



RICHMOND COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



[rcboe.org](http://rcboe.org)

## **Employee Handbook – Revised 2025**

# RICHMOND COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM 2025-2030 Strategy Map



## **Mission Statement:**

Empowering Every Learner Every Day.

## **Vision Statement:**

To prepare every student to thrive, adapt, and lead in an ever-changing world.

## **Belief Statements:**

- Success is attainable for everyone.
- All students deserve a quality educational experience.
- Education is a shared responsibility.
- Transparency is a foundation of trust.
- Safety for all is a priority.





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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

This Employee Handbook represents a summary of Human Resources policies, practices, benefits, and services. It is intended to assist all employees of the Richmond County School System. The Board of Education reserves the right to adopt, change, or terminate any policy at any time.

Employees will acknowledge receipt and review of the Employee Handbook at the time of employment. All continuing employees have access to the handbook in the [Human Resources](#) section of the System webpage. An employee may request a printed copy of the handbook by contacting the Director of Human Resources. It is the responsibility of the employee to review the handbook annually.

### **NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION**

The Richmond County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, disability, sex, age, or any legally protected status in its programs, activities or employment practices and provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The Richmond County School System is expressly prohibited from subjecting any person to discrimination or harassment by the following laws: Title VI and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967; Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Age Discrimination Act of 1975; Title I and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990; and Title II of the Genetic Information Nondiscrimination Act of 2008.

Inquiries regarding this information should be directed to:

Chief Human Resources Officer - Dr. Melissa Shepard  
864 Broad Street  
Augusta, Ga 30901 (706) 826-1000  
[shepame@boe.richmond.k12.ga.us](mailto:shepame@boe.richmond.k12.ga.us)

### **EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATIONS**

**Classified:** A classified employee is any person who is hired by the School System and does not hold a certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission or receive a contract of employment.

**Certified:** A certified employee is any person who holds a professional educator certificate for a teaching, service or leadership field and receives an annual contract for employment.

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION**

The Local Board of Education is a 10-member body serving four-year staggered terms. Members are residents of the district from which they are elected and are voted on in district elections.



The primary duty of the board is to develop policies and written statements with the intent of guiding the operation of the school program. The board also approves the hiring of each employee and makes the final decision on the termination of all employees, unless otherwise delegated.

A board member has no individual power or authority to make decisions or take action except when acting as a member of the board during a meeting. Regular Board Meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m. at the Central Office. All employees are invited to attend board meetings.

While employees are expected to follow procedures, policies, and the prescribed chain of command in pursuing grievances and complaints, they nevertheless are encouraged to speak to board members at any time on matters of public concern. A listing of the board members and their contact information may be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under “Board of Education.”

## **SUPERINTENDENT**

The Superintendent of Schools is appointed by the Board of Education for up to a three-year contractual term.

The Superintendent is the Chief Executive Officer of the Board and acts as its secretary. The Superintendent also has authority for general supervision of the School System and its employees. The Superintendent recommends the hiring and the termination of employees to the Local Board.

## **BOARD ATTORNEY**

The Charter authorizes the Board Attorney to represent the Board of Education and the School System, to provide general legal services and to perform such other duties as are from time to time approved or directed by the Board of Education.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Empowering every learner every day.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

To prepare every student to thrive, adapt, and lead in an ever-changing world.

## **CORE BELIEFS**

- Success is attainable for everyone.
- All students deserve a quality educational experience.
- Education is a shared responsibility.
- Transparency is a foundation of trust.
- Safety for all is a priority.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Every five years, the Richmond County School System reviews the strategic plan with the support, guidance, and assistance of the Georgia School Boards Association and The Georgia Leadership Institute for Student Improvement and/or other appropriate educational leadership organizations. This process brings together a diverse group of our community’s best thinkers to develop a plan to move our School System forward.

The Richmond County School System Strategy Map provides a summary of the 2025-2030 Strategic Plan and shows the goals and performance objectives being pursued by the School System for our students to accomplish Student Achievement and Success. The Strategic Plan can be reviewed in its entirety through this link [2025-2030 Strategic Plan](#).



## EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

### ACCESS OF RECORDS

An employee may review his/her personnel file, except for confidential references. In order to review the file, an appointment must be scheduled with the Human Resources Department.

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

All permanent personnel records for employees are kept and maintained under the direct supervision of the Chief of Human Resources.

### CELL PHONE USE

Employees may bring their cellular phone in schools. However, it is required that the cellular phone be turned off during instruction or when on duty so that incoming calls cannot be received. The cellular phone may only be used in emergencies where the life or health of a student or staff member is in present danger, before or after school and during planning time. Teachers will be required to sign a Cell Phone Agreement which can be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under **Staff Resources**. All employees must acknowledge the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy and Procedures, also known as Policy IFBG and coordinating procedures, which can also be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under **Policies**.

The Board of Education recognizes the Hands Free Georgia Law (HB673), which prohibited motorists from handling their cell phones or other electronic devices while driving. Motorists could still use their phones, as long as they use hands-free technology. The following acts are prohibited:

- Holding or supporting, with any part of the body, a wireless telecommunications device or stand-alone electronic device (for example, an iPod).
- Writing, sending, or reading any text-based communication, including a text message, instant message, e-mail, or internet data while holding your device.
- Watching a video or movie other than watching data related to the navigation of your vehicle. (i.e., your mapping app or GPS screen).
- Recording a video.

### COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES: CERTIFIED EMPLOYEE [Board Policy GAE and Procedure GAE-R(1)]

It is the policy of the Board that certified personnel shall have the right to present and resolve complaints relating to certain matters affecting the employment relationship at the lowest organizational level possible. The Board of Education encourages all employees to resolve their complaints informally in a spirit of collegiality where possible.

This policy and procedure are available where such efforts do not succeed or, where for any other reason, the certificated employee desires to pursue this procedure. Certified personnel may access the complaints

and grievances policies in the System's [online policy manual](#) and the [Human Resources website](#). Questions regarding the submission of a complaint or grievance should be addressed to the Chief of Human Resources.

### **COMPLAINTS AND GRIEVANCES: CLASSIFIED EMPLOYEE [Board Policy GAE and Procedures GAE(3) and GAE(3)-R(1)]**

It is the policy of the Board that classified employees should have a reasonable and fair means of addressing their working conditions and employment requirements. To this end, a classified employee who, after informally attempting to resolve a complaint, considers himself unjustly treated shall have the right to pursue a grievance where the classified employee is substantially affected in his or her employment relationship by an alleged violation or misapplication of statute, policies, rules or regulations governing the School System.

This policy and procedure is available where such efforts do not succeed or, where for any other reason, the classified employee desires to pursue this procedure. Classified personnel may access the complaints and grievances policies in the System's [online policy manual](#) and the [Human Resources website](#). Questions regarding the submission of a complaint or grievance should be addressed to the Chief of Human Resources.

This grievance policy is not designed to address terminations. Classified employees do not have written contracts for a definite term and are therefore employees at will. Notwithstanding this, such employees at will or those without written contracts, may request in writing that the Board of Education consent to review termination, or resignation decisions under this grievance policy.

### **CONDUCT EXPECTATIONS**

The Richmond County School System expects its employees to conduct themselves in a professional manner which reflects the trust and faith of the community for an individual who works near and with its children and families. All employees are required to meet the standards of conduct as identified in the Code of Ethics for Georgia Educators. The Code of Ethics is available online through the Georgia Professional Standards Commission website at <http://www.gapsc.com/ethics/home.aspx>.

### **CONFLICT OF INTEREST [Board Policy GAG]**

RCSS employees are prohibited from engaging in any activity which may conflict with or detract from the effective performance of their duties. No employee will attempt, during the school day or on school property, to sell or endeavor to influence any student or school employee to buy any product, article, instrument, service, or other items which may directly or indirectly benefit the school employee. No school employee will enter into a contract for remuneration with the System other than a contract for employment.

### **CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS [Board Policy GAK(1)]**

As a condition of employment by the Richmond County Board of Education, all applicants for employment, whether full-time or part-time, and including substitute/temporary employment, must submit to a Federal Criminal History Check (fingerprinting) and a Georgia Criminal History Background Check, which will be conducted by and through the Department of School Safety and Security. Such fingerprinting and criminal record checks may be required even though the applicant may already have

undergone fingerprinting and criminal record checks by another school district in Georgia or elsewhere. A clearance certificate verifying a satisfactory criminal background check is required based on State law and rules of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

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

### **DRUG FREE WORKPLACE [Board Policy GAMA]**

The Board of Education provides a drug-free workplace and professes that the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of tobacco and alcohol are wrong and harmful. The unlawful possession, use, manufacture, distribution, or dispensation of illicit drugs, tobacco, and alcohol by employees on school premises, in school vehicles, or at any school sponsored activities is prohibited. This prohibition also includes, but is not limited to, an employee using or displaying drug, alcohol, and tobacco products while on duty, during the normal school day, or while at a school or School System sponsored function. Compliance with these standards is mandatory.

### **DRUG TESTING [Board Policy GAMA and Regulation GAMA-R(1)]**

All Board of Education employees may be tested for misuse of alcohol or controlled substances. Such tests may include pre-employment and/or pre-duty testing, reasonable suspicion testing, random testing, post-accident alcohol and controlled-substance testing, and follow-up testing. In addition to testing for alcohol abuse, the School System reserves the right to test for marijuana, cocaine, opiates, phencyclidine (PCP), amphetamines (including methamphetamines), and all other illegal substances.

### **DRUG SCREENING AND SAFETY-SENSITIVE FUNCTIONS [Board Policy GCRA(1)]**

The Board of Education is dedicated to providing safe and efficient transportation for students transported on school buses. Safe student transportation depends on unimpaired judgment, physical dexterity, reflex action, and unimpaired senses of sight and hearing of employees in safety-sensitive functions. implements a controlled substance and alcohol testing program for all employees engaged in safety-sensitive functions.

In recognition of the fact that certain drug and/or alcohol use can impair an employee's ability to transport students safely; the Board of Education hereby endorses the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's anti-alcohol and controlled substances policies, regulations and procedures for transportation workplace drug and alcohol testing programs. The Board shall require testing for alcohol and controlled substances by employees engaged in safety sensitive functions in accordance with federal and state law, which shall include pre-employment, post-accident, random, follow-up and reasonable suspicion testing.

Operating a school bus or other commercial vehicle requires a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and is considered a safety-sensitive function. Individuals who are employed by the Board of Education to operate safety-sensitive vehicles include, but are not limited to: mechanics, school bus drivers, substitute

school bus drivers, maintenance workers, coaches, teachers, and other staff and faculty who as part of their official duties occasionally operate a school bus. The Board will not tolerate unauthorized use, abuse, possession or sale of alcohol or controlled substances by its employees.

Drivers must inform their immediate supervisor of any therapeutic drug use, whether by prescription or "over the counter", and must provide a statement from their treating physician that the substance does not adversely affect the driver's ability to operate the bus. The Superintendent or designee shall establish the administrative processes needed to ensure that all employees engaged in safety sensitive functions who are subject to the alcohol and drug testing requirements of this policy are provided information that explains the testing requirements with which they must comply.

## **EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE EVALUATION**

The Richmond County School System is committed to performance assessment that encourages continuous quality improvement for all employees. All personnel will have their performance evaluated annually as required by Georgia Code 20-2-210. When necessary, written plans of improvement are developed to support employee growth. All certified employees will be evaluated according to a state evaluation instrument each school year. All classified employees will be evaluated using a job description assessment.

## **EMPLOYEE JOB PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS**

All employees of the Richmond County School System are hired for the express purpose of supporting the educational program for children. As a result, all employees are expected to perform their jobs and conduct themselves in such a manner as to serve as an appropriate role model for children. The following guidelines are offered to ensure that employees understand expectations for job performance, but these guidelines are not intended to be all-inclusive.

Employees of the Richmond County Board of Education are expected to:

1. Report to work promptly and follow all required sign in/sign out procedures as assigned.
2. Perform job responsibilities outlined in the job description accurately and proficiently.
3. Adhere to all policies and procedures as established by the Richmond County Board of Education and the local school or department.
4. Refrain from use of tobacco or alcoholic beverages in the workplace. Use of illicit drugs is prohibited.
5. Attend work and required meetings and trainings as scheduled unless sick, personal, medical, or other approved leave.
6. Report absences from work as required by local school or department procedures.
7. Recognize the school principal as the immediate supervisor when assigned directly to a school or when providing services in school.
8. Refrain from touching or talking to students or employees of the Board of Education in a manner which could be construed as sexually or physically threatening or otherwise unacceptable or harmful.
9. Respect and protect public property from harm, damage, or loss.
10. Refrain from borrowing, taking, or bothering the personal property of others or public property without proper authorization.

## **EMPLOYMENT OF FAMILY MEMBERS**



There shall be no prohibition against relatives working in or being assigned to work in the same school, school unit or department within the School System; however, in a particular instance in which the employment of relatives within the same school, department or school unit has created unprofessional and deteriorating staff relations or disruption of efficient operation of the unit, the principal or department head may request transfer of one or more of said employees, provided such principal or department head first demonstrates appropriate evidence that staff relations or work relations have deteriorated or become disruptive due to the employment of two or more relatives in the same school, school unit or department. Under no circumstances should an employee be placed in the position of supervising a relative.

## **EMPLOYEE PERSONAL DATA CHANGES**

It is the responsibility of employees to update their personal address and phone number through our employee online system or by submitting the request through email to the Human Resources Department. Name change requests can only be updated by Human Resources personnel and must be accompanied by a legal document or copy of the social security card reflecting the new name.

## **HARASSMENT [Board Policy GAEB]**

The Board is committed to providing a workplace free from distractions caused by harassment; all forms of discrimination based upon race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, or disability at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity. It is the Board's expectation that all personnel conduct themselves in a highly professional manner and respect co-workers, students, parents, and customers. In this regard, the Board prohibits harassment, all forms of discrimination, and other unprofessional conduct.

Harassment may include, but is not limited to, conduct or speech which entails unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, taunts, threats, comments of a vulgar or demeaning nature, demands or physical contact which creates a hostile environment. There may be other speech or conduct which employees or students experience as inappropriate or illegal harassment which should also be reported; harassment can take many forms, and it is not possible to itemize every aspect of the harassment forbidden by this policy. All employees are to adhere to the Board Harassment Policy GAEB found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under "Policies." Any employee who believes they are subject to harassment or discrimination should follow the procedures found in Policy GAAA found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under **Policies**. RCSS Notification regarding Title IX policies and procedures can be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) at [Title IX Resources](#).

## **HIRING PERSONNEL [Board Policy GBD]**

All school personnel must be employed by the Board of Education on the recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools. All personnel recommended for employment must meet the minimum requirements for employment. The Superintendent of Schools is authorized to place under temporary employment non-certified personnel to fill vacancies as needed, provided all employment policy and procedure requirements have been applied and cleared. Board of Education approval of such employees shall be requested at the next Board meeting where official personnel action shall be taken.

## **MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS**

The Records Specialist shall be responsible for the maintenance, upkeep, updating and protection of all permanent records for the employees of the School System. These records are kept in the vault of the Central Administrative Offices at 864 Broad Street, Augusta, Georgia 30901. Generally, said personnel records shall contain applications, evaluations, recommendations, personal history information, contracts, reprimands, if any, and any other forms which are reasonably necessary, proper, and useful in the proper conduct of the School System.

Certain records such as information on sick leave, annual or periodic personnel evaluation, payroll and insurance are housed separately from the personnel files and may include electronic files. However, such records are subject to the same guidelines as those maintained in the vault files, unless separate laws apply. All supervisors shall keep such personnel records as are deemed necessary for the proper placement, evaluation, or similar entry. These records must be shown to the employee upon request. The employee, at his election, in lieu of any statutory rights granted by Section 20-2-940, *et seq.*, Official Code of Georgia, has the right to include a response to any such entry.

### **MANDATED REPORTER**

Any person (including a teacher, administrator, support personnel and other System and school personnel) who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child or a student has been abused, abandoned or neglected shall report such knowledge immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. A Richmond County School System employee who suspects physical or sexual child abuse shall immediately report this suspicion to his/her principal or supervisor.

### **NON-SCHOOL EMPLOYMENT [Board Policy GAG]**

An employee is permitted to hold a part-time job that does not interfere with the efficiency, effectiveness, or the duties of the employee. RCSS employees are reminded that their job assignments within the System are their first obligation, and if outside employment is taking time or energy from this position or affecting their performance, they will be asked to choose one or the other. Each principal/supervisor has direct responsibility for evaluating the effects of outside employment on personnel assigned. Ethical violations may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.

### **PERSONNEL ATTIRE**

The Board of Education recognizes that staff members are role models for the students with whom they come in contact during and after school hours. As role models, all staff should be conscious of their dress and grooming and how it may affect students and parents. Employees are expected to dress in a professional and appropriate manner that will be most conducive to the educational environment. Employees should be clean, neat, well-groomed, and dressed in an appropriate manner for their individual work assignments. Good judgment and common sense should be used in choosing appropriate attire. The responsibility for determining appropriate grooming and dress shall be placed under the supervision of System and school level administrators.

The minimum dress and grooming standard for employees shall meet or exceed the standard required for students in the Code of Student Conduct and Discipline. Employees are expected to be familiar with student dress code, to enforce it and to meet or exceed its standard in their professional dress and grooming.

## **PERSONNEL TIME SCHEDULE**

A full-time work schedule is 8 hours per day and 40 hours per week for most employees. Some classified positions such as paraprofessionals, school nutrition assistants, bus drivers and school clerical work less than 8 hours per day. Please refer to the [salary schedule](#) for specific hours per day for these positions. The principal or director sets a schedule within this policy for the time of arrival and departure of all employees assigned to his/her operation. In order for an organization to achieve its desired goals, excellent attendance and punctuality are necessary. Therefore, regular and prompt attendance is expected and required of all employees.

## **POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT**

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

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

## **PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL SERVING AS CONSULTANTS**

Employees may serve as resource persons for an agency, university, a teaching workshop, a course, or another school system according to the guidelines of the Richmond County Board of Education. Persons wishing to serve as consultants must first receive written approval from the Superintendent.

## **PROMOTIONS**

All career opportunities are advertised through our [online application system](#). Current employees are encouraged to apply to positions of interest as an internal candidate. The Human Resources Department has a process for leadership positions which includes screening applicants and interviewing procedures. The Superintendent or his/her designee has the sole responsibility to recommend an applicant to the Board; thus, the results of the screening, when held, are usually advisory only. The Superintendent's recommendation is presented to the Board for approval. Furthermore, appointment to such position may be subject to such prior training, evaluations, or conditions as determined appropriate from time to time.

## **REDUCTION IN WORK FORCE [Board Policy GBKA]**

A reduction in force may occur for the following reasons: inadequate funds; loss of funding that includes the reduction or expiration of grant generated funds; insufficient student enrollment to merit continuation of a program or service; decline in average daily attendance; decline in need for services rendered by a position classification; return of contractual personnel from extended leave; discontinuation of a program by action of the Board; change in class sizes; closure or change in purpose of a school or program; reorganization; legislative mandates; judicial decrees; other exigencies.

Any reduction in force will be effectuated by complying with policies formulated and approved by the Richmond County Board of Education. A copy of the Board of Education's reduction in force policy can be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under "Policies."

## **REPRIMAND**

A superintendent may write a letter of reprimand to a Richmond County School System employee for any valid reason. A copy of said letter of reprimand is to remain in the employee's permanent personnel file. A teacher receiving such a letter of reprimand shall have the right to appeal the decision of the superintendent to the Local Board. Said hearing is to be conducted according to the provisions of the Fair Dismissal Act. The Board shall have the right to either affirm the decision of the superintendent or to reverse it. If the decision of the Board is to reverse it, said letter of reprimand shall be removed from said teacher permanent personnel file. (See O.C.G.A. Sec. 20-2-944 .) Additionally, an alternate local policy gives teachers the right to have their written response placed in their personnel file in lieu of a hearing. Any appeal right of a classified employee is governed by **Policy GAE-3** which can be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under **Policies**.

## **RESPONSIBILITY TO REPORT CRIMINAL CHARGES**

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

## **RETURN OF SYSTEM PROPERTY UPON SEPARATION**

All employees upon separation of employment shall be responsible for items issued by the School System such as the following:

1. Instructional supplies;
2. Credit cards;
3. Equipment (e.g., computer, cellular telephone);
4. Keys;
5. Written materials (e.g., manuals, flash drives.); and
6. Other School System property assigned for use by the employee.

All such property must be returned on or before the last day of work. Final paychecks will not be issued until all RCSS property has been accounted for or returned. Deductions to employee's paycheck, to the extent allowed by law, shall be made as compensation for property not returned or returned in unsatisfactory condition. The School System may also take all other action deemed appropriate to recover or protect system property.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA USE**

As online technologies become more interactive, the Richmond County School System is providing new methods for supporting teaching and learning, including social media, home access to learning activities, and enhanced online resources. Social media includes all types of communication shared in an electronic format, including Facebook, Instagram, X, YouTube, blogs, wikis, e-mail, social networks, instant messaging, and video-hosting sites, as well as emerging technology that encourages sharing and electronic collaboration. Each vehicle has its own style and privacy options. These technologies must

meet standards and expectations for communication with students, parents, staff, and community members. Information regarding FERPA and the School System's media release expectations are detailed in the Student/Parent Handbook.

Some additional guidelines around social networking are important to remember:

- Treat school-related social media as a secondary form of communication with parents and students. System-approved or System-hosted communication tools (such as e-mail and the school website) are the primary resources for communication to parents and students about school-related matters.
- Communicate with students and parents about school-related matters through System-approved or System-hosted electronic accounts and applications, such as System e-mail and the school or department website.
- Do not share information, such as personal information, images, and work examples on social network sites unless you have approval and permission of the individual.
- Consider the information being distributed and its impact on your credibility as a staff member and your ability to perform your duties.
- Only allow "true friends" access to your personal information and carefully consider what you post about your professional activities and environment on personal social networking sites.
- Directly connect the use of social networking to the academic purpose of the classroom when maintaining a site for teaching and learning purposes.
- Remember that staff members are expected to follow the ethical and professional standards for educators and associated procedures. If you choose to post information about your work, strive to post only information that is a positive reflection of your efforts to educate students and interact with others.
- Respect Richmond County School System time and property. You should participate in personal social media conversations on your own time.
- Use your best judgment. What you write may have serious consequences. Once you post something on social media, it cannot be retracted; even deleting the post does not mean that the information is truly removed. Ultimately, you bear sole responsibility for what you post.
- Avoid the offensive. Do not post any defamatory, libelous, vulgar, obscene, abusive, profane, threatening, racially or ethnically hateful, or otherwise offensive or illegal information or material.
- Do not misuse trademarks.
- Make no endorsements. Do not use your school or the System's name to endorse or promote products, political positions, or religious ideologies.
- Do not violate copyright. Do not post information or other material protected by copyright without permission of the copyright owner.
- Do not misrepresent yourself. Do not disguise, impersonate, or otherwise misrepresent your identity or affiliation with any other person or entity.
- Do not promote yourself for personal or financial gain. Do not use your School System affiliation to promote, endorse, or benefit yourself or any profit-making group or agency.
- Follow terms of service. Be familiar with a social media site's term of service and follow them.

- All employees must acknowledge the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy and Procedures, also known as Policy IFBG and coordinating procedures, which can also be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under **Policies**.

## **SOLICITATIONS [Board Policy GAG]**

Employees are not to use School System time, materials, facilities, or employees to distribute materials nor solicit aid or contributions for any private, charitable, or non-profit cause, entity or institution without the prior, formal approval of the Board of Education, unless a specific prior written policy of the Board covers the subject matter.

## **STUDENT INTERACTIONS**

The Board of Education is committed to fostering an environment that promotes academic and professional success in students and staff. The achievement of such success is dependent on an environment free of behaviors which can undermine the goals of our School System. The following are necessary when interacting with students: Be friendly, but not a friend. Choose appropriate settings. Avoid electronic communications outside of school site or approved School System platforms. Keep interactions at school or at school related events. When interacting with students, employees must be mindful of their interactions and remain in compliance with The Code of Ethics for Georgia Educators.

## **SUBSTITUTE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (ABSENT REPORTING)**

Kelly Services and Global Personnel Solutions provide our School System with substitutes. In general, Kelly Services provides substitutes for school nutrition assistants, teachers and elementary paraprofessionals, and Global Personnel Solutions provides substitutes for custodians and school nutrition staff. Teachers and paraprofessionals are responsible for securing a substitute through absence management/frontline when they are going to be out. Please visit our [substitute resource](#) center under Human Resources Department on the RCSS website for detailed information.

## **TERMINATION, SUSPENSION AND DEMOTION**

The Richmond County Board of Education follows the provisions of the Georgia Fair Dismissal Act of 1975, as amended, as it relates to termination, demotion, non-renewal, or letters of reprimand for a teacher, principal or other employee having a contract for a definite term. (See Sections 20-2-940 through 20-2-946, Official Code of Georgia.) A teacher who accepts a fourth consecutive school year contract may be non-renewed only for those reasons set forth in the Fair Dismissal Act. A teacher is deemed to have accepted a fourth consecutive school year contract, if, while the teacher is serving under the third consecutive school year contract, the local board does not serve notice on the teacher by May 15\* that it intends not to renew the teacher's contract for the ensuing school year, and the teacher does accept the following consecutive school year contract. School year means a period of at least 190 school days beginning in or about August and ending in or about June.

## **TRANSFER OF EMPLOYEES**

Administrative transfer of employees within the School System may be made according to the needs of individual schools. The Board expressly reserves its right and responsibility to place employees at any school within the system to the extent the Board deems necessary for the orderly and effective management of the School System.



Employees may also initiate a lateral transfer request during the voluntary transfer period established by the Human Resources Department by following the voluntary transfer procedures that are shared with all employees each year. If the request for transfer has not been acted upon by the date established in each year's transfer procedures, then said transfer shall not be allowed for the ensuing year unless the mutual consent of both the releasing and receiving Principals is given and a replacement is found for the vacated position. A lateral voluntary transfer is not official until notification of approval is shared by the Human Resources Department.

## **UNAUTHORIZED AUDIO AND VIDEO RECORDING**

Richmond County School System employees are prohibited from making unauthorized, secret audio or video recordings of employees, students, or guests. An employee, student or guest may only be authorized to make an audio or video recording by permission from the school or System administrator with the highest assigned responsibility who is present.

## **USE OF ELECTRONIC RESOURCES**

The Richmond County Board of Education recognizes that electronic media, including the internet, provides access to a wide variety of instructional resources in an effort to enhance educational opportunities. Use of electronic resources must be in support of, and consistent with the vision, mission, and goals of the Richmond County School System and for the purpose of academic knowledge and skills, instructional support, or administrative functions.

All users of the System-wide area network and/or other electronic informational services must maintain strict compliance with all applicable ethical and legal rules and regulations regarding access. All employees must acknowledge the terms of the Acceptable Use Policy and Procedures, also known as Policy IFBG and coordinating procedures, which can also be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under **Policies**.

## **WEAPONS PROHIBITED**

Employees are prohibited from carrying or possessing any weapon within a school safety zone or at a school building, school function, or on school property or on a bus or other transportation furnished by the school.



## **BENEFITS**

Benefits are a large part of the total compensation package for Richmond County School System employees. In order to meet the changing needs of our employees, we are continuously reviewing and updating these benefits and their features. The following is an overview of the benefits provided by RCBOE. Because of the importance of the benefits package, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the details of the various plans from a variety of sources, including the RCBOE *New Hire Guide* and *State Health Benefit Plan Decision Guide*. Publications, along with other detailed information, can be found on the [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org)– Human Resources – Employee Benefits.

Open Enrollment (OE) is the period each year when employees may enroll or change options or coverage, subject to the conditions described in the plan. The OE period, unless otherwise announced, occurs mid-October through mid-November of each calendar year. Coverage changes or enrollments become effective the following January 1. It is the responsibility of the employee to notify the Benefits Office of any changes in the number of dependents and/or the names of beneficiaries.

Insurance benefits become effective on the first day of the month following the completion of one full calendar month of employment. Temporary employees or employees who work less than 20 hours per week are not eligible for benefits.

### **ACCIDENT INSURANCE**

Accident insurance complements traditional health coverage by providing a lump sum payment that can help pay expenses not typically covered by other insurance. The payment can be used to off-set medical deductibles, out-of-pocket maximums, and/or living expenses. The employee pays the total premiums for this optional accident insurance.

### **CAFETERIA BENEFIT PLAN**

The Board of Education offers a passive “cafeteria” plan of fringe benefits for all eligible employees. The plan allows employees to pay insurance premiums from pretax dollars and thereby increasing an employee’s net pay and decreasing tax liability. Please contact the benefits department during open enrollment or at the beginning of employment. Once enrolled, an employee must remain under the plan for one calendar year.

### **CANCER INSURANCE**

Cancer insurance complements traditional health coverage by helping with costs associated with cancer screenings, diagnosis, and treatment. Benefits are paid directly to the employee in a lump sum when treatment is confirmed. Rates are age-banded and are not changed once enrolled in the plan. The employee pays the total premiums for this optional cancer insurance.

## **CREDIT UNION**

As an employee with the Richmond County School System, you and your family members qualify for membership in Peach State Federal Credit Union. As a convenience for employees, payroll deductions are provided upon request for contributions or payments to the Peach State Federal Credit Union. For more information, please visit the [Peach State Federal Credit Union](#) website.

## **CRITICAL ILLNESS INSURANCE**

Critical illness insurance complements traditional health coverage by helping with costs associated with a critical illness. Benefits are paid directly to the employee in a lump sum when a diagnosis of a covered illness is confirmed. Rates are age-banded and are not changed once enrolled in the plan. The employee pays the total premiums for this optional critical illness insurance.

## **DENTAL INSURANCE**

Dental coverage may be purchased for the individual employee and his/her eligible family members. Two plans are available: regular option or high option. Both plans offer a voluntary network of preferred dental providers. The Premium plan also offers orthodontia benefits. Late entrant restrictions may apply to employees who decline enrollment at the time of hire and enroll through a subsequent Open Enrollment, or for those employees who dropped dental coverage and re-elected coverage at a later Open Enrollment. The employee pays the total premiums for this optional dental insurance.

## **DISABILITY INSURANCE**

Disability insurance helps protect employees who become disabled and cannot work due to a covered accidental injury or sickness. Disability insurance is not a one-size-fits-all plan. Employees can select a benefit amount and elimination period that meets their financial needs. The Richmond County School System pays up to \$11.40 of the employee's monthly premium.

## **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

As an employee of the Richmond County School System, American Fidelity offers confidential legal, financial and life coaching services to assist with everyday issues. This program has telephonic life coaching, work-life programs and 24/7 resources available to all employees. This includes professional referrals for a wide variety of concerns. Further information is available on our [benefits](#) website page.

## **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS UPON SEPARATION**

Employee benefits will obviously be affected by employment separation. For instance, all accrued and vested benefits that are due and payable at the time of separation will be paid. Some benefits may be continued if the employee so chooses to continue payments. Employees should contact the Human Resources Benefits Department regarding any benefits that may be continued and of the terms, conditions, and limitations of such continuance.

## **EMPLOYEE PERKS**

School System employees are valued across the nation for their dedication to students and their community. As a result, employees have access to a number of discounts and offers not available to the public. Please visit our [PERKS](#) to view participating vendors.

## **HEALTH INSURANCE**

Benefit-eligible employees have the opportunity to enroll in group health insurance provided by the State Health Benefit Plan. Enrollment in the State Health Benefit Plan is limited to a 15-day period at the time of effective hire date of employment. Any employee who fails to meet this requirement, will not be eligible to enroll in the plan until the annual Open Enrollment period (mid- October through mid-November). Information on the health plan is available from the Benefits or [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) - [Human Resources – Employee Benefits](#).

Coverage may not be dropped except during the open enrollment period. Certain changes in life status enable an employee to enroll or add dependents within 31 days of the event. Otherwise, all changes, additions, and deletions may be made only during the time of open enrollment. If an employee's spouse loses group health insurance coverage because of factors beyond his/her control, the employee has the option of selecting family coverage no later than 31 days after the coverage loss. The employee must come into the insurance office to make eligible changes outside of the open enrollment window.

The Board contributes a portion toward the premium for classified personnel wishing to enroll in the State Health Benefit Plan. For certified personnel, the Board contributes a percentage of their state salary toward the premium for the State Health Benefit Plan. Current Health Insurance Rates can be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under [Human Resources – Employee Benefits](#)

## **HOSPITAL INDEMNITY INSURANCE**

Hospital Indemnity insurance complements traditional health coverage by providing a lump sum payment that can help pay expenses associated with hospitalization not typically covered by other insurance. The payment can be used to off-set medical deductibles, out-of-pocket maximums, and/or living expenses. The employee pays the total premiums for this optional hospital indemnity insurance.

## **INSURANCE COVERAGE DURING LEAVE WITHOUT PAY**

Employees on an approved leave without pay absence may continue coverage by making the full health insurance premium payment to the Human Resources Department Benefits Office. All other insurance payments are to be paid directly to the vendor. Failure to make timely premium payments may result in lapse of coverage and/or payroll deduction upon return to work. It is the employees' responsibility to communicate with their benefits specialist and make timely payments.

## **LIFE INSURANCE**

Benefit-eligible employees (working at least 20 hours per week) are automatically covered by a \$30,000 group term Life and Accidental Death and Dismemberment policy provided by the Board at no cost to the employee. Additional life insurance is available at the expense of the employee.

## **PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEMS OF GEORGIA**

Bus drivers, food service employees, some non-supervisory maintenance and custodial personnel, and other employees not eligible for membership in TRS are eligible for membership in the Public School Employees' Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS). For members with at least 10 years of creditable service, normal retirement benefits may commence at age 65 and reduced early retirement benefits may commence as early as age 60. Members hired before July 1, 2012, contribute \$4.00 per month for nine months each year. Members hired or rehired on or after July 1, 2012, contribute \$10.00 per month for nine months each year.

The required employee's portion is deducted from their paychecks for the months of September thru May each year. The state makes the employer's contribution. Further information is available on the [Employees' Retirement System of Georgia](#) website.

## **SOCIAL SECURITY WITHHOLDING NOTICE**

Pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-219.1, the Richmond County School System is required to provide notice to all employees regarding withholding of Social Security Taxes and eligibility for inclusion in certain benefits, pension, or retirement plans as follows:

Social Security Taxes will be withheld from the pay of employees of the Richmond County School System and will be reflected on each employee paycheck.

Richmond County School System employees are eligible to be included in a plan with coverage for the benefits of Title II of the Social Security Act in addition to other pension and retirement plans, depending on the employee's certification and employment status. For more information, please refer to the information at the following link: [Benefits Department](#). If you need further information, please contact Benefits Coordinator, Franklin Hudson, [hudsofr@boe.richmond.k12.ga.us](mailto:hudsofr@boe.richmond.k12.ga.us).

## **TAX SHELTERED ANNUITIES**

As an employee working for a public nonprofit institution, you are eligible to participate in a tax-sheltered annuity plan. It allows you to defer receiving a portion of your current year's earnings, which enables you to defer paying income tax on that portion. An employee may select a tax sheltered annuity plan of any insurance company approved by the Board of Education. Contributions to the desired plan may be made through payroll deduction. Existing annuities will continue to be deducted. The approved companies can be found at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under [Human Resources – Employee Benefits Center](#).

## **TEACHER LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAM**

Teaching is a profession that requires a great deal of talent and responsibility, but it also provides educators with many personal rewards. These rewards are what attract many people into the teaching profession. Congress provided an incentive to teach when it established the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program (TLFP).

The TLFP was created to encourage individuals to enter and continue in the teaching profession in eligible elementary and secondary schools that serve low-income families. An eligible school is considered “low-income” according to certain criteria for funding under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act and is listed in the Annual Directory of Designated Low-Income Schools for Teacher Cancellation Benefits. Additional information is available through the Office of [Federal Student Aid at the U. S. Department of Education](#).

## **TEACHERS RETIREMENT SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

Teachers, administrators, supervisors, clerical employees, paraprofessionals, and various central office staff are eligible members of the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia (TRS). Exceptions to TRS membership include employees required to participate in another Georgia retirement plan, temporary, substitute teachers, and less than half time employees.

Benefits become available after 30 years of service, regardless of age, at 25 years of service with early retirement adjustments, or at age 60 after 10 years of service. Employees who have 10 years of TRS service are eligible to apply for disability retirement benefits if permanently disabled, as well as survivor’s benefits that are paid to a beneficiary.

If a member ceases to be employed, the amount of his contribution to the retirement system shall be payable to him upon request. Processing this request may take up to 90 days. This request shall be made through the Richmond County Board of Education.

TRS benefits are funded by a combination of employee and employer contributions. Current contribution rates and additional information about TRS is available on the [Teacher Retirement System of Georgia website](#)

## **VISION INSURANCE**

Vision coverage may be purchased for the individual employee and his/her eligible family members. Vision insurance covers the cost of eye exams and other services and materials through the selected vision care provider. Using in-network providers allows enrollees to receive care at no cost or minimal out-of-pocket expense. The plan also includes an out-of-network benefit that allows enrollees to use any eye care professional. The employee pays the total premiums for this optional vision insurance.

## **WELLNESS AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT**

Employees who select Blue Cross Blue Shield of Georgia or United Healthcare as their health insurance plan have the option to be a part of a disease management, tobacco cessation and/or wellness program. An employee can join the Disease Management Program if they want additional support in dealing with asthma, diabetes, or heart disease. With active participation, there is an opportunity to get certain prescriptions at no cost or a lower cost.



The Tobacco Cessation Program is confidential and voluntary. The program offers online and telephonic tobacco cessation services that provide the tools and support needed to quit successfully at no additional cost to the employee. The Wellness Program allows employees to earn credits in an incentive account to offset eligible medical expenses. Well-being actions such as assessing your health, completing your biometric screening, and participating in telephonic coaching are a required part of the wellness program. To learn more information or participate in one of these programs visit [www.BeWellSHBP.com](http://www.BeWellSHBP.com).



# **COMMUNICATIONS**

## **ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION**

The Board of Education recognizes an expanding reliance on electronic communication due to the convenience, speed, cost-effectiveness, and environmental advantages it provides. As role models, teachers and other staff should be conscious of their electronic communication with staff members, students, and parents. The following expectations are necessary:

- Only use electronic communication on a professional level.
- Notify supervisor of your plans and always copy them. Should a student communicate inappropriately, notify your supervisor immediately.
- If your school site provides an electronic platform such as Remind, utilize that platform.

## **E-MAIL**

The System maintains e-mail accounts for the majority of employees to facilitate communication with supervisors, coworkers, System staff, parents of students, and others, to carry out the employee's responsibilities. An email account and its use is a privilege and is subject to the System's Internet Acceptable Use Policy, which can be found in the online policy manual.

Employees are prohibited from using e-mail to forward or distribute messages for the purpose of soliciting funds or business, marketing, sale of items or distribution of inappropriate material.

With very limited exceptions, all communication using a System e-mail account is a public record and is subject to open records requests and must adhere to the System's records retention guidelines.

## **PONY MAIL**

The System maintains an interoffice mail service to distribute documents and materials to employees and departments. Interoffice mail should not be used for distribution of non-work related materials.

## **SCHOOL/OFFICE TELEPHONES**

Richmond County School System telephones are provided for business communications. Accepting personal phone calls during work is discouraged.



## **COMPENSATION**

### **EMPLOYEE ONLINE**

Employees may access the following payroll items online via the employee online link located in our staff resources directory on our System webpage. Please note in order to access the directory, employees must sign in on the System home page.

- Pay Statements
- Direct Deposit
- Tax Withholdings
- W2's
- Leave Tracking
- Current and Historical jobs
- Benefits

### **OVERTIME AND COMPENSATORY TIME [Board Policy GCRD]**

The Board of Education complies with the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) that establishes a 40-hour work week for non-exempt (hourly pay) employees. The work week is defined as the time period from Monday to Sunday. Time worked beyond 40 hours will be paid at 1½ times the regular hourly rate of pay. Overtime is calculated on actual hours worked. Work weeks in which an employee uses leave or does not work due to a holiday may record more than 40 hours for pay purposes but not be paid overtime because actual time worked was not over 40 hours.

Supervisors strive to maintain a 40-hour work week for each full-time, non-exempt employee, utilizing a typical 8-hour, 5-day work week. Any employee whose time worked for a week may result in overtime hours must notify his/her supervisor for a possible schedule adjustment. For more information regarding Overtime and Compensatory time in lieu of overtime, please see RCBOE Policy GCRD regarding Classified Personnel Overtime Pay.

### **PAY ADJUSTMENT**

Employee pay may be adjusted at any time for reclassification or reassignment of job duties, changes in certification level for certified staff, changes in work schedule, absences for which paid leave was not available, disciplinary action while suspended from duties, and changes in the salary schedule approved by the Richmond County School System Board of Education. Pay adjustments will be made during the next available pay period following a change and the employee will be notified in writing. Due to the payroll processing cycle and adjustment cutoff period, the next available pay period may be the next month following notification of a change in pay.

### **PAY FREQUENCY AND DIRECT DEPOSIT**

All employees are paid semi-monthly. Employees have the option to participate in the direct deposit or pay card programs. Direct deposit is an option for any pay period provided that the direct deposit form has been submitted earlier than the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month. The annual salary is paid over a period of twelve

months. Inquiries about paychecks are to be made through the principal, director, or bookkeeper to the Central Office Accounting Department.

## **SALARY DEDUCTIONS [Board Procedure DJCB-R(1)]**

There are a number of deductions that may be withheld from each check.

These include:

1. **Federal Withholding Tax**: Tax deduction is based upon W-4 form filed with the Human Resources Office and current tax rate schedule of U.S. Department of Internal Revenue.
2. **State of Georgia Withholding Tax**: Tax deduction is based upon G-4 form filed with the Human Resources Office and current tax rate schedule of Georgia Income Tax Division.
3. **Social Security**: All employees of the Board of Education are covered by Social Security, and deductions for this purpose are made; rates of deduction will change as required by law.
4. **Teachers Retirement System of Georgia**:
  - a. For all eligible employees of the Richmond County Board of Education (RCBOE), the required contribution percentage of the employee's salary will be deducted for contribution to the Teachers Retirement System. In addition, the Board and/or State may make such additional contributions as is required by law.
  - b. Eligible employees who resign from employment with RCBOE and wish to withdraw contributions should request an Application for Return of Contributions from the Human Resources Office.
  - c. For information concerning the regulations and/or policies of the Teachers' Retirement System of Georgia, please contact [www.trsga.com](http://www.trsga.com) or (800) 352-0650.
5. **Group Insurance**: RCSS offers group medical, life, dental, vision and cancer insurance plans as well as short and long term disability supplemental plans. For those coverages selected by the employee, appropriate payroll deductions are made.
6. **Tax Sheltered Annuity (T.S.A.)**: Teachers or other qualified employees may elect to have T.S.A. deducted from their salary for the company of their choice provided the company is on the approved list.
7. **403(b) Program for Non-Certified Employees**: Non-certified employees, as defined in the plan documents, may participate in a 403(b) matching contribution plan and have their contributions deducted from their salary.
8. **Public Employees Retirement System**: For all RCBOE employees not eligible for the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia, the Public Employees Retirement System provides retirement allowances. The required contribution amount will be deducted from the employee's paycheck for contribution to the Public Employees Retirement System.

9. **Repayment of Money the Employee Owes to the School System:** There may be instances in which an employee owes the School System repayment for certain sums. By way of example and not limitation, such situations may exist when an employee who was overpaid due to an accounting error or other circumstances, an employee who failed to turn in or damaged School System property or technology equipment, or an employee who received more leave than was accrued or allowed. In these instances, the School System may deduct such amounts from employee's pay. The School System will make every effort to communicate with the employee to determine mutually agreed upon repayment schedule and terms. Note: Upon employee separation, an audit will be conducted, and if monies are owed to the School System whether under a repayment agreement, discovered during the final exit audit, or due to the employee's failure to return School System property or technology equipment, the School System may deduct any and all amounts from the employee's final paycheck(s).

## **VERIFICATION OF EXPERIENCE FOR SALARY PURPOSES**

All employees are placed on the appropriate salary schedule according to documented and verified work experience and degree level. Each employee is responsible for providing documentation for salary placement. Certified staff are placed on the state teacher salary schedule according to State Board of Education Rule GBA (5). The superintendent may recommend exceptions to salary schedule placement and/or create a new salary schedule for an employee or class of employees with approval from the Richmond County Board of Education.



## ***EMPLOYEE LEAVE AND ABSENCES***

Richmond County Board of Education recognizes that our employees will encounter illness, injury and personal situations that may require time away from their job. Leave options are designed to not only be flexible and consistent with employee needs but also to comply with state and federal laws.

[Is this done now through **FRONTLINE?**] A [certificate of absence form](#) must be filed and approved by the principal or immediate supervisor prior to leave. Unless otherwise approved by the Superintendent or designee, personal and professional leave will not be granted during pre-planning, post-planning, in-service days or on the day before or day after holidays. In the event of an emergency or sudden illness, the employee must contact their immediate supervisor as required by building and department expectations.

### **BEREAVEMENT LEAVE [Board Policy GARH]**

In the event of a death in the immediate family of a benefits-eligible employee, a leave-of-absence of no more than three sick leave days will be granted for the death of an immediate family member in state and up to five days for the death of an immediate family member out of state. Any absence due to the death of a person other than on the list below must be taken from personal leave.

Immediate family members are defined as: husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, granddaughter, grandson, grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, and any relatives living in the immediate household of the employee.

Exceptions to the above must be approved by the Superintendent or designee. Request for such leave shall be made in writing to the employee's immediate supervisor or designee.

### **EXTENDED LEAVE [Board Policy GARH]**

Employees who have completed at least three full years of consecutive service with the Richmond County School System are eligible for an extended leave of absence beyond the 60 days under the Family and Medical Leave Act. Extended leave must be approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee and may not exceed one calendar year unless the Superintendent grants an extension. Extended leaves may be granted for educational leave, health, childcare, military, and political leave. Employees are entitled to return to active employment, contingent upon a vacancy in the field in which they were employed at the time leave was granted.

### **FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE ACT [Board Policy GBRID]**

To be eligible for coverage under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), an employee must have been employed by the System for at least 12 months and must have worked at least 1,250 hours during the prior twelve-month period. FMLA may grant qualified employees 60 working days of unpaid leave every twelve months, which may be used for the following purposes:

1. Birth of a child and to care for the newborn child
2. Adoption or foster placement of a child
3. Care for a sick spouse, child, or parent
4. Employee's own serious health condition



## 5. Military

An eligible employee who is a covered service member's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin may also take up to 26 weeks of FMLA leave in a single 12-month period to care for the service member with a serious injury or illness. The System requires that any leave request based on a family member's health condition, the employee's own health condition, or military caregiver status, be supported by the appropriate FMLA documentation. Additionally, an approved health care provider's release to return to work will be required for all employees who were on leave due to their own health condition.

The employee must provide at least 30-day notice of the employee's intention to take leave when possible. The employee should make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment in a manner that will not overly disrupt the operations of the System. With limited exceptions, any eligible employee who takes leave under FMLA is entitled to be restored to his/her position or an equivalent position.

If an employee has been absent 10 consecutive working days and has not notified the Benefits Office by completing a Leave Request Form, along with a written attending healthcare provider's statement or FMLA form certifying the illness and anticipated return to work date, his/her position is subject to being declared vacant and may result in employment termination.

The System may, under certain circumstances, request that an employee "recertify" his or her serious health condition or the serious health condition of his or her family member within the same leave year. The System may contact the employee's health care provider to authenticate or clarify the fitness-for-duty certification. For additional information, please reference Policy GARH and GBRIG at [www.rcboe.org](http://www.rcboe.org) under **Policies** or contact the Benefits Office, Central Office, Suite 208, 864 Broad Street, Augusta, Georgia 30901, (Phone) 706-826-1000.

### **JURY DUTY, SUBPOENA, AND OTHER COURT ORDER [Board Policy GARH]**

All System employees shall be allowed leave without loss of pay when they respond to a summons for jury duty or attend a judicial proceeding in response to a job-related subpoena or other court order that requires their attendance. Employees with jury duty shall not have the jury leave deducted from sick or personal leave, and no employee using this leave shall be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute. Employees may also retain juror compensation.

### **LIVING DONOR EDUCATORS LEAVE [Board Policy GARH]**

The Georgia Supporting Living Donor Educators Act (O.C.G.A. 20-1-12) provides that each public school teacher and public school employee shall be entitled to receive the following leaves of absence, without loss of pay:

1. Not more than seven (7) days for the purpose of bone marrow donation for transplantation, which shall not be charged against or deducted from any annual or sick leave and shall be included as service in computing any retirement or pension benefits; and

2. Not more than thirty (30) days for the purpose of organ donation for transplantation, which shall not be charged against or deducted from any annual or sick leave and shall be included as service in computing any retirement or pension benefits.

In order to be entitled to a leave of absence under this provision, the employee must furnish a statement from a medical practitioner who is to perform such transplantation procedure or from a hospital administrator where such procedure is to be performed that such individual is making a bone marrow or organ donation. Such statement shall be furnished to such individual's employer no less than seven days prior to any leave of absence to be scheduled.

### **MILITARY DUTY LEAVE [Board Policies GARH, GBRID]**

Every employee shall be entitled to a leave of absence from duties or service as an employee while engaged in the performance of ordered military duty and while going to and returning from such duty for a period or periods up to six months. However, no employee shall be entitled to absent himself or herself in excess of a total of six months during any four-year period.

Employee shall be paid his or her salary or other compensation as such employee for any and all periods of absence while engaged in the performance of ordered military duty and while going to and returning from such duty, not exceeding a total of 18 working days, per fiscal year.

### **OBSERVANCE OF RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS [Board Policy GARH]**

Leave for religious holidays may not exceed three days per fiscal year. Employees may use personal leave for the observance of recognized religious holidays. If an employee desires to take leave for the observance of recognized religious holidays in excess of the days allowed for personal leave, the employee may take unpaid leave for such purposes provided that such leave is not excessive and does not interfere with fulfilling the obligations of his or her job.

### **PAID PARENTAL LEAVE [Board Policy GARH]**

The Board of Education shall make paid parental leave equally available to all eligible employees of the Board of Education under the following terms:

1. An employee of the Board of Education shall be eligible for paid parental leave for qualifying life events upon satisfying the following criteria:
  - a. The employee is classified as full-time by the School System and is eligible to participate in the TRS (Teacher Retirement System of Georgia) or the PSERS (Public School Employees Retirement System); and
  - b. The employee has six continuous months of employment with the Board, regardless of whether he or she is eligible for paid or unpaid leave under federal law. An employee paid on an hourly basis must have worked a minimum of 700 hours over the six-month period

immediately preceding the requested paid parental leave date.

2. A qualifying life event means:
  - a. The birth of a child of an eligible employee;
  - b. The placement of a minor child for adoption with an eligible employee; or
  - c. The placement of a minor child for foster care with an eligible employee.
3. The maximum amount of paid parental leave that may be taken by an eligible employee during a rolling 12-month period is 240 hours, regardless of the number of qualifying life events that occur during such period.
  - a. The rolling 12-month period shall be measured backward from the date an eligible employee first uses parental leave.
  - b. Parental leave may be taken as needed and may be taken in increments of less than eight hours. The smallest increment of parental leave that may be taken is 2 hours.
  - c. Any unused paid parental leave that remains 12 months after the qualifying event shall not carry over for future use.
  - d. Unused paid parental leave shall have no cash value at any time of the eligible employee's separation from employment with the Board of Education.
4. Paid parental leave under state law shall run concurrently with any leave provided under federal law.
5. Eligible employees requesting paid parental leave must provide at least 30 days advance notice to the Chief Human Resources Officer. If such advance notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practical. If an employee does not provide at least 30 days' notice of foreseeable leave, he/she must also explain why such notice was not practical, in accordance with the System's leave requirements.
6. Employees must provide sufficient information for the System to reasonably determine whether the parental leave may apply to the leave request. When an employee seeks leave due to a parental leave-qualifying reason for which the System has previously provided parental leave, the employee must specifically reference either the previous qualifying reason for leave or the need for parental leave.

## **PERSONAL LEAVE [Board Policy GARH]**

Employees may take up to three days of accumulated sick leave each fiscal year for personal or professional reasons. Supervisory approval is required prior to the date of the planned absence. The employee is not required to disclose the specific purpose for the leave. Personal leave may not be carried over from year to year; therefore, unused personal leave will be carried over as accumulated sick leave.

Personal leave may not be taken when the presence of the employee is considered essential for effective school/school system operation. In addition, personal leave will not be granted during the first week of the student school year or during the last week of the student school year, unless the Superintendent or designee, in his or her discretion, determines that such leave should be granted due to circumstances

beyond the employee's control. The Superintendent may refuse to allow an employee to take personal or professional leave if qualified substitutes are not available.

### **PROFESSIONAL LEAVE [Board Policy GARH]**

An employee may request leave to attend specific professional activities or to receive in-service training. Leave requests must be approved by the supervisor and submitted to the Superintendent or his/her designee for approval at least two weeks prior to the requested absence. Approval of the request does not commit the system to payment of any expenses. Professional leave may not total more than three days. Professional leave for training and/or professional meetings attended at the request of the School System shall not be counted against an employee's sick leave.

### **RETURNING FROM EXTENDED LEAVE**

An employee who is returning to work from approved extended leave must notify the Human Resources Department in writing of his/her intention to return to the School System. Every effort will be made to place an employee in the field held prior to the leave and at the location where the employee worked prior to the leave. Such placement will depend on the availability of openings.

Employees who have been on extended leave without pay, and did not participate in the annual benefits Open Enrollment Process will be unable to make benefit election changes until the next Open Enrollment window.

When returning from extended leave, the employee must submit to the Benefits Office and supervisor a release to work statement from the health care provider stating the employee is able to perform the essential functions of the job. If an employee is released with work restrictions, the Human Resources Director and Principal/Program Manager must approve the work restrictions.

### **SICK LEAVE [Board Policy GARH]**

Sick leave for full-time employees is earned at the rate of 10 hours per month multiplied by the number of months worked. Employees working less than 40 hours per week earn a prorated share of sick leave. Temporary employees or employees who work less than 20 hours per week are not eligible to accrue leave.

All unused sick leave shall be accumulated from one fiscal year to the next up to a maximum of ninety (90) days. Sick leave accumulated by a certified employee is transferable from one school system to another school system, up to a maximum of 45 days. In accordance with state statute, the transfer of leave must take place within one year of termination from the previous school system. Employees absent without accumulated sick leave will have a full day's pay deducted from their salary for each day absent.

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

- Illness (including childbirth) or injury
- Adoption
- Exposure to contagious diseases which might endanger others

- Illness, injury, or death in employee's immediate family (spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, siblings, grandparents, in-law equivalents of the aforementioned, any relative residing in the employee's home or any dependent as shown in the employee's most recent tax return).

For any absence in which sick leave is used, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall have the right to require a physician's statement and a physician's certificate stating that the employee is ill and is unable to perform his or her duties. In the event that sick leave is used to care for a member of the immediate family, under the Federal Medical Leave Act an employee will be required to provide a physician's statement and a physician's certificate stating that the employee is needed to care for the sick family member. If an employee is absent for three consecutive days of sick leave, a physician's statement must be furnished.

### **SICK LEAVE BANK**

The Sick Leave Bank (SLB) has been established to provide additional sick leave days for employees who have exhausted their accrued leave due to a catastrophic illness or injury. The SLB will serve as a depository into which employees may donate accrued sick leave time for allocation to other participating employees in similar pay status. For further information and necessary forms, please visit [sick leave bank](#) on our Human Resources webpage.

### **VACATION FOR 12-MONTH EMPLOYEES**

Annual employees (12-month employees) earn vacation at a rate of twelve (12) days per year, accrued on a monthly basis. Employees may accrue a maximum of 20 vacation days per year. Any number of days over 20 will be forfeited on July 1 of each year. All vacation leave is subject to approval by the immediate supervisor.



# ***RISK MANAGEMENT***

## **EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Each school facility maintains a Safety and Security Plan for emergency response to safety threats within the school neighborhood, and community. The emergency plan and the employee's responsibilities within the plan will be shared by the facility administrator. Each employee must ensure awareness of duties related to emergency response.

## **IDENTIFICATION BADGES**

All employees are provided a System name badge with picture identification. The ID badge is to be worn at all times while fulfilling assigned duties. The badge is an access key to assigned facilities during specified times appropriate for the employee's position. The ID badge should never be shared with another person. If the badge is lost or damaged, contact the Human Resources Department for a replacement. Damaged badges should be returned to Human Resources. An employee may be charged \$5.00 for each replacement badge. The employee badge is System property and should be returned upon separation of employment or at the request of the employee's supervisor. [ADD INFO ON CENTEGIX SECURITY BADGE AND COST OF REPLACEMENT?]

## **PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

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

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

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

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



- Personally identifiable information in education records is defined as a student's first and last name with one or more of the following data elements:
- A list of personal characteristics or any other identifiers that would make the students identify easily traceable
- Name of student's parent(s) or other family member(s)
- Social security number

## **SAFETY PROGRAM**

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

To help ensure safe working conditions, an employee is responsible for:

- Knowing the potential hazards of the job.
- Learning and following the safety practices required by management.
- Complying with safety rules and regulations.
- Correcting and/or reporting safety hazards immediately.
- Immediately reporting any accident or injury to supervisor.
- Operating machinery or equipment only if qualified to do so.
- Maintaining good housekeeping practices including keeping all fire exits clear and firefighting equipment accessible.

## **SECURITY INCIDENT REPORTING**

Increasingly, school systems— like many other organizations and businesses— have become the target of internet scammers and cybercrime organizations. RCSS has implemented security measures to protect the information it collects. However, individual employees— through their actions and online behavior— have a role and responsibility when it comes to keeping information secure.

A “Security Incident” is any activity that places the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of RCSS’ information technology or digital information at risk.

A “Security Incident” includes, for example:

- Non-compliance with Responsible Use of Electronic Media for Technology Team Personnel or Responsible Use of Electronic Media for Personnel policy;
- Receipt of a suspected “phishing” email;
- Disclosure of Internal Use or Limited Access information via electronic or printed materials;
- Execution of malicious software, such as clicking on a website link or opening an email attachment that contains a virus;
- Unauthorized intrusion or “hacking” into RCSS’ networks or systems; and
- Loss or theft of a RCSS issued laptop, mobile device, or other information storage device.

Staff members who experience a security incident should report the incident to their immediate supervisor and the Instructional Technology Department.

## **WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

Employees may be entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits if injured on the job. The injury must arise out of and in the course of employment. The injured employee must provide notice of the injury immediately, but no later than 30 days after the accident, to the employer, the employer's representative, or the employee's immediate supervisor. Failure to do so may result in the loss of benefits. The injured employee may select a medical care provider from the Panel of Physicians posted in conspicuous places in all locations maintained by the Board of Education and may be obtained through the Human Resources office.

Not every injury that occurs on Richmond County School System premises or during the workday is covered under Workers' Compensation. Generally, employees are not eligible for Workers' Compensation benefits for injuries sustained: going to or coming from work; during deviations from the scope of employment (e.g., employee making a delivery drives to a place unconnected to the employment); an employee engaging in a prohibited act; an employee engaging in horseplay; during voluntary participation in recreational or social activities; and during times in which the employee is not subject to the employer's control. Each report of injury is reviewed in detail by Human Resources staff, and a decision on coverage is made based on the available information. Questions may be addressed to the Workers' Compensation Specialist and/or Benefits Coordinator. An employee injured on the job who sees a physician other than a physician listed on the official panel without the approval of the employer or Workers' Compensation Board, will be required to pay his/her own medical expenses. Employees needing emergency treatment should go to the emergency room of any local hospital except the Veterans Administration Medical Center and the Eisenhower Medical Center. Urgent Care Centers are not authorized. The Official Code of Georgia, Section 34-9-201, provides that if, due to an emergency or similarly justifiable reason, an inability to make a selection results, the selection requirements of this subsection shall not apply as long as such inability persists.

If an employee receives workers' compensation in lieu of his/her normal payroll, the employee enters a *leave-without pay* status. Therefore, no payroll deductions can be made because no paycheck is issued. At such time, if coverage is to continue, the employee is responsible for making his/her insurance payments directly to the Benefits Office located at 864 Broad Street, Augusta, Georgia 30901.



## ***CERTIFIED STAFF INFORMATION***

### **CERTIFICATE PAY**

Pay for certified employees who do not hold a valid Georgia certificate at the time of employment will be calculated on teacher provisional pay from the date of hire. Certified employees will be placed on a provisional pay scale initially until a valid GA certificate has been received. At that time, an adjustment of retroactive pay will be made according to the validity date of the certificate.

### **CERTIFICATION**

It is the responsibility of certified employees and paraprofessionals to obtain and maintain valid certification. The Human Resources Department facilitates the initial application, renewal process, and other changes. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) requires all certificated educators and paraprofessionals to create and utilize an online "[MyPSC](#)" account to communicate with GaPSC.

GaPSC shall establish rules and regulations for appropriate requirements and procedures to ensure high-quality certification standards for all Georgia educators while facilitating the interstate mobility of out-of-state certificated educators. Information on certification and educator preparation as well as application documents may be accessed at the [Georgia Professional Standards Commission website](#).

### **CERTIFIED EXPERIENCE CREDIT**

Credit for one year's experience shall be given for each year of verified work experience. Certified employees are to be given credit for previous experience according to the following:

- a. The employee must have worked at least 120 days in a regular school year.
- b. The school must be accredited by the state or a regional accrediting agency.
- c. The employee must have held a valid professional teaching certificate from the state in which the experience was earned. The certificate must be the equivalent of a Georgia clear renewable certificate as determined by the state of origin.
- d. Two one-half years of experience earned in a regular school may be combined and equal.
  - a. 120 days of consecutive service.
  - e. No more than one year of experience may be credited for any 12-month period.
  - f. The employee is responsible for providing verification of prior teaching experience.
  - g. Experience verification must be submitted to the Human Resources Department on or before the last day of the fiscal year of hire.

**CREDIT WILL NOT BE GIVEN FOR EXPERIENCE EARNED WITHOUT A VALID STATE CERTIFICATE. THE SCHOOL MUST HAVE BEEN ACCREDITED DURING THE TIME THE EXPERIENCE WAS EARNED.**

## CONTRACTS

Contracts for certified employees are issued for no more than one fiscal/school year. A full-time employee with a full-year contract must be notified no later than May 15<sup>th</sup> of the current school year if he or she will not be renewed for the next school year.

*\*Note: The School System has until May 15<sup>th</sup> to send notice to certified employees notifying them that their contract will not be renewed or to tender new contracts pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-211(b).*

Renewal contracts for continuing employees are issued no later than May 15<sup>th</sup>. An employee with a current-year contract for less than full-time or less than the full year may be offered a contract for the next school year after May 15<sup>th</sup>. The employee has a minimum of ten days to review the contract before signing and returning.

Certified employees may request to be released from their contract during the school year due to unforeseen circumstances. The superintendent or his designee may grant a release from contract providing a suitable replacement is found. The employee must remain in the present assignment until the release has been officially approved. Principals do not have the authority to grant a release from contract. In this regard, certified employees should be aware of the requirements of the Code of Ethics for Georgia Educators found at [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com).

## MAINTAINING TENURE

Certified tenured employees and those with life certificates are required to earn ten quarter hours or six semester hours of college or PLU credit or a combination of the two within a three-year period to maintain tenure status.

## II. Two Unsatisfactory Annual Performance Evaluations

Georgia Code 20-2-210 requires that all personnel employed by local units of administration (LUAs) shall have their performance reviewed annually. The purpose of this rule is to define the process for reporting “Unsatisfactory,” “Ineffective” and “Needs Development” annual performance evaluations for certificated personnel; the process for reporting successful completion of remediation plans; and the effect of two (2) or more unremediated “Unsatisfactory,” “Ineffective” or “Needs Development” annual performance evaluations in a five-year period on certification eligibility, issuance and renewal.

Legal Reference: O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200(c), as may be amended from time to time.

## NONRENEWAL OR DEMOTION AFTER THREE YEARS OF SERVICE

In order to demote or fail to renew the contract of a teacher who accepts a school year contract for the fourth or subsequent consecutive school year from the local board of education, the teacher must be given written notice of the intention to demote or not renew his/her contract. Such notice shall be given by certified mail as provided in subsection (c) of Code Section 20-2-940, *et seq.* Such notice shall contain a conspicuous statement in substantially the following form:

You have the right to certain procedural safeguards before you can be demoted or dismissed. These safeguards include the right to a hearing. If you desire these rights, you must send to the superintendent of schools, by certified mail, a statement that you wish to have a hearing, and such statement must be

mailed to the superintendent of schools within 20 days after this notice was mailed to you. Your rights are governed by Code Sections 20-2-940 through 20-2-947.

A copy of Code Sections 20-2-940 through 20-2-947 shall be enclosed with the notice. A teacher who is so notified that he or she is to be demoted or that his or her contract will not be renewed has the right to the procedures set forth in subsections (b through g) of Code Section 20-2-940 before the intended action is taken. A certified employee who has the right to these procedures must serve written notice on the superintendent of the local board employing the teacher within 20 days of the day the notice of the intended action is served that he or she requests a hearing. In order to be effective, such written notice that the teacher requests implementation of such procedures must be served by certified mail as provided in subsection (c) of Code Section 20-2-940. Within 14 days of service of the request to implement the procedures, the local board must furnish the teacher a notice that complies with the requirements of subsection (b) of Code Section 20-2-940.

A “school year contract” means a contract of full-time employment between a teacher and Richmond County Board of Education.

The following are grounds for termination, suspension, or demotion:

- Incompetence
- Insubordination
- Willful neglect of duties
- Immorality
- Inciting, encouraging, or counseling students to violate any valid state law, municipal ordinance, policy, or rule of the Local Board of Education
- Reduction in staff due to loss of students or cancellation of programs
- Failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training
- Any other good and sufficient cause

Before termination or suspension of a teacher, principal, or employee having a contract of employment for a definite term, written notice of the charges shall be given at least ten days before the date set for the hearing. Any teacher, principal, or other person against whom such charges have been brought, shall be entitled to be represented by counsel, and upon request, shall be entitled to have subpoenas or other compulsory process issued for attendance of witnesses and the production of documents and other evidence. The superintendent may temporarily relieve from duty any teacher or any other school employee pending hearing by the Board in those cases where charges are of such seriousness or other circumstances exist which indicate that such teacher or employee could not be permitted to continue to perform his or her duties pending hearing without danger of disruption or other serious harm to the school, its mission, pupils or personnel. (For more information, please see Official Code of Georgia, Section 20-2-940, *et seq.*)

opportunity for parents and teachers to meet in order to share and discuss a mutual interest, the education of children.

## **PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO MEET CONTRACTUAL OBLIGATION**

If fewer than 20 days of service are rendered under contract, the daily rate may be equal to the substitute teacher rate.

### **PENALTY FOR FAILURE TO PROVIDE CERTIFICATION**

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

### **TEACHER EVALUATION APPEALS [Board Policy GBIA]**

Teachers who have accepted a full-time, full school year contract with the Board of Education for the fourth or subsequent consecutive school year may appeal summative performance rating of “Unsatisfactory” or “Ineffective” contained in personnel evaluations conducted pursuant to Code Section 20-2-210, procedural deficiencies on the part of the School System in conducting an evaluation, and job performance. Please review [Board Policy GBIA: Teacher Evaluation Appeals](#) for more information.

Legal Reference: O.C.G.A. 20-02-989.7, as may be amended from time to time.





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

**Effective April 15, 2021**

### **505-6-.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS**

- (1) **Introduction.** The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission has adopted standards that represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction and provides guidance for protecting the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, and assuring the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.
- (2) **Definitions.**
- (a) “Breach of contract” occurs when an educator fails to honor a signed contract for employment with a school/school system by resigning in a manner that does not meet the guidelines established by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
  - (b) “Certificate” refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate, license, or permit issued by authority of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
  - (c) “Child endangerment” occurs when an educator disregards a substantial and/or unjustifiable risk of bodily harm to the student.
  - (d) “Educator” is a teacher, school or school system administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and persons who have applied for but have not yet received a certificate. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, “educator” also refers to paraprofessionals, aides, and substitute teachers.
  - (e) “Student” is any individual enrolled in the state’s public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual under the age of 18. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the school year of graduation.
  - (f) “Complaint” is any written and signed statement from a local board, the state board, or one or more individual residents of this state filed with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission alleging that an educator has breached one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators. A “complaint” will be deemed a request to investigate.
  - (g) “Revocation” is the permanent invalidation of any certificate held by the

educator.

- (h) “Denial” is the refusal to grant initial certification to an applicant for a certificate.
- (i) “Suspension” is the temporary invalidation of any certificate for a period of time specified by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.
- (j) “Reprimand” admonishes the certificate holder for his or her conduct. The reprimand cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action.
- (k) “Warning” warns the certificate holder that his or her conduct is unethical. The warning cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action.
- (l) “Monitoring” is the quarterly appraisal of the educator’s conduct by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission through contact with the educator and his or her employer. As a condition of monitoring, an educator may be required to submit a criminal background check (GCIC). The Commission specifies the length of the monitoring period.
- (m) “No Probable Cause” is a determination by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission that, after a preliminary investigation, either no further action need be taken or no cause exists to recommend disciplinary action.

### (3) Standards.

- (a) **Standard 1: Legal Compliance** - An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the commission or conviction of a felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude; of any other criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, sale, or possession of a controlled substance or marijuana as provided for in Chapter 13 of Title 16; or of any other sexual offense as provided for in Code Section 16-6-1 through 16-6-17, 16-6-20, 16-6-22.2, or 16-12-100; or any other laws applicable to the profession. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought; a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted; and a situation where an adjudication of guilt or sentence was otherwise withheld or not entered on the charge or the charge was otherwise disposed of in a similar manner in any jurisdiction.
- (b) **Standard 2: Conduct with Students** - An educator shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

(c) Standard 3: **Alcohol or Drugs** - An educator shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

(i) For the purposes of this standard, an educator shall be considered "under the influence" if the educator exhibits one or more of the following indicators, including but not limited to: slurred speech, enlarged pupils, bloodshot eyes, general personality changes, lack

of physical coordination, poor motor skills, memory problems, concentration problems, etc.

(d) Standard 4: **Honesty** - An educator shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

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

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

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

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

1. Soliciting students or parents of students, or school or LUA/school district personnel, to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee;
2. Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;
3. Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
4. Coaching, instructing, promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involves students in an educator's school system and from whom the educator receives remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee. These types of activities must be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the Georgia High School Association.

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

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

(h) **Standard 8: Required Reports** - An educator shall file with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5),

or any other required report. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Failure to report all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission;
2. Failure to make a required report of a violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner; and
3. Failure to make a required report of any violation of state or federal law as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. These reports include but are not limited to: murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, kidnapping, any sexual offense, any sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving a controlled substance and any abuse of a child if an educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.

(i) Standard 9: **Professional Conduct** - An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to a resignation that would equate to a breach of contract; any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position; or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students.

(j) Standard 10: **Testing** - An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

#### **(4) Reporting.**

(a) Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of legal requirements and local policies and procedures for reporting unethical



conduct. Complaints filed with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, or other LUA/school district employee, etc.).

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

## **(5) Disciplinary Action.**

- (a) The Georgia Professional Standards Commission is authorized to suspend, revoke, or deny certificates, to issue a reprimand or warning, or to monitor the educator's conduct and performance after an investigation is held and notice and opportunity for a hearing are provided to the certificate holder. Any of the following grounds shall be considered cause for disciplinary action against the educator:
  - 1. Unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-10 (GaPSC Rule [505-6-.01](#));
  - 2. Disciplinary action against a certificate on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-10 (GaPSC Rule [505-6-.01](#));
  - 3. Order from a court of competent jurisdiction or a request from the Department of Human Resources that the certificate should be suspended or the application for certification should be denied for non-payment of child support (O.C.G.A. §19-6-28.1 and §19-11-9.3);
  - 4. Notification from the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan guaranteed by the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation (O.C.G.A. §20-3-295);
  - 5. Suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate;
  - 6. Violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession (O.C.G.A. §16-13-111); and
  - 7. Any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.
- (b) An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not serve as a volunteer or be employed as an educator, paraprofessional,

aide, substitute teacher or, in any other position during the period of his or her revocation, suspension or denial for a violation of The Code of Ethics. The superintendent and the educator designated by the superintendent/Local Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the superintendent and the superintendent's designee must hold GaPSC certification. Should the superintendent's certificate be revoked, suspended, or denied, the Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that the superintendent whose certificate has been revoked, suspended, or denied is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200

## **Employee Handbook – Revised 2025**