



GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

EMPLOYEE POLICIES, PROCEDURES & EXPECTATIONS HANDBOOK 2026–2027

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the George County School District, along with our community partners, is to prepare and empower our students with the knowledge and skills that are essential in being college and/or career ready.

GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Physical & Mailing Address: 494 Cowart Street Lucedale, MS 39452

Phone: 601-947-6993

Website: <https://www.gcsd.us/>

Follow us: <https://www.facebook.com/georgecountyschooldistrict>

Debra D. Joiner, Superintendent

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Welcome to the 2026–2027 school year! Whether you are joining the George County School District for the first time or returning for another year of service, we are pleased to have you as part of our district family.

Each new school year brings fresh opportunities to inspire growth, foster learning, and make a meaningful impact in the lives of our students. The Human Resources Department is here to support you throughout the year. Should you have questions regarding policies, benefits, or professional development opportunities, please know that we are always available by phone or email to assist you.

Thank you for the important work you do each day in support of our students, schools, and colleagues. We look forward to a successful, rewarding, and inspiring school year ahead.

Phyllis McDonald

Director of Human Resources – George County School District

Board of Education Secretary,
Susan Moore 2026/2027

George County Board of Education

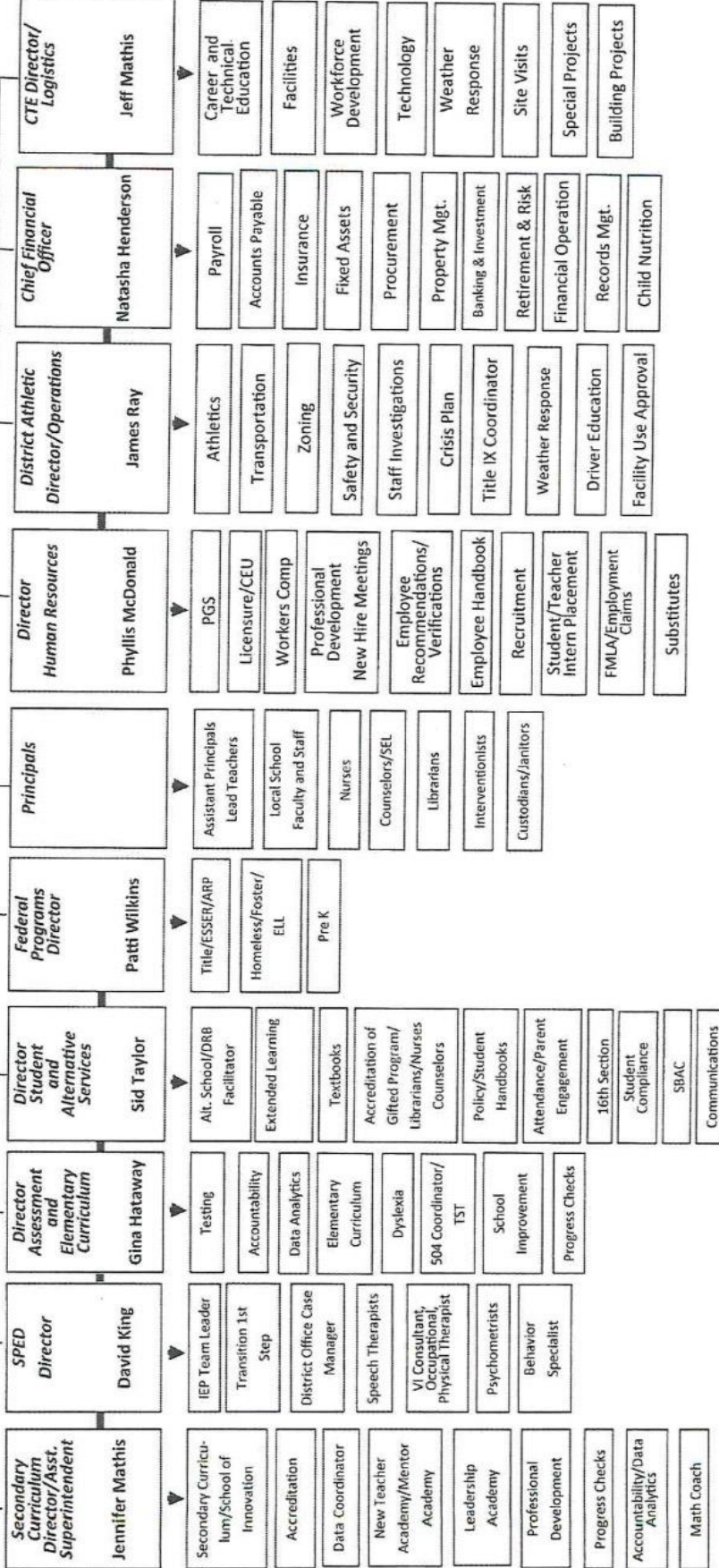
School Board Attorney,
Cherie Wade

Superintendent
Debra Joiner

Assistant Superintendent, Jennifer Mathis

Department of Operations

Department of Academics



APPROVED

FEB 03 2026

G.C. SCLIPBOARD



GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HEALTH CLINICS

*All patients must be consented.
No appointment necessary.*

**ALL SERVICES LISTED BELOW ARE OFFERED TO
STUDENTS AND ALL DISTRICT PERSONNEL.**

- *treatment of minor acute injury and illness*
- *well-visits*
- *sports physicals*
- *immunizations*
- *routine lab tests*
- *management of chronic illness*
- *mental behavioral assessment and treatment*
- *health education and health promotion*
- *medications and/or prescriptions for medications*



**STUDENT
CONSENT**



**PATIENT
REGISTRATION**

**STUDENTS ARE TREATED AT NO OUT-OF-POCKET COSTS.
ALL INSURANCE ACCEPTED.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Email: GCSchools@CoastalFamilyHealth.org
Facebook: [CFHC.SchoolBasedHealthServices](https://www.facebook.com/CFHC.SchoolBasedHealthServices)

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK DISCLAIMER

This handbook is intended to serve as a general reference throughout your employment with the George County School District. It does not cover every detail or condition of your employment. For information regarding specific topics such as employee parking, building access, or use of facilities, please consult your supervisor, principal, or department director.

Please note that the contents of this handbook are subject to change in response to updates in laws, Board of Education policies, procedures, or regulations. While this handbook provides guidance, it does not establish a contract of employment or guarantee continued employment. It also does not ensure specific work assignments, schedules, working conditions, or employment duration.

The District's administration reserves the right to review, revise, delete, or interpret any policies and procedures within this handbook as needed, subject to applicable laws. That said, we are committed to open communication and fairness and will make every effort to keep employees informed of relevant updates that affect their roles.

Many policies and regulations referenced here have been summarized for clarity and brevity. Employees are expected to be familiar with the full content of these policies. A complete copy of the district's policy manual is available at the central office and in each school office.

OUR COMMITMENT TO NON-DISCRIMINATION AND EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

The George County School District values the diversity of its workforce and recognizes the unique backgrounds, talents, and perspectives each employee brings to our organization. We believe that success is built on shared goals, mutual respect, and an appreciation for both individual and group differences. By treating every person with dignity and respect, we foster a workplace that is inclusive, collaborative, and high-performing.

The George County School District is committed to the principles of equal employment opportunity and non-discrimination in all employment practices. This commitment applies to recruitment, hiring, training, compensation, benefits, transfers, promotions, and all other terms and conditions of employment.

We strive to provide equal employment opportunities to all individuals without regard to race, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital or parental status, religion, age, disability, military service (past or present), or any other status protected by law. All employment decisions are based on individual qualifications, merit, and the operational needs of the district.

INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES

The George County School District is committed to employing and supporting individuals with disabilities as part of our inclusive workforce. Qualified individuals with physical or mental disabilities are entitled to the same employment opportunities as any other qualified candidate or employee.

A qualified individual with a disability is defined as someone who possesses the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform the essential functions of a job, with or without reasonable accommodation.

Examples of reasonable accommodations may include:

- Removing physical barriers in the workplace
- Modifying job duties, work schedules, or the work environment
- Adjusting how tasks are typically performed
- Providing alternative methods of communication
- Reassigning the employee to a vacant position for which they are qualified

Employees or applicants in need of accommodation should notify their immediate supervisor or the Human Resources Director. Upon receiving a request, a confidential discussion will take place with the individual, and the supervisor or Human Resources Director will consult with the Superintendent or designee. The individual will then be informed of the accommodation decision, if any, that will be implemented.

For more details, please refer to the district's full Individuals with Disabilities Policy.

EMPLOYEES' CONTACT INFORMATION

Employees are required to keep their current address, phone number, and emergency contact information on file with their school or department office. If any of this information changes, employees must notify their school or department office within one (1) working day. Additionally, the updated information must be reported to the District Office Payroll Department within five (5) working days.

EMPLOYEE RECORDS

Employee personnel records are maintained at the District Office. You may request to review the contents of your personnel file by submitting a written request with reasonable advance notice.

All official documents and files – whether paper or electronic – created by any employee of the George County School District are the permanent property of the school district and must remain with the district. Employees are strictly prohibited from deleting, destroying, or altering any official records.

Employees are responsible for promptly notifying the District Office of any changes to their personal information. This includes updates to home address, phone number, marital status, number of dependents or children, the death of a family member covered under district insurance plans, life insurance beneficiaries, emergency contacts, or any other relevant information.

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND INFORMATION

The school district displays workplace posters at each location to inform employees about their legal rights, as well as other important business and work-related information.

GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT GUIDELINES FOR BEHAVIOR IN OUR WORKPLACE

The George County School District takes great pride in the quality of its educational system. A key factor in our success is maintaining a positive and productive work environment. By clearly defining behavioral expectations and establishing work rules, we aim to minimize conflict and reduce the need for corrective action. While we hope that corrective measures will never be necessary, when concerns arise, they will be investigated and addressed on a case-by-case basis. Except in cases involving safety risks, violence, or emergencies, employees will have the opportunity to present their side of the situation before any action is taken.

While we generally follow a "step" or "ladder" approach to discipline, serious infractions may result in suspension or termination, even for a first-time offense. Factors that may influence the appropriate corrective action include the seriousness of the behavior, the employee's employment history, the employee's honesty, willingness to correct the issue, and how similar situations have been addressed in the past.

Desired and Expected Behaviors:

- Treating colleagues, students, parents, and visitors with courtesy and respect
- Performing job duties and assignments to meet or exceed performance standards
- Following instructions from supervisors or administrators
- Knowing and adhering to safety protocols
- Complying with Board Policies
- Showing respect for others and refraining from speaking disparagingly about colleagues
- Adhering to the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics

Examples of Unacceptable Behavior that May Lead to Corrective Action:

- Falsifying work records, including timesheets
- Speaking disrespectfully about employees, students, parents, or the district
- Violating another employee's privacy rights
- Engaging in harassing, intimidating, threatening, or disruptive conduct
- Dishonesty
- Excessive absenteeism
- Insubordination
- Refusing to follow supervisor instructions regarding job-related matters
- Engaging in outside employment or private business during scheduled school hours
- Violating any Board Policy

CONFIDENTIALITY AND PROTECTION OF STUDENT & EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

All employees are expected to maintain strict confidentiality regarding information obtained through their employment with the school district. Respect for privacy applies to student records, personnel files, business systems, medical information, and any other sensitive data. Protecting this information – by securing it properly, filing it appropriately, and sharing it only with individuals who have a legitimate educational or business need to know – is a fundamental responsibility. Unauthorized disclosure may result in disciplinary action and may also violate the law.

Employee and student contact information, including telephone numbers and addresses, must not be shared without prior approval from a supervisor or administrator. Any requests for records under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) must be referred to the Director of Human Resources for proper handling.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. Under FERPA, students and their parents or legal guardians have specific rights concerning access to and disclosure of educational records. All faculty and staff must understand and comply with FERPA requirements before sharing student information.

What Is an Educational Record?

An educational record includes any record containing personally identifiable information (PII) that is directly related to a student. Examples include:

- Grades and academic records
- Discipline reports
- Photographs or video recordings
- Student work or projects
- Information stored in school databases or electronic systems

FERPA Guidelines and Examples

- Student academic or behavioral information may only be shared with a parent or legal guardian unless written consent is provided.
- Posting graded student work with identifying information is prohibited.
- Employees may not post student photos or identifying information on personal social media accounts, websites, or in media outlets without written parental or guardian permission.

Key Responsibilities

- Always verify the identity and authorization of anyone requesting student information.
- When uncertain, do not disclose information and consult a supervisor or administrator.
- Maintain confidentiality of all student and employee records at all times.

The George County School District requires all employees – including teachers, assistants, clerical staff, counselors, administrators, cafeteria staff, and support personnel with access to student data – to complete annual FERPA training. Training information will be provided by the Human Resources Department or the employee’s supervisor.

WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS, ETHICS, AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The George County School District is committed to maintaining a professional, respectful, and ethical work environment. Employees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that promotes fairness, integrity, and public trust while avoiding situations that could create conflicts of interest or disrupt the workplace.

Personal and Family Relationships

The District welcomes referrals of qualified applicants, including friends and family members, and will comply with all applicable laws regarding hiring practices. However, personal or romantic relationships in the workplace must not interfere with job performance, create discomfort for others, or disrupt the professional environment.

Supervisors are strictly prohibited from engaging in personal or romantic relationships with employees they supervise. If such a relationship becomes known, the administration will take appropriate corrective action.

All employees must also comply with the District’s Harassment Prevention Policy and ensure that workplace relationships remain professional at all times.

Ethics and Conflict of Interest

As public employees, we serve in positions of trust. Our conduct directly reflects on the reputation and integrity of the George County School District. Employees must avoid both actual and perceived conflicts of interest and carry out their duties objectively and responsibly.

A conflict of interest arises when personal, financial, or relational interests interfere – or appear to interfere – with an employee’s ability to perform job responsibilities impartially.

Examples of Potential Conflicts of Interest:

- Outside employment that interferes with District duties, scheduling, or overtime obligations
- Significant financial interest in a vendor, contractor, or business working with the District
- Romantic or personal relationships that create a supervisory-subordinate dynamic
- Soliciting money, gifts, purchases, or donations during work hours or in workspaces

Employee Responsibility

Employees who believe they may have a conflict of interest, or the appearance of one, must promptly disclose the situation to their supervisor. Transparency and open communication are essential to preserving trust and accountability.

All employees are required to review and adhere to the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct at the beginning of each school year. Although specifically designed for certified staff, its principles apply to all employees and are expected to guide conduct throughout the District.

Student Welfare, Health Services, and Family Communication

The George County School District is committed to protecting student safety, supporting student health needs, and maintaining strong partnerships with families. The following guidelines outline employee responsibilities related to reporting abuse, administering medication, and communicating effectively with parents and guardians.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Under the Mississippi Code of 1972, certain professionals – and any individual with reasonable cause – are legally required to report suspected child abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters include:

- Attorneys
- Physicians, dentists, interns, and residents
- Nurses and psychologists
- Teachers and school principals
- Social workers and child caregivers
- Ministers
- Law enforcement officers
- Any other person who reasonably suspects abuse or neglect

Immunity from Civil Liability

Anyone who reports suspected abuse or neglect in good faith is protected from civil liability. Absolute proof is not required. Investigations are conducted by Child Protective Services.

Steps to Take if You Suspect Abuse or Neglect

- Remain calm.
- Assure the child that you believe them.
- Protect the child's privacy; share information only with those who need to know.
- Immediately report concerns to the school administrator, school nurse, or school counselor.

Administration of Medication to Students

Only school personnel who have completed Assisted Medication Administration Training may assist students with medication. All medications must be stored securely in a location designated by school administration and administered only by trained staff.

Requirements for Medication Administration

- A Medication Authorization Form signed by the parent or guardian is required each school year.
- Medications must be in their original, properly labeled containers.
- Prescription labels must include:
 - Student's name
 - Medication name
 - Dosage
 - Route of administration
 - Time to be given
 - Prescribing physician's name

Parents are encouraged to request a separate, labeled container from the pharmacist for school use.

Only the school nurse or school administration may administer limited over-the-counter medications, and only with written parental authorization. If neither is available, the parent or guardian must come to school to administer the medication.

Teacher and Parent Communication

The District values open, consistent communication between school staff and families. Strong partnerships contribute to student success and a positive educational experience.

Communication Expectations

Teachers are required to:

- Use School Status to make at least five (5) individual parent/guardian contacts weekly.
- Make at least one (1) class or group contact weekly.
- Schedule parent-teacher conferences as needed to discuss student progress or concerns.

Guidelines for Addressing Parent Concerns

1. Listen

- Allow parents to fully express concerns without interruption.
- Seek to understand the root of the issue.

- Consider the situation from the parent’s perspective.
- Acknowledge feelings respectfully.

2. Acknowledge

- Validate stress or frustration.
- Show empathy and express appropriate understanding.
- If outside the school’s control, explain possible next steps and offer support.

3. Problem Solve

- Remain calm and avoid arguments.
- Separate emotions from the issue.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- Restate concerns to confirm understanding.
- Present facts clearly and objectively.
- Focus on solutions and collaborative next steps.

Through vigilance in protecting students, careful management of health needs, and strong communication with families, the George County School District promotes a safe, supportive, and student-centered learning environment.

WORKPLACE PROBLEM RESOLUTION AND WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION

The George County School District is committed to fairness, accountability, and ethical conduct. Employees are encouraged to raise concerns promptly so that issues can be addressed effectively and work relationships remain positive and productive. No employee who follows established reporting procedures will face discrimination or retaliation.

Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution

Unresolved workplace concerns can lead to misunderstandings and dissatisfaction. To promote timely and equitable solutions, the District provides a structured process for addressing concerns unrelated to discrimination, harassment, or bullying (which have separate complaint procedures).

Employees who believe a policy has been improperly applied, treated inequitably, or have other workplace concerns should:

1. **Notify their immediate supervisor** promptly, either verbally or by email. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue fairly at this level.
2. **Escalate the concern to the Director of Human Resources** if the issue remains unresolved or involves the supervisor.

The Director of Human Resources may collaborate with the Superintendent to investigate and resolve the matter. Employees may be asked to complete a formal complaint form. When a written complaint is submitted, the Director or Superintendent will conduct any necessary investigation and, when feasible, provide a written response within ten (10) working days.

Whistleblower Responsibility and Protection

To uphold the highest ethical standards and ensure compliance with all state and federal laws, employees are expected to report any suspected unlawful, unethical, or improper conduct. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Corruption or fraud
- Financial mismanagement
- Abuse of authority
- Violations of law or policy

Reports should be made immediately to a supervisor or another appropriate administrator.

Protection from Retaliation

In accordance with applicable state and federal law, employees who report suspected violations – either verbally or in writing – are protected from retaliation, disciplinary action, or penalty. This protection also applies to individuals reporting concerns on behalf of another employee.

However, knowingly making a false report is not protected and may result in disciplinary action.

Maintaining a culture of integrity and accountability is a shared responsibility. Employees are encouraged to speak up when concerns arise to help safeguard the values and reputation of the District.

HARASSMENT/BULLYING PREVENTION POLICY AND COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

The George County School District is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful, and inclusive workplace free from harassment, discrimination, and bullying. The District strictly prohibits conduct that discriminates against or harasses any individual based on race, color, national origin, ancestry, citizenship status, sex, sexual orientation, pregnancy, marital or parental status, religion, age, disability, military service (past or present), genetic information, or any other legally protected status. This protection also extends to individuals associated with a person in a protected class.

Prohibited conduct includes harassment, bullying, or discrimination in any interaction involving employees, students, parents, volunteers, visitors, applicants, or business partners – regardless of whether the victim belongs to a protected class. This policy applies on school property, at school-

sponsored events, on school buses, and off-campus when conduct disrupts the work or educational environment.

This policy is supported by state and federal laws, including Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX (2020), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA), and Mississippi's anti-bullying statute (SB 2015).

All employees, supervisors, managers, and administrators share responsibility for maintaining a workplace free of unlawful conduct. The District will promptly and thoroughly investigate all complaints and will maintain confidentiality to the greatest extent possible.

Employees who violate this policy are subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Retaliation is strictly prohibited against any applicant or employee who:

- Files a good-faith complaint of harassment, discrimination, or bullying;
- Participates in an investigation, hearing, or legal proceeding;
- Opposes unlawful conduct; or
- Exercises legal rights related to discrimination or harassment.

Employees with questions may contact the Director of Operations at 601-947-6993 ext. 2202. Individuals who believe they have experienced harassment or bullying may file a written complaint. Forms are available on the District's Human Resources webpage and at the District Office or any school or department office.

Prohibited Conduct

Harassment or bullying includes verbal, written, electronic, or physical behavior that unreasonably interferes with work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile, offensive, or abusive work environment.

Examples include:

- Racial or ethnic slurs
- Ridiculing or demeaning a person or group based on a protected characteristic
- Threats or conduct that places an employee in reasonable fear of harm
- Damage to personal property

A hostile work environment exists when conduct is both perceived as harassment or bullying by the victim and is severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination and includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when:

- Submission is made a term or condition of employment;
- Employment decisions are based on submission to or rejection of such conduct; or
- The conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment may be overt or subtle and can include:

- Repeated attempts to initiate unwanted personal or romantic relationships
- Employment decisions tied to acceptance or rejection of advances
- Sexual jokes, comments, or propositions
- Displaying inappropriate images, leering, or staring
- Unwanted physical contact

It may occur between individuals of any gender and may involve employees, supervisors, students, visitors, contractors, or others associated with the school system.

This policy also applies to electronic communications. Employees may not use any George County Public Schools communication system to harass or offend others.

Reporting Procedures

Employees or volunteers who believe they have been subjected to discrimination, harassment, or bullying are encouraged to inform the offending individual that the behavior is unwelcome, if they feel safe doing so. They should report the matter promptly to their immediate supervisor. If uncomfortable reporting to a supervisor, they may contact the Director of Human Resources or Chief of Operations directly.

Supervisors who receive reports of suspected misconduct must immediately notify the Director of Human Resources or Chief of Operations. Complaints involving the Superintendent must be directed to the President of the School Board. Employees or volunteers who witness or have reliable information about misconduct must also report it.

Reporting Timeline

Reports should be submitted as soon as possible, and no later than five (5) calendar days after the incident or after becoming aware of it.

A written complaint form must include:

- Name of the person reporting
- Description and date(s) of the alleged misconduct
- Names of affected individuals
- Names of witnesses
- Any other relevant information

Completed forms should be submitted to the Director of Human Resources or Chief of Operations, who will initiate an immediate investigation.

Investigation and Resolution

Information gathered during an investigation will be shared only with individuals who have a legitimate need to know. Participants will be instructed to maintain confidentiality.

Within ten (10) working days of receiving the complaint, the Principal or Director will schedule meetings with involved parties when feasible. All parties may present evidence and identify witnesses. Findings will be documented in writing.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the supervisor will notify the complainant and appropriate parties of the outcome and any resulting disciplinary action.

Appeals

If dissatisfied with the resolution, the complainant may submit a written appeal to the School Board within ten (10) working days of receiving the decision. The Board will allow the complainant to appear within twenty (20) working days of receiving the appeal and will issue a written decision within ten (10) working days following the appearance.

False Allegations

Knowingly making a false or malicious accusation is a serious offense and will result in disciplinary action.

For questions or concerns regarding this policy, employees may contact the Director of Human Resources or the Director of Operations at 601-947-6993 ext. 2202.

ATTENDANCE AT WORK

The Importance of Attendance

Regular and punctual attendance is essential for a successful and productive work environment. Employees who consistently arrive on time and maintain regular attendance demonstrate their commitment to being a valued member of the George County School District team. Frequent absences, tardiness, or early departures place additional burdens on colleagues and negatively impact morale and productivity.

Reporting Absences

We understand that there may be occasions when you need to be absent. In such cases, it is your responsibility to notify your supervisor as soon as possible, following the proper notification procedures. Middle and high school teachers must also report their absences in the Substitute Teacher Placement System, if applicable. Additionally, if you need to leave work during your scheduled hours, please ensure you clock out according to building procedures.

Returning to Work

If you are absent for three (3) or more consecutive calendar days due to illness, you may be required to provide medical documentation confirming your ability to return to work, with or without work restrictions.

Attendance Issues

Absences or leaving work without approval, chronic tardiness, or abuse of scheduled work hours are considered neglect of duty. The George County School District monitors employee attendance and addresses issues consistently to ensure a smooth operation.

Absences not covered by paid leave will result in deductions from your paycheck. Please verify the accuracy of reported absences with the School Secretary. Any necessary corrections or adjustments will be made as appropriate.

PERSONAL APPEARANCE AND ATTIRE

As role models for our students, all employees are expected to maintain a professional appearance and dress appropriately for the school environment. Clothing, hair, and general appearance should not disrupt the classroom, work environment, or violate health and safety standards. Employees must present themselves in a neat, clean, and professional manner. Visible tattoos and body piercings are not permitted.

Specific guidelines for attire include:

- Jeans or pants with holes are not considered professional attire and are not allowed. Jeans without holes may be worn if approved by the building administrator.
- Hats or ball caps may be worn outside for protection but are not permitted inside the buildings.
- T-shirts, unless they support a school activity or sport during approved events, are not considered professional attire and are not allowed during school hours.
- Tongue rings are not permitted.
- Flip-flops should not be worn due to safety concerns.

- Sweat suits and wind suits are not allowed, except for P.E. coaches, who must maintain a professional appearance.
- Tank tops, low-cut shirts, or clothing that reveals undergarments are not permitted.
- If leggings, jeggings, or meggings are worn, tops must be longer than fingertip length and professionally appropriate.
- Inappropriate makeup, hair color, or hairstyles that appear costume-like are not allowed.

EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK AND EVALUATIONS

At the George County School District, we believe every employee deserves regular and constructive feedback on their performance. Supervisors will provide ongoing evaluations to foster open communication, offer suggestions for improvement, and set goals.

Performance evaluations will be conducted for all new employees at the end of their Introductory Period and annually thereafter. Supervisors will ensure employees are informed about the evaluation process. Employees facing ongoing or significant performance challenges will receive close supervision and support, with clear standards and objectives. More frequent performance reviews will be scheduled to monitor progress and ensure corrective actions are being taken.

Different evaluation procedures are in place for various employee groups.

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT, INNOVATION, AND RECOGNITION

The George County School District values employee engagement and believes that continuous improvement and meaningful recognition strengthen our schools and workplace culture. We encourage all employees to contribute ideas and celebrate the accomplishments that make our district successful.

Encouraging Innovation and Suggestions

Innovation plays an important role in enhancing our educational programs and work environment. Employees are encouraged to share ideas or strategies that may improve any area of the district, including:

- Instruction and educational practices
- Operations and efficiency
- Safety and health
- Employee morale
- Student or employee activities
- Overall workplace effectiveness

Employees should document their suggestions and submit them to their supervisor. Supervisors will ensure the ideas are reviewed with appropriate personnel and will provide feedback or a response.

Recognition and Rewards

The District deeply appreciates the dedication and contributions of its employees in creating a positive learning and working environment. To recognize outstanding efforts and achievements, the District offers various forms of acknowledgment, which may include:

- Public recognition at School Board meetings
- Features on the District's social media platforms
- Other celebratory initiatives highlighting employee success

Through open communication, innovation, and recognition, we strive to foster a culture of collaboration, excellence, and appreciation across the George County School District.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT, LICENSURE, AND TRAVEL GUIDELINES

The George County School District is committed to supporting employee growth while ensuring compliance with district and state requirements. The following guidelines outline expectations for professional development, maintaining licensure, and work-related travel.

Professional Development

Whenever possible, professional development opportunities will be provided through in-house training. Employees requesting professional development must submit a Professional Development Request Form to the district office at least two (2) weeks in advance.

Out-of-state professional development (excluding Mobile, Alabama) and overnight travel with students require prior approval from the School Board. Because School Board meetings are typically held once per month, employees should plan accordingly to meet submission deadlines.

CEUs and Maintaining Licensure

Employees must successfully complete all required staff development activities as a condition of continued employment.

Certified staff are responsible for monitoring their licensure validity dates and completing the required Continuing Education Units (CEUs) or college credit hours to maintain valid Mississippi licensure. Failure to maintain proper licensure may affect employment status.

Travel and Work-Related Expenses

All work-related travel and anticipated expenses must be submitted in advance using the Professional Development Request Form and approved prior to travel.

After travel is completed, employees must submit a Reimbursement Request Form to report expenses. Employees who use their personal vehicle for approved work-related travel will be reimbursed according to state and district policies.

Additional information regarding allowable travel expenses and reimbursable costs is available through the District Business Office.

GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT RECRUITMENT AND HIRING PROCESS

At George County School District, our goal is to create a positive and professional work environment that attracts and retains the most qualified individuals. We are committed to hiring candidates who not only meet the full requirements of each position but also align with our district's mission and values.

We strive to select individuals who will contribute to the overall success of our schools, while upholding our dedication to **equal employment opportunity** for all applicants.

As part of the hiring process, the District conducts **criminal background checks** and **reference checks** on all prospective employees. Additionally, in compliance with federal law, all new hires must provide **proof of eligibility to work in the United States**.

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES

Accurate classification of employees is essential for the effective administration of compensation and benefit programs, as well as for compliance with employment and tax laws. In accordance with federal regulations, all employees of the George County School District are classified as either **exempt** or **non-exempt**:

- **Exempt employees** are salaried and must perform executive, administrative, or professional duties. They are not eligible for overtime compensation.
- **Non-exempt employees** are paid hourly for all time worked, rounded to the nearest quarter hour, and are eligible to receive overtime pay.

The District also categorizes positions into two broad groups based on job function and responsibilities:

- **Certified positions**
- **Non-certified (classified) positions**

Each role is assigned a job classification based on factors such as performance expectations, working conditions, supervisory responsibilities, reporting structure, and overall workflow. Job descriptions are developed and maintained for all positions and outline the **essential functions, required qualifications, and key responsibilities** of the role. While comprehensive, these descriptions are not intended to be exhaustive lists of all duties and qualifications associated with a position.

Job descriptions and classifications are reviewed and updated regularly to ensure they reflect the current needs of the District. Job descriptions are available upon request through the **Human Resources Department** at the District Office and are also accessible on the **George County School District Human Resources webpage**.

JOB POSTINGS, ASSIGNMENT, TRANSFERS AND PROMOTIONS

The George County School District recognizes that employees may seek new opportunities for growth within the organization. Employees in good standing may request a transfer from one position or location to another by submitting a **Transfer Request Form**.

When a vacancy arises, the names, qualifications, years of experience, and other relevant information of current employees who are both qualified and have expressed interest in reassignment will be forwarded to the appropriate principal or supervisor for consideration. At the principal's or supervisor's discretion, an interview may be conducted to evaluate the employee's suitability for the position. Following this process, the principal or supervisor will make a **recommendation to the Superintendent** regarding the proposed transfer or promotion.

The **Superintendent** will make all final assignment decisions based on the **best interest of the district**, taking into account employee preferences as appropriate. Transfer and promotion decisions will be based on a thorough assessment of the employee's **qualifications, experience, training, knowledge, skills, abilities, and prior job performance**.

Principals are authorized to assign staff within their respective schools to positions that align with the individual's qualifications and the school's needs. Additionally, the District may transfer or reassign employees to other positions for which they are qualified, based on operational needs, the provision of disability accommodations, or other legitimate business reasons.

Additional Guidelines:

- **Transfer and promotion requests** expire at the end of the school year in which they are submitted.
- Employees currently on a **Plan of Improvement** are not eligible for transfer until the plan has been successfully completed.
- Employees will **not be retaliated against** for requesting a transfer or promotion.

WORK SCHEDULES AND BREAKS

Each school within the District sets its own operating hours, which may vary based on individual site needs.

For non-exempt (hourly) employees, the typical full-time workweek consists of 40 hours, generally structured as 8 hours per day, plus a 30-minute unpaid meal break. Specific daily and weekly schedules are determined by the employee's supervisor, principal, or designated administrator, in alignment with the operational needs of the District.

Work calendars are developed to optimize instructional effectiveness and operational efficiency. Supervisors maintain department-specific work calendars, which are also available upon request from the Business Department and on the District's Business Department website. All employees are expected to stay informed of their assigned workdays and schedules.

Exempt Professional Staff

Exempt (salaried) professional employees are expected to work a minimum of 6.5 hours per day and 40 hours per week, in accordance with district guidelines. The daily work schedule for exempt staff is determined by school or district administration and may require flexibility to accommodate district business and operational demands.

Work Year

The work year for "school year" employees – such as teachers, paraprofessionals, and bus drivers, typically ranges between 180 and 240 days, depending on the position. Annual work calendars are published on the District website by June 30 for the upcoming school year.

Meal Periods and Breaks

- **Non-Exempt Employees:**
All full-time, non-exempt employees are entitled to a minimum 30-minute unpaid meal break each day. This break is in addition to their scheduled work hours and must be approved by their supervisor.
If a non-exempt employee is responsible for supervising students during the lunch period, the 30-minute break will be considered paid time.
- **Exempt Employees:**
Exempt employees receive meal breaks based on what best fits their workday, as determined by their supervisor and dependent on operational requirements and staffing needs.

OVERTIME AND TIME REPORTING

Overtime Policy

Non-exempt (hourly) employees are eligible for **overtime compensation** for all hours worked **in excess of 40 hours in a single workweek**. Please note that **paid leave (e.g., sick or vacation days)** does **not** count as time worked when calculating overtime eligibility.

Advance approval from the employee's **immediate supervisor, principal, or designated administrator** is required for any overtime work or changes to the regular work schedule.

- Principals are authorized to approve up to **two (2) hours of overtime per month** for employees under their supervision.
- Overtime exceeding that amount must be approved by the **employee's director/supervisor** and the **Superintendent**.

Except in emergency situations, employees must receive **reasonable advance notice** prior to being assigned overtime. Approved overtime must be reported on the employee's **regular time sheet**. Overtime will be compensated at a rate of **1.5 times the employee's regular hourly wage**, in accordance with federal labor law.

Time Reporting

All employees are required to **clock in and out** as directed by George County School District policy.

- **Electronic timekeeping** is mandatory for all employees.
- **Computer-generated time sheets** must be signed by both the employee and their supervisor or director at the end of each month.

Non-exempt employees are **not permitted** to begin work before or stay beyond their scheduled shift **without prior authorization**. Employees are also **not allowed to volunteer their work time**, as this violates wage and hour laws.

EMPLOYEE PAY GUIDELINES

Employees are paid monthly, with each pay period covering one calendar month. Paychecks are normally issued on the last business day of each month, except for December. Compensation is based on your total annual salary divided into twelve (12) equal monthly payments. Any overtime worked during a month is included in the following month's paycheck.

Pay is delivered via direct deposit, and paystubs are accessible through Active Resources. Payroll deductions include mandatory withholdings (such as taxes and state retirement) as well as optional deductions for insurance and retirement benefits, which are detailed further in the Benefits section of this handbook.

If you have any questions regarding your pay, please contact the Payroll Department at 601-947-6993, extension 2042, or via email.

OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT

The George County School District respects the personal time and choices of its employees and generally considers off-duty activities to be private matters. However, outside employment must not interfere with an employee's responsibilities to the district or create a conflict of interest. To ensure alignment with the district's mission and standards, the following guidelines apply to all employees engaging in work outside of their school district role:

- **No Interference with Job Duties:** Outside employment must not interfere with your regular work responsibilities, schedule, or availability, including any required overtime.
- **No Conflict of Interest:** The outside job must not conflict with the interests of the district or disrupt the educational environment.
- **No Use of District Resources:** Employees may not use district facilities, equipment, or work time for any activities related to outside employment.
- **Limitations During Leave:** Employees may not engage in outside employment while on an approved unpaid leave of absence or if out of work due to personal illness or injury.

Employees are encouraged to consult with their supervisor if they are unsure whether a potential outside job complies with these guidelines.

EMPLOYEE ARREST

Any employee who is arrested or charged with a felony or misdemeanor must notify their immediate supervisor and the Superintendent as soon as possible – and no later than 24 hours after the arrest – **and before returning to work.** Failure to report such incidents may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Additionally, under state law, specific procedures apply when an arrest warrant is issued for a licensed public school employee for an alleged offense that occurred during the performance of their official duties.

USE OF TELEPHONES

School district telephones are intended primarily for work-related or business purposes. Personal calls should be limited to brief, necessary conversations during designated break times – except in emergencies or urgent situations requiring immediate attention. The same expectations apply to the use of personal cell phones.

Teachers and instructional staff should refrain from using cell phones during instructional time. Additionally, **cell phones and mobile devices are strictly prohibited for both teachers and students during all state testing sessions.**

Employees operating a vehicle on behalf of the school district must not use a cell phone while driving unless utilizing a hands-free device.

Furthermore, **staff members are prohibited from using text messaging to communicate directly with individual students.** If a student sends a text message to a staff member, it must be reported to the building principal immediately.

USE OF COMPUTER SYSTEMS AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

The George County School District's computer network, electronic information, and communication systems are the property of the district and are intended for educational or official work-related purposes only. Use of these systems is governed by the district's **Computer Use Policy**, and all employees are required to comply with the terms outlined in that policy.

Users should understand that there is **no expectation of privacy** when using district-owned systems. The school district reserves the right to monitor system usage and review any materials stored, transmitted, or accessed on its network at any time.

For detailed guidelines and responsibilities related to the use of district technology, please refer to the **George County School District Computer Use Policy**.

BENEFITS AND LEAVES OF ABSENCE

The success of the George County School District depends on the health and well-being of its employees. We offer a comprehensive range of benefits and time-off options to support you and your family and promote overall wellness. These benefits are generally available to full-time regular employees who work at least 20 hours per week. As benefits may change over time based on ongoing evaluations of their effectiveness and value, this section serves as a summary and guideline rather than a binding contract.

HEALTH AND PRESCRIPTION DRUG INSURANCE

Recognizing the importance of affordable health care, the George County School District offers medical and prescription drug coverage to eligible employees. Employees are responsible for a portion of the monthly premium, which may vary annually. Premium contributions are made through pre-tax payroll deductions. Detailed plan summaries are available and outline specific coverage and cost information.

The District also offers employees the opportunity to participate in 403(b) and 457 retirement savings plans. Eligible employees may enroll or change their contributions on the first day of any month. These plans allow pre-tax contributions, enabling employees to build personal retirement savings.

Employees planning to retire should notify the School Board of their intended retirement date as early as possible, with a minimum of four months' notice strongly recommended to ensure timely processing of eligible benefits. Per Mississippi Public Employees Retirement System (PERS) regulations, employees may not terminate employment at the end of the school year with the intent to return the following school year solely to access their retirement contributions.

HOLIDAYS

Certified and classified employees on a 12-month contract (220, 230, or 240 days) are entitled to eight (8) paid legal holidays. Holiday pay is provided only if the employee is in paid status the workday before and after the holiday. If a holiday falls on a Saturday or Sunday, it will be observed on the day designated by the Governor.

The district observes specific holidays, and school system and office closures are based on the official school calendar. Please refer to the calendar for specific dates.

PAID VACATION

Employees scheduled to work 240 days annually receive ten (10) paid vacation days per year. Those scheduled for 230 days receive five (5) paid vacation days. Vacation must be scheduled in advance with the employee's principal, supervisor, or director.

Vacation accrual follows the fiscal year (July 1–June 30). A maximum of fifteen (15) unused vacation days may be carried over to the next fiscal year with prior approval. Any excess will be converted to sick leave. Vacation requests should be submitted at least three (3) working days in advance.

- **Non-exempt employees:** Vacation may be taken in increments of fifteen (15) minutes or more.
- **Exempt employees:** Vacation must be taken in half or full-day increments.

Unused vacation days are credited toward retirement upon separation from the district. Vacation may not be taken within the last two weeks of employment to allow time for training replacements.

BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Employees may use up to three (3) consecutive days of sick or personal leave in the event of a death in the immediate family. Immediate family includes: spouse, parents, parents-in-law, children, sons/daughters-in-law, siblings, siblings-in-law, grandparents, grandchildren, or an individual who served as a custodial parent for a significant period.

PAID PERSONAL LEAVE

Eligible employees are granted two (2) paid personal leave days each fiscal year, credited after July 1.

Advance notice and supervisor approval are required for personal leave, except in emergencies. Certified staff may not take personal leave on the day before or after a school holiday or on the first or last day of school, unless for the death or funeral of an immediate family member, deployment of an immediate family member, or if the employee has either:

- At least ten (10) years of service with the district, or
- At least thirty (30) unused personal leave days earned during employment with the district.

Employees may accrue up to five (5) personal days. Any excess will be converted to sick leave. Leave use for non-exempt employees is subject to supervisor discretion.

PAID SICK LEAVE

Sick leave is provided for:

- **Personal illness, injury or childbirth**
- Illness or injury of an immediate family member (parent, spouse, or child)
- Medical appointments that cannot be scheduled outside working hours
- Employees working 240 days: 10 sick days per year
- Bus drivers (hired after July 1, 2002): 4 sick days per year
- All other full-time employees: 7 sick days per year (minimum)
- **Exempt employees** may take sick leave in half-day or full-day increments.
- **Non-exempt employees** may use sick leave in quarter-hour increments.

Employees must notify their supervisor of sick leave needs as soon as possible, and at least one hour prior to the scheduled start time, unless extenuating circumstances prevent timely notice. Medical documentation may be required for absences of three or more consecutive calendar days. Unused sick leave carries over from year to year without limit. Transferred sick leave from other Mississippi public school districts will be credited for retirement purposes. Sick leave is not paid out unless the employee retires. Employees may not use sick leave to extend service time after their final working day.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

The George County School District adheres to the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) in all employment practices. The procedure for requesting FMLA leave is outlined as follows:

Eligibility

An employee is eligible for FMLA leave if:

- They have been employed by the school district for at least 52 weeks, and
 - They have worked at least 1,250 actual work hours in the previous school year.
- For new or part-time employees who do not meet these criteria, please refer to the Unpaid Leave section of this employee handbook.

Requesting FMLA Leave

Employees must notify their supervisor at least 30 days in advance of their need for family or medical leave when the need is foreseeable (e.g., birth, adoption, planned medical treatment). If 30 days' notice is not possible, employees must provide notice as soon as practicable – usually the same day or the next business day.

When the need for leave is not foreseeable, employees should inform their supervisor as soon as possible.

Employees must follow the school district's regular procedures for reporting leave and provide sufficient information to indicate that the leave qualifies for FMLA. If the leave is for a reason previously designated as FMLA leave, employees should specify this when making the request. If there are changes to the scheduled leave, employees must inform their supervisor as soon as possible.

Supervisors must promptly notify the Human Resources Department or FMLA Administrator about the employee's request for FMLA leave. Human Resources will manage the processing of all FMLA-related paperwork.

Certification Requirement

For FMLA leave requests, employees may be asked to submit a completed certification form to support the need for leave. This form will be provided within five business days of the employee's notification. The completed form must be returned within 15 calendar days. If the employee cannot provide the form within 15 days, they must explain the delay. Failure to submit a completed form may result in a delay or denial of FMLA leave.

FMLA Leave Entitlements

Eligible employees can take FMLA leave for the following reasons:

- Incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal care, or childbirth
- To care for a child after birth or placement (within 12 months)
- To care for a spouse, child, or parent with a serious health condition
- For the employee's own serious health condition
- A qualifying exigency arising from a family member's military service
- To care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness

Leave Duration

An employee is entitled to up to 12 workweeks of FMLA leave within a 12-month period, except for leaves to care for a covered service member, which allows up to 26 workweeks in a single 12-month period. The 12-month period is measured from July 1 of each year.

If leave is taken for multiple qualifying reasons, the combined total may not exceed 12 workweeks (unless for a covered service member, which is limited to 26 workweeks).

TYPES OF LEAVE AND CONDITIONS FOR USE OF LEAVE

Consecutive, Intermittent, and Reduced Schedule Leave

Employees may take FMLA leave in different formats: as a block of continuous time, intermittently, or on a reduced schedule, as described below:

1. **Consecutive Leave:** This refers to leave taken for a continuous period of time for any of the reasons permitted by FMLA.
2. **Intermittent Leave:** This leave is taken in separate periods, rather than as one continuous block. For example, intermittent leave might include taking one day per week over several months or taking leave on an occasional basis for medical appointments or other non-routine needs. Non-exempt employees may take intermittent leave in increments of 15 minutes.
3. **Reduced Schedule Leave:** This involves a reduction in the employee's regular work hours per day for a specified period of time. For example, an employee may request to work part-time to assist in caring for a parent with a serious health condition.

Intermittent or reduced schedule leave can only be taken when medically necessary for the employee's or a family member's serious health condition, or for a covered service member's serious injury or illness. The leave should be taken when the medical need is best accommodated through intermittent or reduced schedule leave. This type of leave can be used for:

- Planned or unanticipated medical treatment, or periodic treatment required by a healthcare provider (e.g., chemotherapy or prenatal care).
- Recovery from a serious health condition or a covered service member's injury or illness.
- Providing care or psychological comfort to a covered family member or service member.
- Incapacity due to a chronic serious health condition, or because of the serious injury or illness of a covered service member.
- A qualifying exigency related to a family member's military service.

Scheduling Planned Medical Treatment

When planning medical treatment that qualifies for FMLA leave, employees should work with their supervisor to schedule the treatment in a way that minimizes disruption to the school district's operations, subject to the healthcare provider's approval. Ideally, employees should consult their supervisor before scheduling treatment to ensure that the timing works well for both the school district and the employee. In some cases, the district may require employees to reschedule treatment if there is justifiable cause, provided the healthcare provider approves any changes.

Temporary Transfer

If an employee requires intermittent or reduced schedule leave for medical treatment, recovery, or other qualified reasons, the school district may temporarily transfer the employee to another job (if available) that accommodates the leave request while maintaining equivalent pay and benefits. Special arrangements may also be needed for instructional employees who need intermittent or reduced-schedule leave and will be absent for more than 20% of the workdays in the leave period (e.g., more than five days within a five-week period).

Both Spouses Working for the School District

If both spouses are employed by the school district and request FMLA leave for the birth or placement of a healthy child (by adoption or foster care), or to care for a parent with a serious health condition, they will be entitled to a combined total of 12 weeks of leave within a 12-month period. If either spouse uses part of their 12-week entitlement for one of these reasons, they may still use the remaining balance for other FMLA reasons within the same entitlement period.

LEAVE TAKEN BY INSTRUCTIONAL EMPLOYEES NEAR THE END OF AN ACADEMIC TERM

1. If an instructional employee takes leave for any reason more than five (5) weeks before the end of an academic term, the School District may require the employee to continue the leave until the end of the academic term, provided the leave lasts at least three (3) weeks and the employee would otherwise return during the three-week period before the end of the term. "Instructional employee" refers to those primarily employed to teach or instruct students in a class, small group, or individual setting, including teachers, athletic coaches, driving instructors, and special education assistants (e.g., sign language interpreters for the hearing impaired). It does not include teacher assistants, aides, or other non-instructional staff such as counselors, psychologists, cafeteria employees, maintenance workers, or bus drivers.
2. If an employee begins a leave during the five-week period before the end of an academic term for a reason other than their own serious health condition, the School District may require the employee to continue the leave until the end of the term if the leave lasts more than two (2) weeks and the employee would return during the two-week period before the term concludes.
3. If an employee begins a leave during the three-week period before the end of an academic term for a reason other than their own serious health condition, the School District may require the employee to continue the leave until the end of the academic term if the leave lasts more than five (5) working days.

Substitution of Paid Leave

Employees must use any accrued paid sick leave to cover any unpaid portion of medical leave taken for their own serious health condition (including pregnancy/maternity leave). This means that paid leave and unpaid FMLA leave will run concurrently. In addition, employees must use accrued paid personal leave and vacation time (in that order) for any unpaid FMLA leave taken for reasons other than their own serious health condition. When the leave is for the employee's own serious health condition, paid sick leave must be used before any personal leave or vacation time is substituted.

STAFF SUBSTITUTE PROCEDURES

When a staff member is absent, a substitute may be requested to cover their duties. The following guidelines outline when a substitute is eligible to be requested.

Certified Staff

Certified staff (including inclusion teachers) are eligible for a substitute beginning on the first day of absence.

Exceptions: These positions are not eligible for substitutes.

- Interventionists
- Instructional Coaches
- Counselors

Non-Certified Staff

Eligibility for substitutes for non-certified staff depends on the position.

A substitute may be requested on the first day of absence for:

- Kindergarten Assistants
- Special Education Assistants
- Staff responsible for their own class or program (e.g., computer lab, ISI, activity/special area)
- Bus Drivers
- For clerical staff and all other non-certified positions, a substitute may be requested after the third consecutive day of absence.

MEDICAL INSURANCE AND OTHER BENEFITS DURING FMLA LEAVE

During approved FMLA leave, employees are entitled to retain all job-related benefits for any portion of the leave where they are using available paid leave. During this paid portion, the employee's health insurance premiums will continue to be deducted from their paycheck as usual.

For any unpaid portion of FMLA leave, the School District will continue to pay its share of the employee's medical insurance premiums. The employee is responsible for paying their share of the premium. Failure to pay may result in the loss of coverage. The employee must submit their portion of the monthly premium on or before the 20th day of the month following the start of the unpaid leave.

If the employee does not return to work after their FMLA leave ends, they will be required to reimburse the School District for its portion of the medical insurance premiums paid during the unpaid leave, unless the failure to return is due to a serious health condition or other circumstances beyond the employee's control.

Any unused employment benefits accrued by the employee before the start of the leave will not be lost and will be available upon the employee's return to work.

RETURN TO WORK AFTER FMLA LEAVE

An employee who returns to work after a family or medical leave is entitled to return to their previous position or an equivalent one with the same pay and benefits. If the leave was taken for the employee's own serious health condition (except for intermittent or reduced-schedule leave), the employee may be required to submit a completed fitness-for-duty certification form to confirm that the health condition no longer prevents them from performing the essential functions of their job. If the required certification is not provided, the employee's return to work may be delayed until it is received. For any questions regarding family or medical leave, employees should contact Human Resources.

JURY DUTY LEAVE

School district employees may be called for jury duty, and the district will excuse their absence. Serving on a jury will not affect absentee, sick, or other leave benefits.

Jury duty leave will be provided with pay. Employees are not required to return jury duty fees. However, if an employee is released from jury duty during school hours, they are expected to return to work for the remainder of the day. Employees must notify their supervisor, director, or principal immediately upon receiving a jury summons. A copy of the jury summons should be submitted to the supervisor, along with proof of attendance upon completion of jury service.

MILITARY AND UNIFORMED SERVICES LEAVE

The George County School District fully complies with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1993 (USERRA) and Mississippi state law in its employment practices. Upon written request, employees who are selected or called for military service will be granted a leave of absence without pay. Employees who are members of reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces are entitled to up to 15 days of leave without loss of pay, time, annual leave, or professional rating when ordered to duty for training exercises.

Employees who provide advance notice and take a leave of absence for any period of active duty or training service in the Uniformed Services are entitled to continued employment. After completing their military service, employees will be re-employed in accordance with federal and state law. Employees must notify their supervisor as soon as they become aware of their military leave schedule and complete their service upon returning from military duty.

UNPAID LEAVE

In place of FMLA leave, a classified employee may be granted Non-Qualifying General Medical Leave for up to a maximum of 20 unpaid workdays within a 12-month period, for approved medical emergencies.

The purpose of this policy is to protect the employment and benefits of both newly hired and veteran employees who are scheduled to work less than 1,250 hours per year, to the extent allowed by law, and in a fair and consistent manner. This policy is not intended to supplement or increase any benefits already provided under FMLA. All Non-Qualifying General Medical Leave requests require final approval from the Human Resources Department.

RESPONSIBILITY OF CLASSROOM TEACHERS DURING ABSENCE

Classroom teachers are required to maintain a substitute teacher file at all times. This file should include essential information for substitute teachers, such as the class schedule, class roster, lesson plans, current duty schedules, and any other relevant details. The principal will determine the appropriate location for storing this file.

WORKPLACE SAFETY, HEALTH AND SECURITY

While the school district cannot guarantee protection from willful or reckless acts by third parties or other employees, ensuring a safe, clean, and healthy work environment for employees, students, and visitors is a top priority for everyone at the George County School District. All employees are expected to adhere to all relevant safety, health, and security rules, regulations, policies, and laws that apply to our district.

GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT HEALTH CLINICS

The **George County School District Health Clinics** provide comprehensive medical care to our students and staff. Our services include the treatment of minor acute injuries and illnesses, wellness visits, sports physicals, and immunizations. We also offer routine lab testing, chronic illness management, and mental/behavioral health assessments. Additionally, our clinics provide health education, prescriptions, and medication management. **For more details, please refer to page 3 of this handbook.**

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

The George County School District will actively monitor the spread of communicable diseases and reserves the right to adjust procedures as necessary in accordance with CDC, federal, and state guidelines. Employees are encouraged to visit the district's website regularly to stay informed with the latest updates.

SUICIDE TRAINING

The George County School District acknowledges that suicide is a leading cause of death among youth and must be addressed with the utmost seriousness. In line with this, the district requires all employees to complete an online suicide prevention training course. If you suspect that a student or employee is experiencing depression and may be contemplating suicide, you are obligated to promptly complete a mental health referral and submit it to the school counselor or an administrator.

OUR COMMITMENT TO SAFETY AND NON-VIOLENCE

The George County Board of Education upholds a strict "Zero Tolerance" policy regarding workplace safety and violence. Any violation of this policy will result in immediate termination of employment. Employees are prohibited from bringing firearms, explosives, incendiary devices, martial arts equipment, or any other weapons into the workplace or any work-related setting, regardless of whether or not they are licensed to carry such weapons. If you have experienced or witnessed any threats or acts of violence in the workplace, you are required to notify your supervisor or an appropriate administrator immediately. Retaliation against anyone who reports workplace violence is strictly prohibited by Board policy. For more details, please refer to the Workplace Violence Prevention Policy GAEA Staff Protection.

ACCIDENTS AND WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Any injury, no matter how minor, that occurs while at work must be reported to your immediate supervisor so that appropriate treatment or Workers' Compensation claims can be processed. If you are unable to continue working due to an injury, you will be compensated for the remainder of the day. Before returning to work, you must provide medical documentation on a form provided by the school district. All accidents must include statements from those involved, as well as any witnesses.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

If you believe an emergency situation exists or is imminent, immediately call 911 for fire, police, or emergency medical services. Additionally, you must notify your supervisor or an administrator, who will then contact the employee's family member or emergency contact, as necessary.

Employees should refrain from using personal cell phones to make unauthorized emergency notifications to other individuals, including school personnel.

In line with applicable laws, the school district has implemented lockdown procedures to ensure the safety of all employees and students. Regular training and drills are conducted to support these measures.

The Superintendent, with Board approval, has the authority to close or delay the start of any schools due to weather, health, or other emergencies. According to Mississippi Public Schools Accountability Standards, all missed school days must be made up unless otherwise granted by state government or the Mississippi Department of Education. School closures will be communicated through WRBE local

radio station, WLOX TV, the district's automated phone messaging system, website, and social media. If no announcement is made, school will be open, and attendance is required.

In accordance with Board policy, a delayed start due to inclement weather will result in a rescheduled start time. Employees who work more than 187 days are expected to report to work at the regular time, if possible. Supervisors must be notified if an employee is unable to report. All missed time must be made up.

Emergency procedures are posted in the Principal's office at each school. Employees are required to participate in all emergency drills and procedures. Please check with your school's principal for further details.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING

As a safety measure, school district employees should be aware that their work activities and communications may be subject to electronic monitoring. This includes, but is not limited to, telephones, computer files, and e-mails. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using the school district's electronic equipment. However, employees will not be monitored or recorded in areas designated for personal comfort or privacy, such as restrooms, locker rooms, or lounges, where their personal belongings are safeguarded.

MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

The school district may require an employee to undergo a fitness-for-duty examination to assess their ability to perform the essential duties of their position if their performance raises concerns. Additionally, the district may mandate a medical examination in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), or as permitted by other applicable laws or policies.

SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE

Smoking and the use of tobacco products, including vaping and e-cigarettes, by district employees and visitors are prohibited in school buildings, on school grounds and property, and in district vehicles, including school buses. Employees who are responsible for supervising students, whether on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities, are not permitted to use tobacco in any form while on duty or in attendance at such events.

ALCOHOL AND DRUG FREE WORKPLACE POLICIES GBRL, GBRM, GBRM-2

In accordance with the federal Drug-Free Workplace Act and as part of the George County School District's commitment to maintaining a safe, healthy, and productive work environment, we aim to minimize the risks posed by drug and alcohol use at the workplace. Employees who abuse drugs or alcohol, or who report to work under the influence, pose a safety threat to themselves, fellow employees, and students. As such, the Board has implemented a strict policy regarding drug and alcohol abuse.

The unlawful use, consumption, possession, manufacture, distribution, purchase, sale, transfer, storage, or offering for sale of alcohol, illegal narcotic drugs, hallucinogens, amphetamines, barbiturates, marijuana, or any other controlled substance (as defined by the federal Controlled Substances Act) on school district property, while on duty, or while operating school district vehicles or equipment is strictly prohibited. This policy extends to an employee's personal vehicle parked on district property or any vehicle used for work-related purposes.

Employees are also prohibited from being under the influence of illegal drugs or alcohol while on school district property, on duty, or while operating school district vehicles or equipment. Additionally, employees must not be impaired by prescription or over-the-counter medications during work hours.

The “workplace” includes any site where work is performed, including school buildings, other district premises, school-owned vehicles, or school-approved vehicles used to transport students. It also extends to off-campus events or activities, such as field trips or athletic events, where students are under the school district’s jurisdiction.

The district is committed to non-discrimination and reasonable accommodation for recovering addicts, alcoholics, or employees with a history of substance abuse treatment. We encourage employees to seek help before their drug or alcohol use affects their ability to perform their job functions or compromises the health and safety of themselves or others. We will support employees through referrals to rehabilitation programs, appropriate leaves of absence, and other measures, provided these accommodations do not impose an undue hardship or endanger the health and safety of the employee or others.

The district reserves the right to require drug and alcohol testing for employees based on reasonable suspicion, as outlined in Board Policy. In the event of an on-the-job accident, the district may also require an employee to submit to a drug and alcohol test when seeking medical care.

Employees must notify their supervisor within 24 hours if they are convicted of a drug-related offense that occurred in the workplace. The district will notify any federal agency from which it receives a grant of any such conviction within 10 days.

Upon receiving notice of a conviction involving a controlled substance violation in the workplace, the district will take appropriate action within 30 days, which may include:

1. Taking disciplinary action up to and including termination, or
2. Requiring the employee to participate in an approved rehabilitation program.

Disciplinary actions, including suspension, non-renewal, or termination, will follow the district's administrative regulations and procedures. Employees may be suspended without pay for up to 30 days or terminated for a first violation of this policy.

Employees who are aware of a colleague’s on-the-job substance use are required to inform their immediate supervisor.

The district’s staff development program includes drug-free awareness training to educate employees about the dangers of drug abuse. The personnel office will provide information on available drug

counseling services, the drug-free workplace policy, and penalties for violations. All employees will receive a copy of this policy and information about drug counseling upon employment and annually thereafter. Employees who violate this policy may face non-renewal, suspension, or termination, at the discretion of the Board.

Certified employees who are suspended or dismissed may also face suspension or revocation of their educator's license, as determined by the Mississippi Department of Education's Office of Educator Misconduct, depending on the severity of the offense.

ENDING EMPLOYMENT WITH THE GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT **RESIGNATION AND RETIREMENT**

Non-exempt employees who decide to resign should provide written notice to their supervisor, with a preference for at least two weeks' notice. Certified and professional employees are required to submit a minimum of thirty (30) days' written notice of resignation, whenever possible. This notice helps ensure an orderly transition of duties and minimizes disruptions to operations. Certified employees will not be released from their contracts unless a qualified replacement is available.

NON-RENEWAL, TERMINATION AND LAYOFF

Written notice of non-renewal of an employee's contract will be provided prior to the statutory deadline for notification of non-reemployment. In the case of a recommendation to not renew a contract, the following timelines apply:

- For building-level principals, the Superintendent will give notice of non-reemployment by March 1, without further board action.
- For teachers, administrators, or other professional educators, notice will be given by April 15, or within ten (10) days of the Governor's approval of the K-12 education funding budget, whichever is later.

Employees will be notified of any performance or behavior issues that, if unresolved, may result in termination. The Superintendent will take appropriate action following recommendations from supervisory staff. If an involuntary termination is necessary, written notice will be provided detailing the date of termination. Prior disciplinary actions and conferences will inform employees that failure to correct unacceptable behavior may lead to termination.

For certified employees with at least two years of service in the George County School District or in a Mississippi public school district, procedures for dismissal, suspension, or other disciplinary action are as follows:

- If an employee's conduct includes incompetence, neglect of duty, immoral conduct, intemperance, brutal treatment of students, or other good cause, the Superintendent may dismiss or suspend the employee. The employee will be notified of the reasons for suspension or

termination and will be informed of their right to a public hearing. If the employee requests a hearing, the school board will schedule it within five to thirty days of the request. If no hearing is requested within five calendar days, the termination or suspension will be effective as stated in the notice.

If termination is due to business reasons such as reorganization or a workforce reduction (layoff), notice will be given according to legal requirements.

AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT

Classified personnel are considered "at-will" employees. This means their employment with the George County School District is for an indefinite period and can be terminated by either the employee or the district, with or without cause, notice, or at any time. Nothing in this policy or any other district policy changes the at-will status unless a written agreement is made between the employee and the Superintendent. By signing the Employee Handbook Acknowledgement form, you acknowledge that your employment is at-will and that no provisions in this handbook create a contract of employment.

FINAL COMPENSATION AND CONTINUING BENEFITS

Employees who are involuntarily terminated will receive their final paycheck in accordance with applicable law and district policy. Employees separating from employment will also receive information on extending health insurance benefits under COBRA, details about the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), and options for converting any optional life insurance policies.

RETURN OF SCHOOL PROPERTY

Before their last workday, departing employees must return all district property, including:

- Keys, key cards, and badges
- Technology or other assigned equipment
- Files, computer storage devices, and any other school district-related records, in both printed and electronic formats

EXIT INTERVIEW PROCESS

As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we invite employees who are leaving the George County School District to participate in an exit interview. This process is entirely voluntary and is intended to gather honest feedback about your experiences while working with George County Public Schools. The insights you provide will help us improve our workplace environment. Completed exit interviews will be securely maintained in the office of the respective school or department.

REHIRE ELIGIBILITY

Former employees may be eligible for rehire if they previously held the same or a similar position successfully. Eligibility is limited to individuals who resigned in good standing or were laid off due to job reductions. Individuals who were terminated due to misconduct, performance issues, policy violations, or disciplinary actions are not eligible for rehire under any circumstances.

**EMPLOYEE
HANDBOOK
APPENDIX**

MISSISSIPPI EDUCATOR CODE OF ETHICS AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

1. Standard 1: Professional Conduct

An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards.

a. Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- i.** Encouraging and supporting colleagues in developing and maintaining high standards
- ii.** Respecting fellow educators and participating in the development of a professional teaching environment
- iii.** Engaging in a variety of individual and collaborative learning experiences essential to professional development designed to promote student learning
- iv.** Providing professional education services in a nondiscriminatory manner
- v.** Maintaining competence regarding skills, knowledge, and dispositions relating to his/her organizational position, subject matter and pedagogical practices
- vi.** Maintaining a professional relationship with parents of students and establish appropriate communication related to the welfare of their children

b. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- i.** Harassment of colleagues
- ii.** Misuse or mismanagement of tests or test materials
- iii.** Inappropriate language on school grounds or any school-related activity
- iv.** Physical altercations
- v.** Failure to provide appropriate supervision of students and reasonable disciplinary actions.

2. Standard 2: Trustworthiness

An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice and does not knowingly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district or educational institution.

a. Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- i.** Properly representing facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression
- ii.** Advocating for fair and equitable opportunities for all children
- iii.** Embodying for students the characteristics of honesty, diplomacy, tact, and fairness.

b. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- i.** Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting any of the following:
 - a)** employment history, professional qualifications, criminal history, certification/recertification
 - b)** information submitted to local, state, federal, and/or other governmental agencies
 - c)** information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel
 - d)** reasons for absences or leave
 - e)** information submitted in the course of an official inquiry or investigation
- ii.** Falsifying records or directing or coercing others to do so.

3. Standard 3. Unlawful Acts

An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes and local school board policies.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the commission or conviction of a felony or sexual offense. 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 or situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted.

4. Standard 4. Educator/Student Relationship

An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

a. Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

i. Fulfilling the roles of mentor and advocate for students in a professional relationship. A professional relationship is one where the educator maintains a position of teacher/student authority while expressing concern, empathy, and encouragement for students

ii. Nurturing the intellectual, physical, emotional, social and civic potential of all students

iii. Providing an environment that does not needlessly expose students to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement

iv. Creating, supporting, and maintaining a challenging learning environment for all students

b. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

i. Committing any act of child abuse

ii. Committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment

iii. Committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act

iv. Engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, national origin, religion or disability

v. Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs

vi. Soliciting, encouraging, participating or initiating inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, physical or romantic relationship with a student. Examples of these acts may include but not be limited to:

1) sexual jokes

2) sexual remarks

3) sexual kidding or teasing

4) sexual innuendo

5) pressure for dates or sexual favors

6) inappropriate touching, fondling, kissing or grabbing

7) rape

8) threats of physical harm

9) sexual assault

- 10) electronic communication such as texting
- 11) invitation to social networking
- 12) remarks about a student's body
- 13) consensual sex.

5. Standard 5. Educator Collegial Relationships

An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with colleagues, both in and outside the classroom

1. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the following:

- a. Revealing confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law
- b. Harming others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system
- c. Interfering with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities
- d. Discriminating against or coercing a colleague on the basis of race, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability or family status
- e. Using coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions of colleagues.

6. Standard 6. Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Use or Possession

An educator should refrain from the use of alcohol and/or tobacco during the course of professional practice and should never use illegal or unauthorized drugs

a. Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

i. Factually representing the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use and abuse to students during the course of professional practice

b. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

i. Being under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs

ii. Being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while documented as being under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages. A school-related activity includes but is not limited to, any activity that is sponsored by a school or a school system or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum such as club trips, etc. which involve students.

iii. Being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while documented using tobacco.

7. Standard 7. Public Funds and Property

An educator shall not knowingly misappropriate, divert, or use funds, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.

- a. Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Maximizing the positive effect of school funds through judicious use of said funds
 - ii. Modeling for students and colleagues the responsible use of public property
- b. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Knowingly misappropriating, diverting or using funds, personnel, property or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain
 - ii. Failing to account for funds collected from students, parents or any school-related function
 - iii. Submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay
 - iv. Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts
 - v. Using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing body.

8. Standard 8. Remunerative Conduct

An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

- a. Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Insuring that institutional privileges are not used for personal gain
 - ii. Insuring that school policies or procedures are not impacted by gifts or gratuities from any person or organization
- b. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. 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 governing body.
 - ii. Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local school board
 - iii. The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or to obtain special advantage. *(This standard shall not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service).*

9. Standard 9. Maintenance of Confidentiality

An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material, and other information covered by confidentiality agreements.

- a. Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Keeping in confidence information about students that has been obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a legitimate purpose or is required by law
 - ii. Maintaining diligently the security of standardized test supplies and resources
- b. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

i. Sharing confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information family status/income and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law.

ii. Violating confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, and violating local school board or state directions for the use of tests

iii. Violating other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy

10. Standard 10. Breach of Contract or Abandonment of Employment

An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local school board or educational agency for the duration of the contract.

a. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

i. Abandoning the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the school board

ii. Refusing to perform services required by the contract.

7 Miss. Code. R. § 3-14.18

Miss. Code Ann. § 37-1-3 (Revised 1/2011) Adopted 12/30/2015



Policy JRAB: Compliance with FERPA

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 07/08/2013 | **Last Revised Date:** 11/05/2024 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 04/08/2025

COMPLIANCE WITH FAMILY EDUCATION RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT OF 1974 (FERPA)

In accordance with the policy of the George County School District Board of Education, the following regulation shall govern the release of student records to students and members of the student's family, legal custodian, or legal guardian.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this regulation, the school district has used the following definitions of terms:

Student: Any person who attends or has attended a program of instruction sponsored by the board of education of this school district.

Eligible Student: A student or former student who has reached age 18 or is attending a post-secondary school, and who is no longer a dependent of the parent for federal tax purposes.

Parent: Either natural parent of a student unless his or her rights under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) have been removed by a court order; an adopted parent; a guardian; or an individual acting as a parent or guardian in the absence of the student's parent or guardian.

Education Records: Any item of information or record (in handwriting, print, computer media, video or audio tapes, film, microfilm, microfiche, or other medium) maintained by the school district, an employee of the district, or an agent of the district which is directly related to an identifiable student except:

1. A personal record, including informal notes, kept by a school staff member, which meets the following tests:
 - A. It was made as a personal memory aid;
 - B. It is in the sole possession of the individual who made it; or
 - C. Information contained in it has never been revealed or made available to any other person except the maker's temporary substitute;
2. An employment record which is used only in relation to a student's employment by the school district (employment for this purpose does not include activities for which a student receives a grade or credit in a course); or
3. Alumni records that relate to the student after the student no longer attends classes provided by the school district and the records do not relate to the person as a student.

Personal Identifier: Any data or information that makes the subject of a record known. This includes the student's name, the student's parents or other family member's name, the student's address, the student's social security number, a student number, a list of personal characteristics, or any other information that would make the student's identity known.

ANNUAL NOTIFICATION

Within the first month of each school year, the school district will publish a notice to parents and eligible students of their rights under the FERPA and this policy. The district will also send home with each student a bulletin listing these rights and the bulletin will be included with a packet of material provided parents or an eligible student when the student enrolls during the school year.

The notice will include the following:

1. The right of a student's parent or eligible student to inspect and review the student's education records;
2. The intent of the school district is to limit the disclosure of information contained in a student's education records except: (1) by the prior written consent of the student's parent or the eligible student, (2) as directory information, or, (3) under certain limited circumstances, as permitted by the FERPA;
3. The right of a student's parent or an eligible student to seek to correct parts of the student's education records which he or she believes to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of student rights (this right includes the right to a hearing to present evidence that the record should be changed if the district decides not to alter it according to the parent's or eligible student's request and the right to insert in the student's permanent records an explanatory statement giving reasons for disagreeing with the decision);

4. The right of any person to file a complaint with the Department of Education if the school district violates the FERPA; and
5. The procedure that a student's parent or an eligible student should follow to obtain copies of this policy and the locations where copies may be obtained.

The district will arrange to provide translations of this notice to non-English speaking parents in their native language.

STATEMENT OF RIGHTS

Parents and eligible students have the following rights under the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act and this policy:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education record;
2. The right to exercise a limited control over other people's access to the student's education record;
3. The right to seek to correct the student's education record, in a hearing, if necessary;
4. The right to report violations of the FERPA to the Department of Education; and
5. The right to be informed about FERPA rights.

All rights and protections given parents under the FERPA and this policy transfer to the student when the student reaches 18 or enrolls in a post-secondary school.

LOCATIONS OF EDUCATION RECORDS

TYPES

Cumulative School Records

Cumulative School Records

(Former Students)

Health Records

School Transportation Records

Speech Therapy Records

Psychological Records

PROCEDURE TO INSPECT EDUCATION RECORDS

The parent of a student or an eligible student may inspect the student's education records upon request. In some circumstances, it may be mutually more convenient for the record custodian to provide copies of records. See the schedule of fees for copies below.

Since a student's records may be maintained in several locations, the school principals will offer to collect copies of records or the records themselves from locations other than a student's school, so they may be inspected at one site. However, if a parent or eligible student wishes to inspect records where they are maintained, school principals will make every effort to accommodate the wishes.

The parent or eligible student should submit to the student's school principal a written request that identifies, as precisely as possible, the record or records he or she wishes to inspect.

The principal (or other record custodian) will contact the parent of the student or the eligible student to discuss how access will be best arranged (copies, at the exact location, or records brought to a single site).

The principal (or other record custodian) will make the needed arrangements as promptly as possible and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected. This procedure must be completed in 45 days or less from the receipt of the request for access.

If for any valid reason, such as working hours, distance between record location sites, or health, a parent or eligible student cannot personally inspect and review a student's education record, the school district will arrange for the parent or eligible student to obtain copies of the record. See below for information regarding fees for copies of records.

When a record contains information about students other than a parent's child or the eligible student, the parent or eligible student may not inspect and review the records of the other students.

FEES FOR COPIES OF RECORDS

The school district will not deny parents or eligible students any rights to copies of records because of the following published fees. Where the fee represents an unusual hardship, it may be waived in part, or in whole, by the record custodian. However, the district reserves the right to charge for copies, such as transcripts, it forwards to potential employers or to colleges and universities for employment or admission purposes. The school district may deny copies of records (except for those required by the FERPA) in the following situations:

1. The student has an unpaid financial obligation to the school.
2. There is an unresolved disciplinary action against the student that warrants the denial of copies.

FERPA requires the school district to provide copies of records:

1. When the refusal to provide copies effectively denies access to the records by a parent or eligible student;
2. At the request of the parent or eligible students when the school district has provided the records to third parties by the prior consent of the parent or eligible student; or
3. At the request of the parent or eligible student when the school district has forwarded the records to another school where the student seeks or intends to enroll.

The fee for copies provided under the FERPA may not include the costs for search and retrieval. The fee will be from no cost to ten cents per page. (Actual copying cost, less hardship factor.)

The fee for all other copies, such as copies of records forwarded to third parties with prior consent or those provided to parents as a convenience, will be from ten cents to thirty-five cents per page (actual search, retrieval, and copying cost) plus postage, if incurred.

EXCEPTIONS TO PRIOR CONSENT

The district may disclose personally identifiable information without prior consent under the following conditions:

1. To personnel within the district who have legitimate educational interests;
2. To personnel of an education service district or state regional program where the student is enrolled or is receiving services;
3. To personnel of another school, another district or institution of post-secondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll;
4. To personnel connected with an audit or evaluation of federal or state education programs or the enforcement of or compliance with federal or state legal requirements of the district;
5. To personnel determining a financial aid request for the student;
6. To personnel conducting studies for or on behalf of the district;
7. To personnel in accrediting organizations fulfilling accrediting functions;
8. To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
9. For health or safety emergency;
10. By request of a parent of a student who is not 18 years of age;
11. By request of a student who is 18 years of age or older or emancipated;
12. Because information has been identified as directory information.

USE OF STUDENT EDUCATION RECORDS

To carry out their responsibilities, school officials will have access to student education records for legitimate educational purposes. The school district will use the following criteria to determine who school officials are. An official is:

1. A person duly elected to the school board;
2. A person certified by the state and appointed by the school board to an administrative or supervisory position;
3. A person certified by the state and under contract to the school board as an instructor;
4. A person employed by the school board as a temporary substitute for administrative, supervisory, or instructional personnel for the period of his or her performance as a substitute; or
5. A person employed by, or under contract to, the school board to perform a special task such as a secretary, a clerk, the school board attorney or auditor, for the period of his or her performance as an employee or contractor.

School officials who meet the criteria listed above will have access to a student's records if they have a legitimate educational interest in doing so. A "legitimate educational interest" is the person's need to know in order to:

1. Perform an administrative task required in the school employee's position description approved by the school board;
2. Perform a supervisory or instructional task directly related to the student's education; or
3. Perform a service or benefit for the student or the student's family such as health care, counseling, student job placement, or student financial aid.

The school district will only release information from, or permit access to, a student's education record with a parent's or eligible student's prior written consent except that the school superintendent, or a person designated in writing by the superintendent, may permit disclosure:

1. When a student seeks or intends to enroll in another school district or a post-secondary school (the district will not further notify the parent or eligible student prior to such a transfer of records; the parent or eligible student has a right to obtain copies of records transferred under this provision);
2. When certain federal and state officials need information in order to audit or enforce legal conditions related to federally supported education programs in the district;
3. The parties who provide or may provide financial aid to a student to:
 - A. Establish the student's eligibility for the aid,
 - B. Determine the amount of financial aid,
 - C. Establish the conditions for the receipt of the financial aid, or
 - D. Enforce the agreement between the provider and the receiver of financial aid;
4. When the school district has entered into a written agreement or contract for an organization to conduct studies on the school district's behalf to develop tests, administer student aid, or improve instruction;
5. To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions;
6. To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena (the district will make a reasonable effort to notify the student's parent or the eligible student before making a disclosure under this provision); or
7. If the disclosure is an item of directory information, and the student's parent or eligible student has not refused to allow the district to designate that item as directory information for the student; or
8. In response to an ex parte order of the Attorney General of the United States or his/her designee in connection with the investigation or prosecution of terrorism crimes.

The school district will permit any of its officials to make the needed disclosure from student education records in a health or safety emergency if:

1. He or she deems it is warranted by the seriousness of the threat to the health or safety of the student or other persons;
2. The information is necessary and needed to meet the emergency;
3. The persons to whom the information is to be disclosed are qualified and in a position to deal with the emergency; or
4. Time is an important and limiting factor in dealing with the emergency.

The school district officials may release information from a student's education record if the student's parent or the eligible student gives prior written consent for disclosure. The written consent must include at least:

1. A specification of the records to be released;
2. The reasons for the disclosure;
3. The person, organization, or the class or organizations to whom the disclosure is to be made;
4. The parent's or eligible student's signature; and
5. The date of the consent and, if appropriate, a date when the consent is to be terminated.

The student's parent or the eligible student may obtain a copy of any records disclosed under this provision.

The school district will not release information contained in a student's education records, except directory information, to any third parties except its own officials, unless those parties agree that the information will not be re-disclosed without the parent's or eligible student's prior written consent.

RECORDS OF REQUESTS FOR ACCESS AND DISCLOSURES MADE FROM EDUCATION RECORDS

The school district will maintain an accurate record of all requests for it to disclose information from, or to permit access to, a student's education records and of information it discloses and access it permits with some exceptions listed below. This record will be kept with, but will not be a part of, the student's cumulative school records. It will be available only to the record custodian, the eligible student, the parent of the student, or to federal, state, and local officials for the purpose of auditing or enforcing federally supported educational programs.

The record will include at least:

1. The name of the person or agency that made the request;
2. The interest the person or agency had in the information;
3. The date the person or agency made the request; and
4. Whether the request was granted and, if it was, the date access was permitted or the disclosure was made.

The district will maintain this record as long as it maintains the student's education record.

The record will not include:

1. Requests for access or access granted to the parent of the student or to an eligible student;
2. Request for access granted to officials of the school district who have a legitimate educational interest in the student;
3. Requests for, or disclosures of, information contained in the student's education record if the request is accompanied by the prior written consent of a parent of the student or the eligible student or if the disclosure is authorized by such prior consent;
4. Requests for, or disclosure of, directory information designated for that student; or for

5. Requests for, or disclosure of, information contained in the student's education record if the request is in response to an ex parte order of the Attorney General of the United States or his/her designee in connection with the investigation or prosecution of terrorism crimes.

PROCEDURES TO SEEK TO CORRECT EDUCATION RECORDS

The parent of a student or an eligible student has a right to seek to change any part of the student's record believed to be inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of student rights. (*NOTE: under FERPA, the district may decline to consider a request to change the grade a teacher assigns for a course.*)

For the purpose of outlining the procedure to seek to correct education records, the term "incorrect" will be used to describe a record that is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of student rights. The term "correct" will be used to describe a record that is accurate, not misleading, and not in violation of student rights. Also, in this section, the term "requester" will be used to describe the parent of a student or the eligible student who is asking the school district to correct a record.

To establish an orderly process to review and correct an education record for a requester, the district may make a decision to comply with the request for change at several levels in the procedure.

First Level Decision

When a parent of a student or an eligible student finds an item in the student's education record that he or she believes is inaccurate, misleading, or in violation of student rights, he or she should immediately ask the record custodian to correct it. If the record is incorrect because of an obvious error and it is a simple matter to make the record change at this level, the record custodian will make the correction. However, if the record is changed at this level, the method and result must satisfy the requester.

If the record custodian cannot change the record to the requester's satisfaction, or if the record does not appear to be obviously incorrect, the record custodian will:

1. Provide the requester a copy of the questioned record at no cost;
2. Ask the requester to initiate a written request for the change; and
3. Follow the procedure for a second level decision.

Second Level Decision

The written request to correct a student's education record through the procedure at this level should specify the correction the requester wishes the district to make. It should at least identify the item the requester believes is incorrect and state whether he or she believes the item:

1. Is inaccurate and why;
2. Is misleading and why; and/or
3. Violates student rights and why.

The request will be dated and signed by the requester.

Within two weeks after the record custodian receives a written request, he or she will study the request, discuss it with other school officials (the person who made the record or those who may have a professional concern about the district's

response to the request), make a decision to comply or decline to comply with the request, and complete the appropriate steps to notify the requester or move the request to the next level for a decision.

If, as a result of this review and discussion, the record custodian decides the record should be corrected, he or she will effect the change and notify the requester in writing that the change has been made. Each such notice will include an invitation for the requester to inspect and review the student's education record to make certain the record is in order and the correction is satisfactory.

If the record custodian decides the record is correct, he or she will make a written summary of any discussions with other officials and of the findings in the matter. The record custodian will transmit this summary and a copy of the written request to the school superintendent.

Third Level Decision

The school superintendent will review the material provided by the record custodian and, if necessary, discuss the matter with other officials such as the school attorney, or the school board (in executive session). The superintendent will then make a decision concerning the request and complete the steps at this decision level. Ordinarily, this level of the procedure should be completed within two weeks. If it takes longer, the superintendent will notify the requester, in writing, of the reasons for the delay and a date when the decision will be made.

If the superintendent decides the record is incorrect and should be changed, he or she will advise the record custodian to make the changes. The record custodian will advise the requester of the change as at the second level.

If the superintendent decides the record is correct, he or she will prepare a letter to the requester, which will include:

1. The school district's decision that the record is correct and the basis for the decision;
2. A notice to the requester that he or she has a right to ask for a hearing to present evidence that the record is incorrect and that the district will grant such a hearing;
3. Instructions for the requester to contact the superintendent, or an official he or she designates, to discuss acceptable hearing officers, convenient times, and a satisfactory site for the hearing (the district will not be bound by the requester's positions on these items, but will, so far as possible, arrange the hearing as the requester wishes); and
4. Advise that the request may be represented or assisted in the hearing by other parties, including an attorney at the requester's expense.

Fourth Level Decision

After the requester has submitted (orally, or in writing) his or her wishes concerning the hearing officer and the time and place for the hearing, the superintendent will, within a week, notify the requester when and where the district will hold the hearing and who it has designated as the hearing officer.

At the hearing, the hearing officer will provide the requester a full and reasonable opportunity to present material evidence and testimony to demonstrate that the questioned part of the student's education record is incorrect as shown in the requester's written request for a change in the record (second level).

Within a week after the hearing, the hearing officer will submit to the school superintendent a written summary of the evidence submitted at the hearing. Along with the summary, the hearing officer will submit his or her recommendation, based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing, that the record should be changed or remain unchanged.

The school superintendent will prepare the district's decision within two weeks of the hearing. The decision will be based on the summary of the evidence presented at the hearing and the hearing officer's recommendation. However, the district's decision will be based solely on the evidence presented at the hearing. Therefore, the superintendent may overrule the hearing officer if the superintendent believes the hearing officer's recommendation is not consistent with the evidence presented. As a result of the district's decision, the superintendent will take one of the following actions:

1. If the decision is that the district will change the record, the superintendent will instruct the record custodian to correct the record. The record custodian will correct the record and notify the requester as at the second level decision.
2. If the decision is that the district will not change the record, the superintendent will prepare a written notice to the requester that will include:
 - A. The school district's decision that the record is correct and will not be changed;
 - B. A copy of a summary of the evidence presented at the hearing and a written statement of the reasons for the district's decision; and
 - C. Advice to the requester that he or she may place in the student's education record an explanatory statement which gives the reasons he or she disagrees with the school district's decision and/or the reasons he or she believes the record is incorrect.

The Mississippi Public School Accountability Standard for this policy is standard 8.

Policy JCBA: Student Restraint & Seclusion

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 11/01/2007 | **Last Revised Date:** 04/02/2024 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 04/08/2025

STUDENT RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION POLICY

The George County School District Board of Trustees supports a positive approach to behavior that uses proactive strategies to create a safe school climate that promotes dignity, creates authentic student engagement, and improves student achievement for all students.

In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-9-69 and 37-11-57, it is recognized that staff may intercede in situations wherein students are displaying physically violent behavior or are deemed to be a danger to themselves or others. The use of excessive force or cruel and unusual punishment regarding student management is prohibited. Restraint and/or seclusion shall not be utilized as a punitive measure.

Only school personnel trained in the use of restraint and seclusion should be used to observe and monitor these students. Staff engaged in monitoring students shall have knowledge of effective restraint and seclusion procedures, emergency procedures, and knowledge of how to effectively debrief students after the use of restraint or seclusion.

This policy in no way shall inhibit the right of staff to reasonable self-defense in accordance with the provisions of the 5th and 14th amendments to the Constitution of the United States, or the Constitution of Mississippi, nor negate the obligation of the district to provide a safe work environment.

In any situation in which a student is a danger to himself/herself or others, and it becomes necessary to contact law enforcement or emergency medical personnel, nothing in this policy guidance shall be construed to interfere with the duties of law enforcement or emergency medical personnel.

Restraint

Physical restraint is considered to be an emergency response after all other verbal and non-verbal de-escalation measures have failed in effectiveness. When using physical restraint for students who are a danger to themselves or others or who constitute potential or actual destruction of property, staff should take precautions necessary to ensure the safety of the student and the staff members engaged in restraining the student.

1. Physical restraints that restrict the flow of air are prohibited in all situations.
2. The use of mechanical restraints is prohibited, except by law enforcement.
3. The use of chemical restraints is prohibited.

The restraint shall be removed as soon as the student is no longer a danger to themselves or others, but shall be immediately removed at any point the student appears to be, or claims to be, in severe stress. When the student is able, he/she should be returned to the instructional activity, or to a less restrictive environment.

Seclusion

School personnel may use seclusion to address a student's behavior if that behavior constitutes an emergency and seclusion is necessary to protect a student or other person from imminent, serious physical harm after other less intrusive, less restrictive, nonphysical interventions, or other alternative approaches have failed or been determined inappropriate.

The use of seclusion occurs in a specially designated room or space that is physically isolated from common areas and from which the student is physically prevented from leaving. The room or space used for seclusion may not be locked and staff shall be present to monitor the student. Seclusion shall cease once the student regains control of his or her behavior.

The room or space used for seclusion shall not contain any objects or fixtures with which a student could reasonably be harmed. Additionally, the room shall provide adequate lighting and ventilation.

Administrative Procedures

This policy and the supporting procedures are designed to ensure the safety of all students, school personnel, and visitors. The following provisions shall be adhered to:

1. Staff and faculty shall be trained at least annually on the use of physical restraint and seclusion. Teachers and other district personnel shall be trained on how to collect and analyze student data to determine the effectiveness of these procedures in increasing appropriate behavior.
2. Administrators shall document incidents of the use of physical restraint or seclusion by staff or faculty participating in or supervising the restraint or seclusion event.
3. A review of the use of a restraint and seclusion process shall be conducted by the school to determine if revisions of behavioral strategies are in place to address dangerous behavior or if positive behavioral strategies were not in place at the time of the restraint or seclusion.
4. The school board shall review this policy and incidents of seclusion and restraint data at a minimum, annually. At a minimum, the Superintendent shall make quarterly reports of incidents of restraint and/or seclusion to the school board. The school district shall report the incidents to Mississippi Department of Education annually.
5. This policy and supporting procedures shall be reviewed with all staff on an annual basis.

6. The superintendent or designee shall develop procedures for reporting the use of restraint or seclusion to the local board of education and to the Mississippi Department of Education.
7. After reviewing the district reports of incidents in which restraint and seclusion were used, if necessary, the superintendent shall make recommendations to the board for possible revisions to this policy. The review and/or revisions to this policy shall be documented on the school board meeting agenda and the subsequent minutes of the school board meeting. The school district or school shall maintain records of its review of and any resulting decisions or actions regarding the use of seclusion and restraint.

Parental Notification

1. All parents shall receive, at least annually, written information about the policies and procedures for restraint and seclusion issued by this school district. The written policies shall be included in the code of conduct, student handbook, school board policy manual, and any other appropriate school publication.
2. Parents or guardians shall be notified verbally or in writing on the day of the restraint or seclusion or no later than 48 hours following the incident. In the event a parent cannot be reached by telephone, a letter shall be sent informing the parent of the incident and the person who can be contacted at the school to address any questions the parent may have. At the time the parent is notified, the school shall schedule a debriefing with the parent to discuss the incident.
3. The superintendent or designee shall develop procedures by which a parent may submit a complaint regarding the physical restraint or seclusion of their child; the procedures shall be printed in the Student Handbook.

The superintendent or designee shall establish and disseminate all procedures relevant to the implementation of this policy and the guidelines set forth by the Mississippi Department of Education.

This policy and all revisions to the policy shall at a minimum be disseminated to all parents and staff annually, and listed in the staff and student handbooks, as well as the school board policy manual.

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Policy GBRL: Drug Free Schools and Workplace Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 06/06/2017 | **Last Revised Date:** 12/06/2022 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 02/03/2026

DRUG FREE SCHOOLS AND WORKPLACE

No employee engaged in work in connection with the George County School District shall unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess or use on or in the workplace any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana or any other controlled substance, as defined under state and federal law.

"Workplace" is defined to mean the site for the performance of work done in connection the George County School District. That includes any school building or any school premises; any school-owned vehicle or any other school approved vehicle used to transport students to and from school or school activities; off school property during any school-sponsored or school-approved activity, event or function, such as a field trip or athletic event, where students are under the jurisdiction of the school district.

As a condition of employment in the George County School District, each employee shall notify his or her supervisor of his or her conviction of any criminal drug statute for a violation occurring in the workplace as defined above, no later than 5 days after such conviction.

As a condition of employment in the George County School District, each employee shall abide by the terms of the school district policy respecting a drug-free workplace.

An employee who violates the terms of this policy may be non-renewed or his or her employment may be suspended or terminated, at the discretion of the board. Sanctions against employees, including non-renewal, suspension, and termination shall be in accordance with prescribed school district administrative regulations and procedures.

MEDICAL MARIJUANA

This policy applies to medical cannabis. Under the Mississippi Medical Cannabis Act, this school district:

1. Is not required to permit, accommodate, or allow the medical use of medical cannabis, or to modify any job or working conditions of any employee who engages in the medical use of medical cannabis or who for any reason seeks to engage in the medical use of medical cannabis.
2. May refuse to hire, discharge, discipline, or otherwise take an adverse employment action against an individual with respect to hiring, discharging, tenure, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment as a result, in whole or in part, of that individual's use of medical cannabis, regardless of the individual's impairment or lack of impairment resulting from the medical use of medical cannabis.
3. Does not allow the use of medical cannabis by employees while on district property, while at a district sponsored event, or while performing district business.

DENIAL OF LICENSE

The State Board of Education, acting through the commission, may deny an application for any teacher or administrator license if the applicant is actively addicted to or actively dependent on alcohol or other habit-forming drugs or is a habitual user of narcotics, barbiturates, amphetamines, hallucinogens, or other drugs having a similar effect, at the time of application for a license. ' 37-3-2 (11) (c)

SUSPENSION OF LICENSE

The State Board of Education, acting on the recommendation of the commission, may revoke or suspend any teacher or administrator license for specified periods of time if the teacher or administrator has been convicted, has pled guilty or entered a plea of nolo contendere to a felony, as defined by federal or state law. ' 37-3-2 (12) (d)

Dismissal or suspension of a licensed employee by a local school board pursuant to Section 37-9-59 may result in the suspension or revocation of a license for a length of time which shall be determined by the commission and based upon the severity of the offense. ' 37-3-2 (13) (a)

Policy KHE: Gifts to Schools

Original Adopted Date: 07/08/2013 | **Last Revised Date:** 08/03/2021

GIFTS TO SCHOOLS

The superintendent, on behalf of the board, is authorized to accept gifts to particular schools or the district. He shall report such acceptance to the board which shall officially acknowledge the gifts and thank the donors.

In instances where the superintendent doubts the appropriateness or usefulness of a gift, he shall refer the offer to the board for its decision.

Assets which are donated to the school district must be recorded at their fair market value at the date of donation. The school board must acknowledge in their official minutes who will maintain title of ownership to the donated assets.

‘Crowdfunding Projects’

Inasmuch as desired enhancements to educational programming have always and will always exceed school resources, school employees may at times choose to seek private funds for school improvements. One modern manifestation of this is commonly referred to as ‘crowd funding,’ or the placement of needs on various web sites in order to secure donations to meet those needs. Two popular sites of this sort include Go Fund Me and Donors Choose. Such fundraising methods are permissible within the George County School District and the Board commends school employees for their efforts to secure outside funding to better serve the needs of their students. It is the preference of the GCSD Board that employees utilize sites funding supplies or equipment rather than monetary donations.

District employees wishing to secure crowdfunding should keep the following requirements in mind:

1. Any person or entity acting on behalf of the district and wishing to conduct an online fundraising/donation campaign for the benefit of the district shall begin the process by seeking prior approval from the building administrator. Pre-approval for technology or non-technology equipment must also be obtained from the technology department or maintenance department. Pre-approval for monetary donations must be obtained from the district business manager at the District Office.
 2. All monetary donations should be recorded by the school bookkeeper in the School Funds accounting system at each school. A new fund will be created for each new project. Please note, no school banking information should ever be given out. A check should be requested to be mailed to the school in the name of the school, not to an individual person. If after purchases are made any funds remain, they will be held at the school in that fund for similar projects for that classroom/program/grade level. If there are not enough funds to cover the purchase, due to price changes, shipping, etc., the shortage will be the responsibility of the employee.
 3. All items received/purchased through crowdfunding projects are the property of **George County School District** and all inventory procedures apply. If a teacher changes schools, the materials remain at the original school unless that school's principal gives consent for the teacher to bring those materials to their new classroom. Should the employee leave the district, the building administrator will disperse the equipment or funds based on similar needs reflected in the original project.
 4. A file is to be maintained at the school for any crowdfunding request. The file should include: the crowdfunding fundraising project from and any documentation (packing slips, e-mails, invoices, etc.) pertinent to the project, name of employee who has possession of said items, and tracking of items if employees transfers from school.
 5. Employees should be aware that some sites are tax deductible and some are not. It is the employee and donor's responsibility to determine if the donation is tax deductible.

6. All individual items valued at \$250 or more, or considered highly walkable, must be 'red tagged' inventory and follow GCSD fixed asset procedures.

NOTE: During the 1998 Legislative Session, MS Code Section 21-17-1 was amended:

NOTE: During the 1998 Legislative Session, MS Code Section 21-17-1 was amended:

1. To provide that the governing authorities of a municipality "may donate such lands and necessary funds related thereto to the public school district in which the land is situated" for the purposes set forth in Section 21-17-1 (1).
2. To provide that "The governing authorities of any municipality may, in its discretion, donate personal property or funds to the public school district or districts located in the municipality for the promotion of educational programs of the district or districts within the municipality."

NOTE: See also Financial Accounting Manual for Mississippi School Districts, as amended.

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Policy GABBA: Social Media Websites

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 07/08/2013 | **Last Revised Date:** 07/21/2020 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 02/03/2026

I. PURPOSE

The George County School District recognizes that social media has become an integral part of the way people communicate worldwide. Communicating through digital environments is one way to enhance the learning environment for students. The District supports the use of online social media to facilitate District programs, departments and school sites in building a more successful parent, community, student and employee network.

The District also recognizes its obligation to ensure responsible and safe use of online technologies. This policy addresses employees' use of publicly available social media networks, including: personal Websites, Web logs (blogs), wikis, social networks, online forums, virtual worlds, and any other social media. The purpose of this Policy is to establish rules and guidance for the use of social media by employees. A social media blunder is a critical problem with the potential to injure students, employees, guests, and others, to lose confidential information and data, to set back any progress that the District has previously made, and to subject the user or the District to litigation.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

The District encourages the use of District-approved technologies for e-learning and encourages use of District tools for collaboration by employees. However, public social media networks, outside of those sponsored by the District, may not be used for classroom instruction or school-sponsored activities without the prior authorization of the Superintendent, or designee, and parental consent for student participation on social networks.

First Amendment free speech rights protect employees who speak out in social media on matters of public concern. However, such speech is not protected if it violates federal or state law, or unduly disrupts school operations, the learning environment, educational programs, school activities, the work environment, or the rights of others. In addition, employees have an obligation to report prohibited or illegal behavior or activity on social networks as it relates to other employees or students, including the requirements for mandated reporting of abuse or neglect.

Employees must refrain from social media activity that:

- (a) Interferes with, disrupts or undermines the effective operation of the school district;
- (b) is used to engage in harassing, bullying, defamatory, obscene, abusive, discriminatory, threatening or similarly inappropriate communications;
- (c) creates a hostile work or school environment;
- (d) encourages any illegal activity, sexual behavior, harassment or bullying;
- (e) breaches confidentiality obligations of school district employees; or
- (f) violates the law, board policies and/or other school rules and regulations.

While the Board reserves the right to monitor use of its computer systems, employees may engage in incidental personal use of social media in the workplace so long as such use does not interfere with operations and productivity, and does not violate other Board policies. However, employees who choose to use social media for personal use must do so on their own personal time. Participating in social media network activity for non-work related reasons on scheduled work time is prohibited.

An employee who is responsible for a social media network posting that fails to comply with the rules and guidelines set forth in this policy may be subject to corrective action, up to and including termination.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. The rapid speed at which technology continuously evolves makes it difficult, if not impossible, to identify all types of social media. The term "Social Media" includes a variety of online tools and services that allow users to publish content and interact with their audiences. Additional social media may be developed in the future that could be covered by this Policy. By way of example, social media includes:

1. social-networking sites (e.g., Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+);
2. blogs and micro-blogs (e.g., Twitter, Tumblr);
3. content-sharing sites (e.g., Scribd, SlideShare);
4. imagesharing and videosharing sites (e.g., Flickr, YouTube, Instagram, Vine, Pinterest, Picasa, and Google Video).
5. mobile communication platform (Remind, ClassDojo, GroupMe, etc...)

B. District approved password-protected social media tools are those that fall within the District's electronic technologies network or which the District has approved for educational use. The District has greater authority and responsibility to protect minors from inappropriate content and can limit public access within this limited public forum.

C. Board of Education includes all names, logos, building, images and entities under the authority of the Board of Education.

IV. RULES CONCERNING ANY USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

All employees who participate in social media activity must observe the following rules:

- A. An employee's use of any social media network and an employee's postings, displays, or communication on any social media network must comply with all state and federal laws and any applicable District policies, including policies and procedures relating to the use of District computer equipment, networks or devices.
- B. Employees must not engage in communication or conduct that is harassing, threatening, obscene, abusive, libelous, or defamatory, that encourages any legal activity, sexual behavior, harassment or bullying.
- C. Employees should not use their District e-mail address for communications on public social media networks that have not been approved by the District.
- D. Employees may not act as a spokesperson for the District or post comments as a representative of the District, except as authorized by the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee. When authorized as a spokesperson for the District, employees must disclose their employment relationship with the District.

- E. Employees may not disclose information on any social media network about students or employees that is confidential and protected by privacy laws.
- F. Employees may not post images on any social media network of co-workers without the co-workers' consent.
- G. Employees may not post images of students on any social media network without written parental consent, except for image of students taken in the public arena, such as at sporting events or fine arts public performances.
- H. Employees have responsibility for maintaining appropriate employee-student relationships at all times and have responsibility for addressing inappropriate behavior or activity on these networks. This includes acting to protect the safety of minors online.

Social Media Websites

All employees, faculty, and staff shall observe the following while participating in any social media website, mobile communication platform, or application including, but not limited to: Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Remind, GroupMe, ClassDojo, or any other social media platform.

1. Access of social media websites for individual use during school hours is prohibited.
2. Employees, faculty, and staff shall not friend students on any social media platforms.
3. Employees, faculty, and staff shall not give social media passwords to students.
4. Employees, faculty, and staff shall not post any data, documents, photos, or inappropriate information on any website or application that might result in a disruption of classroom activity. This determination will be made by the Superintendent.
5. Employees, faculty, and staff are solely responsible for the security of their social media accounts.
6. Employees, faculty, and staff are solely responsible for the content that is posted on their social media accounts at all times.
7. Employees, faculty, and staff shall NEVER use their personal social media accounts in any way purporting to be or speaking for the George County School District.

Fraternization via the internet between employees, faculty, or staff and students is prohibited and in violation of standards of the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics. Communications with both students and parents shall be done in person, over telephone, through standard mail, SchoolStatus, and/or email. Social media shall never be used and is not an appropriate form of communication.

Violation of any of these policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Nothing in this policy prohibits employees, faculty, staff or students from the use of educational websites, since educational sites are used solely for educational purposes.

V. RULES CONCERNING DISTRICT-RELATED SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

The following rules apply to all employees who participate in District-related social media activity:

- A. In order for an employee to use social media sites as an educational tool or in relation to extracurricular activities or programs of the school district, the employee must seek and obtain the prior permission of the Superintendent or designee. The employee must comply with the following:
 1. Access to the page may only be permitted for education purposes related to the club, activity, organization or team;
 2. The employee responsible for the page will monitor it regularly;
 3. The employee's supervisor shall be permitted access to any page established by the employee for a school-related purpose; and
 4. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries in the establishment and maintenance of all

such district-related or sponsored social media activity.

B. The Board of Education reserves the right to monitor all employee use of district computers and other electronic devices, including employee blogging and social networking activity. An employee should have no expectation of personal privacy in any communication made through social media while using district computers, cellular telephones or other data devices. Information that the District obtains may be disclosed without limitation for purposes of investigation, litigation, internal dispute resolution, and legitimate business purposes regardless of whether the particular user is involved. Information that a user deleted may be recovered indefinitely by the District.

C. An employee may not link a district-sponsored social media page to any personal social media sites or sites not sponsored by the school district.

D. An employee may not use district-sponsored social media communications for private financial gain, or for a political, commercial, advertising, proselytizing or solicitation purpose.

E. An employee may not use district-sponsored social media communications in a manner that misrepresents personal views as those of the Board of Education, individual school or school district, or in a manner that could be construed as such.

VI. RULES CONCERNING PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA ACTIVITY

The following rules apply to all employees who participate in District-related social media activity:

A. An employee may not mention, discuss or reference the Board of Education, the school district or its individual schools, programs or teams on personal social networking sites in a manner that could be reasonably be construed as an official school district communication. Employee must make clear within any such communication that it is the personal view of the employee and that the views expressed are the employee's alone and do not represent the views of the school district or the Board of Education. An example of such a disclaimer is: "the opinions and views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the position or opinion of the school district or Board of Education."

B. Employees who participate in social media networks may decide to include information about their work with the District as part of their personal profile, as it would relate to a typical social conversation. This may include work-related information included in a personal profile, District name, job title, and job duties, participation in District-sponsored events, including volunteer activities, and other information.

C. Employees are required to maintain appropriate professional boundaries with students, parents, and colleagues. For example, absent an unrelated online relationship (e.g., relative, family friend, or personal friendship unrelated to school), it is not appropriate for a teacher or administrator to "friend" a student or his/her parent or guardian or otherwise establish special relationships with selected students through personal social media, and it is not appropriate for an employee to give students or parents access to personal postings unrelated to school.

D. Any access to personal social media activities while on school property or using school district equipment must comply with those policies, and may not interfere with an employee's duties at work.

E. An employee may not link a personal social media page to the Board of Education's website or the websites of individual school, programs or teams, or post official Board of Education material on a personal social media site or webpage without written permission of his/her supervisor.

F. All of Board of Education's policies and administrative regulations apply to employee use of personal social media in the same way that they apply to conduct that occurs in the workplace and off duty conduct.

G. Employees should refrain from posting anything that belongs to another person or entity, such as copyrighted publications or trademarked images.

George County School District Computer Acceptable Use Policy

The George County School District (GCSD) offers currently enrolled students, faculty and staff access to the school computer network through computer labs, networked and stand-alone computers. District technology equipment is provided for use in fulfilling curriculum objectives and quality enrichment activities. Personal electronic devices are not to be connected to the District network. This includes, but is not limited to, personal computers, laptops, tablets, smart phones, and MP3 Players.

The GCSD is in compliance with the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and will comply with any additional state and federal regulations that pertain to technology use within the district and through use of the GCSD network infrastructure and servers that is forthcoming from the local, state, and federal regulatory agencies.

The Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) is a federal law enacted by Congress to address concerns about access in schools and libraries to the Internet and other information. Among other things, it calls for schools and libraries to have in place appropriate electronic filters to prevent children and adults from accessing and viewing inappropriate Internet content. For any school or library that receives discounts for Internet access or for internal connections, CIPA imposes certain requirements. The GCSD receives these discounts for Internet access through the E-Rate program and therefore must be in compliance with CIPA.

COMPUTER NETWORK AND INTERNET USE RULES

Students and school personnel are responsible for good behavior on the school computer networks just as they are in as classroom or in a school hallway. Communications on the network are often public in nature. General school rules for behavior and communications apply. Within reason, freedom of speech and access to information will be honored.

In compliance with CIPA 2008 updates, all students (K-12) will be educated about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites, in chat rooms, and in cyber bullying awareness and response. When using the Internet, all students will be closely monitored to prevent students from accidentally or otherwise accessing inappropriate material.

Computer access is a privilege, not a right, and is provided for students and staff to conduct research, fulfill course requirements, and communicate with others when appropriate or authorized. Access to network services is given to students and staff who agree to act in a considerate and responsible manner. Signed parental permission is required for all students. All faculty and staff using the District’s Internet access must sign a written contract.

Network administrators may review network storage files and communications to maintain system integrity and ensure that users are using the system responsibly. While user files will not be examined without good cause, users should not expect that files stored on school computers will always be private. The GCSD will fully cooperate with local, state, or federal officials in any investigation related to illegal activities conducted through any GCSD Internet account.

All users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of Netiquette. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Be polite. Do not abuse or be ‘bullying’ in your messages to others.
- Use appropriate language.
- Do not assume that email is secure and/or confidential. Never send anything that you would hesitate to have viewed by others.
- Respect other people’s privacy regarding mail and files. Do not reveal personal addresses or phone numbers, or those of students or colleagues.
- Keep paragraphs short and to the point. Be mindful of spelling.
- Check email regularly and delete unwanted messages as quickly as possible.

NETWORK SECURITY – CIPA COMPLIANCE

Users have the responsibility to use computer and network resources for academic purposes only. Therefore, as mandated by CIPA, filtering and monitoring will be utilized on all computers accessing the Internet. Free email sites are blocked for all users. Faculty and staff must use District provided email. The District is required by the State to archive (keep on file) all email going in and out. This is due to past litigations involving email and requirements for the District to produce email copies when requested by the courts.

Activities using the computer network in violation of local, state, federal, or GCSD policies are strictly forbidden.

Students will not respond to unsolicited online contacts or reveal personal identifiable information over the network unless it meets District-approval (examples: ACT Registration, Scholarships, or College Applications). This includes information about themselves as well as information about anyone else.

GCSD staff are prohibited from disclosing personal information about students on websites. Although teachers and other district personnel may reveal personal information about themselves over the network, they are strictly forbidden to disseminate any student information electronically to any source that has not met District approval. Information that is considered personal includes, but is not limited to, the following: student's full name, home address, Social Security number, personal telephone numbers, and any information relating to their health.

Because there are additional prohibitions with which users must comply, non-compliance with these regulations will result in disciplinary and/or legal actions taken by the GCSD authorities if deemed necessary.

There is absolutely no expectation of privacy on the GCSD network. Activities at any workstation or transmission and receipt of data can be monitored at any time both electronically or by staff members. This includes the transmission and receipt of email, email attachments, Web browsing, and any other use of the network.

Prohibited activities include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Using the network to transmit, or retransmit copyrighted material (including plagiarism).
- Accessing, transmitting, or retransmitting threatening, harassing, bullying (cyber bullying), obscene, and pornographic or trade secret material or any material deemed harmful to minors.
- Using the network to access, transmit, or retransmit language that can be considered defamatory, abusive, or offensive.
- Using social networking sites, chatting, or blogging unless associated with a specific curriculum related activity.
- Users of the GCSD network are forbidden to access, transmit, or retransmit information that could cause danger or disruption, engage them in personal, prejudicial, or discriminatory attacks or that harasses or causes distresses to another person.
- Users of the District network are forbidden to access, transmit, or retransmit material that promotes violence or the destruction of persons or property by any device including, but not limited to, firearms, explosives, fireworks, smoke bombs, incendiary devices, or other similar material.
- All users agree to report any accidental access of any of the aforementioned material to the appropriate school authority so that the district can take steps to prevent similar future access.
- Using the network to download, upload, or store large files such as music and video that are not directly related to projects or activities that are a part of the school curriculum.
- The use of flash (thumb) drives is limited to data storage only.
- No executable files of any type may be transferred to district property.
- Re-sending email chain letters or engaging in any spamming activities where bulk mailings of unsolicited email are sent.
- Damaging computers, computer systems, or computer networks (hardware or software). If a student maliciously damages GCSD technical equipment in such a way that requires service or repairs, the parent/guardian of the student is responsible for providing all expenses incurred for those services, grades K-12.
- Deliberate or careless action that damages the computer's configuration or limits the computer's usefulness to others.

- Downloading unauthorized software on school computers/networks. This includes students, teachers, staff, and administrators. All software installed on district computers must be installed by the Technology Department and only after the proper licenses or authorizations for use have been acquired and verified.
- Creating, uploading, or transmitting computer viruses, worms, or other disruptive software code.
- Making any attempt to defeat computer or network security on the District network or any other client, server, or network on the Internet. Hacking or attempting to gain access to unauthorized areas of the District network or the Internet is prohibited.
- Invading the privacy of other individuals. Using another person's password or account or providing his/her password to another person. Trespassing in another's folder, work, or files, in the attempt to use others' work to 'cheat' on assignments, tests, or any class work.
- Intentionally wasting limited resources.
- Using the network or school computer for unauthorized commercial, private, personal purposes, or political lobbying.
- Any activity harmful to or reflecting negatively on the GCSD community.

CONSEQUENCES OF POLICY NON-COMPLIANCE

Violation of this AUP (Acceptable Use Policy) may result in the denial, suspension, or cancellation of the users' privileges as well as other disciplinary and/or legal action deemed appropriate and imposed by the school administration, district administration and/or local, state, or federal law enforcement officials. Other action not specified above may include, but are not limited, to monetary restitution, school suspension or expulsion, detention, or any other action deemed appropriate by the administrative authorities.

In grades K-12, students in computer-based classes may be removed from the course for the duration of the semester or school year if found by administration to be intentionally in violation of the AUP. Reinstatement procedures will be individually addressed.

Any disciplinary action that is a result of an alleged violation of this policy can be appealed through the normal channels provided by the disciplinary policy of the GCSD.

Signatures at the end of this document are legally binding and indicate the parties who have signed have read the terms and conditions carefully and understand their significance.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS FOR USE OF THE GCSD NETWORK

All users of the GCSD's network and Internet access are required to adhere to the District's Internet Acceptable Use Policy (AUP). The policy describes in detail the purpose of the District's network and the rules governing its use. If a parent does not want their child to have access to the Internet or Internet services provided by the District, they must obtain and complete a Refusal Form and return to your child's Principal. This form will be completed each school year. Please realize that this action will make enrollment in certain classes impossible.

All users and the parents of all student users are required by the GCSD AUP to sign a contract stating that they will abide by the policy while using the District's computer network resources.

All users, including faculty and staff, must be aware that misuse of the network facilities could result in disciplinary action by the GCSD officials including termination of employment or legal action by local, state, and/or federal law enforcement officials.

It is, therefore, incumbent upon all who sign the Internet Use Contract to carefully read the District AUP and understand what is expected and the penalty for non-compliance.

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G C SCHOOL BOARD

GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

EMPLOYEE POLICIES, PROCEDURES & EXPECTATIONS HANDBOOK 2026–2027

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the George County School District, along with our community partners, is to prepare and empower our students with the knowledge and skills that are essential in being college and/or career ready.

GEORGE COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Debra D. Joiner, Superintendent

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