



Troup County School System

# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



## **VISION, MISSION, BELIEFS AND PHILOSOPHY**

### ***OUR VISION***

Troup County School System will provide educational opportunities that inspire learners to be independent, successful, and happy.

### ***OUR MISSION***

The mission of the Troup County School System is to educate all students in a challenging and safe learning environment, so they will become productive citizens in a diverse and changing world.

### ***OUR BELIEFS***

The Troup County School System believes:

1. Students are the primary focus of all decisions.
2. Each student is a valued individual with unique social, emotional, physical, and intellectual needs.
3. Students have a shared responsibility for their own learning.
4. Clear and high expectations contribute to success.
5. All students can learn when provided with a rigorous curriculum and when supported academically, socially, and emotionally.
6. All students must be prepared to function effectively in a knowledge-based, technologically rich, and culturally diverse world.
7. Effective and engaging instruction provides the knowledge and skills to meet global challenges and opportunities.
8. Students who are lifelong learners are prepared to meet future challenges.

9. Students, staff, parents, and the community share the responsibility for the support of the TCSS mission.

10. Students benefit from strong family, school and community partnerships.

11. Effective communication between home and school is essential.

12. The TCSS should be guided by long-range plans designed to meet the vision, mission, and goals of the district.

### **PHILOSOPHY**

The Troup County philosophy of education is based on the belief that education is the essence of the social, economic, and political life of America; that the fullest realization of each person's potential is essential to the welfare of society; that the maximum developments of each individual's talents great or small, is the democratic right of every citizen; and that providing optimum opportunities for his/her continued learning is the responsibility of the school. The purpose of the school is the whole development of every person. The program of the school should promote the mental, social, physical, moral, emotional, aesthetic, and spiritual growth of humankind. The school program should be adapted to the needs, interests, and purposes in life of the individuals it serves. The curriculum should be developmental and adaptable rather than prescribed and uniform. Provisions should be made for individual ability and readiness. Adjustments should be made in the difficulty and the quantity of work rather than in the quality of work. The child should be taught at his/her own level of learning rather than at the average level of the class or group. He/she should be placed in the grade or group in which he/she will do the most and best work and that will do the most for him/her. Emphasis in education should be placed on meaningful associations and applied learning rather than on isolated facts, laws, and principles. Within a given framework of system philosophy and

general objectives, opportunity should be provided in each school and each classroom for flexibility and for experimentation in order to develop creativeness and initiative on the part of teachers and students.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy BA

### **OVERVIEW**

The purpose of this handbook is to provide employees answers to frequently asked questions concerning policies, procedures, ethics, benefits, and services, which govern their employment. The information provided is not a contract nor does it outline specific conditions or terms of employment. The materials provided in this handbook are assembled from a variety of sources including Federal and State laws, State Board Rules, State Department of Education Rules and Standards, Policies of Cognia, the accrediting agency, and the Policies and Operational Procedures of the Troup County Board of Education. Some sections are applicable to certified employees and others are applicable to classified employees or both. For the most current information, please refer to the sources noted above or address your needs to your immediate supervisor. The text of all local Board policies are available online at the system website - [www.troup.org](http://www.troup.org).

### **SCHOOL SYSTEM ORGANIZATION**

The Troup County School System serves all of Troup County including cities and the unincorporated areas of the county. The school system operates 19 schools, serves approximately 12,300 students, and employs over 1,800 people.

### **DUTIES OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Troup County School System is governed by a seven-member Board of Education who has the following responsibilities:

1. To establish policies and procedures under which the school system shall operate;
2. To interpret the educational needs of the school community;

3. To appoint the Superintendent of Schools for a term not to exceed three years, to contract with the Superintendent, and to delegate him/her the authority to place these policies and procedures into operation;

4. To evaluate and act upon the nominations of personnel as presented by the Superintendent;

5. To approve the annual budget and approve other expenditures;

6. To evaluate and pass upon the recommendations of the Superintendent for additional capital outlays – building, sites, improvements and to determine the means of financing such outlays;

7. To advise the Superintendent concerning the use of school property;

8. To adopt a school calendar;

9. To keep citizens well informed about school Business;

10. To review and approve a monthly financial statement;

11. To conduct all school system business in the most responsible manner;

12. To function as the local taxing authority to set millage rates to produce tax revenues for operating expenses and capital improvements; and,

13. To perform such other duties and to exercise such other responsibilities as provided by law or State Board policies.

Board members are elected and serve four-year terms. Officers of the Board are elected on an annual basis.

Reference: Troup County Schools – Policy ABB, ABCD and BBAA.

### **DUTIES OF THE SUPERINTENDENT**

The Superintendent shall be the chief executive officer of the Board of Education and shall have such qualifications, powers, and duties as

provided by general law. The Superintendent, as chief executive officer of the school board, is charged with the duty of implementing board policy. In addition, the Superintendent is the educational leader of the school system who oversees the facilities management, community relations activities, pupil personnel services, financial management and staff personnel management.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy CEA and CEB.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### ***CERTIFICATION***

Professional employees of the Troup County School System must hold proper certification from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and meet Professional Qualification requirements determined by the district. Certain Special Georgia Requirements in the areas of: Georgia Association of Certified Educators (GACE) content knowledge assessment tests; Program Admission assessment (PAA), Georgia Educator Ethics Assessment, Verification of Lawful Presence (VLP) and the exceptional child course must be satisfied for certification. **It is the sole responsibility of the individual to keep his/her certification current.** Certified staff will be reminded of the expiration date of their certificate and the procedure to follow to achieve renewal of their certification. Professional learning communities have been established so each educator will have the opportunity to complete the requirements of professional learning in order to renew their certificates. Regardless of what new rules are developed, expiring certificates will be renewed under the GAPSC rules.

Reference: [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com)

### ***PROFESSIONAL LEARNING***

The Troup County Board of Education recognizes the importance of establishing, coordinating, and maintaining professional learning programs that address the assessed

needs of all students and school and system personnel. Continuous professional growth is encouraged and expected of all system personnel. Funds budgeted for professional learning shall be used for activities that enhance the skills and knowledge of all school system personnel, school board members and school council members, which directly relate to improving student achievement. Renewal of certificates will require professional learning to be primarily job-embedded and done in the context of the school learning community. Other forms of professional learning such as workshops shall be for the purpose of supporting job-embedded learning. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission develops the renewal requirements.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy: GAD; [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com); Rule 505-2-.36

### ***CODE OF ETHICS***

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, which represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, ensures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession, and defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction. A complete copy of The Code of Ethics for Educators is contained in this handbook.

Reference: Georgia Code 20-2-200; 20-2-981 through 20-2-984.5

### ***DRESS CODE***

There is abundant research to show that personal appearance has a significant effect upon other people. School system personnel are professionals. The dress, grooming, and mannerisms of school system staff members have an impact upon the way students and

parents respond to our leadership. Staff members are expected to dress in a professional manner.

### **Beliefs**

1. An environment that is safe, professional, and conducive to learning must begin with employees that support these attributes in their dress, grooming, and overall appearance.
2. Employee dress and appearance are more a matter of culture, values and creating an appropriate environment for youth who learn from every aspect of the school experience; not personal choices or fashion.
3. In order for students to understand the concept of an appropriate, kept, and dignified appearance, adults must lead and model the way.
4. As professional educators, we exist to serve students, the public, and represent our profession. Our choices in attire and appearance should be governed by this noble purpose.
5. Choices in dress, grooming, and overall appearance can enhance or detract from one's interaction with students, colleagues, and the public.
6. Being selective and strategic in one's appearance is a common expectation for most professions and work environments. Schools should seize every opportunity to coach our students in this regard.

### **Expectations**

1. Visible body piercing allowed in the ear lobe only.
2. Visible tattoos are discouraged.
3. No jeans, T-shirts, or shorts when students are in attendance.
4. No exposed cleavage, midriffs, or garments or styles that might be otherwise perceived as provocative.
5. No strapless or halter tops.

6. Shoes should be safe and complement a professional appearance. Rubber, plastic, or beach style flip-flops are not allowed.

7. We must model the student dress code and what we would have students emulate as they prepare for post-secondary opportunities. For some students, we are the only professionals they see on a regular basis.

### **Exceptions**

1. Jeans or "dressing down" for spirit days or other special occasions permitted as directed by the principal. There may be "dress down" exceptions for attire. There are no exceptions for neatness and grooming.
2. Staff who work in physical education, lab settings or with small children may dress as necessary as guided by the principal, in the interest of safety, modesty, and serving students. There are no exceptions for neatness and grooming.
3. Each principal or supervisor is responsible for maintaining an acceptable standard for employees under his/her supervision.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GBRL

## **SCHOOL CEREMONIES AND OBSERVANCES**

### **Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag**

Each school day, the students in the Troup County School System shall be afforded the opportunity to recite the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Students participating in the recitation of the Pledge will be expected to stand, face the flag and recite the Pledge in unison.

Students not participating in the recitation of the Pledge may (a) stand and refrain from reciting the Pledge; or (b) remain seated.

### Moment of Reflection

In compliance with Georgia law, at the opening of school on every school day in each public school classroom, the teacher in charge shall conduct a brief period of quiet reflection for not more than 60 seconds with the participation of all the pupils. This moment of quiet reflection is not intended to be a religious service or exercise but shall be considered as an opportunity for a moment of silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day. Teachers and administrators shall not suggest or imply that students should or should not use the moment of reflection for prayer, nor shall they deny to any student the right to use it for a moment of quiet prayer. Students and/or staff may not under any circumstances use the moment of quiet reflection to audibly pray, singly or in unison.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy IKD

### **IDENTITY CARDS / BADGES**

Each school or facility issues Employee Identity Cards containing the employee's name, work location, a photograph and the employee's identification number. These cards should be worn or carried with the employee while on the job.

### **DRUG FREE WORKPLACE**

The employees of the Troup County Board of Education are a valuable resource and their health and safety is therefore a serious concern. The Board will not tolerate any drug or alcohol use, which imperils the health and well-being of its employees or operations, purposes and missions of the school system.

The use of illegal drugs and abuse of other controlled substances, on or off duty, is inconsistent with law-abiding behavior expected of all citizens. Employees who use illegal drugs or abuse other controlled substances or alcohol, on or off duty, tend to be less productive, less reliable, and prone to greater absenteeism resulting in the potential for increased cost, delay, and risk for the school system's function.

Furthermore, employees have the right to work in an alcohol and drug-free environment and to work with persons free from the effects of alcohol and drugs. Employees who abuse alcohol or other drugs are a danger to themselves and to other employees.

The Board of Education is therefore committed to maintaining a safe and healthy workplace free from the influence of alcohol and drugs. In addition, the Board will vigorously comply with the requirements of the Drug Free Workplace Act of 1988. The County Schools Policy GAMA outlines specific prohibitions and the consequences for violation of the policy.

### **FINGERPRINTING AND CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK**

Personnel employed by the Troup County School System shall be fingerprinted and have a criminal record check as required by O.C.G.A. 20-2- 211(e).

New certificated employees shall be employed based on the completion and acceptability of the criminal record check according to the Employment Guidelines listed below.

Teachers, principals, and other certificated personnel whose employment is continued shall have a criminal record check as required by O.C.G.A. 20-2- 211(e) (1) upon any certificate renewal application to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

All other employees of the Troup County School System who are not covered by the above paragraph relating to certificated personnel shall be fingerprinted and have a criminal record check as required by O.C.G.A. 20-2-211(e) (1). The employees who are not considered certificated personnel shall be fingerprinted upon initial employment and have a criminal record check every five years thereafter based on their date of employment.

The fingerprinting and record checks shall be initiated by the school district at the appropriate

time, and the fee for such shall be paid by the individual seeking employment.

Information Center or the National Crime Information Center shall be used only for the purposes allowed by O.C.G.A. 35-3-35 or by applicable federal laws, rules, or regulations in accordance with O.C.G.A. 20-2- 211(e)(5).

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GAK (1)

### **REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

All employees of the Board of Education, including all teachers, administrators, guidance counselors and visiting teachers, as well as all school social workers and school psychologists employed by the Board, who have reason or cause to believe that a child is being or has been abused shall report that abuse immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused, in accordance with Georgia law and the protocol for handling child abuse cases for Troup County, Georgia. Under no circumstances shall the principal or designee to whom a report of child abuse has been made exercise any control, restraint, modification or make other change to the information provided by a mandated reporter, although the reporter may be consulted prior to the making of a report and may provide any additional, relevant and necessary information when making the report.

By law, any employee, teacher, or administrator who suspects that a child (under 18) has had any physical injury or injuries inflicted upon them other than by accidental means, or has been neglected or exploited, or has been sexually assaulted, shall report their observations to a supervisor who will notify the Department of Family and Children's Services.

It is the policy of the Troup County School System that the reporter will also notify the school principal (or their designee) and the school social worker.

In order to meet legal responsibilities, reports of suspected child abuse and neglect are to be made in good faith. This reporting is legal under Section 99.31 (a) (5) and 99.36 of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and does not constitute a violation of it so long as the following factors are taken into account:

- The seriousness of the threat to the child's health and safety;
- The need for the information from the child's education records to protect the child's health and safety;
- Whether the information is being disclosed to persons who are in position to deal with the emergency;
- Whether time is of the essence in dealing with the emergency.

Procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect are outlined in Administrative Regulation JGI-R.

Reference Troup County Schools Policy JGI, Administrative Regulation JGI-R., Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act 99.31 and 99.36.

### **HARASSMENT**

Any act of harassment of students or employees by other students or employees based upon race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age or disability at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity shall not be permitted. Any such act by a student or an employee shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment or suspension or expulsion of the student.

Sexual harassment may include conduct or speech, which entails unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, taunts, threats, and comments of a vulgar or demeaning nature, demands or physical contact, which creates a hostile environment for a student or an employee. There may be other speech or conduct, which employees or students

experience as inappropriate or illegal harassment, which should also be reported. Procedures for reporting sexual harassment are set forth in Troup County Schools Policy GAEB.

### **TOBACCO FREE ENVIRONMENT**

The philosophy of the Troup County Board of Education is that smoking is a matter of grave concern as it threatens the physical well-being of students and employees in the school environment; diminishes time on task; is addictive; results in increased maintenance for facilities and grounds; and is not in the best interest of students or employees of the school system. Thus, affirmative steps must be taken to educate students and employees and to create a tobacco free environment in our school system.

The use of tobacco products in any form and/or vapor emitting devices of any kind 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 buses. The use of any tobacco products and/or vapor emitting devices of any kind by employees at all times when on duty for the school district, including when such employees are directly instructing or supervising students is prohibited. Direct supervision includes coaching, band directing, acting as a sponsor or advisor of a club or similar school organization and other instructional roles or on extra-curricular trips. Employees shall not store or possess tobacco or tobacco-related products and/or vapor emitting devices of any kind on their person or in their belongings in such a manner that such products are visible to students. School district employees who violate this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including reprimand, suspension with or without pay or termination.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GAN

### **INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE**

The Troup County Board of Education is committed to providing a wide range of

instructional materials for teachers and students, including access to electronic resources through computers, computer networks and other information systems.

The use of computers, computer networks and other electronic information services must be in support of and consistent with the vision, mission and goals established by the Troup County Board of Education and must comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations.

All users' files, content, and communications stored on school-based computers, networks or other devices are subject to access and review by administrators or designated system technicians to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are acting responsibly. These files are subject to the Georgia Open Records Act and may be accessible to others as a matter of public records.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy IFBG and Administrative Regulation IFBG-R

### **SOCIAL NETWORKING STATEMENT**

One of the hallmarks of social networks is the ability to “friend” others – creating a group of others that share interests and personal news. The district strongly discourages teachers from accepting invitations to friend students within these social networking sites. When students gain access into a teacher’s network of friends and acquaintances and are able to view personal photos, the student-teacher dynamic is altered. Friending students provides more information than one should share in an educational setting. As employees of the Troup County School System, we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online helps determine this image. Some employees feel that being online shields them from having their personal lives examined. But increasingly, employees’ online identities are too often public, scrutinized, and can lead to serious repercussions.

## **GaPSC Statement**

Educators who use social media are responsible for their conduct and their postings and must recognize the likelihood that students, parents, other staff, and the community will view any posting. Thus, any posting that contains content that reflects unprofessional or unethical conduct may be evidence that would support disciplinary action. Similarly, the educator is responsible if the conduct of any posting results in a disruption in school, or the loss of effectiveness in performing their duties of the job. Conduct/postings inconsistent with the norms of the profession should be avoided. It is important for employees to maintain a professional stance in all social postings to avoid situations that could cause bias in the classroom or loss in effectiveness in performing their duties of the job.

## **BENEFITS EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLAN**

The Troup County School System maintains an employee benefit plan which is available on a non-discriminatory basis to all permanent, full-time (20 hours or more per week) employees. These benefits have been designed and are being offered for the exclusive benefit of employees. The benefits program allows employees to choose the types and amounts of coverage needed to meet individual needs. During the first thirty (30) days of employment, each eligible employee has the opportunity to enroll in any of the benefits. Open enrollment is during October or November of each year and employees must enroll or make changes in their benefits to become effective the following January 1. Changes to benefits can only be made outside of open enrollment if a qualifying event occurs. Examples of a qualifying event may include adoption, birth, death, divorce, or marriage. If a spouse's employment changes and benefits are offered that were not previously offered, this constitutes a qualifying event and required documentation must be submitted within 30 days of the event. For a summary of current available benefits and premiums, you may view

the Summary of Benefits at the following website: [www.houze.org/troupboe](http://www.houze.org/troupboe)

The Master Policies and Plan Documents for each of these benefits are maintained in the Payroll Department and are available for inspection during normal working hours.

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package

## **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

Employees can take advantage of this no-cost counseling service, which helps you address stress, relationships and other personal issues you and your family may face. It is staffed by Guidance Consultants, a highly trained master's and doctoral level clinicians who will listen to your concerns and quickly refer you to in-person counseling and other resources for stress, anxiety, depression, relationship/marital conflicts, problems with children, job pressures, grief and loss and substance abuse.

Reference:

<http://www.houze.org/index.php/troupboe/employee.assistance>

## **SECTION 125-PLAN FLEXIBLE BENEFIT PLAN**

Under IRS Code Section 125, employees are provided a choice of employee benefits best suited to their needs, and they may elect to reduce the taxable income by amounts equal to the costs of certain benefits. This choice results in the payment of lower state and federal income taxes, as well as, lower contributions under the Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA) or Social Security.

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package

## **STATE HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN**

The costs for group health insurance, both single and family coverage, are partially paid by the school board and the employee. Each qualified employee has the choice of being covered by

one of the state health benefits plans. To review the options go to [www.dch.ga.gov/shbp](http://www.dch.ga.gov/shbp).

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package

### **GROUP DENTAL INSURANCE**

Group Dental insurance is available to employees for individual, employee plus one, or full family coverage. Two dental plans are offered high plan and a low plan to allow the employee to select the level of coverage that fits their situation.

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package

### **SHORT-TERM DISABILITY INCOME**

Qualifying employees may purchase short-term disability insurance. To be eligible for a policy an employee must work at least nineteen (19) hours each week, earn at least \$9,000 annually, and be between 18 and 74 years old. Payments are made for a three month period. For accidents, benefits begin the first day of disability. For sickness, benefits begin the 15th day of disability. For pre-existing conditions due to illness/injury, disability is payable after the policy has been in force for twelve months.

Disability due to pregnancy and childbirth is payable to the same extent as a covered sickness, after the policy has been in force for ten months. The maximum benefit period allowed for childbirth is six weeks for non-cesarean delivery and eight weeks for cesarean delivery, less the elimination period of 14 days, unless you furnish proof that you remain disabled beyond these time frames. Premiums and coverage amounts may be viewed at [www.houze.org/troupboe/](http://www.houze.org/troupboe/).

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package.

### **GROUP LONG-TERM DISABILITY INCOME**

Employees may purchase this insurance, which coordinates with Social Security, Worker's Compensation Insurance and disability benefits received from the State Retirement Plan. The disability plan provided 60% of earnings beginning the 91st day of disability and continuing as long as disabled up to age 65. Employee premiums are based on age and monthly salary.

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package

### **BASIC GROUP LIFE INSURANCE**

Each permanent, full-time employee is provided, at no cost, Life and Accidental Death and Dismemberment Insurance coverage for \$25,000. The Troup County Board of Education pays all premiums. This coverage reduces by 50% at age 70 and terminates at retirement or when the employee ceases to be employed. Coverage can be retained (ported or converted) prior to age 70, if certain conditions are met.

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package

### **SUPPLEMENTAL GROUP LIFE INSURANCE**

Each employee has the option of selecting from \$10,000 to \$250,000 of additional group life and AD&D coverage. This coverage reduces by 50% at age 70 and terminates at retirement or when employment is terminated. Dependent life insurance coverage is also available under this plan. Coverage can be retained (ported or converted) prior to age 70, if certain conditions are met.

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package.

## **OTHER BENEFITS**

Under the Troup County School System's Benefit Plan, the following benefits are available: Individual Life Insurance, Whole Life Insurance, which includes a Long Term Care Insurance Rider, Cancer Insurance, Critical Illness Plan, Hospital Indemnity Insurance, AirMedCare Network, Vision Plan, and Flexible Spending Accounts for Medical and Dependent Care. Medical FSA allows a rollover of a specified amount from year to year.

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package

## **LIABILITY INSURANCE**

The Board of Education purchases liability insurance coverage for board members, administrators, and other personnel.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy EGD

## **WORKER'S COMPENSATION**

The Georgia Worker's Compensation Act covers all employees in the Troup County School System. Promptly go to your supervisor and/or school office, so that a written report of injury may be completed. All accidents must be reported promptly, in writing. Medical attention, within the limits of the law, will be furnished. The injured worker **MUST** select a doctor from the approved panel of physicians posted in each building. Should a Worker's Compensation injury require medical treatment, a drug test will be administered as a routine part of the examination if it may be reasonably suspected that drugs or alcohol may have played a part in the injury.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy EGAA and O.C.G.A. 34-9-1; 34-9-120 to 34-9-128

## **403B AND 457 PLANS**

Employees may enter into a salary reduction agreement, separate from the 125 Plan, to have deposits made with the approved company for the purchase of a 403B or 457 Plan. These Plans

are available on payroll deduction but are separate and not included in the 125 Plan. Information on each plan can be obtained from the Payroll Department and the company representative.

Reference: Troup County Schools Employee Benefit Package

## **CREDIT UNION**

Employees can choose to become a member of The Southern Credit Union. Individuals may opt to have automatic monthly deposits made for them from their payroll earnings. A variety of savings and loan services are available.

Reference: The Southern Credit Union ([southernonline.org](http://southernonline.org)) 1-800-338-5882

## **SOCIAL SECURITY**

Employees are required to contribute to the Social Security System. The employer's contribution is paid by the Board of Education, and the employee's portion is deducted from salary.

## **RETIREMENT**

All full-time employees must belong to one of two retirement systems: Teacher Retirement Systems of Georgia (TRS) or Public School Employees Retirement Systems (PSERS). Maintaining accurate, up-to-date beneficiary information is the employee's responsibility. Employees may contact the Payroll Department for appropriate forms to change beneficiary information.

## **TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF GEORGIA (TRS)**

All employees in covered positions of the state's public school systems and all employees of units in the University Systems of Georgia who are employed one-half time (twenty hours each week) or more are required to be members of the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia as a condition of employment. Covered positions include teachers, administrators, supervisors,

clerks, secretaries, paraprofessionals, public school nurses, employees of the Agricultural Extension Service, and county and regional librarians.

Other persons eligible for TRS membership include certain employees of the State Board of Education, State Department of Education, the Department of Technical and Adult Education, and certain managers and supervisors of public school lunchrooms, maintenance, and warehouse, transportation, and technology departments.

Certain employees who are at least age 60 at the time they become employed in a covered position, or employees who have previously withdrawn TRS service and become employed again after attaining age 60, may decline TRS membership. Notice must be made to TRS within 90 days after employment on the Election to Decline TRS Membership form available at [www.trsga.com](http://www.trsga.com).

Public school personnel who are not eligible for membership in the system are maintenance workers, technology support workers, custodial employees, school bus drivers and cafeteria workers. Temporary or emergency employees are also ineligible for membership. Substitute teachers are considered temporary employees and are not eligible for membership in the system.

All members must contribute 6% of their pre-tax earnable compensation to their TRS account by payroll deduction. In addition to employee contributions, which are a required condition of employment for TRS covered positions, the employer contributes a percentage of the gross salary.

As a member of TRS, you may establish sick leave credit at the time of retirement provided that you have a combined minimum of 60 days of unused sick leave, for which you have not been paid, from your current and all previous TRS covered employers. You must have earned the sick leave while in a TRS covered position.

Any TRS member whose effective date of retirement is on or after July 1, 1999, will be eligible for the full funding of sick leave credit. In order to qualify, the member must have at least 60 days of sick leave for which they have not been paid. (Less than 60 days equal no credit.) One month of creditable service will be awarded for each 20 days of unused sick leave rounded to the nearest month.

Reference: Members Guide to the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia 1-800-352-0650 ([www.trsga.com](http://www.trsga.com))

### **PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM (PSERS)**

Membership in Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) consists of all employees of public school systems who are not eligible for membership in the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS). Specifically, all school bus drivers, food service employees, technology support workers, maintenance and custodial personnel are members of PSERS. Certain managers, supervisors, and directors in food service, maintenance, technology and custodial areas are eligible for TRS membership. No employee may be a member of both PSERS and TRS at the same time. Members contribute \$10.00 a month (September through May) for each month of employment during the school year. All regular employees who occupy a position described above must establish membership with PSERS as a condition of employment. Upon termination or resignation from employment with the school system prior to retirement, members may request and receive a refund of contributions previously made to the Retirement System. Application should be made through the Payroll Department. All rights to any retirement benefits are waived upon receipt of the refunded contributions and interest. If at the time of termination or resignation a member has completed at least 10 years of membership service and has not attained age 60, the member may leave his/her contributions in the retirement

fund and, upon attaining 60, may apply for and begin receiving a monthly retirement allowance. If the member dies before retirement benefits begin, the named beneficiary will receive a refund of the employee's contributions and interest. At the time of retirement, PSERS does not credit unused sick leave as creditable experience for retirement purposes.

Reference: Public School Employees Retirement

System Handbook for Members  
1-800-805-4609 (www.ers.ga.gov)

**SUPPLEMENTAL RETIREMENT PLAN FOR PSERS EMPLOYEES**

The Board offers a supplemental retirement plan through the AIG VALIC for those employees who are members of the Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS). The Board contributes one percent of each employee's salary to the plan automatically. The Board will also match the employee's contribution by one-half percent of the employee's salary for each employee's one percent of salary contributed, to a maximum of four percent of the employee's contribution. (For instance, if the employee elects to contribute an additional three percent of his/her salary, the Board will match this by one and one-half percent of the employee's salary. This would total a contribution by the Board and the employee of five and one-half percent of the employee's salary). The maximum amount the Board will match is three percent of the employee's salary. Employer contributions are vested after 36 months of service. The employee may contribute additional amounts to the plan to the maximum allowed by law. Additional questions should be directed to the Payroll Department at 706-812-7900.

**EMPLOYEE LEAVE**

**SICK AND PERSONAL LEAVE**

Each person employed on a full-time basis (20 hours or more per week) shall earn sick leave days at a rate of one and one-fourth days for

each month worked. (Pay for sick leave will be given only after it is earned.) The following chart reflects the number of days earned by employee categories.

Number of Days Worked	Number of Sick Days
9 months (189 days)	11 ¼
10 months (190-219 days)	12 ½
11 months (220-239 days)	13 ¾
12 months (240 days)	15

Employees are required to personally notify their immediate supervisor as soon as possible before their shift or workday is to begin if they will be late or unable to work. Sending word by another employee or a family member is not acceptable. Contact must be made on a daily basis if they are not able to come to work. Planned long-term absences must be reported to the immediate supervisor as soon as possible. Administrators and supervisors are required to notify the Human Resources Department when an employee is absent more than three (3) consecutive days and the employee may request Family Medical Leave. Employees who are absent more than three (3) consecutive days must submit a Fit-For-Duty (Return to Work) notice upon return to work.

Failure to personally notify the employee's immediate supervisor of any absence for three consecutive days will be grounds for immediate dismissal due to job abandonment.

Tardiness and excessive and/or habitual absences may result in disciplinary action.

Sick leave may be used in accordance with state and local Board of Education policy for:

- Personal illness or injury.
- Absence necessitated by exposure to contagious disease.
- Absence due to illness or death in the employee's immediate family.

Accumulation: Unused sick leave may be accumulated to a total of one hundred twenty

(120) days, effective June 30, 2008. No retroactive accumulations to this date will be allowed. Personal leave days may not be accumulated.

Break in Service: Accumulated sick leave from prior service with Troup County School System may be applied if the break in service did not exceed twelve (12) months. Any personnel who forfeit accumulated sick leave under the break in service policy may request reinstatement after returning to work for a period of two consecutive years. A written request for reinstatement should be sent to the Payroll Office.

Spousal Donations: Pursuant to OCGA 20-2-850, an employee of Troup County School System may donate up to ten (10) sick leave days annually to his or her spouse if such spouse is also an employee of the Troup County School System for purposes of maternity leave, illness, illness of a family member, or death of a family member.

Transfer from Outside Agencies: Accumulated sick leave may be transferred from other public schools or Georgia state agencies, up to 45 days accumulation mandated by State Law, based upon written notice from the prior employer. Break in service rules will also apply to transfers from outside agencies.

Transfer: Teachers and other professional employees will be allowed sick leave transfer only as provided by state law.

Deductions: For any sick leave in an amount above that which is allowed by policy, there shall be a deduction equal to one day's salary for each day of sick leave (or the appropriate percentage of the day's salary) made from the employee's salary.

Personal Leave: Each employee is entitled to three (3) personal leave days per employment term. Personal leave days will be charged against accumulated sick leave days. Employees shall request personal leave from their principal or immediate supervisor for approval or

disapproval. Employees shall request personal leave from their supervisors at least two (2) days prior to their absence, if the absence is to occur on Tuesday through Thursday of a normal week. Employees requesting personal leave on a Monday or Friday or on a day or days immediately preceding or following holidays shall request personal leave from their supervisors at least one week (7 days) in advance on the proper request form for approval or disapproval. Personal leave with pay will be granted to employees only if the employee has accumulated sufficient sick leave to cover the personal leave absence. Approval of such leave may not be conditioned on the reason.

### **ILLNESS IN FAMILY**

Employees are allowed to be absent from school without loss of pay because of illness in the immediate family. The "immediate family" is defined as the father, mother, brother, sister, child, grandchild, grandfather, grandmother, mother-in-law, father-in-law, husband or wife of the employee concerned or a relative living in the residence of the employee. Such leave will be deducted from the employee's accumulated sick leave. If the employee does not have any accumulated sick leave, there shall be a deduction equal to one day's salary for each day of sick leave (or the appropriate percentage of the day's salary) made from the employee's salary.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARH

### **BEREAVEMENT**

Up to 5 days of sick leave may be used for absence due to a death in the employee's immediate family.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARH

## **LONG-TERM MEDICAL LEAVE**

An employee who works at least 20 hours per week and is unable to continue working due to physical disability, as certified by a physician, may request a 12-month medical leave without pay when all sick leave and annual leave have been exhausted. To maintain health insurance, the employee will be responsible for paying his portion of the State Health Benefit Plan premium. The Troup County Board of Education will continue to pay the Group Life Insurance for the employee. The employee can continue all other payroll-deducted benefits as long as the employee bears the cost of the premiums. The request for leave should be submitted in writing to the employee's immediate supervisor and to the Human Resources Department. The Payroll Department will then be notified. The long-term medical leave will terminate when the physician certifies that the employee is able to return to work or when the 12-month leave has expired. Should you have questions about long-term leave, contact the Payroll or Human Resource Department at 706- 812-7900.

## **SICK LEAVE BANK**

The purpose of the Sick Leave Bank is to provide leave for employees who experience disabling illnesses/injuries after their own accumulated leave has been exhausted. Any person entitled to sick leave may become a member by donating one day of his/her accumulated sick leave annually, before December 1st, during an annual open enrollment period between November 1st and December 1st. Membership requests will only be accepted during the annual enrollment period. New employees will be eligible for participation in the second year of employment. The donation of one sick day to establish membership must be deposited in writing on the Sick Leave Bank Donation Form. Members will be reassessed one day per year, to be added to the Sick Leave Bank on December 1 of each year or more often, if necessary, not to exceed two (2) days per year, to sustain the Sick Leave Bank balance.

Donations to the Sick Leave Bank are non-refundable and non-transferable. Procedures for application of Sick Leave Bank withdrawal are available by contacting the Payroll Department at Administrative Services Center (706-812-7900).

Reference: Troup County Schools  
Administrative Regulation GBRIB (1) and  
GCRGB (1)

## **PROFESSIONAL LEAVE**

Professional Leave may be granted to permit employees to engage in professional activities. Such activities may include receiving additional training, attending conferences, participating in state and local meetings, or representing the school district on official business. Requests for professional leave must be submitted in writing on the appropriate form, to the principal or immediate supervisor and to the Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum, Instruction and Professional Learning for approval.

## **JURY AND WITNESS DUTY**

Employees 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. 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 may retain any jury/witness pay they receive. Employees who are subpoenaed for jury duty shall notify their supervisor as soon as possible and present proper documentation.

Reference: Troup County School Policy GARH

## **SABBATICAL/GRADUATE STUDY**

A teacher with three or more years of acceptable service with Troup County School System may be granted a leave of absence without pay for one year for full-time graduate study. If no acceptable replacement can be found, the leave of absence will not be granted. The teacher may return to the same or an equivalent position that is available at the conclusion of the sabbatical. The teacher must notify Human Resources in writing by March 1 of the following year as to his/her intention to return as an employee of the school system.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARH

## **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)**

Employees of the Troup County Board of Education who have been employed for 12 months or more and who worked at least 1250 hours during that time, are entitled to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year (defined as the previous 365 days) in connection with:

- (1) The birth and first year care of a child;
- (2) The adoption or foster parent placement of a child;
- (3) the illness of an employee's spouse, child or parent with respect to serious health condition, defined as one that requires in-patient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, or which requires continuing treatment by a health care provider;
- (4) The employee's own illness;
- (5) Military Caregiver Leave; or
- (6) Military Qualifying Exigency Leave.

In the instance of a birth, adoption and foster placement, the entitlement for child-care ends after [1] the child reaches the age of 1 year, or [2] 12 months after the adoption or placement.

Entitlement for leave associated with illness of a child occurs only where the child is under 18

years of age or incapable of self-care due to mental or physical disability.

In cases where Troup County Board of Education employs both spouses, the combined amount of leave for birth of a child, adoption, or to care for a sick parent is limited to 12 weeks.

Except where circumstances are such that reasonable advance planning is not possible, employees must provide the Superintendent or designee at least thirty (30) days' notice of the date when leave is to begin.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARH, 29 CFR Part 825, 29 CFR 1604.10 and 29 USC 2601

## **MILITARY LEAVE**

Persons employed in any capacity in any school (other than those employed on a temporary basis) shall be entitled to military leave for ordered military duty with full employment and reinstatement rights as provided by law.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARH

## **MATERNITY LEAVE**

A leave of absence for maternity reasons shall be granted to an employee as follows:

An employee who is pregnant shall be entitled to leave of absence to begin at a time to be determined by the employee, the physician and the local school Superintendent between the commencement of pregnancy and the anticipated date of delivery. Said employee shall notify the Superintendent in writing of her desire to take such leave and except in case of emergency, shall give such notice at least 30 calendar days prior to the date on which her leave is to begin. This notice shall include a doctor's statement of anticipated date of physical disability. The employee may continue in active employment as late into her pregnancy as she desires provided she is able to properly perform the required functions of her job. Final determination of ability to properly perform the required job functions shall be made by the Board of

Education. An employee wishing to discontinue work prior to the date of physical disability shall be governed by the same sick leave provisions as apply to employees on leave for other reasons.

The employee who has been granted maternity leave will return after six (6) weeks from the date of delivery; or, if complications ensue, when the physician certified she is able to return. The physician's statement must be presented prior to the end of the six weeks period if an extension is required. Any employee returning from maternity leave must present a doctor's statement certifying that she is able to return to work.

The employee shall be entitled to use earned sick leave during the six-week maternity leave. However, if an extension of the six weeks has been granted, a weekly statement from the physician may be required.

The employee may return to her present position or an equal position after she is able to return to work.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARH

### **ADOPTION LEAVE**

An adoption leave of absence, in cases of children under 6 years of age, shall be granted to employees of the Board of Education in accordance with the following guidelines:

(1) Notice: As soon as the employee has been approved for the adoption of a child, the employee shall notify the immediate supervisor or principal. Written certification from the agency or the attorney through which the child is to be adopted shall be included in this notification.

(2) Extent of Leave: The employee may use up to 30 days of accumulated sick leave for adoption leave or adoption leave without pay may be granted if the employee desires.

(3) Commencement: When the employee is notified that a child is available, the employee will immediately notify the supervisor or principal. A conference will be held to

determine specific adoption leave dates for commencement and return to work.

(4) Return to Work: An employee who has been granted adoption leave may return to the present position or an equal position.

(5) Limitations: An employee who has acquired step child/step children and seeks to adopt the step child/step children shall not be eligible for an adoption leave of absence. Only one employee in a family shall be granted an adoption leave of absence.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARH

### **VACATION/ANNUAL LEAVE**

Teachers, school administrators, clerical employees, bus drivers and support personnel receive holidays as specified in the annual system calendar as adopted by the Board. All 12-month (240 days) employees shall earn annual leave at the rate of one (1) day per each full calendar month of employment with a maximum total accumulation of 24 days. In addition, all 11-month (220 days) administrators will earn one (1) day of annual leave per each month of employment for a total of 11 days of annual leave per year, with a maximum total accumulation of up to 24 days. Annual leave in excess of 24 days will be forfeited if not used by June 30.

Vacation/Annual Leave must be scheduled so that each school and department can maintain effective service levels. A request for paid Vacation/ Annual Leave shall be submitted on the appropriate form to the employee's immediate supervisor for approval or disapproval.

All employees, regardless of classification, shall be paid for any unused Annual Leave upon resignation or retirement up to 24 days of unused annual leave. Employees who are terminated are not eligible to receive unused Annual Leave days.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARH

## **WORK SCHEDULES/ ATTENDANCE AND SALARIES**

### ***SCHOOL CALENDAR***

The Board annually adopts a school calendar consisting of 190 days, which takes into account the required instructional days for students as well as teacher and staff professional learning and workdays for pre-planning and post-planning needs and holidays. The school calendar is posted on the system website at [www.troup.org](http://www.troup.org).

### ***ATTENDANCE***

Employees who work on an extended year schedule beyond 190 days, including custodians, administrative and office personnel, and system operations and maintenance workers should obtain a work and holiday schedule from their supervisors. Employees who work twelve-months (240 days) do not follow the adopted school calendar for holidays and breaks. Any questions regarding work and holiday schedules should be directed to the employee's immediate supervisor. Tardiness, leaving early, excessive and/or habitual absences may result in disciplinary action.

## **PAY SCHEDULES/SALARY**

### ***STEP INCREASES***

The Board adopts system pay schedules for certified and non-certified employees annually. Twelve-month (240 days) employees receive their first paycheck of the new school year at the end of July. Eleven-month (220 days) employees receive their first paycheck of the new school year at the end of August. Ten-month (180 days; 183 days; 186 days; 190 days; 210 days, etc.) employees receive their first check of the new school year at the end of September.

New employees who begin working after a payroll cut-off date (usually mid-month) will not receive a paycheck until the end of the following full-month of employment.

## **PAY STATEMENT/DIRECT DEPOSIT**

Employees may access their pay statements online via Munis Self-Service Portal at ([www.troup.org](http://www.troup.org)). Employees are required to utilize direct deposit and must notify payroll in writing of any changes.

### **MUNIS: EMPLOYEE SELF SERVICE**

Within the ESS portal, Employees are able to view and print pay stubs, change information on W-4 or G-4 forms, and view leave information.

To access the new Employee Self Service portal:

1. Select the Munis Employee Self Service link.
2. Type in your username - the first letter of your first name, first letter of your middle name and your full last name. (i.e. John D. Smith = jdsmith)
3. Type in your password - the last four digits of your Social Security Number
4. For security reasons, you will be prompted to change your password the first time you log in.
5. You will see a 'Welcome to Employee Self Service' screen with personal information, time off, and paychecks in the center.
6. Additional ESS selections will be on the left. At this time, not all selections are available. When they are available for employee use, the links will be opened to allow employee access.

## **NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION**

It is the policy of the Troup County Board of Education not to discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or sex, or programs, or activities under which it operates; and to honor all appropriate laws relating to discrimination. Complaints made to Troup County School System regarding alleged discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in violation of Title VI, on the basis of sex in violation of Title IX or on the

basis of disability in violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans With Disabilities Act will be processed in accordance with the following procedure:

(1) Any student, employee, or other person with a complaint alleging a violation described above shall promptly notify, in writing or orally, either the principal for his/her school or the appropriate coordinator designated 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.

(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.

(3) The coordinator 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 days of receiving a copy of the

written response, to have the complaint referred to the Superintendent of Schools.

(5) The Superintendent shall have fifteen 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 approval of the action recommended by the coordinator or designee or the action to be taken by the system 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 workdays 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 system to take. The complainant shall also include in the written response a request that the complaint be referred to the Board of Education.

(7) Within thirty days of the 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, 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 system to take some other action in response to the complaint. A copy of the action of the Board will be either furnished to the

complainant, 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 system.

(9) This procedure is not intended to deprive any right they may have to file a grievance pursuant to any other policy of the 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 the State Department of Education regulations, specifically including, but not limited to, hearings to be conducted pursuant to the Fair Dismissal Act of Georgia, Official Code of Georgia Annotated 20-2-940 through 947. The complainant retains at all times the right to contact the Office of Civil Rights with regard to any allegations that the system has violated the statutes described above. This procedure is available to students, employees, and the general public through the Troup County Schools Board Policy Manual that can be accessed through the Troup County School System's website at: [www.troup.org](http://www.troup.org).

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GAAA and Administrative Regulation GAE (1)-R

## **NOTICE**

It is the policy of the Troup County Board of Education not to discriminate based on age, race, sex religion, national origin, disability or handicap in its employment policies, education programs or activities under which it operates and to honor all appropriate laws relating to discrimination.

Any inquiries regarding compliance should be directed to:

### **Title I/ Title II Coordinator**

*Director of Federal Programs*  
100 N. Davis Road, Bldg. C  
LaGrange, Georgia 30241  
706-812-7900

### **Title VI Coordinator**

*Chief Human Resources Officer*  
100 N. Davis Road, Bldg. C  
LaGrange, Georgia 30241  
706-812-7900

### **Title IX Coordinator**

*Assistant Superintendent of Operations*  
100 N. Davis Road, Bldg. C  
LaGrange, Georgia 30241  
706-812-7900

### **Section 504 Coordinator**

*Director of Student Services*  
4864 West Point Road  
LaGrange, Georgia 30240  
706-812-7931

### **ADA Coordinator**

*Director of Exceptional Education*  
1712 Whitesville Road  
LaGrange, Georgia 30240  
706-812-7939

### **Perkins Act Coordinator**

*Director of Secondary Education*  
100 North Davis Road, Bldg. C  
LaGrange, Georgia 30241  
706-812-7900

## **CLASSIFIED ONLY (NON-CERTIFIED)**

### **TCSS CODE OF ETHICS FOR CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEES**

The Code of Ethics for Classified Employees defines the professional behavior expected of employees of Troup County Schools and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The code defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary action. It protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and employees while assuring a degree of accountability.

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

#### **Standards**

**Standard 1: Legal Compliance** – All employees 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.

**Standard 2: Conduct with Students** – All employees should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the work environment.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Committing any act of child abuse, including physical and verbal abuse;
2. Committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
3. Committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
4. Engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student that would violate a state or federal law;
5. Soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student;
6. Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or allowing a student under the employee’s supervision.

**Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs** – All employees shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

**Standard 4: Honesty** – All employees shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.

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

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

**Standard 5: Public Funds and Property** – All employees entrusted with public funds and property shall honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

**Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct** – All employees shall maintain integrity with students,

colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee;
2. Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;
3. Coaching, instructing promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involves students in an

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

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

**Standard 8: Abandonment of Employment**

**Agreement** – An employee should fulfill all terms and obligations regarding job performance. Employees are expected to work productively during the course of normally scheduled working hours. Employees who fail to report to work or report his/her absence for three consecutive days will be terminated for voluntarily abandoning their employment agreement with the school system.

**Standard 9: Failure to make a Required**

**Report** – An employee should report unethical conduct immediately to their supervisor of the Human Resources Department. All employees within the system are mandated reporters and are required to report any suspected or known violation of state or federal law as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the employee became aware of the breach. These reports include but are not limited to:

1. Murder
2. Voluntary manslaughter
3. Aggravated assault
4. Aggravated battery
5. Kidnapping
6. Sexual offense
7. Sexual exploitation of a minor
8. Any offense involving a controlled substance
9. Any abuse or neglect of a child (if the employee has reasonable cause to believe that child had been a victim of such abuse or neglect).

**Standard 10: Professional Conduct** – All employees shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the school system. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

Any conduct that impairs and or diminishes the employee’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.

**Disciplinary Action**

These codes of ethical conduct are the same as work rules. Unethical conduct as defined by Standards 1-10, shall be considered grounds for disciplinary action. Disciplinary actions may include verbal and/or written warning, disciplinary leave without pay, and/or termination.

**CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL HEALTH EXAMINATIONS**

State policy requires that school bus drivers have a health examination upon initial employment then annually prior to the start of school. If the employee is a regular bus driver, the Board will pay the cost of the examination.

In any case where the Superintendent determines that a health issue warrants requirement of health examinations of other employees, the Superintendent will advise the Board and develop appropriate policies or regulations.

In all cases, legal requirements of State and Federal laws and regulations shall be observed.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GCRA

**NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL EVALUATION**

The job performance of each non-certified staff member will be annually evaluated by his/her immediate supervisor.

The Superintendent and staff will utilize the system-approved instruments for the evaluation of all employees, which shall not include substitutes.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARI

## **NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL EMPLOYMENT**

Employees not holding professional certification shall not be given contracts of employment. All non-certified employees should be notified prior to employment in writing that non-certified employees are “at will” employees and continuing employment is at the will of the Board.

Contracts, written or oral, shall not be extended to non-certified employees. Non-certified employees are not to be renewed on an annual basis, as are certified personnel; and supervisors should not imply nor indicate assurance of extended employment to any non-certified employee. Satisfactory evaluation on the annual evaluation shall not extend or be interpreted to mean or imply a contract for a definite term.

Employees in positions that do not require professional certification are employed as school system needs require and as funds are available. Contractual arrangements and rights to continuing employment are prohibited by Board policy.

Compensation for employees not holding professional certification shall be set by the Board in the form of salary schedules proposed by the Superintendent.

The School System’s workweek begins on Sunday and ends on Saturday. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires that overtime be paid to nonexempt employees either in the form of monetary compensation or compensatory time, at the rate of 1.5 times the regular hourly rate for the number of hours worked in excess of 40 hours per week. Employees are expected to arrive and depart at or about the time specified by their supervisor, unless requested to work overtime by their immediate supervisor. Covered employees shall accurately record hours worked during each week, including the exact time of arrival and departure from work and all overtime, by timesheet or timecard. Certain employees are exempt from coverage

under the FLSA and are not subject to professional certification shall be set by the Board in the form of salary schedules proposed by the Superintendent.

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Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GCA and GCRB-R

## **NON-CERTIFIED PERSONNEL DISMISSAL/TERMINATION/ RESIGNATION**

Non-certified personnel shall be employed to serve at the will of the Board of Education and are not employed for a definite period of time or pursuant to contract. No property right or expectation of continued employment is created or granted by or with the employment of a non-certified employee.

The Board delegates to the Superintendent the authority in his discretion to terminate, dismiss, or otherwise discipline to include suspension without pay of non-certified employees. All accrued vacation/annual leave days(s) are forfeited on termination.

Any keys, uniforms, and system property must be turned in at the time of separation.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GCN and Georgia Code 20-2-1160

## **CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL TIME SCHEDULES**

Employees should consult with their immediate supervisors regarding meal periods, rest breaks and individual work schedules. To ensure that the Troup County School System complies with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), which requires that overtime be paid to non-exempt employees either in the form of monetary compensation or compensatory time, the following regulations have been adopted:

Covered employees. Employees in the following job classifications are covered under the FLSA: assistant teachers, bookkeepers, clerks, custodians, food service workers, maintenance personnel, receptionists, secretaries, bus drivers and mechanics. Some employees in the above positions may be exempt from coverage if they have supervisory responsibilities and their supervisory duties exceed 50 percent of their work time or for other reasons.

Exempt employees. Certain employees are exempt from coverage under the FLSA and are not subject to compensation for overtime work. Exempt employees include executive, administrative, and professional employees, such as teachers, counselors, supervisors, and administrators. Employees or supervisors who are unsure if an employee is exempt from coverage shall consult with the District's Human Resources Department and individual job descriptions.

Hours worked. District's workweek begins on Sunday and ends on Saturday. Employees are expected to arrive and depart at or about the time specified by the District, unless requested to work overtime by their immediate supervisor.

Covered employees shall accurately record hours worked during each week, including the exact time of arrival and departure from work and all overtime, by timesheet or time card. Supervisors and principals shall review, approve

and submit all timesheets or time cards to the payroll office prior to each pay period.

(1) Overtime pay. Employees covered by the FLSA shall be paid not less than 1.5 times their regular rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 in a week. For those employees working two or more jobs for the District, overtime pay shall be calculated based on a blended hourly rate on all jobs worked by a formula set by the District.

(2) Compensatory time. The District reserves the right to grant compensatory time at a rate of one and one-half (1.5) hours for every hour worked beyond 40 hours in lieu of paying employees monetary compensation. Prior to employees' overtime work, the District and employees must agree to compensatory time arrangement. Employees may accumulate a maximum of 240 compensatory time hours while employed by the District. Employees must get their supervisor's approval on when to take the compensatory time.

(3) Authorization for overtime required. Employees shall not work overtime without prior permission from their immediate supervisors, except in cases of emergency. Each employee responsible for the supervision of employees subject to the FLSA shall receive authorization from their immediate supervisor prior to authorizing overtime.

(4) Overtime work without prior approval. Employees covered by FLSA who work overtime without prior approval will be allowed to claim the hours worked in accordance with the FLSA. If the supervisor determines that the work was unforeseen or emergency in nature, it will be approved. If the supervisor determines that the performance of the work was unnecessary at the time it was performed, the employee will receive pay for the hours worked, but disciplinary action may be taken for failure to follow established policy.

(5) Record keeping and posters. All records on wages, hours and other items listed in the record keeping regulation will be kept by the payroll

department for the time specified by the FLSA. The District will display minimum wage posters at each District work site where employees will be likely to see them.

Reference: Troup County Schools  
Administrative Regulation GCRB-R

### **EXPERIENCE VERIFICATION FOR NON-CERTIFIED STAFF**

Troup County Schools will award pay step increases to newly hired classified employees upon receipt of written experience verification on the Troup County System form. The completed Experience Verification form(s) must be received by the Human Resource Office within the first ninety (90) days of the initial hire date. For a step, increase to be granted the experience verified must be directly related to the position for which the employee has been hired. The Human Resource Office must receive all completed Experience Verification forms and make a determination regarding the experience to be awarded based on established state procedures.

Completed Experience Verification forms received after ninety (90) days from the employment date will not be considered.

Any experience verification received that is not specifically job related will be reviewed by system administrators and a decision made regarding the relevance of the verified experience to the job duties to be performed for the school system.

Work experience earned within the Troup County School System that is not directly related or not similar to an employee's new position assignment is calculated on a one-year credit for every two years of experience based on verified system personnel records.

### **MORAL TURPITUDE**

It has been stated that the term "moral turpitude" is so clear that there is no duty on the trial judge

to define it in the absence of a request. The term has been defined in Georgia as follows:

"Turpitude in its ordinary sense involves the idea of inherent baseness or vileness, shameful wickedness, depravity.... In its legal sense, it includes everything contrary to justice, honesty, modesty or good morals.... The word "moral," which so often precedes the word turpitude, does not seem to add anything to the meaning of the term, other than that emphasis which often results from a tautological expression. All crimes embraced within the Roman's conception of the crime false involve Turpitude; but it is not safe to declare that such crimes are the only ones involving turpitude."

In *Ramsey v. State*, the court said that a crime involving moral turpitude is one, which is malum in se rather than malum prohibitum. In Georgia, the test for whether a felony is one involving moral turpitude is "does the [crime], disregarding its felony punishment, meet the test as being contrary to justice, honesty, modesty, good morals or man's duty to man?"

It has been held that the following offenses are crimes involving moral turpitude:

- Fraud or false pretenses in obtaining something of value
- Larceny or a misdemeanor theft by taking
- Larceny after trust
- Murder
- Soliciting for prostitutes
- Voluntary manslaughter
- Sale of narcotics or other illegal drugs
- Pattern of failure to file federal tax returns in years in which taxes are due
- Criminal issuance of a bad check
- Making a false report of a crime

The following have been held to be offenses, which are not crimes, involving moral turpitude:

- Public drunkenness
- Driving under the influence
- Carrying a concealed weapon
- Unlawful sale of liquor

- Fighting
- Simple Battery
- Simple Assault
- Misdemeanor criminal trespass
- Child abandonment
- Misdemeanor offense of escape
- Misdemeanor offense of a law obstructing enforcement officer
- The federal misdemeanor offense of Conspiracy in Restraint of Interstate Trade and Commerce
- Possession of less than one ounce of marijuana

[This is take from Handbook of Criminal Evidence by Davis, 2000 edition.

## **CERTIFIED**

### **HUMAN RESOURCES CERTIFICATION**

Professional employees of the Troup County School System must hold proper certification from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and must meet all state board of education requirements. Certain Special Georgia Requirements in the areas of: Georgia Association of Certified Educators (GACE) content knowledge assessment tests; Educator Ethics exit exam, Verification of Lawful Presence (VLP) and the exceptional child course must be satisfied for certification. It is the sole responsibility of the individual to keep his/her certification current.

Certified staff will be reminded of the expiration date of their certificate in the school year that it expires and the procedure to follow to achieve renewal of their certification.

Professional learning communities have been established so each educator will have the opportunity to complete the requirements of the professional learning in order to renew their certificates. Renewals will be submitted electronically according to the procedures established by the GaPSC. A criminal record check will be complete at the time of renewal.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy: GAD; [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com)

### **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

The Troup County Board of Education recognizes the importance of establishing, coordinating, and maintaining professional learning programs that address the assessed needs of all students and school and system personnel. Continuous professional growth is encouraged and expected of all system personnel. Funds budgeted for professional learning shall be used for activities that enhance the skills and knowledge of all school system personnel, schoolboard members and school

council members, which directly relate to improving student achievement.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy: GAD; [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com)

### **CODE OF ETHICS**

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, which represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, ensures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession, and defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction. A complete copy of The Code of Ethics for Educators is contained on pages 29 through 33 of this handbook.

Reference: Georgia Code 20-2-200; 20-2-981 through 20-2-984.5

### **COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES**

It is the policy of the Troup County 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 a spirit of collegiality where possible. When such efforts do not succeed or, where for any other reason, the certified employee desires, the procedure outlined in Troup County Schools Policy GAE (2) should be followed.

### **PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL HEALTH EXAMINATIONS**

Each employee must be physically capable and physically fit to satisfactorily perform the duties for the positions that are assigned. Employees

are encouraged to have annual health examinations, but are not required to do so.

In the event of a dispute about the employee's capability to perform the duties assigned, the matter shall be resolved in the following manner:

Final determination of an employee's physical capability to perform the duties assigned (without endangering others) will be made by the Board. The Board may require that the employee submit to examination by a physician selected and paid for by the Board; and refusal to submit to such examination may be grounds for terminating the contract or prohibiting other employment of such employee, subject to any rights that may exist under the Fair Dismissal Act.

### **PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL EVALUATION**

The Board recognizes that a thorough, regular appraisal of teaching performance is critical to the realization of district goals. The primary purpose of teacher evaluation is the growth of the individual staff members as well as the strengthening of the school staff as a whole and improvement of the instructional program.

Anyone evaluated under TKES or LKES and receiving an Ineffective or Needs Development rating on the TAPS or LAPS component must be reported to the GaPSC as an "unsatisfactory" summative performance rating.

School systems and charter schools must also report "unsatisfactory" summative ratings for certificated personnel, sometimes described as "Contributing Professionals", who are not evaluated under TKES or LKES.

Employers of certificated personnel who have received an unsatisfactory, ineffective, or needs development performance rating are responsible for establishing a remediation plan and supervising its completion. This is described in GaPSC rule 505-2-.43, "Annual Performance Evaluation." Successful completion of

remediation plans during the current school year is to be reported to the GaPSC by June 30.

Reporting will continue to utilize the same procedures as in prior years using the "UNSAT" reporting tool on [www.gapsc.org](http://www.gapsc.org). Reporting of unsatisfactory performance ratings and remediation of past unsatisfactory performance ratings is due no later than June 30. Sign-offs by Superintendents or their designees, which attest to complete, and accurate reporting are also due no later than June 30, using the "UNSAT" reporting tool on [www.gapsc.org](http://www.gapsc.org).

Performance evaluations have consequences for educators' continued certification and licensure. Educators who receive any combination of two un-remediated Needs Development, Ineffective, or Unsatisfactory annual summative performance evaluations in the previous five-year period are not entitled to a renewable certificate. Loss of a certificate or license can render an educator unable to continue in a role that requires the credential.

### **RESIGNATIONS OF CERTIFICATED PERSONNEL**

Any employee under contract with the Board who wishes to terminate his/her services for the remainder of the school year or at the end of the school year may request release from their current contract or resign from their current position, effective at the end of the contracted year. Resignations should be tendered at the earliest possible date so as to promote continuity of instruction or support services.

A written letter of resignation must be presented to the Principal or immediate supervisor by an employee intending to terminate his/her service. A copy shall be forwarded to the Superintendent/ Designee.

The Board shall have the right to accept or reject the resignation, based upon the circumstances in each individual case and the needs of the school system. The Board delegates to and authorizes the Superintendent on its behalf to accept, reject, or otherwise act upon the resignation of any

certificated or non-certificated employee of the school system. The Superintendent shall advise the Board of his actions.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GAO

### **SEPARATION OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL**

Any certified employee may be dismissed at any time for incompetence; insubordination; willful neglect of duties; immorality; inciting, encouraging, or counseling students to violate any valid state law, municipal ordinance, or policy or rule of the local Board of Education; for reduction in staff due to loss of students or cancellation of programs; for failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training; and for any other good and sufficient cause. All accrued vacation/annual leave day(s) are forfeited on termination.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GBN and Georgia Code 20-2-940 and 20-2-942.

### **TRANSFER OF PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL**

Teachers are assigned to duty at specific schools but the Board of Education upon recommendation of the Superintendent reserves the right to effect a transfer at any time to any school under its jurisdiction.

Reference: Troup County Schools Policy GARE

### **THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS**

Georgia Professional Standards Commission  
Two Peachtree Street, Suite 6000  
Atlanta, GA 30303-3141  
Effective January 1, 2018  
[www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com)

#### **Introduction**

The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Professional Standards Commission has adopted standards that represent the conduct generally

accepted by the education profession. The code defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction and provides guidance for protecting the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, and assuring the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.

#### **Definitions**

- (a) **“Breach of contract”** occurs when an educator fails to honor a signed contract for employment with a school/school system by resigning in a manner that does not meet the guidelines established by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
- (b) **“Certificate”** refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate, license, or permit issued by authority of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
- (c) **“Child endangerment”** occurs when an educator disregards a substantial and/or unjustifiable risk of bodily harm to the student.
- (d) **“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.
- (e) **“Student”** is any individual enrolled in the state’s public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual under the age of 18. For the purposes of The Code of Ethics for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the school year of graduation.
- (f) **“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.

**(g) “Revocation”** is the permanent invalidation of any certificate held by the educator.

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

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

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

**(k) “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.

**(l) “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.

**(m) “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.

## **Standards**

**Standard 1: Legal Compliance** – All educators 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.

**Standard 2: Conduct with Students** – All educators shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

**Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs** – All educators shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of

professional practice. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

**Standard 4: Honesty** – All educators shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting or omitting:

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

**Standard 5: Public Funds and Property** – All educators entrusted with public funds and property shall honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Misusing public or school-related funds;

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

**Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct** – An educator shall maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors and additional compensation. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to:

1. Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee;
2. Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;
3. Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
4. Coaching, instructing promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involves students in an

**Standard 7: Confidential Information** – All educators shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material and other information. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

**Standard 8: Required Reports** – All educators shall file reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. § 19-7- 5), or any other required report. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Failure to report all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission;
2. Failure to make a required report of a violation of one or more standards of The Code of Ethics for Educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner; and
3. Failure to make a required report of any violation of state or federal law 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. These reports include but are not limited to murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated

battery, kidnapping, any sexual offense, and any sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving a controlled substance and any abuse of a child if an educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.

**Standard 9: Professional Conduct** - All educators 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 a resignation that would equate to a breach of contract; 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.

**Standard 10: Testing** – All educators shall administer state- mandated assessments fairly and ethically. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Committing any act that breaches Test Security; and
2. Compromising the integrity of the assessment.

**Reporting**

Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator becomes 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, personnel director, Superintendent, etc.).

The Commission notifies local and state officials of all disciplinary actions. In addition, suspensions and revocations are reported to national officials, including the NASDTEC Clearinghouse.

## **Disciplinary Action**

The 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:

1. Unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 (PSC Rule 505-6-.01);
2. Disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 (PSC Rule 505-6-.01);
3. Order from a court of competent jurisdiction or a request from the Department of Human Resources that the certificate should be suspended or the application for certification should be denied for non-payment of child support (O.C.G.A. § 19-6-28.1 and § 19-11-9.3);
4. Notification from the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan guaranteed by the Georgia Higher Learning Assistance Corporation (O.C.G.A. § 20-3- 295);
5. Suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate;
6. Violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession; and
7. Any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator

An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not serve as a volunteer or be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, substitute teacher or in any other position during the period of his or her

revocation, suspension or denial for a violation of The Code of Ethics. The Superintendent and the Superintendent's designee for certification shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the Superintendent and the Superintendent's designee must hold GAPSC certification.

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

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- Unlawful sale of liquor
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- Simple Assault
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- Misdemeanor offense of escape
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