



Gwinnett County Public Schools

Electronic Personnel Handbook

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Gwinnett County Public Schools Mission and Strategic Goals

Last revised September 1, 2003

Mission

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

Strategic Goals

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

Message From the Superintendent

Last revised September 1, 2003

Gwinnett County Public Schools welcomes you as a new employee in our school district. We believe the quality of our personnel is the most important factor in providing a quality education for the students of our community. You were selected as an employee because we believe the knowledge and skills you possess will assist our school system in meeting its mission.

The handbook has been prepared to highlight opportunities available to employees, communicate compensation and benefit information and to summarize Gwinnett County Board of Education policies and procedures. The [handbook directory](#) provides names and phone numbers of persons who can provide you more detailed information about topics covered in the handbook. Complete policy and procedure manuals are available and your supervisor can advise you of their location at your work site.

As is characteristic of all dynamic organizations, changes in policies and procedures will occur. These changes are communicated to all employees in an effort to keep you fully informed about matters that affect you on the job. I urge you to read the Personnel Handbook and other information available to you.

Sincerely,
J. Alvin Wilbanks
Superintendent

Opportunities

Last revised August 2, 2004

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

Professional Development

The mission of the Gwinnett County Public Schools Professional Development Department is to foster continuous improvement of all members of our school community. We believe all people have the ability and desire to grow, learn, and define their own goals and mission. Our role is to advance continuous improvement by aligning resources, activities, values, and visions with the mission of the school system to meet the needs of local schools and individuals.

System-wide professional development offerings for all employees are announced through an online catalog available through Lotus Notes to employees each quarter. In addition, specialized professional development offerings for classified employees vary by program. Specific details are available through the sponsoring division. Local schools also offer a variety of opportunities based on their Local School Plan for Improvement.

A wide variety of professional development opportunities are available to all certified employees. Centralized courses based on system initiatives provide state-of-the-art classroom and instructional practices for our teachers. Support for new teachers is provided through GCPS PRIME (Promoting Retention By Inducting and Mentoring Educators), a three-year induction program that includes continuous support and mentoring. An appealing quality of our professional development program is the large number of activities that are designed and delivered at each local school site for teachers, paraprofessionals and classified staff.

Administrators participate in leadership development activities such as the Continuous Quality Improvement and Shared Decision-Making Training. Monthly leadership development meetings cover a range of topics pertinent to GCPS principals, assistant principals, and county level administrators. This professional learning culminates each June with the Summer Leadership Conference provided for leadership personnel. New administrators also are given the opportunity participate in a two-year induction program (GCPS PRIME). A three-day orientation is held each July.

The Professional Development Department through the Office of Teacher/Staff Development processes staff development credits (SDU's) and issues transcripts for all participants in professional development activities.

Performance Appraisal

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

programs. Classified employees are assessed using locally developed evaluation programs. Details of the GCPS evaluation program can be found in Policy and Procedure [GBI](#), Evaluation of Personnel.

Certification

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

All paraprofessionals must hold a Paraprofessional Certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Certification requirements may be found at the Georgia Professional Standards Commission web site, <http://www.gapsc.com/>.

Questions regarding certification should be directed to the Gwinnett County Public Schools Certification Office. Please see the GCPS [telephone directory](#) for phone numbers and addresses.

Penalty for Failure to Provide Certification

Employment contracts are issued to certificated staff. These contracts are contingent upon the employee securing and continuing to hold a valid in-field certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Gwinnett County Public Schools adjusts salaries to conform to the certificate level approved by the Professional Standards Commission of Georgia. Certificated staff must hold a valid Georgia certificate in the field to which assigned. If a person is unable to be appropriately certified, the daily rate of pay may be adjusted to substitute teacher rate from the date of employment or the date the certificate became invalid, whichever is most recent.

Licensing

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

Employee Recognition

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

Education Briefs, a newsletter prepared by Gwinnett's Department of Community and Media Relations, highlights employee honors and promotions. The Department of Community and Media Relations also makes local media aware of employee accomplishments.

Compensation

Last revised August 2, 2004

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

Reclassification Process

Payday/Direct Deposit

Most employees are paid monthly with earning statements issued on the last workday of the month. Direct deposit to a bank account is available to all benefit-eligible employees.

Penalty for Failure to Provide Certification

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

Penalty For Failure to Meet Contractual Obligation

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

Vacations and Holidays

Employees who earn vacation will accumulate hours based on the schedule below. Other employees follow the holiday schedule on the annual school calendar.

Vacation

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

Holidays

New Year's Day (1)
Martin Luther King's Birthday (1)
Spring Holiday (1)
Memorial Day (1)

Independence Day (1)
Labor Day (1)
Thanksgiving Day (2)
Winter Holidays (see calendar)

Benefits

Last revised August 13, 2004

Benefits are a large part of the total compensation package and are designed to meet the most important needs of Gwinnett County Public School employees. In order to meet the ever-changing needs of our employees, we are continually reviewing and updating these benefit offerings. The following pages are an overview of the benefits provided by Gwinnett County Public Schools. Because of the importance of the benefits package, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the details of these plans from a variety of sources including booklets, information sheets and the Internet at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/> under the Employment section, Benefits Center menu item.

Insurance Benefits

Insurance benefits become effective on the first day of the month following the completion of work for one full calendar month and a proper payroll deduction.

Temporary employees or employees who work less than halftime are not eligible for benefits.

Health Insurance

GCPS employees have the opportunity to subscribe to group health insurance. Both individual coverage and family coverage options are available. Employees may choose between the following types of health plans:

- The State Health Benefit Plan Standard PPO Option
- The State Health Benefit Plan Indemnity Option
- Health Maintenance Organizations (HMO's):
 CIGNA, Blue Choice, Kaiser Permanente, and United HealthCare.

Complete packets of information on all plans are available from the Employee Relations Department.

Open enrollment is a period of each year when employees may enroll or change options or coverage, subject to the conditions described in the plan. The open enrollment period, unless otherwise announced, usually occurs mid-April through mid-May. Coverage for changes or enrollments become effective the following July 1.

Cancer Insurance

An optional policy for supplemental cancer and intensive care coverage is available from the Professional Insurance Corporation and Protective Life Insurance Company whose local agents are listed in the directory.

Dental Insurance

Optional dental coverage may be purchased for the individual employee or their family. Two plans are available: Basic or Premium Direct Reimbursement.

Life Insurance

Eligible employees working 20 hours or more per week are covered by a group term life/accidental death and dismemberment policy provided by the Board at no cost to the employee. All eligible employees have \$12,500 term life insurance underwritten by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

In addition, an employee may purchase supplemental life insurance up to six times their annual salary. Employees may also purchase a \$5,000 dependent supplemental life insurance policy.

Home and Auto Insurance

Insurance coverage for home and auto is available as a payroll deduction for employees of Gwinnett County Public Schools. Information and comparative quotes may be obtained by calling the agency listed in the directory.

Liability Insurance

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

Disability Insurance

Short-term disability insurance is available to all eligible employees on a payroll deduction basis. An employee must have completed one full year of coverage in order to receive a sickness/illness benefit for a normal illness or elective surgery. The basic benefit of \$225 per week of disability may be increased to \$300 per week or \$500 per week at an increased premium and with proof of insurability. The weekly salary benefit may not exceed $66 \frac{2}{3}$ of the employee's current salary. Short-term disability benefits begin on the first day after an accident or the eighth day of an illness and may continue for up to 26 weeks. Pregnancy or its complications are covered.

The Gwinnett Retirement System (GRS) provides long-term disability insurance coverage for all employees who work half time or more and are paid on a regular payroll. The benefit is 60% of the employee's salary at the time of disability. However, benefits do not begin until six months from the actual date of disability. Disability benefits from GRS will be reduced dollar for dollar by income received from other sources such as, but not limited to, Workers' Compensation, pension plans and Social Security. A booklet about GRS is available from the [Retirement Department](#).

Critical Illness

Critical Illness insurance offers a single payment of up-to \$50,000 to a covered employee, \$30,000 to a covered spouse, or \$5,000 to a covered child for specific critical events including heart attack, stroke, major organ transplant, permanent paralysis, end-stage renal failure, or coronary artery bypass surgery. Additional health-related questions and exams may be required. This optional benefit is available only during the annual Open Enrollment period.

Vision Insurance

Vision Insurance covers the cost of eye exams, lenses, and frames. Under this Direct Reimbursement plan, any eye care professional can be used. There are no fee schedules. There is no coordination of benefits between the Direct Reimbursement plans and other benefits plans.

For each person, the plan will pay 100% of the first \$50 of vision care expenses each year. After that, the plan will then pay 50% of the \$500 of vision expenses. The maximum payment per person per year is \$300. Additional benefits may also be associated with this plan, so be sure to review the Vision Plan Benefit sheet or claim forms for additional information.

Workers' Compensation

Employees may be entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits if injured on the job. The injury must arise out of and in the course of employment. The injured employee must provide notice of the injury immediately, but not later than 30 days after the accident, to the employer, the employer's representative, or the employee's immediate supervisor. Failure to do so may result in the loss of benefits. The injured employee may select a medical care provider from the list posted by the Board of Education. Only those providers listed are authorized to provide medical care for a work-related injury. The [panel of physicians](#) is posted in conspicuous places in all locations maintained by the Board of Education and may also be obtained through the risk management department

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

Cafeteria Plan

Employees of Gwinnett County Public Schools have a choice of participating in a plan that uses before-tax dollars to pay for benefits. Benefits that are included in the Cafeteria Plan are medical and dental insurance, short-term disability, long-term disability, and cancer insurance.

Employees will be given a chance to begin or discontinue participation in the Cafeteria Plan during open enrollment of each year.

Flexible Spending Accounts

Gwinnett County Public School employees may deduct up to \$5,000 per employee to be deducted before taxes. The Dependent Child Care Spending Account provides reimbursement for day care center and baby-sitter expenses. The Medical Reimbursement Spending Account provides for reimbursement of medical, dental, vision, and/or hearing expenses not covered by insurance. Direct Administrative Services, Inc., the company that processes payment requests, is listed in the directory. Please contact the Benefits Office for more information or see [additional information](#) provided at our Benefits Center website.

Tax Deferred Annuity and Other Investment Opportunities

The Tax Deferred Annuity (TDA) program allows employees to exclude a portion of their salary from taxable income for the purchase of an annuity contract. Payment of taxes on this money and on the interest it earns is deferred until the money is withdrawn, presumably at retirement. The Board has approved Conseco, Fidelity, Lincoln National, and Morgan Stanley, and VALIC to sell tax sheltered annuities to employees. The Board has also selected the Fidelity Investment Company and the brokerage firm of Morgan Stanley for payroll deduction and marketing privileges to broaden the investment opportunities for its employees. Further information about these companies may be obtained from the agent listed in the directory at the [Benefits Center website](#).

Credit Union

As a convenience for employees of Gwinnett County Public Schools, payroll deductions are provided upon request for contributions or payments to the Gwinnett Federal Credit Union. The address is provided in the directory at the end of this book. Or, you may visit the Gwinnett Federal Credit Union website at <http://www.gwinnettfcu.org/>.

Gwinnett Retirement System (GRS)

Effective January 1, 1983, Gwinnett County Public Schools elected to withdraw from the Social Security System. The Gwinnett Retirement System was developed to offer employees benefits that compensate for the loss of Social Security benefits. This plan provides a retirement income that supplements the state retirement programs. Further details can be found at the website <http://www.gwinnettretirementsystem.com/>, but some highlights of the Gwinnett plan are:

- Lifetime income at retirement.
 - Benefits may increase up to 3% annually based on cost of living index.
 - Full benefits begin at age 65.
 - An employee is vested after five years of service.
 - Survivor benefits.
 - If disabled while employed, an employee can collect benefits which, when added to benefits from other sources, equal 60% of salary.
 - The Board contributes 6.7% of an employee's salary and the employee contributes 1%. Employees are offered several optional opportunities to invest monies that were formerly contributed to Social Security.

Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS)

Teachers, administrators, supervisors, clerical employees, paraprofessionals, and various Central Office staff are eligible members of TRS. Benefits become available after 30 years of service, regardless of age, at 25 years of service with early retirement penalties, or at age 60, after ten years of service. Employees who have 9 ½ years of service earn disability retirement benefits if permanently disabled, as well as survivor's benefits that are paid to a beneficiary. While members must contribute 5% of their salary, the school system contributes 11.29%. A booklet detailing the plan is available from the Gwinnett County Public Schools Retirement Office. You can also gather additional information from the Gwinnett County Public Schools Internet website <http://www.trsga.com/>.

Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia

Bus drivers, food service employees, some non-supervisory maintenance and custodial personnel, and other employees not eligible for membership in TRS are eligible for membership in the Public School Employees' Retirement System. Retirement benefits are available for members who are 60 years of age with at least ten years of creditable service. Members contribute \$4.00 per month for nine months, and the state makes the employer's contribution. The address for further information is in the directory, or you can refer to the Internet web site at <http://www.ersga.org/>.

Long Term Care

Critical Illness insurance may include Home Health care, assisted living care and nursing home care. Group discounts are available to all employees of GCPS. This is not a payroll deduction item.

Medicare

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

Communication with Employees and the Community

Last revised September 1, 2003

Employees are recognized for their honors, promotion, and teaching techniques through the employee newsletter, Education Briefs, and through press releases prepared by the Department of Community & Media Relations for distribution to all metro-area media.

Any employee may submit information for the newsletter or the media tip sheet by sending it to the Department of Community & Media Relations at 52 Gwinnett Drive.

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

Bus drivers have opportunities for communication and input through their cluster representatives on the Driver Advisory Committee, which meets with Transportation Department administrators and the Superintendent. School food service employees are encouraged to submit concerns through the School Food Service Advisory Council, which meets with the School Nutrition Program Director and the Associate Superintendent.

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

Parents and citizens have direct channels for input to their School Board representatives through attendance at monthly Board meetings and at Area Board meetings held throughout the county.

Gwinnett County Public Schools shares information through the system-wide parent newsletter, Communique. Additionally, each school produces its own newsletter.

On-going, two-way communication between the school system and its internal and external publics and positive media relations are continually stressed throughout the Gwinnett County Public Schools.

The school district also provides an Internet website, <http://gwinnett.k12.ga.us>, which offers additional information concerning GCPS organization and operations.

Leave

Last revised August 12, 2004

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

Sick Leave

Sick leave for full time employees is earned at the rate of 10 hours per month times the number of months worked. Sick leave may be accumulated up to a maximum of 1200 hours (150 days). An employee must be at work or on paid leave at least 13 days within a month to earn sick leave for that month.

Employees working less than 40 hours per week will earn a prorated share of sick leave. Temporary employees or employees who work less than half time are not eligible to earn sick leave.

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

- Illness or injury
- Exposure to contagious diseases which might endanger others
- Illness or death in employee's immediate family (spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, in-law equivalents of the above, and any relative residing in the employee's home).

Employees absent for other than approved reasons or absent after sick leave has been exhausted will have their pay reduced based on the schedule appearing in Board policy GBRIB, Leave.

Certified employees and bus drivers who transfer to Gwinnett County Public Schools from other Georgia counties may transfer up to 45 days of sick leave earned after July 1, 1978. According to state statute, the transfer of leave must take place within one year of termination from the previous position.

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

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

Sick Leave Bank

The Sick Leave Bank was established to provide additional sick leave to participants in the plan who have catastrophic personal illness, non-elective surgery, elective surgery with complications, or injury with debilitating consequences beyond their control, and who have exhausted their sick leave and vacation leave. The Sick Leave Bank is available to eligible

employees who earn sick leave. Only those enrolled in the Sick Leave Bank may withdraw sick leave time. Application for withdrawal of days from the Bank shall be sent to the Leave Office for approval. For detailed information regarding the Sick Leave Bank, please refer to Procedure [P.GBRIB](#).

Personal Leave

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

Disability Leave

Except in emergency cases, written notice accompanied by a physician's statement should be given to the GCPS Leave Administration Office at least 60 days before the anticipated date of disability. Maternity is classified as a disability.

If an employee wishes to discontinue work before the anticipated date of disability, the employee must notify the Leave Administration Office in writing 30 days before the leave is to begin. The employee will not be eligible for sick leave or short term disability benefits provided by the Gwinnett County Public Schools.

An employee who wishes to continue working up to the time of physician certified disability should notify the Leave Administration Office at least 30 days before the anticipated date of disability.

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

Extended Leave of Absence

Employees who have completed at least three full years of service with Gwinnett County Public Schools are eligible for an extended leave of absence. All extended leaves of absence are unpaid leave and for not more than one calendar year unless approved by the Superintendent. Extended leaves may be granted for educational leave, health, child-care, and political leave. Upon written request for reassignment, employees are entitled to return to active employment, contingent upon a vacancy in the field in which they were employed when the leave was granted.

Military Duty Leave

Employees will be paid for a maximum period of 18 working days for ordered military duty. Applicable federal and state laws will be followed.

Religious Leave

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

Professional Leave for Certified Personnel

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

Returning From Leave

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

A contracted employee who is returning to work after leave must notify Human Resources in writing by March 15 of their intention to return for the following school year. The employee will be placed in a job comparable to the one held before the leave. Employees who have been on an extended leave without pay and did not participate in the annual benefits open enrollment process must contact the Leave Office and schedule a Return from Leave Benefits Orientation Interview.

Jury Duty, Subpoena, and Other Court Order

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

Family and Medical Leave Act

Gwinnett County Public Schools is in full compliance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. The FMLA grants qualified employees twelve week of unpaid leave every twelve months, which may be used for the purposes listed below:

1. the birth of a child;
2. the adoption of a child or the placement of a foster child;
3. to care for a sick spouse, child, or parent;
4. the employee's own serious health condition.

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

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

The employee must provide at least 30 days notice of the employee's intention to take leave when possible. The employee should make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment in a manner that will not unduly disrupt the operations of the school district.

With limited exceptions, any eligible employee who takes leave under FMLA is entitled to be restored to their job or an equivalent position.

Detailed information concerning FMLA is available through Gwinnett County Public Schools [Policies and Procedures](#) and the Leave Office. All Principals and Program Managers have access to this system and will provide a copy upon request.

Policies and Procedures

Last revised April 21, 2005

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

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

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

A listing of each section of Board policies can be accessed on the GCPS web site at <http://www.gwinnett.k12.ga.us/polproc.nsf>. Employees can also access Board policies and administrative procedures using the Lotus Notes database system through a button called "Policies and Procedures."

Equal Opportunity Employment

The Gwinnett County School Board does not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, race, color, disability, religion or national origin in the educational programs and activities or admissions to facilities operated by the Board or in the employment practices of the Board. It is the express policy of the Board to comply with all appropriate laws and regulations relating to discrimination.

Employee Background Checks

All personnel employed on or after July 1, 2000, must be fingerprinted and successfully complete a criminal records check. Teachers, principals and other certified personnel renewed after July 1, 2000, will also have a criminal record check made upon any certificate renewal application to the Professional Standards Commission. Non-certified personnel shall also have periodic criminal record checks as required by law.

Contracts

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

May 1 is the deadline for release from Gwinnett County Public Schools contracts. Any certified employee who wishes to resign a position during the contractual period must give the Board of Education 30 days written notice. The release from the contract will be pending

the employment of a suitable replacement. The Board may approve a release on shorter notice in verifiable emergency cases.

An employee who is fulfilling a full year contract for the current year must be notified by April 15 if a contract for the ensuing year will not be offered. An employee who holds a contract for less than one full year will not necessarily be offered a full contract for the ensuing year.

Classified and Certified Personnel Transfers and Separations

A reduction in force could result from changes in the size or nature of the student population, changes in the curriculum, consolidation of positions, or budgetary limitations. The determination of employees to be demoted or terminated is based on approved procedures established by the Board of Education and school system administration.

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

Transfers – Certified Personnel

Employee Requests for Transfers

After teachers have been employed for three years, they are given the opportunity to request an intra-system transfer by use of the Placement Preference Form that is distributed each spring. It is not necessary to determine the existence of an opening prior to listing a school as a preference. A list of personnel desiring transfers to a particular school will be provided to each principal. Principals will consider requests for transfer when filling positions for the coming year. The deadline for intra-system transfers is April 15 of each year unless the Chief Human Resources Office deems such a transfer an emergency.

Lateral Transfers to New or Existing Schools

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

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

The following criteria will be observed in effecting these transfers.

1. The needs of the instructional program and after-school activities of the school(s) involved must be considered.
2. A teacher must hold a valid Gwinnett County contract and valid teaching certificate in the field where the transfer is needed.
3. When the need for a transfer is known, volunteers will be given top priority. Principals must inform qualified teachers of the vacancy and accept voluntary transfers when offered.
4. If there are no volunteers, involuntary transfers will be based upon seniority* within the grade level or subject matter field where the transfer is needed except as follows: Teachers receiving or scheduled to receive a supplement for after-school activities may not be required to transfer. This decision is left to the discretion of the principal.

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

Identification and Security Badges

All full-time employees of Gwinnett County Public Schools will have picture identification badges that include their signature. The badge allows the employee to be admitted to Gwinnett High School Association activities and to receive certain specified merchant discounts. When an employee terminates, the I.D. must be turned in to the Safety and Security Department.

Conflicts of Interest

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

Endorsements

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

Actions that could be construed as a conflict of interest or a violation of the [Code of Ethics for Educators](#) may jeopardize the employee's employment relationship with GCPS. It is advised that before an employee makes a final decision concerning endorsements of any kind that they discuss the situation with their Principal or Program Manager.

Non-School Employment

Gwinnett County Public School employees are reminded that their job assignments within the school system are their first obligation and if outside employment is affecting their performance, the employee could be forced to choose between the employment opportunities.

Each Principal/Program Manager has direct responsibility for evaluating the effects of outside employment on personnel assigned to their operation.

Tutoring

A teacher may serve as a tutor when it is deemed beneficial to the student. However, teachers may not give private instruction for a fee to students presently enrolled in their classes. These students should receive help from the teacher after school hours if necessary. The preference of the Board is that a teacher serving as a tutor not be on the staff of the school in which the student is enrolled. Tutoring may not interfere with a teacher's regular school responsibilities.

Dual Pay

Gwinnett County Public School employees are prohibited from receiving dual pay for services rendered during the regular working hours. The employee must forfeit either the regular pay or the pay from the other agency, organization or individual. Employees may receive payment for services rendered while on a non-paid leave of absence or for services performed other than during the regular working day.

Political Involvement

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

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

Personnel Attire

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

Personnel Time Schedule

All full time employees of the Board of Education work a minimum 40 hours per week. The Principal or Program Manager sets a schedule within this policy for the time of arrival and departure of all employees assigned to their operation.

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

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

Staff Meetings

Regular staff meetings are a necessary part of the school operation. Each school shall have a schedule for staff meetings on a regular basis. Special staff meetings for staff development, accreditation, and/or workshops as deemed necessary should be called by the principal. All staff members are required as part of their teaching/employment responsibilities to attend all such meetings as designated by the Principal.

Health and Safety

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

To help ensure this, an employee is responsible for:



- Knowing the potential hazards of the job.
- Learning and following the safety practices required by management.
- Using health and safety devices required by the job (the Gwinnett County Board of Education has adopted a policy regarding Infectious Diseases; all employees are required to be familiar with this policy).
- Correcting and/or reporting safety hazards immediately.
- Reporting immediately to supervisor any accident or injury.
- Obeying “No Smoking” regulations. All students are prohibited

from tobacco use on campus or at school activities, functions, or events. While fulfilling their duties as school district employees, staff members shall not use tobacco in the presence of students or on school system property. Please refer to the section titled “[Personnel Smoking](#)” for additional information.

- Operating machinery or equipment only if qualified to do so.
- Maintaining good housekeeping practices including keeping all fire exits clear and fire fighting equipment accessible.

Drug Free Workplace

The Board provides a drug-free workplace and professes that the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of tobacco and alcohol is wrong and harmful.

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

Personnel use of Illicit Drugs

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

- a. Employees must notify the Gwinnett County Public Schools in writing of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace (in GCPS buildings and vehicles and at school sponsored activities) no later than five calendar days after such conviction.
- b. The Gwinnett County Public Schools will take one of the following actions, within 30 calendar days of receiving notice with respect to any employee who is so convicted:
 - (1) Take appropriate personnel action against such an employee, up to and including termination, consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and/or
 - (2) Require such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state or local health, law enforcement or other appropriate agency.

An on-going drug-free awareness program is provided to inform employees about the dangers of drug abuse, Gwinnett County Public School’s GAM policy and Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Policy for Students and Employees, the penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug abuse violations occurring in the workplace and drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, and re-entry programs.

Personnel Smoking

Employees are prohibited from using or displaying tobacco products in front of students while the employee is on duty during the normal school day or while on duty at any school or system sponsored function. Tobacco use is banned from all school system vehicles and shall not be used in any school system facilities.

An on-going program is provided to inform employees about the dangers of smoking and the penalties that may be imposed upon employees. A formal discipline procedure is outlined in policy [P.GAMA](#).

Complaint Procedures

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a way for the Board and its employees to reach solutions to problems, disputes, or controversies that may occur. Employees maintain good morale and enhance effective job performance, and citizens of the community are better served when employers and employees exert sincere efforts toward constructive solutions to problems that may arise. The intent of this policy is to provide, in a clear and concise way, for the solution of complaints at the lowest feasible administrative level, as fairly and as expeditiously as possible. Complaints that may be addressed under this policy are more specifically defined below and generally include those matters that affect the terms or conditions of employment.

Employees who allege discrimination or harassment on the basis of age, gender, race, color, religion or disability may also use this policy specifically as a complaint procedure. In the case of alleged discrimination based on the aforementioned factors, employees may complain directly to the school system Title IX Coordinator who will make a prompt investigation. Any supervisor who becomes aware of such a complaint should notify the Title IX Coordinator (also known as Equity Compliance Coordinator and ADA Coordinator) no later than on the business day immediately following his/her knowledge of the complaint.

Please refer to the Gwinnett County Board of Education [GAE-R](#) for specific procedural steps. Complaint Procedure forms may be obtained from a supervisor or by calling the Human Resources Office.

Scope of Complaint: Exclusions

This complaint and grievance procedure applies to any claim by professional employees certificated by the Professional Standards Commission. These employees must have been affected in their employment relationship by an alleged violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of various compliances required of the school district.

This procedure does not apply to:

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

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

Procedure

Initiating a Complaint and Requesting a Hearing

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

Sexual Harassment Policy

The Board is committed to providing a workplace free from distractions caused by sexual harassment and all other forms of discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin or handicap; or inappropriate or offensive conduct. It is the Board's expectation that all personnel conduct themselves in a highly professional manner and respect coworkers, students, parents, and customers. In this regard, the Board prohibits sexual harassment, all forms of discrimination, and other unprofessional conduct. Sexual harassment in the school environment is unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated or condoned.

Sexual Harassment may include, but not be limited to:

- unwelcome sexual advances
- requests for sexual favors
- verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including subtle pressure for sexual activity, touching, pinching, patting, or brushing against
- comments regarding physical or personality characteristics of a sexual nature
- sexually oriented "kidding", "teasing", double-entendres, and jokes
- demanding sexual favors accompanied by implied or over threats concerning an individual's employment or educational status.

Personnel Records

It is the responsibility of employees to inform Human Resources when there are changes in the home address, phone number and number of dependents. It is important to be aware of the person named as beneficiary of the employee's life insurance and retirement plans and to notify the Employee Relations Department should a change in beneficiary be desired.

Information contained in an employee's personnel file is not made available to others except as may be required by law, requested by the employee, or to those school officials with a need to know in an official capacity. Otherwise, requests for information not specifically approved by the employee will be referred to the Chief Human Resources Officer. Georgia's Open Records law lists certain records that are protected from public disclosure. Among those listed are medical records, home address information, Social Security Numbers and confidential evaluations.

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

The employee may review personnel information, except for confidential references, contained in the employee's personnel file. In order to review this file, an appointment with the appropriate Human Resources Director is required.

Any personnel records kept by each principal or immediate supervisor shall also be kept confidential with access only to those school officials with a need to know the in an official capacity. The immediate supervisor of active employees may retain the individual performance and evaluations records.

Use of Electronic Resources

The Gwinnett County Board of Education recognizes that electronic media provides access to a wide variety of instructional resources in an effort to enhance educational opportunities. Use of electronic resources must be in support of assigned responsibilities. All electronic,

telephonic, and communications transmitted by, received from, or stored in these systems are the property of the Gwinnett County Public Schools. Users of such systems shall have no expectation of privacy. Please refer to Policies [EBC](#) and [IFB](#) and related Procedures for further information.

Standards of Conduct

Last revised September 1, 2003

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 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.

Definitions

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

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

“Student” is any individual enrolled in the state’s public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual between and including the ages of 3 and 17.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standards

Standard 1: Criminal Acts – An educator should 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. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty a plea 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: Abuse of Students – An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

- committing any act of child abuse, including physical and emotional abuse;
- committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
- committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act;
- engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, sex, national origin, religion or disability;
- soliciting, encouraging, or consummating a written, verbal or physical romantic or inappropriate relationship with a student (including dating a student); and
- furnishing tobacco, alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs – An educator should 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:

- being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs; and
- being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, using, 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 curriculum i.e. Foreign Language trips, etc.).

Standard 4: Misrepresentation or Falsification – An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

- falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting professional qualifications, criminal history, college or staff development credit and/or degrees, academic award, and employment history when applying for

- employment and/or certification or when recommending an individual for employment, promotion, or certification;
- falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting information regarding compliance reports submitted to federal, state, and other governmental agencies;
- falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel including improper administration of any standardized tests (changing test answers, copying or teaching identified test items, unauthorized reading of the test to students, etc.);
- falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting reasons for absences or leaves; and
- falsifying, deliberately misrepresenting, or omitting information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation.

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

- misusing public or school-related funds or property including the use of facilities, equipment or property for athletic camps, clinics or out-of-season leagues without the approval of the local board of education;
- failing to account for funds collected from students or parents;
- submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay; and
- co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds.

Standard 6: Improper Remunerative Conduct – An educator should 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: soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator in a private remunerative capacity; accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest; tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education or superintendent; and coaching, instructing, promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involves students in an educator's school system and from whom the educator receives remuneration unless approved by the local board of education or the superintendent. These types of activities must be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the Georgia High School Association.

Standard 7: Confidential Information – An educator should comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student records, unless disclosure is required or permitted by law. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, personal confidences, health and medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results.

Standard 8: Abandonment of Contract – An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or education agency for the duration of the contract. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

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

Standard 10: Professional Conduct – An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards. Unethical conduct is any conduct that seriously impairs the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students (inappropriate language, physical altercations, inadequate supervision, inappropriate discipline, etc.).

Reporting

Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators. Educators should be aware of local policies and procedures and/or the chain of command for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the Professional Standards Commission must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, personnel director, superintendent, etc.) Please refer to the Professional Standards Commission Internet website at <http://www.gapsc.com/> for further information.

Disciplinary Action

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

- unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-10 ([PSC Rule 505-2-.03](#));
- disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-10 ([PSC Rule 505-2-.03](#));
- 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);
- notification from the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan guaranteed by the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation (O.C.G.A. §20-3-295);
- suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate;
- violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession (O.C.G.A. §16-13-111); and
- any other good and sufficient cause.

An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied for disciplinary reasons, or suspended may not be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, or substitute teacher.

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