accommodations by nature may not be needed (i.e., extra time when student finishes within allotted testing time, but student is offered extra time.)

f. The School Test Coordinator is the only person allowed to add to or delete a name from the roster of an accommodated test site.

i. Any addition/deletion must be confirmed with appropriate personnel.

ii. School Test Coordinator should sign and date roster when adding or deleting a name on the roster.

8. Establish a secure storage area for test material at each school testing site.

a. Locked at all times.

b. Limited access to area. School Test Coordinator should have primary access. In emergency cases, the Principal may have access to the area.

c. Only two keys should be available to this secure area—School Test Coordinator and Principal.

9. School Test Coordinators will receive secure test materials from System Test Coordinator.

a. Manually count all packages of material comparing to invoice

i. Report discrepancies from packing slip immediately to System Test Coordinator.

ii. System Test Coordinator verifies shortage and/or overage and reports to GaDOE and/or testing company.

b. Manually count contents of each package comparing to package count indication.
After Receiving Test Materials in the School

1. School Test Coordinators and designated personnel should check pre-identification labels and test tickets for accuracy. Labels with incorrect information should not be used.
2. Ensure the integrity of the secured storage area.
   a. A sign-in/out sheet must be utilized when entering the storage area.
3. Prepare containers at each school for each testing site within the school with the exact quantity of materials the Test Examiner will need.
   a. Ensure test security and limited access during this process.
   b. Testing containers should be kept in secured area until given to Test Examiner and then should be returned to secured area promptly after testing.
   c. Each school should have a plan for preparation of test tickets.
   d. Prepare a form with inventory numbers (count) for each type of testing material in the container for the Test Examiner to verify and sign that the count is correct in his/her container. This is done in the presence of the School Test Coordinator or Assistant Test Coordinator.
      i. Once a Test Examiner signs verifying or correcting the material count, it is the responsibility of the Test Examiner to return the same number to the School Test Coordinator.
      ii. Verification is done in the presence of the School Test Coordinator.
      iii. This is done daily before and after the test is administered.
      iv. Verification form should include time and signature for signing out materials and for the return of materials.
4. Have teachers remove/cover all instructional materials from walls, cabinets, desks, etc.
   a. This should be done 3-5 days prior to testing so students are not disrupted by a change in environment.
5. Place student desks/tables in positions to discourage communication and cheating among students. Provide dividers for students if desks/tables are in close proximity.
6. Principals should verify all instructional materials have been removed, desks arranged appropriately, and windows uncovered.
7. Schedule all test sites in areas where there is easy access for Monitors. Doors should be unlocked at all times.

During Testing

1. Cease all specific test prep/review activities during the week of testing.
2. Provide students with pencils that have erasers that will not smear or smudge. Be sure they are #2 non-mechanical pencils.
3. Have students and Test Examiner verify their name and sign the test ticket.
   a. Have students sit in assigned seats.
   b. Ensure student name and required information have been accurately bubbled and printed on answer document when appropriate.
      i. Student names must be on test booklets and answer documents during testing.
ii. Student labels must be reviewed to ensure they contain correct information for each student.


5. Record the start and stop time of each testing session and or section. This should be recorded on the Student Roster form and turned in to School Test Coordinator along with other test materials each day.

6. Ensure that the script is read exactly as directed and no deviations are made during the testing process.

7. Ensure Test Examiners and Proctors should actively monitor students by walking routinely by student desks or computer stations, monitoring that students are following instructions, and are in the appropriate test sections.
   a. Test Examiners/Proctors should NOT be on the computer or their phones during testing. Computers should be turned OFF during testing.
   b. Test Examiners/Proctors should turn OFF any personal communication device during testing.
   c. Test Examiners/Proctors should not be grading papers, reading or otherwise engaged in any activity other than testing. Examiners and Proctors must actively MONITOR students.

8. Ensure the Test Examiner maintains a testing site Incident Log Sheet noting any unusual occurrence in the testing site that could cause an irregularity or inflated or deflated score.
   a. This is a safeguard for the Test Examiner. The more recorded the better informed for a later inquiry.
   b. Incident Log Form should be turned in each day with testing materials.
   c. Examples when form is to be used:
      i. A student gets knocked off the internet and has to log back in.
      ii. Student gets sick and/or goes to restroom during test.
      iii. Diabetic student needs care during test.
      iv. A student is emotionally distressed.
      v. School Test Coordinator should review log sheets daily.
      vi. Initial and date each review. This will prevent additions or changes to the log on subsequent days.

9. Teachers should report any testing irregularities as described in training sessions to the School Test Coordinator. The School Test Coordinator should contact the System Test Coordinator upon notification of possible irregularity.
   a. The School Test Coordinator should complete the appropriate forms and provide detailed written statements from all parties involved.
   b. Once IR is received by the System Test Coordinator, System Test Coordinator will contact GA DOE Assessment Specialist for guidance.
      i. If IR is deemed necessary, System Test Coordinator will complete portal entry.
      ii. System Test Coordinator will confirm IR code with School Test Coordinator.
      iii. School Test Coordinator will code appropriate document.
   c. The School Test Coordinator should make a copy of all Incident Log Sheets on the last day of testing.
10. Instruct Test Examiners, Proctors, and Monitors NOT to read a student test. The only exception for Test Examiners would be for an “oral reading” accommodation.

11. Report any problem with a student test to the School Test Coordinator immediately.

12. Instruct Test Examiners, Proctors, and Monitors NOT to discuss test questions or answers with anyone, including students.

13. The System Test Coordinator, School Test Coordinator, and Principal will verify that testing procedures and protocols are being followed in the testing sites. The System Test Coordinator will monitor all testing sites.

14. Test Examiners should contact the School Test Coordinator immediately if any situation arises that might impact test results.

15. The School Test Coordinator should contact the school Principal and System Test Coordinator immediately if any situation arises that might impact test results.

16. Make-up testing must be done using the same testing procedures as the original testing.

**After Testing**

1. Testing materials should be collected and verified promptly after each testing session.

2. Materials should be kept secure until returned to the District. School Test Coordinators should follow packaging directions after inventory of completed tests as found in School Test Coordinator’s manual or Directions for Administration.

3. Return testing materials and other required documentation to District on assigned date.

4. Testing materials should be collected by the system and counts verified for return to scoring companies.

5. Materials returned from schools should be signed for and dated by the System Test Coordinator or his/her designee and placed into the system’s inventory.

6. Package answer documents noting on a master list the box number with a list of the classes submitted in that box.

7. Package testing materials for return recording the box number and what materials are returned in that box.

8. If school is responsible for packaging materials for return to state/companies, then the system should spot check matching numbers and recorded contents for accuracy.

9. Assure that shipping directions and time lines are followed.

10. Secured test documents for shipping should be maintained in a secure location, never “left at main desk” or “out in the open” for pickup by a carrier.

11. The System Test Coordinator will notify the School Test Coordinator when test scores arrive at the District.
   a. The System Test Coordinator will retain a copy of all system score reports for the district.

12. Each School Test Coordinator will ensure the prompt distribution of test scores at his/her school.
   a. Test scores should not be e-mailed under any circumstance.
   b. Each school should retain a copy of all school-level score reports.

13. Retain all testing rosters, lists, signatures, agendas, sign-in/out forms, logs, and other system/school materials for documentation purposes.
14. Compile and check-off the required Principal’s Certification Form as required after each test administration.
   a. These will be maintained at the system level for five years.
15. System Test Coordinator and Superintendent will complete the Superintendent’s Certification Form on January 30 and July 31 as required.

Students with Disabilities Participation in State and Local Assessments
Decisions regarding the participation of students with disabilities in state and local assessments will be made, on a case-by-case basis, by each student’s IEP team. The IEP team should (a) consider the purpose of the assessment, (b) consider the feasibility of the student’s participation, (c) determine what accommodation(s), if any, the student will need and document this in the student’s IEP, and (d) document in the IEP the decision for the student to participate in the assessment or for the student not to participate.

If the student’s IEP team recommends that she/he not participate in the regular statewide assessment, then the IEP must (a) document the reason the student will not participate in the regular statewide assessment, then the IEP must (a) document the reason the student will not participate, and (b) identify participation in the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA). The IEP team must ensure the student meets the eligibility requirements to participate in the GAA.

The Gordon County School District follows all guidelines for the participation and administration of the GAA as outlined in the Georgia Department of Education’s Student Assessment Handbook, GAA test coordinator’s manual, and GAA Examiner’s manual.

Roles and Responsibilities
(Georgia Department of Education 2018-2019 Student Assessment Handbook p. 23-41)

1. Superintendent
   a. Has ultimate responsibility for all testing activities within the local school system.
   b. Appoints the System Test Coordinator.
   c. Supervises Principals and System Test Coordinator to ensure that they fulfill their specific responsibilities for the administration of tests.
   d. Maintains contact with System Test Coordinator to become thoroughly informed of all testing activities.
   e. 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.
   f. Monitors testing activities in the local school system to guarantee compliance with regulations established by the State Board of Education and current legislation.
   g. Informs local board members, parents, and other citizens about requirements pertaining to statewide testing.
   h. Ensures that appropriate local personnel attend GaDOE workshops concerning state assessment programs.
i. Ensures that the appropriate personnel complete all necessary readiness checks for online testing.

j. Ensures that personnel enforce prescribed calculator, cell phone, and electronic device guidelines.

k. Reviews and returns certification/verification forms to the Office of Assessment and Accountability at the GaDOE by the due dates.

l. Ensures that Principal's Certification Forms are completed after each test administration and retained as required.

m. Approves all special administrations.

n. Informs citizens residing within the local system's area concerning the collective achievement of enrolled students by school and system.

o. Ensures that local calendars are planned so that all tests are administered according to the state- published testing calendar.

2. System Test Coordinator
   a. Coordinates all test administration activities within the school system.
   b. Serves as liaison between the system and the GaDOE for all test administration activities.
   c. Coordinates with various local system divisions to ensure successful test administrations (Special Education, Technology, Title III, etc.)
   d. Assumes responsibility for carrying out the approved plan for administration of all tests.
   e. Furnishes all information and submits all forms required by the GaDOE by specified dates.
   f. Ensures principals complete the Principal Certification Form for each administration and maintains these forms for five years.
   g. Orders special format tests (Braille, large print, advanced reading aids).
   h. Receives test materials from GaDOE at a designated time and place and maintains them in secure location.
   i. Reviews and follows all procedures in all administration manuals and is familiar with administrators' roles and proctors' roles.
   j. Ensures that appropriate security provisions and technology readiness checks are in place/completed relative to online testing environments including, but not limited to, security of log-ins, passcodes, seating arrangements, etc.
   k. Adheres to test dates, time schedules, and specified instructions set by the GaDOE and returns all materials to GaDOE and/or its contractors as specified and by the prescribed date(s).
   l. Ensures that each test setting (room) is suitable, has an assigned examiner, and has the appropriate number of proctors.
   m. Ensures that prescribed calculator, cell phone, and electronic device guidelines are applied in each school.
   n. Accounts for all test materials delivered to the school system and for the disposition of specific materials.
   o. Attends statewide testing program meetings.
   p. Arranges schedule for staff to monitor schools during testing sessions.
q. 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 ELLs/Alternate ACCESS), and any others who have responsibilities related to testing and/or testing materials.

r. 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.

s. Maintains a portfolio of all training session materials and rosters of attendees.

t. Answers questions of all School Test Coordinators and Principals and makes decisions regarding testing, when appropriate.

u. Ensures that School Test Coordinators account for all students in terms of testing requirements.

v. Ensures strict test security and reports to Superintendent concerning testing irregularities (e.g., student cheating, unethical professional conduct).

w. Communicates to the Assessment Administration Division when testing irregularities occur.

x. Distributes test results to the 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.

y. Interprets test results to school personnel and appropriate others.

z. 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.

aa. Ensures that students, parents, and the general public have access to information concerning all test administrations and utilization of test results.

bb. Works with system personnel to communicate to parents of students with IEPs, IAPs, and ELL/TPC plans pertinent information regarding all statewide tests.

cc. Facilitates the transfer of GAA portfolios when students withdraw from or enroll in the school system.

3. System Special Education Coordinator

a. 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.

b. Acquires and maintains current information of IDEA, state rules, and waiver process for students with disabilities.

c. Provides technical assistance to special education teachers on test administration.

d. Ensures that all due process rights pertaining to the testing programs are provided for students with disabilities.

e. Ensures that IEP teams understand the appropriate selection of approved accommodations and the selection of the Georgia Alternate Assessment for state-mandated tests.
f. Ensures that appropriate documentation is maintained for all students with disabilities.
g. Ensures that students with disabilities have the appropriate test-taking experience or have been taught test-taking skills prior to taking the tests.
h. Informs System Test Coordinator of the number of special format tests (i.e., Braille, state-approved assistive technology, or large print) needed to test students with disabilities for all test administrations.
i. Informs the System Test Coordinator of the number of students who must receive each accommodation allowed by state regulations.
j. Acquires and maintains current information about the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA).
   i. Discuss the GAA with students and parents/guardians.
   ii. Informs parents and students of participation in the GAA.
k. Ensures that the following activities are completed by special education personnel in preparation for all state-mandated assessments.
   i. Discusses the state-required tests with the students and parents/guardians.
   ii. 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.
   iii. Discusses with the student and parents/guardians the consequences of the student not passing a state-mandated assessment (such as promotion/retention requirements, EOCs constituting 20% of the final course grade, and any relevant local policies). Documents the occurrence of this discussion.
l. Ensures that all special education teachers have been trained to administer the GAA.
m. Collaborates with Title III/ESOL colleagues to train the appropriate teachers to administer the Alternate ACCESS for ELLs.

4. System Title III/ESOL Coordinator
   a. 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.
   b. 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.
   c. Acquires and maintains current information of state rules and the deferment/accommodation process for EL or EL-M students.
   d. Provides technical assistance to teachers on test administration.
   e. Ensures that appropriate documentation is maintained for all EL or EL-M students.
f. 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 must not be administered the ACCESS.

g. Informs the System Test Coordinator of the number of students who must receive each accommodation allowed by state regulations.

h. Ensures that the following activities are completed by EL/ESOL personnel in preparation for all state-mandated assessments:

i. Discusses the state-required tests with the students and parents/guardians.

j. 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.

k. Discusses with the student and parents/guardians the consequences of the student not passing a state-mandated assessment (such as promotion/retention requirements, EOCs constituting 20% of the final course grade, and any relevant local policies). Documents the occurrence of this discussion.

l. Informs System Test Coordinator of the names of EL students receiving deferments. This list should specify which tests or subtests are subject to deferment.

m. Train 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.

5. Principal

a. Has ultimate responsibility for testing activities in the local school.

b. Ensures proper environment for test administration.

c. 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.

d. Ensures that the appropriate personnel complete all necessary readiness checks for online testing.

e. Ensures that personnel apply prescribed calculator, cell phone, and electronic device guidelines to each test setting.

f. Ensures that the test accommodations identified in students' IEPs, IAPs, and EL/TPC plans are provided for each student as specified.

g. Ensures that testing sites are free of interruptions during test administration (e.g., intercom messages, visitors, wandering students, entry into test settings by a person/persons not serving as the examiner or proctor unless necessitated by emergency/time-sensitive need) and that sites do not have content-related materials posted that could advantage one group of students over others.

h. Designates a School Test Coordinator to coordinate the testing program. The School Test Coordinator must hold a PSC-issued certificate.

i. Assigns personnel to serve as Examiners and Proctors.

j. Arranges appropriate schedules for teachers who will be Proctors and Examiners and for those who will be teaching other students not involved in testing.
k. Informs students and parents/guardians about the purpose of testing, dates and times for testing, and expected dates for return of test results (see Test Preparation section).
l. Creates an atmosphere in which all staff members know that their cooperation is needed and expected for successful test administration.
m. Advises School Test Coordinator, Examiners, and Proctors if emergency situations arise.
n. Monitors the administration of tests.
o. Supervises all testing activities to ensure strict test security.
p. Maintains test materials in a secure location, with restricted access.
q. Ensures that only staff members who have been trained on the proper management of secure test materials handle such materials.
r. Notifies System Test Coordinator of testing irregularities and provides explanation of circumstances.
s. Ensures that the school calendar is planned so that all tests are administered according to the system’s testing calendar.
t. Monitors test preparation activities to ensure that secure testing materials are not misused.
u. Verifies all special education teachers have been trained to administer the GAA.
v. Verifies all ESOL teachers have been trained to administer the ACCESS.
w. Verifies all kindergarten teachers have been trained to administer the GKIDS.
x. Validates the content and procedures of students’ portfolios by signing the GAA validation form.
y. Reviews and returns the Principal’s Certification Form to the System Test Coordinator after each administration.

6. School Test Coordinator
   a. Receives test materials from System Test Coordinator and verifies numbers received.
b. Determines the number of test booklets to be assigned to each testing site and accounts for material distribution and return.
c. Prepares all testing sites.
d. Assists Principal in assigning Examiner(s).
e. Assigns Proctors appropriately in accordance with state guidelines.
f. Coordinates with various local school and/or system divisions to ensure successful test administrations (Special Education, Technology, Title III, etc.)
g. Accounts for the security of all test materials during the time the materials are in the building.
h. Under supervision, ensures the accuracy of student FTE and GTID numbers on each answer document.
i. Ensures all materials are stored in a secure, locked location with restricted access, confirms access is restricted by accounting for keys.
j. Ensures that only staff members who have been trained on the proper management of secure test materials handle such materials.
k. Ensures that appropriate security provisions are in place relative to online testing environments and materials including, but not limited to, security of log-ins, passcodes, conducive seating arrangements, etc.

l. Ensures that personnel apply prescribed calculator, cell phone, and electronic device guidelines to each test setting.

m. Ensures that testing sites are free of interruptions during test administration (e.g., intercom messages, visitors, wandering students, entry into test settings by a person/persons not serving as the examiner or proctor unless necessitated by an emergency/time-sensitive need) and that sites do not have content-related materials posted that could advantage one group of students over others.

n. Conducts orientation and training sessions for Examiners and Proctors.

o. Adheres to system testing schedule.

p. Distributes test materials to and collects from each Examiner on the testing days.

q. Ensures Examiners sign out (date and time) materials each testing day shortly before testing begins each day.

r. Ensures Examiners return (sign, date, and time) materials immediately after testing each day.

s. 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 (form located on page 130 of this handbook). Confirms that all necessary transcriptions are completed when necessary.

t. Provides each Examiner with a list of student FTE and GTID numbers.

u. Gives Examiners extra No. 2 pencils, online test tickets, computer peripherals, and resource materials, if appropriate.

v. Accounts for all students in terms of testing requirements.

w. Notifies Principal and System Test Coordinator of any emergency situation and helps to decide what action needs to be taken.

x. Conducts, coordinates, and supervises inspection of all completed answer documents before delivering them to the System Test Coordinator 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.

y. Counts materials returned from Examiners each day and accounts for all materials distributed each day of testing.

z. Packages and returns materials to System Test Coordinator according to directions and time line.

aa. Notifies Principal and System Test Coordinator of any testing irregularities and provides explanation of circumstances.

bb. Maintains dated student sign-in/sign-out sheets for each test administration.

c. Ensures that students have only one opportunity to test during each window.

dd. Ensures that for any students not currently enrolled in their local school, the following protocol is applied:
ee. Contacts students' schools for verification of test eligibility and requires photo ID and maintains photocopy record.

ff. 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. Systems should collaborate and discuss such cases prior to test administration.

7. Examiner
   a. Participates in training.
   b. Reviews and follows all procedures in handling all administration materials.
   c. Counts materials prior to testing and after testing to verify accuracy.
   d. Ensures the security of test booklets while they are in the testing site before, during, and after testing.
   e. Provides No. 2 pencils, erasers, pens for writing tests, and resource materials (if appropriate).
   f. Follows procedures for testing as given in the Examiner’s Manual, including reading all directions to students.
   g. Confirms that all assigned students have entered and bubbled in the test form number correctly if one is required.
   h. Maintains control of testing situation and keeps students on task. Examiners must actively circulate and monitor students throughout the testing session(s).
   i. Applies and enforces prescribed calculator, cell phone, and electronic device guidelines.
   j. Observes students during testing to monitor that they are marking answers completely and correctly and using only specified test materials. Reports student actions to School Testing Coordinator immediately.
   k. Allows no student to leave the test room unless there is an emergency/health/restroom need.
   l. Counts and verifies all testing materials each day prior to dismissing students.
   m. 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.
   n. Returns all test materials to School Test Coordinators immediately after testing each day, including special format tests, such as Braille or large print.
   o. Documents the daily receipt (date, time, and number received) of test materials and the daily return of test materials.
   p. Ensures that no content-related instructional materials are displayed in the testing site. Charts, diagrams, and posters should not be visible. Chalkboards/Whiteboards should be free of any writing except for test procedure information.
   q. As required by State Board Rule 160-3-1-.07, certified educators (teachers, counselors, administrators, paraprofessionals) must administer all state-
mandated assessments. Educators without Georgia certification from the Professional Standards Commission must not administer state assessments. Local systems must be mindful of certificate expiration dates and ensure that all examiners possess a valid/unexpired certificate at the time of test administration.

r. The term Examiner refers to the person administering the assessment.

8. Proctor

a. Participates in training.
b. Assumes responsibility for assigned students.
c. Monitors a specific area if a large testing site is used.
d. With Examiner supervision, assists in preparing test materials for distribution to students in a classroom on days of testing.
e. Ensures that desks are clear of everything except test materials.
f. Assists the examiner in applying and enforcing prescribed calculator, cell phone, and electronic device guidelines.
g. With examiner supervision, assists in distributing and collecting classroom test materials.
h. With examiner supervision, answers questions regarding test procedures but does not explain items or answer any questions regarding the content of the test.
i. Remains in testing site during entire testing time.
j. Observes students during testing to monitor that they are marking answers completely and correctly and using only specified test materials. Reports student actions to School Testing Coordinator immediately.
k. Reports any unusual circumstances to Examiner immediately (e.g., suspicion of cheating).
l. Circulates among students during testing to discourage misconduct and to be available to answer student questions.
m. Avoids standing by a student's desk too long or touching a student, as this may be distracting.
n. Monitors students with disabilities, 504 students, or EL students who may require closer observation than other students or who need special assistance.
o. With examiner supervision, assists in accounting for all classroom test materials (Test materials should be returned to the School Test Coordinator by the Examiner).
p. Assists the Examiner in maintaining strict test security.
EMPLOYEE RESOURCES

Benefits Center
Certification
Certified Salary Schedule
Employee Docs
Employee Leave/PLU Portal
Employee Work Calendars
Georgia Department of Community Health
Georgia Department of Education
Georgia Department of Labor
Georgia Professional Standards Commission
Gordon County Schools Board Approved Policies
Public School Employment Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS)
Teachers Retirement System (TRS)
United States Department of Labor