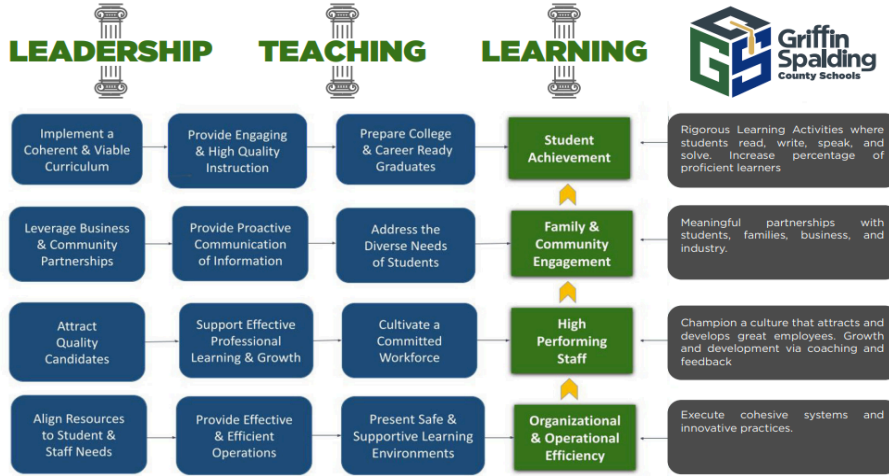


# ROAD MAP TO SUCCESS

## INSTRUCTIONAL VISION FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

High quality instructional practices where students are engaged in reading, writing, speaking and solving grade-level text and tasks everyday.



**2024-2025**

**Griffin-Spalding County Schools**



**Certified and Classified Employee Handbook**

***Keith L. Simmons, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools***

**Our Non-negotiables:**

- Be Professional
- Be Accountable
- Communicate Effectively



**Our Focus Areas:**

- Literacy
- Enrollment
- Attendance
- Discipline



***Our Mission and Vision...***

**Vision:**

Distinctive Brand • Strong Leaders • Great Schools


**Mission:**

To empower each student to graduate college and career ready.




## ***Our Beliefs...***


**Student Achievement:** We believe that promoting educational equity will advance academic achievement and support a well-rounded education for each student, empowering them to graduate ready to choose college or a career.



**Family and Community Engagement:** We believe that cultivating collaborative engagement with families and the community will build and sustain positive relationships that lead to student success.



**High Performing Staff:** We believe that investing in the growth of our employees will produce a high performing and enduring staff who build positive relationships with students.

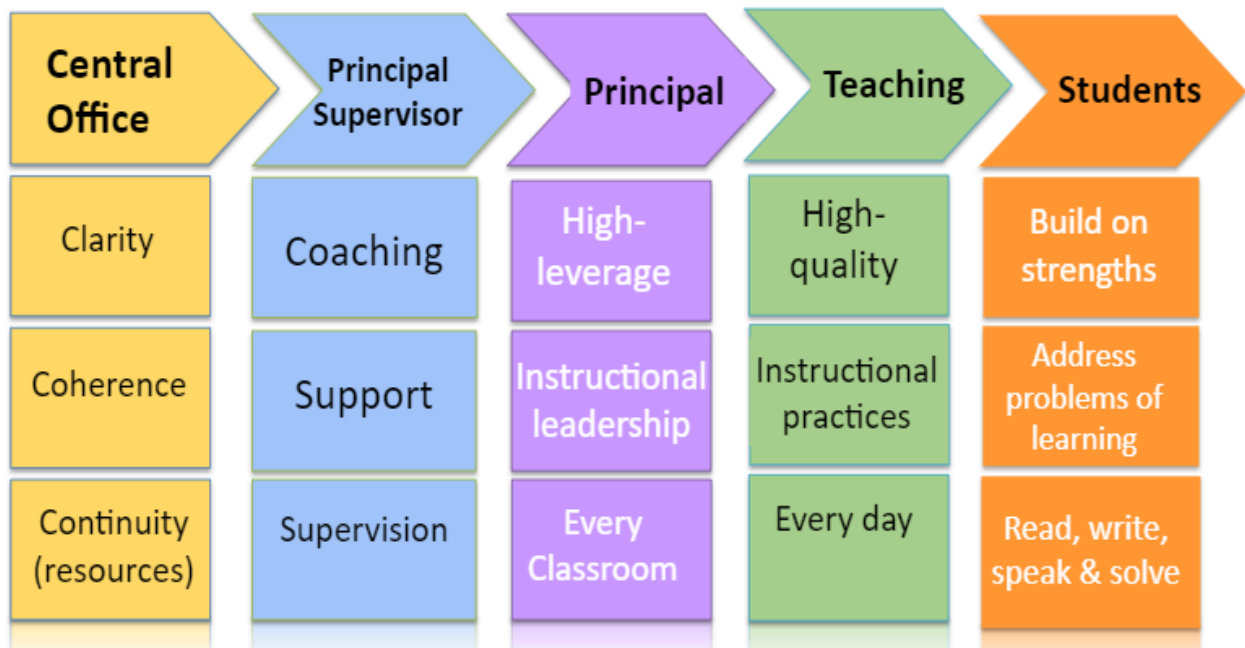


**Organizational and Operational Efficiency:** We believe that our providing effective organizational structures and efficient operations will support the growth and retention of high-quality staff and excellent learning experiences for each student.

# GSCS Strategic Priorities

## Strategic Priorities are:

1. Execute cohesive systems and innovative practices
2. Champion a culture that attracts and develops great employees
3. Grow and develop via coaching and feedback
4. Build deep partnerships with students, families, business, and industry
5. Provide Rigorous Learning Activities where students read, write, speak, and solve on grade-level content
6. Increase percentage of proficient learners



The GSCS throughline represents a theory of action relative to 'who must do what' in support of student success.



## Griffin-Spalding County School System Strategy Map A Roadmap for Success



The GSCS road map is a one-page summary of the district’s strategic plan. Specifically, the road map provides both a narrative and illustration of the work related to achieving our vision for student success. As a navigation tool, the road map identifies the district’s goals, objectives, and strategic priorities.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**The objective of this manual is to:**

- provide information which is essential for an adequate understanding of the rights and responsibilities of each classified and certified staff member;
- assist each employee in understanding the scope of benefits available to him/her and family members;
- inform employees based upon laws, policies, procedures, regulations, benefits, rights, and responsibilities relating to personnel affairs assembled from such sources as: Federal laws; Georgia laws; policies of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; policies of the Georgia Department of Education; and policies of the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education;
- provide information based upon code defined as follows: "O.C.G.A. 20-2-850" denotes Section 20-2-850 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated which is the law of the State of Georgia; "GBOE Rule JGI (160-4-8-.04)" denotes Georgia Board of Education Rule JGI (160-4-8-.04) which is the policy of the State Board; and "GSCSS Policy GAM" signifies a local board adopted policy.

## **DISCLAIMER**

- **NOTE: Every staff member must be aware that each session of Congress and the Georgia Legislature brings new laws and modifications to old laws. Each month may bring changes in the policies of the Georgia Department of Education and the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education. In cases of legislative, Georgia Department of Education or the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, the updated policy, law or regulation will supercede the information published in this manual. Fringe benefit provisions are also subject to alteration at any time. Queries concerning the accuracy and timeliness of any information in this manual should be addressed to an employee's immediate supervisor or the Human Resources Department.**
- Additionally, benefit provisions are likely to change frequently, particularly with respect to the various insurance and retirement benefits available to each employee. Periodic updates of this manual will be provided to reflect these changes.
- The information found in this manual is not meant to be, and should not be, relied upon as legal advice or financial investment advice. If you have any questions regarding your legal rights, then you should contact your attorney. If you have any questions regarding benefits or financial investment decisions, then you should contact a qualified financial advisor.

## **POLICY**

Employees are encouraged to refer to and be familiar with GSCS BOE Policies which are accessible at the [GSCS website](#).

## **CHANGES IN POLICY**

The Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education expressly reserves the right to change any of the board policies, including those covered here, at any time. Normally, employees will be notified of these changes by informing principals and department heads, and by posting to the GSCS website <https://www.gscs.org/> Changes will be effective on dates determined by the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education, and employees may not rely on policies that have been superseded. If you are uncertain about any policy or procedure, please check with your supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

## **EMPLOYMENT RELATIONSHIP**

- All school personnel must be employed by the Board of Education upon the recommendation of the superintendent.
- All personnel, including substitutes, will be fingerprinted and must clear a computer-based criminal record check prior to hire. Positions are offered contingent upon a clear background check.

- The Human Resources Department will notify employees when they need to complete a new fingerprinting/records check.
- Applicants and employees will be asked to sign a statement which will allow the fingerprinting/records check results to be released to the school system. The results will be used by officials only to determine whether or not to grant or continue employment and to comply with federal laws, rules, and regulations.
- Arrests (this includes charges without incarceration) should be reported to the Human Resources Department within 48 hours. Failure to make a timely report may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. ([GSCS Policy GAK](#)). Call 678-603-6186 to report arrest.

## **EMPLOYMENT POLICIES**

### **EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY / NON DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

The Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education is an equal opportunity employer. As such, employment procedures and practices are to be nondiscriminatory in regards to sex, age, race, color, handicap, disability, religion, national origin, veteran status, or genetic information per [GSCS Board Policy GAAA](#). Grievances of this policy will be filed in accordance with [GSCS Board Regulation GAAA-R\(1\)](#) and [GSCS Board Exhibit GAAA-E\(1\)](#)

The following individuals have been designated as the employees responsible for coordinating the system's efforts to implement this non-discriminatory policy. Contacts are:

- Title VI – [Dr. Lisa Moore](#), (770) 229-3700, extension 10400
- Title IX – Dr. Donald Warren (770) 229-3700, extension 10481
- Section 504 and ADA (students) – [Charles Kelley](#) (770) 229-3700, extension 10333
- Perkins Act –Dr. Donald Warren (770)229-3700, extension 10481

### **TITLE IX—NON-DISCRIMINATION**

- There will be no discrimination on the basis of gender, race, age, creed or color in the educational program, activities, or employment practices within the Griffin-Spalding County Schools.
- The Superintendent has appointed the Deputy Superintendent as the Title IX Coordinator. He may be contacted at 770-229-3700, extension 10481.
- The Title IX Coordinator shall be responsible for supervising GSCS's efforts to comply with all aspects of the legislation for procedures that provide for prompt and equitable resolution of such complaints.

### **DEFINITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

The following terms will be used to describe the classification of employees and their employment status:

- Exempt—Employees whose positions meet specific tests established by the [Fair Labor Standards Act \(FLSA\)](#) and applicable state law and who are exempt from overtime pay requirements
- Non-Exempt—Employees whose positions do not meet FLSA and state exemption tests
- Benefits Eligible—Employees scheduled to work 20 hours or more per week
- Part-time—Employees scheduled to work less than 20 hours per week (not benefits eligible)
- Substitute Employees are hired through Spur Employment Agency. Substitutes who are hired for a pre-established period or on- call, as needed, may work a full-time or part-time schedule (not school district benefits eligible).

### **PERSONNEL RECORDS**

- Important events in each employee's history with the Griffin-Spalding County BOE such as change in pay status, and change in location or address, will be recorded and kept in the employee's personnel file.

- Regular performance reviews, change of status records, commendation, corrective action warnings, and educational attainment records are examples of records maintained.
- All references submitted on your behalf are considered the property of the Griffin-Spalding County BOE.
- Your personnel file is available for your inspection in the Human Resources Department—Please contact the Human Resources Department to make an appointment to view your file.
- You are responsible for notifying the Human Resources Department of any name changes or changes in family status (births, marriage, death, divorce, legal separation, etc.).
- A copy of your social security card or application certification from the Social Security Administration is required before a name change request will be processed. All name change requests must match the name on your Social Security Card. Your employment name must match your name with Social Security Administration records.
- It is the employee's responsibility to make any changes to address and/or telephone number in the Employee Self-Service Portal. This responsibility includes employees on leaves of absence or out due to family leave.

### **IDENTIFICATION BADGES**

- As a safety precaution, all employees must wear the picture ID badge provided by the system during the workday.
- If the ID is lost, the employee must contact the Human Resources Department immediately to have another badge issued for a fee of \$10.00.
- When an employee leaves the Griffin-Spalding County School System, the ID must be returned to the supervisor. Failure to return the GSCS badge will result in having the cost of the replacement badge deducted from the employee's final paycheck.

### **EMPLOYEE WORKLOAD/WORKDAY**

- **The following procedures and regulations shall be followed pertaining to employee workload and workday:**
  1. The workload of an employee shall be defined as those work-related responsibilities which are assigned to the position held by the employee and which the employee is expected to satisfactorily complete in return for the salary specified.
  2. The minimum workday is determined by the time required to perform the assigned duties. Check with your principal or supervisor for your time schedule.
- A week is defined as a seven-day work week beginning at 12:01 a.m. on Sunday and ending at 12:00 midnight on Saturday.
- Full-time employees are expected to work a minimum eight-hour day and a forty-hour week. Certain positions may be considered full-time with fewer hours worked per day/week.
- Part-time employees work the number of hours daily and/or weekly as specified in their contract or initial employment agreement.
- Principals have some discretion in the hours that employees are at school and will work with employees on an individual basis to ensure that schools are open and children are supervised when they arrive until the time they leave.
- Duties for certified staff members may vary according to assignments, and include responsibilities such as teaching and preparation, staff meetings, conferences with students and parents, planning conferences, related school activities in the community and extra class responsibilities and completion of those duties may result in a work week in excess of 40 hours.
- Distribution of work among staff members shall conform to the minimum requirements for accreditation, and classes shall be so arranged that each child will receive individual attention. (GBOE Rule AF, GBRC (160-5-1-.06) (O.C.G.A. 20-2-168(c)) ([GSCS Board Policy GBRC](#)))

## **ATTENDANCE CHOICES FOR CHILDREN OF EMPLOYEES**

- As stated in [GSCS Board Policy JBC](#), an employee may elect for his/her child(ren) to attend a Griffin-Spalding County School based on his/her residential address. Additionally, State Law provides that a student shall be allowed to be enrolled in and attend the school in which a parent or guardian of such student is a full-time employee, notwithstanding the fact that the student and his or her parent or guardian may reside in another county or attendance zone. When an employee elects for his/her child(ren) to attend the school where he/she is employed or attend a different grade level other than the campus where the employee is housed, the following options will apply: see [GSCS Board Policy JBC-R \(1\)](#)

## **STAFF ATTENDANCE**

- The school system believes in the importance of good attendance.
- We emphasize regular attendance for our students as an indicator for academic success.
- Instructional achievement and school attendance of students is also measured by the Georgia Department of Education and several other organizations that publish ratings of school systems based on assessments in several areas.
- Research supports that good attendance is a valid indicator of instructional success.
- This system also recognizes that the staff of our school system can have a positive impact on student attendance by example.
- Not only will our good attendance set an example for students, more importantly, the presence of a classroom teacher and other support staff everyday will enable students to take advantage of all we can offer instructionally.
- If we want success in our schools, we must be present and on the job every possible day.
- We realize that there are always circumstances that require some employees to be away from work.
- Illnesses, family crises, and occasional personal business that cannot be scheduled outside the work day are reasonable examples of time required to be away. However, use of personal days for business and sick days for doctor appointments that could be scheduled at other times, or excessive days away for staff development or meetings are poor choices for the use of time away from work.
- System wide, employees are expected to notify their supervisor or approved designee before the beginning of shift and as soon as practical of any absence. The absence should also be entered into Executime as soon as practical and no later than one hour before shift begins. No absence for a personal reason should be entered as sick leave. Sick leave should only be taken for illness of an employee or immediate family member (including doctor's appointments). Each supervisor may convey more specific instructions regarding reporting of absences/tardies; however, these expectations listed in this handbook are minimum requirements.
- Because of the positive impact that good attendance has on the instructional success of our students, attendance will be considered as a part of the annual evaluation.
- Those employees who exhibit poor attendance (as determined by the supervisor) may be required to provide a doctor's excuse or other corroborating documentation for all future absences.
- Absences due to illness that exceed three consecutive work days will require medical documentation.
- In the absence of approved FMLA medical documentation, employees must follow call-in/reporting procedures every day. It is not assumed that an illness will last more than one day.
- Personal leave days should be submitted to the supervisor in writing, ten (10) days in advance, if at all possible. The supervisor may or may not approve personal leave days. Unauthorized/unapproved personal absences may result in leave without pay.

## **TIME AND ATTENDANCE**

Employees will use <https://gscssga.aws.executime.com/ExecuTime/Login.action?bmark=Index.action> as the employee sign in/sign out process. Executime is a time and attendance management system integrated with MUNIS.

- Employees must not clock in or out for any other employee.
- Employees who do not require a substitute can enter leave in Executime in 2 hour increments.
- Certified teachers who require substitutes may only enter leave as either ½ day or 1 full day.
- Any missed time from work at the end of the workweek should have corresponding leave documented in Executime.

**NOTE: Employees must enter leave by 7:00AM on the day of the absence. Employees do not have the ability to put leave into Executime for any previous days. An Executime super-user must enter leave for dates in the past.**

- Employees should document work time accurately according to hours actually worked.
- **Employees should clock in/out from their work location--clocking in indicates that you are on the job and ready to work.**

## **CONTRACTS**

### **ANNUAL CONTRACT**

**A written contract is issued to certified employees. In the spring, upon the principal's recommendation, a contract is issued for each recommended teacher for the coming school year.**

- A contract is made by and between the teacher and the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education for a teaching position within the system and not for a specific school. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-943(b))
- Employment contracts of teachers, principals, and other certificated professional personnel must be in writing and must be signed by such personnel on their own behalf and by the superintendent on behalf of the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-211)
- Any laws to the contrary notwithstanding, the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education shall tender a new contract for the ensuing school year to every teacher on the payroll of the system at the beginning of the preceding school year (except teachers who have resigned or who have been terminated) by May 15 of each year or notify any such teacher that they will not be reemployed for the ensuing school year.
- The notification shall be in writing. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-211)

### **CONTRACT SALARY**

#### **Factors Determining Salary**

**A contracted employee's salary is based on:**

1. the number of work days scheduled in the official school calendar;
  2. the number of years' creditable experience;
  3. the salary schedule he/she is on;
  4. annual evaluation and;
  5. the highest level in-field certificate the employee has on file in the Human Resources Department.
- Therefore, for newly hired personnel, until a valid in-field certificate and certified experience records are on file, all quotations of salary are tentative.
  - For newly hired personnel—when the Human Resources Department receives a valid in-field certificate, the employee's pay rate will be adjusted, if necessary, to the beginning validity date on the certificate.

### **CREDITABLE EXPERIENCE**

- See the State Salary Rule 160-5-2-.05 on the [GADOE Website](#).

#### **Working Fewer than the Number of Contracted Days**

- **An employee's salary will be subject to an adjustment, on a pro-rata basis, for the number of days in the annual work schedule that the employee does not work due to:**
  1. late employment;
  2. temporary relief from duty as the result of superintendent/board action;
  3. absence from work without approval;

4. non-compensated absence with approval;
5. absence when the employee has no accumulated sick leave to cover the absences;
6. early separation from employment;
7. board action to adjust the official work schedule (O.C.G.A. 20-2-212.1).

## **RESIGNATION FROM CONTRACT**

**Signing a contract is a legal commitment of employment with GSCS. We are committed to providing the highest quality teachers for our students. Any release places us at a severe recruiting disadvantage toward meeting this goal.**

- Any employee desiring to relinquish a position for which they have executed a contract with GSCS shall request the release from contract in writing to the Superintendent, and must submit a completed resignation form [GSCS Resignation Form](#).
  - I. **Requesting Release from Contract**
    - **Prior to June 1** - GSCS will favorably consider a request to resign from a contract for the next school year.
    - **On or after June 1** – An employee who has signed a contract and then terminates the contract prior to the beginning of a new school year will be released by the Board only in the event of **ONE** of the following documented, extenuating circumstances (**First three (3) stipulations**):
      1. Spousal relocation that requires a move 100 or more miles from the present work location; **OR**
      2. A position that is a promotion within the field of education that includes all three: 1) increase in responsibility; 2) increase in salary; 3) increase in prestige; **OR**
      3. An incapacitating illness of the employee or an immediate family member which requires care by the employee. This level of care prevents the employee from performing his/her job duties, and it also renders the employee unable to work outside the home; **AND**
      4. **The employee provides GSCS with a minimum of two (2) weeks' notice; and continues to perform his/her contractual duties until a qualified replacement is found.**

## **II. Contract Ethics**

Additionally, the Georgia Professional Standards Commission has established guidelines relating to abandonment or breach of contract. Excerpts from their FAQs include the following:

- An educator shall fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or education agency for the duration of the contract.
- Unprofessional conduct includes but is not limited to:
  1. Breach of the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the employer;
  2. Willfully refusing to perform the services required by a contract.
- In the event that an educator terminates his/her contract, whether by formal notice or by the willful failure or refusal to continue teaching, without such written consent or emergency situation, the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education may report the incident to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission for possible sanctions against the certificate of the educator.

## **NONRENEWAL OF CONTRACT (NON-TENURE STATUS)**

- When the Superintendent proposes not to renew the contract of any teacher or other professional employee certified by the Professional Standards Commission who was on the payroll and under contract on the beginning day of the current school year, written notification of such intention shall be given to the teacher or other certified professional employee by no later than **May 15** prior to the ensuing school year.

- When such notice is not given, the employment of the teacher or employee shall be continued for the ensuing school year unless the teacher or employee has been removed in accordance with provisions of the Georgia Code.
- The superintendent is the final authority, and there is no right to appeal under the provisions of this section. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-211)

### **NONRENEWAL OF CONTRACT OR DEMOTION (TENURE STATUS)**

- In order to demote or fail to renew the contract of a teacher who has gained tenure status in the current school system, the teacher must be given written notice of the intention to demote or not renew the contract of the teacher.
- Such notice shall be given by certified mail or statutory overnight delivery.
- 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 (f) of Code Section 20-2-940 before the intended action is taken.
- A teacher 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 as required by state law.
- In order to be effective, such written notice that the teacher requests implementation of such procedures must be served by certified mail.
- 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. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-942(b)(2))

### **TERMINATION OF CONTRACT (GROUNDS FOR TERMINATION, SUSPENSION OR DEMOTION)**

- **The employment of a teacher, principal or other employee having a contract for a definite term may be terminated or suspended for the following reasons:**
  1. incompetence;
  2. insubordination;
  3. failure to obtain and/or maintain required certification;
  4. willful neglect of duties;
  5. immorality;
  6. inciting, encouraging, or counseling students to violate any valid state law, municipal ordinance, or policy or rule of the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education;
  7. reduction in staff due to loss of students or cancellation of programs;
  8. failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training;
  9. any other good and sufficient cause.
- Termination of a contract, temporary relief from duty, or demotion during a contract year are all subject to appeal to the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education in accordance with the Georgia Code. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-211(b); 20-2-940 et seq; 20-2-1160)

### **ASSIGNMENTS/TRANSFERS**

#### **PROFESSIONAL ASSIGNMENT (GENERAL)**

- Employees work for the Griffin-Spalding County School System and not any specific school or department.
- Returning employees are assigned to their current school/program unless notified of a new assignment.
- Reassignment may become necessary due to changes in enrollment or other reasons.
- If reassignment is necessary, school/district leadership will identify employee(s) affected.
- Voluntary reassignment is explored first when reassignment is necessary.

- If voluntary reassignment is not possible for teachers of record, principals and/or APs, then:
    1. Identified affected employee(s) will be ranked according to annual performance evaluation results; then,
    2. The employee with the median Teacher Assessment on Performance Standard 5 (TAPS) or the median Leader Assessment on Performance Standards (LAPS) will be the first considered for involuntary reassignment.
    3. If a review of all factors affecting reassignment is satisfactory for this individual, then involuntary reassignment of that individual will be made.
  - *Secondary Factors Affecting Reassignment:* In the case of a tie for involuntary reassignment, then the following factors will be used in addition to the above mentioned job performance:
    1. Staff diversity within the school
    2. Special talents and/or expertise deemed to be essential
    3. Training and experience of staff.
- See GSCS Board Policy [GARE-R\(1\)](#).

## **EMPLOYEES SEEKING AN INTERNAL TRANSFER**

- Certified and classified employees requesting a transfer to a different GSCS work location may apply online for any advertised vacancy for the upcoming school year. In addition, employees may attend any GSCS Job Fair to seek opportunities within the district.
- Vacancies are posted for the next school year as soon as known. Employees are responsible for reviewing the [Job Opportunities at the GSCS Website](#); most positions are posted until filled; however, some job postings have application deadlines. Once created, employees can access an application to submit any desired positions.
- Principals are encouraged to consider all internal applicants; however, they are not required to extend interviews or a job offer to all internal applicants. Principals will check with the Executive Director of HR to ensure the candidate is eligible for an internal transfer and contact the most current supervisor before extending an interview. Principals will check references to ensure employee performance is proficient and exemplary.
- Transfer recommendations must be completed by the receiving supervisor and submitted using the GSCS Droplet Form.
- GSCS must balance employees' desire to move to new positions with ensuring timely information regarding staffing needs. Therefore, May 5th is the deadline for recommendations for any internal transfers. Requests for transfer after this date may be considered if the Principal can hire a qualified replacement to fill the position.
- Employees seeking internal transfer must have completed two (2) years at their current location in their current job before being eligible for transfer.
- Transfer requests will be considered case-by-case by the Director of Strategic Talent Management and the Executive Director of Human Resources to meet the district's needs best.
- Note: This process applies to employees requesting a transfer based on individual preference and is separate from the Professional Personnel Assignment policy (See GSCS Board Policy GARE-R(1)), which originates from a system-needed change.

## **PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS (TKES, LKES and GaLEADS)**

- Evaluation is an integral component in the process of improving teaching and learning.
- The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System and the GaLEADS platform will be used to evaluate all Teachers of Record in accordance with Georgia Code (O.C.G.A. 20-2-210.)

- All professionally certified leadership personnel, teaching personnel and service personnel employed by the board must have their performance evaluated annually by appropriately trained evaluators.
- **The purposes of the annual performance evaluation are:**
  1. to identify and reinforce effective teaching practices;
  2. to identify areas where development can improve instructional effectiveness;
  3. to identify teachers who do not meet the minimum standards so that the appropriate action can be taken.
- A single evaluation for certified personnel who share duties among schools will be completed collectively by all supervisors.
- A summary of the employee's formal appraisal will be prepared by the principal on a date designated by the superintendent.
- [TKES](#) and [LKES](#) evaluation data will be housed in the electronic platform hosted by the GADOE.
- Procedures for evaluations can change as directed by the Georgia Department of Education.
- The appeal process described in this policy shall be available to teachers who have accepted a full time, full school year contract with the Board of Education for the fourth or subsequent consecutive school year. Such teachers may appeal summative performance ratings 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. See GSCS Board Policy [GBIA](#).

### **UNSATISFACTORY EVALUATIONS**

- Employees who receive an unsatisfactory (ineffective) annual Summative TAPS/LAPS shall remain at his or her current step and will not receive salary credit or the GSCS retention payment for the year in which the unsatisfactory was earned.
- Two consecutive Needs Development ratings on the Annual Summative TAPS/LAPS rating will result in no salary/experience credit for the second year in which the Needs Development was earned.
- Any educator who has received any combination of two (2) unremediated Needs Development, Ineffective or Unsatisfactory Annual Summative Performance Evaluations in the previous five-year period is ineligible for a renewable certificate.
- In this case, the system may choose to apply for a non-renewable, one-year certificate.
- Deficiencies must be corrected in that one-year period in order to maintain certification.
- Upon receipt of a satisfactory annual evaluation, the individual shall be placed on the next step of the state salary schedule for the subsequent school year, and the unsatisfactory evaluation will be considered remediated. (GBOE Rule GBI (160-3-1-.11) (O.C.G.A. 20-2-210; 20-2-211; 20-2-212; 20-2-281(B); 20-2-282; 50-14-3(6)).

### **NON-SCHOOL EMPLOYMENT (MOONLIGHTING)**

- Full-time employees are discouraged from holding non-school related jobs that might interfere with or affect their performances in assigned areas.
- Employees are prohibited from receiving dual pay for services rendered during regular working hours.
- While on leave (paid or unpaid), employees may not perform compensated work, unless it is part of a return-to-work or transitional duty assignment with the system. Exceptions may be granted by the superintendent or designee. It is the responsibility of the employee to notify HR of any compensated work performed while on medical leave of absence. Working during a medical leave of absence without prior authorization is a violation of the system's leave policy.
- It is improper for employees to receive remuneration of any form from students assigned to them. Therefore, employees involved in tutoring/instructing students outside the school day shall adhere to District Rules and [Standard 6 "Improper Remunerative Conduct"](#) of the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators.

## **PROMOTIONS (JOB POSTINGS)**

- We strive to promote the most capable and experienced individual based on demonstrated ability to assume greater responsibility.
- Sometimes it is necessary to recruit and hire outside of the district to attract the most qualified individual for a particular opening.
- Most job openings are posted on the district's website.
- Exceptions may be made to this procedure when a position is deemed critical by the Superintendent or requires immediate staffing.

## **SEPARATION FROM EMPLOYMENT**

- See Resignation from Contract for those employees who are under contract.
- Any employee desiring to terminate his/her employment with the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education should submit a completed resignation form to his/her immediate supervisor who will in turn submit the resignation form to the Superintendent for recommendation to the Board of Education.
- All uniforms, ID badges, keys, and any other system property must be returned to the supervisor at the time of separation. Failure to return GSCS property will result in the replacement cost of the items not returned deducted from the employee's final paycheck.
- A Separation Notice will be mailed to the former employee's home address after board approval and within three days after separation.

## **REDUCTION IN FORCE(RIF): PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL LAY-OFF** **GSCS BOARD POLICY GBKA**

**Responsibilities and Prerogatives of the Board of Education:** The most important functions of the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education are to employ personnel and management of resources within the limitations defined by the funding sources of the school system. Consequently, it shall be the prerogative of the Board to abolish job positions, to reduce the length of the work year and salary of certified and non-certified personnel (hereinafter "to downgrade") and/or reduce the number of employees when seeking to cope effectively with program changes or financial exigency. See [GSCS Board Regulation GBKA -R\(1\)](#) for specific guidelines and procedures.

## **REPRIMAND**

- The superintendent may write a letter of reprimand to a teacher or other school employee for any valid reason. A copy of the letter of reprimand will be placed in the teacher's or employee's permanent personnel file.
- The teacher or certified employee receiving such a letter of reprimand shall have the right to appeal the decision of the superintendent to the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education.
- 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, the letter of reprimand shall be removed from the teacher's or certified employee's permanent personnel file. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-944)

## **EXIT SURVEYS/INTERVIEWS**

- An exit interview documents your reason for leaving and solicits constructive feedback to enable the GSCS to improve aspects of employment and job productivity.
- All employees are encouraged to complete the Exit Survey and/or Interview in an objective fashion.
- Exit Surveys are sent via Email. The exit interview survey is available on the Human Resources webpage.
- The Human Resources Department may also extend an invitation to conduct a face-to-face Exit Interview in addition to the written survey.

## **WAGE AND SALARY POLICIES**

### **SALARY**

- All personnel will be paid semi-monthly.
- All employees are strongly encouraged to utilize direct deposit or money card. Paper checks are not issued.
- Checks or direct deposit transactions are typically issued in the middle of the month and on the last working day of each month (depending on receipt of state funding). Pay dates are established annually based upon state funding.
- If there is an overpayment in a paycheck that is not related to a communicated pay change, the employee should immediately contact payroll to investigate the overpayment. Any amount paid due to error will be repaid to the district.
- **NOTE: It is especially important that each staff member's correct mailing address be on file in the Human Resources Department.**

### **DIRECT DEPOSIT**

- Payroll is supported through an electronic process. Direct deposit is available and/or payroll cards are available for issuance to employees. Employees can elect either of the two options.

### **EMPLOYEE SELF-SERVICE (ESS)**

The Employee Access portal provides employees with payroll and deduction information, as well as the ability to submit changes to payroll (e.g., direct deposit information, addresses, and tax-election documents). Employees may register to access, review, and print all of their prior pay check stub information and W2s at the Employee Access.

Follow these instructions for Employee Access:

1. Navigate to the [Finance Department](#) page on the GSCS Website, or use the following link:  
[Employee Access](#)  
[Employee Access Payroll Guide](#)

## **Questions**

- Contact Christina Blaclock at 770-229-3710, extension 10314 for questions about Direct Deposit or payroll cards.

### **SOCIAL SECURITY**

- Social Security coverage became available to teaching personnel on July 1, 1960.
- Social Security is a mandatory deduction.
- GSCS participates in Social Security withholdings and contributions.

### **ADVANCEMENT ON THE SALARY SCHEDULE**

- **The contract salary of a 190-day teacher holding a valid, professional, in-field certificate will be advanced to the next consecutive step on the salary schedule unless:**
  1. the maximum progression step for the position has been reached;
  2. services were contracted for fewer than 120 days in the previous academic year;
  3. certification requirements have not been met;
  4. insufficient funds are budgeted for salary advancement; or
  5. the teacher fails to receive a satisfactory performance evaluation for the prior year.
- A teacher may advance only one step on the salary schedule per year and must work one year on each step. Step advancement normally occurs only at the beginning of an academic year.

- Under regulations effective July 1, 1983, professional staff employed on 10-month, 11-month, or 12-month contracts must be under contract a minimum of 120 days in the previous academic year to be eligible for a step increase.
- Check the GSCS Website for the most [current Salary Schedule](#).

### **BRAWNER BONUS**

- The Brawner Bonus is to be distributed equally among certified high school staff, including the principal. ([GSCS Policy GBA](#))

### **EXTENDED DAY/YEAR SALARIES**

- The Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education recognizes as necessary the extension of secondary educational programs through the use of extended day/year funds in the Quality Basic Education Act.
- These extended day/year funds are generated through the full-time equivalency funding process for the categories of 9-12 regular high school, 9-12 non-vocational laboratory program, and the 9-12 vocational laboratory program.
- These funds are reflected in the direct instructional cost allocations in the above categories.
- **The board establishes the following criteria that apply to all instructors receiving extended day/year salaries:**
  1. The extended time required will be beyond the employee's normal eight-hour work day and/or the established work year.
  2. All approved extended instructional activities relate to state-approved instructional student competencies.
  3. Teachers will be limited to teaching a maximum of one additional hour beyond the teaching work day.
  4. Payments will be made only for work performed beyond the normal eight-hour work day.
  5. Monthly/yearly documentation of extended salary time and program responsibilities will be maintained and reported to the Georgia Department of Education.
  6. Payments for extended-day are based on the hourly rate of the teacher's state base salary times the number of days worked. Local supplement is not calculated in extended-day salary.
  7. Payments for extended-year are based on the daily rate of the teacher's state base salary times the number of days worked. GBOE Rule GBA(1) (160-4-3-.09); GBA(2) (160-43-.11); GBA(3)(160-4-3-.04); GBA(4) (160-3-1-.01) (O.C.G.A. 20-2-168(d)(e); 20-2-182(d); 20-2-212) ([GSCS Board Policy GBA](#))

### **EXTRA-DUTY ASSIGNMENTS**

- Personnel may be assigned additional duties by the principal or administrator requiring daily and calendar schedules exceeding the schedules for regular assignments.
- These assignments may include athletic coaching, instruction in instrumental music, on-the-job training, counseling, sponsorship of student organizations and other activities which are a part of the school program.
- All personnel receiving salary supplements are employed with the specific understanding that duties shall be performed in addition to classroom instruction.
- Extra-duty assignments made by the principal or other administrator which are compensated in addition to the contracted salary are specifically duties assigned on a semester or annual basis and are accepted with the understanding that they are exclusive of all contract provisions, including due process provisions of the Georgia Code.

### **EXTRA-DUTY SUPPLEMENTS**

- Supplements for coaching assignments and club sponsorships are paid for the extended daily and calendar schedules, which are necessary for practice, competitive events and other activities related to the respective programs.
- A maximum of four supplemental activities will be assigned to a teacher.

- Teachers who complete a partial assignment will receive a pro-ration of the supplement as recommended by the principal and approved by the Human Resources Department.

### **FUNDING ADJUSTMENTS**

- The contract amount may be decreased according to any decrease in the Georgia Teacher Salary Schedule or any decrease of federal funds or other grant funding from the date of execution of the contract or the termination thereof.
- The rate is also subject to an adjustment upward or downward according to the Quality Basic Education Act (QBE) [as amended] applicable to the classification and type of service to which the teacher has been assigned.
- In the event funds for designated programs are discontinued, the positions funded by the special grants will be terminated when the funds are exhausted.

### **MINIMUM SALARY FOR TEACHERS**

- The GSCS has a flexibility waiver to waive salary schedules.

### **PLACEMENT (INITIAL)**

- A teacher employed by the Griffin-Spalding County School System will receive a salary based on experience and the highest, valid, in-field certificate.
- **NOTE: Educational Leadership certificate holders must meet specific guidelines prescribed by the GAPSC to receive compensation in a non-leadership position.**
- The initial salary placement will be based on the salary schedule and policies adopted by the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education.
- **Active military experience will be recognized for a maximum of three years for initial salary placement.** Prior experience in professional positions in the Griffin-Spalding County School System or in other systems will be recognized at full credit for initial salary placement.
- It is the employee's responsibility to provide acceptable verification of experience in other systems. Salaries are based on verified experience.
- Experience is accepted based on the standards set by the Georgia Department of Education.

### **RETROACTIVE ADJUSTMENTS**

- Salary adjustments are sometimes necessary due to:
  1. late employment;
  2. temporary relief from duty by board action;
  3. absence without approval;
  4. non-compensated absence with approval;
  5. absence when there is no accumulated leave to cover such absence;
  6. early separation;
  7. adjustments in official work schedules;
  8. certification irregularities;
  9. new upgraded certificates;
  10. verification of experience irregularities;
  11. changes in supplemental duty assignments; and
  12. other factors.

### **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS AND SERVICES**

GSCS strives to provide a competitive package of employee benefit programs for our employees. Complete and official details of insurance and payroll plans are available at [Employee Benefits](#). The descriptions in this handbook are only brief summaries for your general information.

## **GROUP HEALTH INSURANCE**

All full-time employees working 20 or more hours per week are eligible to purchase group health insurance.

**Note: While Qualifying Events are not handled through Human Resources, it is important to notify HR to confirm all changes, as there could be financial consequences that could impact pay, otherwise.**

## **GROUP LIFE INSURANCE**

All full-time employees working 20 or more hours per week are eligible for Board-paid \$20,000 term life insurance. Other term and universal life policies are available.

## **FLEXIBLE BENEFITS PLAN/ HEALTH SAVINGS ACCOUNT (HSA)**

A flexible benefits plan is available that allows eligible employees to select among one or more non-taxable benefits according to Section 125 of the IRS Code (medical, dependent care). The plan also enables eligible employees to convert their premium contributions for health benefits from an after-tax expense to a pre-tax expense.

### **DISABILITY (SHORT TERM)**

- Does not pay in addition to sick leave
- Offsets with workers' compensation
- All sick leave must be exhausted before filing a claim
- Portability feature
- Fourteen day elimination period (2 weeks)
- plus, 77 days of benefit (11 weeks)
- In 91 days LTD could begin
- Coverage levels available include a choice of 40%, 50%, and 60% of earnings

### **DISABILITY (LONG TERM)**

- Does not pay in addition to sick leave
- Offsets with workers' compensation
- All sick leave must be exhausted before filing a claim
- Treatment for any condition 3 months prior to effective date of policy is considered preexisting
  - Pre-existing condition means: you received medical treatment, consultation, care or services including diagnostic measures, or took prescribed drugs or medicines in the 3 months just prior to your effective date of coverage; and
  - the disability begins in the first 12 months after your effective date of coverage.
- Portability feature
- Ninety (90) day elimination period
- Benefit duration extends up to Social Security Normal Retirement Age
- Coverage level is 60% of salary

### **CRITICAL ILLNESS**

- Coverage available for benefits-eligible employee, spouse and eligible dependent
- Lump sum benefit
- Portable coverage
- Treatment for any condition 3 months prior to effective date of policy is considered preexisting
  - Pre-existing condition means: you received medical treatment, consultation, care or services including diagnostic measures, or took prescribed drugs or medicines in the 3 months just prior to your effective date of coverage; and,
  - the disability begins in the first 12 months after your effective date of coverage.

- Rates do not increase with age
- Covered critical illnesses are limited to the specific definitions found in the policy

### **DENTAL**

- High or low options available
- Choose your own dentist
- Payroll deduction and pre-taxed (subject to HSA participation)

### **VISION**

- High or low options available
- Contacts necessary for vision correction (not for cosmetic purposes)
- One exam per year
- Frames or contacts (once each 12 months)
- Multiple Network provider options

### **PREPAID LEGAL SERVICES**

- Offered via payroll deduction via mygscbenefits.com OR
- Non-payroll deduction via Legal Shield at [dquincy@legalshieldassociate.com](mailto:dquincy@legalshieldassociate.com)

### **CREDIT UNIONS**

- The [Southern Federal Credit Union](#) and [Delta Community Credit Union](#) were organized to help members and their families save money and to borrow money for worthwhile purposes.
- Any school employee or family member may join the credit union by the deposit of a minimum of \$25.00.
- The current dividend rate paid on shares is compounded quarterly.
- Certificates are usually available at higher rates of interest.
- A credit union member may save through payroll deduction, by mail, or at the credit union offices. Deposits are insured up to \$250,000.
- Other services of the credit union include on-line banking, safe deposit boxes, drive-in-window, ATMs, VISA debit/credit cards, free notary public services, night depository, "money market" savings certificates, 30-year home mortgages, second mortgages, direct payroll deposit, "Share Draft" which is similar to the common checking account, a "Quick Cash" program for pre-approved instant loans, and car finder service.

### **Questions?**

- Contact Candace Peek in the Human Resources Department at 770-229-3710, extension 10353.
- Contact information for State Health - 800-610-1863 or [SHBPservicecenter@adp.com](mailto:SHBPservicecenter@adp.com).
- Contact information for supplemental insurance - 844-268-0645 or [support@benefitscallcenter.com](mailto:support@benefitscallcenter.com)

### **PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS – CHECK-STUB KEY**

Services provided through payroll deductions can be found at the [Employee Access](#)

### **Questions?**

- Contact Christina Blalock in the Finance Department at 770-229-3710, extension 10314.

### **WORKERS' COMPENSATION**

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

1. Report the injury immediately to your supervisor, school nurse, principal, secretary, or department head--no later than the end of the work day;
2. Get proper forms so that you can select a physician from the approved medical panel card that is posted at your worksite;
3. Sign the medical authorization form to release medical information to the school system;
4. See an approved physician if needed;
5. Get a release from the physician to return to work if lost work days are required by the physician;
6. Keep the Human Resources Department and your supervisor informed of your condition and expected return to work date; or
7. Sign a waiver that no medical attention is needed;
8. It is the responsibility of the employee to assure the informing and processing of workers' compensation claims;
9. Accommodations will be made for any physician-ordered restrictions to allow for return to work as soon as possible;
10. Employees unable to work due to a work-related illness or injury may not perform any compensated work for any other employer;

### Questions?

- Contact Ashley Evans in the Human Resources Department at 770-229-3710, extension 10345.

### **RETIREMENT**

- Georgia Teachers' Retirement System information is available upon request through the Human Resources Office or employees may view the [TRS website](#) for further information.

### **Service Retirement (TRS)**

- Active members may retire and elect to receive monthly retirement benefits after completion of 30 years of creditable service regardless of age, or
- After completing 10 years of creditable service and attainment of age 60.
- Members who retire before reaching age 60 with a minimum of 25 years of service are retiring early.
- Benefits will vary based on age and years of creditable service.
- **NOTE: Provisions regarding returning to work after retirement are available on the [TRS website](#) or you may consult with the Human Resources Director.**

### **Disability Retirement (TRS)**

- An active member is eligible to apply for retirement under the disability provision of the law if he/she has at least 10 years of creditable service and is permanently disabled.
- To qualify for disability retirement, the TRS Medical Board must determine that you are permanently and totally disabled for the further performance of the duties in the position you occupied at the time the disability originated.
- The final decision is made by the Board of Trustees based upon the recommendation of the Medical Board.

### **Unused Sick Leave Credit Toward Retirement (HB 203)**

- In 1998, the Georgia General Assembly passed Act 859 which allows Teachers Retirement System (TRS) to grant service credit for accrued sick leave which a member has not used.
- Once an employee makes the decision to retire, request sick leave verification through HR, and after TRS receives verification, TRS determines sick leave credit amount.

## **LEAVES AND ABSENCES (GSCS Board Policy GARH)**

- Each employee who is absent from work for any reason must abide by the specific procedures established by the administrator/supervisor at the work site (Refer to Staff Attendance section). Generally, the employee who will be absent for sick leave purposes needs to notify the principal/supervisor or designee as soon as possible (either the day/night before the absence or the early morning of the day of the absence—at least an hour before the start of shift.)
- Other types of leave need to be submitted to the immediate supervisor for approval as far in advance as possible—preferably five days.
- Each certified employee is responsible for entering his/her own leave request into AESOP—this should be done before the shift begins.
- The following policies cover all authorized leaves and absences. For any absence which is not covered by policies or which exceeds the number of accumulated leave days, there will be a salary reduction equal to the pay earned in one day.
- Unless medical documentation is provided, it will not be assumed that an illness will last more than one day. Proper reporting and call-in is required on a daily basis.
- Three days of failing to report/call-in may result in removal from payroll for abandonment of job.

### **Sick Leave**

- All employees shall annually earn sick leave days at a rate of one and one-quarter (1.25) days per 19 days worked.
- Unused leave days may be carried over from one year to the next until a total of one hundred twenty (120) days are accumulated.
- Any accumulated unused sick leave credited to an employee shall be forfeited if such employee withdraws from service for a period of 12 or more consecutive months. However, this same forfeited sick leave and any other unused sick leave will be reported to TRS upon retirement O.C.G.A. 20-2-850.
- Sick leave used the day before or after a holiday may require a doctor's excuse (discretion of the principal or department head.)

**NOTE: If an employee has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities; has a record of such an impairment; or is being regarded as having a disability; that employee can contact Human Resources to request an evaluation for reasonable accommodation. Medical documentation is required to substantiate the request.**

### **Sick leave may be used for employee absences from work due to the following reasons:**

1. personal illness or disability (including any disability related to pregnancy);
2. absence necessitated by exposure to a contagious disease;
3. absence due to illness or death in the employee's immediate family.
  - The term "**immediate family**" shall be interpreted to mean:
    1. spouse
    2. parent
    3. child(ren)
    4. grandparents
    5. grandchildren
    6. parents, siblings or grandparents of a spouse
    7. son-in-law
    8. daughter-in-law
    9. step-parents
    10. siblings
    11. any relative living in the employee's residence

- An employee may make a one-time donation of up to ten (10) days of sick leave to his or her spouse if such spouse is an employee of Griffin-Spalding County Schools and currently has a medical need to be absent, such as: maternity leave, personal illness, illness of an immediate family member, or death of a family member.
- It shall be within the supervisor's discretion to require a doctor's certificate to substantiate a personal illness claim for sick leave of three or more consecutive days or for absences that occur on the workday before and the workday after a holiday
- A fitness for duty release is required to return to work after absences relating to any employee's serious medical condition.
- The Human Resources Department may require a fitness for duty release from an employee's physician based upon reasonable suspicion that the employee is not able to safely perform the essential functions of his/her job.
- Any sick leave claim shall be recorded and verified at the worksite and entered in Executime no later than 7:00AM on the day of the requested absence by the employee or designee selected by Administration for certain jobs. Certain jobs are defined as positions that do not require a substitute.

### **Bereavement Leave**

- Up to 5 days of sick leave may be used for absence due to a death in the employee's immediate family.
- The term immediate family is defined in the Sick Leave section of the Leave Policy--see above or view the entire policy at [GSCS Board Policy GARH](#)

### **Jury Duty/Court Appearance (Legal Leave)**

- Each full-time employee shall be granted leave when necessary for jury duty.
- No adjustments will be made in accumulated leave or earned salary.
- Employees must return to work the same day if released before noon.
- Employees must return to work the following day if released after noon.
- Employees must request a letter of release from the Clerk of Court's Office and present the letter to the employer upon their return to work.
- Employees may retain earned jury pay.
- **Court Appearance Under Subpoena**—Employees subpoenaed for jury duty or as a witness in a work-related matter shall be allowed a leave of absence without loss of pay. No leave will be deducted from sick, personal, or professional leave. No employee serving jury duty or as a witness in a work-related matter shall be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute to serve during the absence. A copy of the subpoena must be attached to the leave request.
- **Other Court Appearances**—all other court appearances will be considered personal leave.
- Employees must upload jury duty summons or subpoena into AESOP for any absence related to these issues—this is part of the approval process.

### **Personal Leave**

- Up to three (3) days of accumulated sick leave may be used annually by each employee for personal leave.
- The employee's immediate supervisor must approve such leave in advance.
- Employees must request personal or professional leave by entering into AESOP and, except in emergency situations, this leave should be requested at least ten (10) days in advance.
- In addition to the three personal leave days, the supervisor has the discretion to approve two (2) leave without pay days for an employee due to a personal absence reason. Employees are expected to report to work if personal leave is not approved.

## Essential Operational Days

The following days are **essential** for the effective school operation of the Griffin-Spalding County School System and **personal leave cannot be granted for their duration without prior approval by the appropriate supervisor:**

1. pre-planning, post-planning;
  2. the first three days of school;
  3. days when standardized tests are administered;
  4. staff development days, teacher workdays;
  5. the workday before and the workday after a holiday
  6. the last two weeks of the school year; and
  7. all days which are determined "critical" by the Supervisor, Principal or Superintendent.
- **Note: Activities related to the pursuit of an advanced degree will be considered personal. Exceptions may be individuals employed in leadership positions holding non-renewable leadership certification who are completing certification requirements under the "new" leadership program beginning in 2009 which requires on-the-job training.**

## Employee Leave without Pay

- Sick leave is advanced to employees at the beginning of each fiscal year. However, if an employee fails, for any reason, to complete a fiscal year, sick leave used but not yet earned will be deducted from the employee's future checks.
- Upon request, an employee may be granted by the supervisor no more than two days leave without pay per year for personal reasons.

## Sick Leave Bank

- The Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education authorizes the establishment of a Sick Leave Bank (SLB) to provide all contributing employees, upon the exhaustion of all accrued sick leave, with additional sick leave for extended illness or disability.
- Sick Leave Bank days are available for the serious medical condition of the employee—not family members.
- An employee must have one (1) year of service and be eligible for FMLA to participate.
- Members of the SLB may apply to the SLB committee for the approval of days to cover absences for an extended or serious (catastrophic) illness.
- The SLB is **NOT** intended to provide additional leave for single day or short- term illness. There is an open enrollment period at the beginning of each school year.

## Questions?

- Additional information can be found at <https://www.gscs.org/page/human-resources>
- Contact Christy Talbot in the Human Resources Department at 770-229-3710, extension 10353.

## Unpaid Medical Leave (Leave after FMLA)

**Any benefits-eligible employee may be granted a leave of absence without pay (not to exceed 90 days provided the employee:**

- is unable to return to work due to a personal medical necessity or that of a spouse or child; and
- is at the end of an approved FMLA leave; and
- has exhausted all paid sick leave; and
- provides appropriate medical documentation stating an expected return to work date.

**Employees on unpaid medical leave shall:**

- provide medical documentation as required by the Human Resources Department;
- provide medical authorization to return to duty;

- request to return to work in writing (if medical release is secured);
- return to work only if a position for which the employee is qualified is available;

**NOTE: The employee’s job can be posted to fill upon election of Unpaid Medical Leave.**

**Certified employees who are unable to return to work may or may not be recommended for a contract for the next school year. A determination must be made through an interactive process with Human Resources. See [GSCSS Board Policy GARH \(Leave\)](#) for additional information.**

### **Professional Leave**

- Executimbe is used to request/approve all professional leave;
- Administrators’ leave must also be entered into Executime. The only exceptions are in-system activities during pre-planning, post-planning and teacher in-service days. (GBOE Rule GBRI, 160-5-1-.01) (O.C.G.A.,20-2-850) ([GSCSS Board Policy GARH](#));
- There will be no deduction from accumulated leave or pay for absences concerning professional matters that are initiated by the school system.

**The following guidelines should be used for applying for professional leave:**

1. An absence request is created by the employee for an absence reason which requires approval. If a substitute is required, the employee can assign a substitute at this time;
2. Leave applications must be made at least ten days prior to the beginning of any out-of-system leave requests;
3. Employees who require substitutes **MUST** apply in advance for professional leave even if the professional activity is within the system;
4. All required information must be attached, otherwise leave will be denied;
5. Select a funding code from the following choices:
  - a. CTAE
  - b. GNETS—for Mainstay usage only
  - c. Other Federal
  - d. Pre-K
  - e. SpecialEd
  - f. System Staff Dev
  - g. Title I
  - h. Title IIA
6. The administrator (s) will either approve or deny the request;
7. Attach a copy of the approval to the corresponding travel reimbursement request.

### **Vacation Leave (GBRK)**

Eligible employees (those who work 230 days per year) will be entitled to paid vacation leave. See full policy at GSCS Board Policy GBRK.

### **TRS Implications of Professional Study Leave (Creditable Service)**

A member of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia who undertakes full-time graduate study designed to advance or improve training or abilities may be eligible to establish retirement credit for periods of full-time graduate study. The requirements are:

- You must have been a full-time teacher in the public schools of this state or in the University System of Georgia under the board of regents immediately (not more than six months) prior to the period of full-time graduate study.

- You must return to full-time employment as a teacher in the public schools, or University System of Georgia for a minimum of five years following the period of graduate study.
- You must submit a transcript or similar document to TRS as verification of the full-time graduate study period.

Your cost to purchase study leave credit is based on the annual salary you were receiving for full-time employment as a Georgia teacher immediately prior to the period of study leave. Study leave service may be purchased by payment of appropriate employees and in some cases, employer contributions plus interest.

Any period of eligible graduate study interrupted solely for a period of active duty military service during a period in which the military draft is in effect shall be deemed not to have been interrupted provided the member goes immediately (not more than 6 months) into active duty military service.

### **TEMPORARY RELIEF OF DUTY WITH PAY**

**The superintendent may temporarily relieve from duty, pending a hearing by the board, any teacher or other school employee for any of the following reasons:**

1. incompetence;
2. insubordination;
3. willful neglect of duties;
4. immorality;
5. inciting, encouraging, or counseling students to violate any valid state law, municipal ordinance, or policy or rule of the local board of education;
6. to reduce staff due to loss of students or cancellation of programs;
7. failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training; or
8. any other good and sufficient cause.

**Temporary relief from duty may occur in those cases where the charges are of such seriousness or there are existing circumstances which indicate the teacher's or employee's continued performance of his/her duties pending the hearing present a danger of disruption or other serious harm to the:**

1. school
  2. school's mission
  3. students
  4. staff
- In any such case, the superintendent shall notify the teacher or employee in writing of such action which notice shall state the grounds thereof.
  - Such action by the superintendent shall not extend for a period in excess of ten working days and during that period it shall be the duty of the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education to conduct a hearing on charges.
  - During the period that the teacher or other employee is relieved from duty prior to the decision of the board, the teacher or employee shall be paid all sums to which he/she is otherwise entitled.
  - Should the board hearing be delayed at the request of the teacher or employee beyond the mandated ten-day period, then the charged teacher or employee will not be paid beyond the mandated ten-day period unless reinstated by the board.
  - In the event the board reinstates the teacher or employee, the teacher or employee will receive all compensation to which otherwise entitled exclusive of days for which a delay was specifically requested by the teacher or employee. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-940 (G))

### **TEMPORARY RELIEF OF DUTY WITHOUT PAY**

- In exercising its powers in the enforcement of due process, the board is authorized by State law to suspend a teacher or other school employee without pay for a period of time not to exceed 60 days.

- In such an event, the teacher or employee shall provide no services for the school system and shall receive no compensation but shall be considered an employee on suspended status. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-943(a)(1)(B))

### **UNAUTHORIZED ABSENCE**

**Unauthorized absence shall cause an employee to be subject to dismissal with the termination of all employment benefits or to have that absence posted as leave without pay.**

**Unauthorized absence is defined as follows:**

1. an absence for any reason which is not permissible under the Georgia Code or policies of the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education; or
2. an absence which occurs without the supervisor or supervisor's designee receiving ample advance notice regarding the absence. (This absence may result in no substitute teacher being available for students scheduled for classes.)

### **ABSENCE WITHOUT PROPER NOTICE**

- If an employee fails to notify his/her supervisor or the Human Resources Department after three days of consecutive absence, the employee can be removed from the payroll for abandoning his/her position.
- If any employee must leave work for any reason before the end of the scheduled work day, that employee must inform his/her supervisor for approval.

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

#### **Eligibility**

- **Employees of the Griffin-Spalding County School System who have been employed for twelve (12) months or more and who worked at least 1250 hours during that time, are entitled to twelve (12) weeks of unpaid leave during a twelve (12) month period for the following:**
  1. the birth and first year care of a child;
  2. the adoption or foster parent placement of a child;
  3. the illness of an employee's spouse, child, or parent with respect to a serious health condition, defined as one that requires in-patient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, or which requires continuing treatment by a health care provider;
  4. the employee's own illness; or,
    - in the instance of birth adoption and foster placement, the entitlement for child-care ends after the child reaches the age of one (1) year, or twelve (12) months after the adoption or placement;
    - entitlement for leave associated with illness of a child occurs only where the child is under eighteen (18) years of age, or incapable of self-care due to mental or physical disability at the time FMLA leave is to commence;
    - the twelve (12) month period in which the twelve (12) workweeks of leave entitlement occurs is a "rolling" twelve (12) month period measured forward from the date an employee uses any leave granted by this policy;
    - Any days absent due to a work-related illness or injury will count against an employee's FMLA leave entitlement as long as written notification is given by the Human Resources Department and the injury did not arise out of a student assault at school.

#### **Amount of Leave Available**

- In cases where both spouses are employed by Griffin-Spalding County School System, the combined amount of leave for childbirth, adoption, foster placement, or to care for a sick parent is limited to twelve (12) weeks.
- Leave may be taken on an intermittent (irregular intervals) as deemed appropriate by policy.

- The unpaid medical and family leave provided under this policy runs concurrent with accumulated sick or personal leave that the employee is eligible for under other policies of the Griffin-Spalding County School System.

### **Notification of Anticipated Leave**

- Except where circumstances are such that reasonable advance planning is not possible, employees must provide the Human Resources Department with at least thirty (30) days' notice of the date when leave is to begin.
- With respect to foreseeable family or employee illness, the employee shall make reasonable effort to schedule treatment - including intermittent leave - so as not to disrupt unduly the operations of the school district, subject to approval of the employee's or family member's health care provider.

### **Benefits During and after Leave**

- Benefits accrued by the employee before leave is taken will not be altered by the employee's absence under this policy.
- Health benefits will continue during the leave period.
- Benefit premiums will be deducted from paychecks.
- If all pay is exhausted, premiums may be paid directly to the GSCSS Finance Department.
- Upon return, the employee is entitled to restoration to an equivalent position with equivalent pay, benefits, and conditions of employment.
- If an employee fails to return to work after the leave period has expired, the Board of Education may recover the health benefits premium expenditures extended to the employee during the leave period.

### **Required Medical Certification**

- The Board of Education requires that a request for leave be supported by a certification issued by the appropriate health care provider of the eligible employee or of the son, daughter, spouse, or parent of the employee.

#### **The certification shall include:**

1. the date that the condition commenced;
  2. the duration or estimated duration of the absence;
  3. the necessity for the employee's leave; and
  4. if applicable, the employee's inability to perform job functions.
- The Board of Education reserves the right, at its own expense, to designate a second health care provider to provide a second opinion.
  - A third such opinion, should it be necessary, shall be binding.
  - The school district requires the employee to provide certification by his/her health care provider that the employee is able to resume work and perform the essential functions of the job.

### **Military Leave (Employee is a Military Member)**

- You have the right to be reemployed in your civilian job if you leave that job to perform service in the uniformed service and:
  1. you ensure that your employer received advance written or verbal notice of your service;
  2. you have five years or less of cumulative service in the uniformed services while with that particular employer;
  3. you return to work or apply for reemployment in a timely manner after conclusion of service; and
  4. you have not been separated from service with a disqualifying discharge or under other than honorable conditions.
- If you are eligible to be reemployed, you must be restored to the job and benefits you would have attained if you had not been absent due to military service or in some cases, a comparable job.

## **Military Leave (Employee is a Family Member of a Covered Military Member)**

### **Definition of a Qualifying Exigency**

**Unpaid leave is available to eligible employees with a covered military member serving in the National Guard or Reserves who is on active duty or called to active duty status for the following:**

1. short notice deployment;
2. military events and related activities;
3. childcare and school activities;
4. financial and legal arrangements;
5. counseling;
6. rest and recuperation (up to 5 days);
7. post deployment activities;
8. additional activities where employer and employee agree on qualifications and timing.

### **Eligibility of a Qualifying Exigency**

- **Employees eligible under the military provisions of this policy and who have been employed by the Griffin-Spalding County BOE for twelve (12) months or more and who have worked at least 1250 hours during that time are entitled to:**
- a combined total of up to 26 weeks of all types of FMLA leave during a 12-month period.
- up to 12 weeks of unpaid Exigency Leave for the spouse, child, parent or next of kin of members of the Reserves or National Guard.

### **Required Exigency Leave Certification**

- The BOE requires that complete and sufficient certification to support exigency leave be submitted.

#### **Sufficient certification includes:**

1. appropriate facts
2. dates and time estimates
3. contact information to support the request.

### **Eligibility for Military Caregiver Leave**

- **Employees eligible under the military provisions of this policy and who have been employed by the Griffin-Spalding County BOE for twelve (12) months or more and who have worked at least 1250 hours during that time are entitled to:**
- up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a spouse, child, parent or next of kin (nearest blood relative) who has suffered a serious illness or injury while on active duty that renders the member medically unfit to perform their duties. Sick leave can be used in this case, if available.

### **Required Military Caregiver Leave Certification**

- The Board of Education requires that complete and sufficient certification to support military caregiver leave and to establish the familial relationship to the seriously injured or ill military member.

#### **Sufficient certification includes:**

1. Invitational Travel Order (ITO) or
2. Invitational Travel Authorization (ITA) issued to a relative to join injured or ill at bedside.

**Employees not eligible for FMLA must contact Human Resources immediately to discuss leave requests.**

## **PAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

Eligible employees will be entitled to 120 hours of paid leave to take care of parental responsibilities associated with childbirth, adoption, and placement of foster care children, regardless of employee leave availability. See full policy at [GSCSS Board Policy Regulation GARH-\(R1\)](#).

## **EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)**

An EAP is a confidential, worksite-based program designed to assist both employees and employers. An EAP provides assessment and referral—in person and over the phone—for personal problems. The program is provided at no charge to employees and dependents to help in critical areas of need. Access the most current information at [GSCS EAP](#).

## **QUALITY LEADERS ACADEMY**

The [Quality Leader Academy \(QLA\)](#) has an intentional emphasis on identifying and growing GSCS school leaders and developing them to become effective leaders, assistant principals, principals, and central office leaders that we need now and in the future. Contact [Dr. Stephanie Evans](#) at 770-229-3710, extension 10359 in Human Resources for more information.

QLA includes the following leader development levels:

- Aspiring Leaders (employees seeking knowledge about leadership)
  - This program is open to any employee seeking knowledge about leadership development
- Aspiring Principals (assistant principals)
  - This program is for assistant principals aspiring to become principals
- Aspiring Assistant Principals (employees specifically seeking an AP position)
  - This program is specifically for teachers, instructional coaches, counselors, media specialists and district personnel interested in becoming assistant principals
- District Office Leadership (new district level leaders)
  - District personnel are able to take classes with GA School Superintendent Association

## **JOB COUNSELING**

- Any employee concerned about job performance or simply wishing to discuss job prospects in line with career, interest, and abilities, may arrange for a counseling discussion with their supervisor or the Human Resources Director.
- These discussions will be confidential and will in no way jeopardize the employee's present position or future with the GSCS system.

## **PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

### **Components**

- The Griffin-Spalding County School System's Professional Learning program addresses assessed needs based on professional development and instructional effectiveness.
- **Needs based on professional learning for certified and uncertified teaching, leadership, and service personnel are considered based on three stages of professional learning:**
  1. **Induction** refers to the process of preparing persons to enter a new field of employment. It can continue for three years. Induction refers to beginning teachers or to any employee who has accepted an assignment in a new function.
  2. **Specific needs development** means the provision of professional learning opportunities to assist persons who have been employed in a field for three or more years and who must overcome deficiencies identified through their annual performance evaluations.

3. **Enhancement** is the provision of learning opportunities which renew persons professionally by addressing needs that have been identified through the annual performance evaluations.
  - Needs based on evaluations of the effectiveness of instructional programs are also considered. An educational program is effective to the extent that students are achieving the objectives of that program.
  - If they are not, then program changes may be needed.
  - The competencies needed by personnel to perform adequately in the roles required by the new or revised educational program are professional learning needs.

## **Professional Learning Opportunities**

- The Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education endorses the concept of local professional learning and is committed to this effort regarding the educational personnel employed by the Griffin-Spalding County School System.
- Such employees will be provided opportunities to add to or improve their competencies and skills through a planned professional learning program. See [Professional Learning page](#) at the GSCS website for the latest opportunities.

## **EMPLOYEE RECOGNITIONS**

The thing that differentiates a good school system from a great school system is the people who work there. Our employees are the heart and energy of GSCS. They are responsible for the transformative changes in the lives of students. They do not settle for good enough; but rather, they aspire to empower learners to not just recite it, or recall it, but to feel it, experience it and own it—it is knowledge, and knowledge is powerful and liberating.

GSCS celebrates and appreciates our exceptional employees for their creativity, vision, and illuminating spirit that they so selflessly share every day with our students.

- **PACE-Setter (Professional, Accountable, Communicate Effectively)** – given by the Superintendent to any employee who has a demonstrated record of improving processes, impacting instruction, student achievement, and embracing innovation.
- **Teacher of the Year Awards** – selected at the school levels by peers and administrative staff for their contributions to student achievement.
- **System wide Teacher of the Year Award** – One teacher selected by the District Committee from the Teacher of the year pool as an exemplary teacher representing the district.
- **Employee of the Month Awards** – A school level or department-level employee is selected monthly based on contributions above and beyond that which is expected.
- **Classified Employee of the Year** – One Classified employee from five different departments is selected annually after receiving recommendations (meeting specific criteria) from department heads.
- **Employee Referral Bonus** – Monetary bonus given to employees for recommending successful candidates for hire in teaching positions.
- **Service Awards** – Pins given to employees to honor years of service: 1 year and 20 years.
- **Perfect Attendance Awards** – Pins given to employees who had perfect attendance for the previous school year.

## **EMPLOYEE COMMUNICATIONS**

### **SUGGESTIONS**

- The Superintendent encourages employees to suggest methods to improve quality and efficiency of the GSCS system.
- Employees should submit suggestions in writing to his/her supervisor or to the Human Resources Department.

- Suggestions should be detailed so that the procedure can be adequately evaluated.

## **PUBLIC RELATIONS**

- Public relations are a by-product of all school activity.
- Successful implementation of public relations objectives is the responsibility of the board of education, administrators, teachers and support personnel.
- **In order to promote effective public relations, the following beliefs are set forth:**
  1. The cause of public education can be promoted, resulting in an improved, quality instructional program.
  2. All citizens have the right to accurate and complete information on all aspects of the educational program.
  3. It is the primary responsibility of the public relations representative assigned to each department or school, the administrators, and the director of public relations to communicate effectively with the many stakeholders of the school system.
- Public relations require continuous internal (employee) as well as external (community) communication. This communication must be a planned, systematic, two-way process.
- Communication should incorporate the use of a variety of media.
- Educational communication must be dynamic and sensitive to change as determined by events and evaluation of the program.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

- Social media technology can serve as a powerful communications tool supporting student achievement, education and parent involvement. Please refer to our Internet Acceptable Use at [GSCS Board Policy IFBG](#) and corresponding [GSCS Board Policy Regulation IFBG-R\(1\)](#).
- General Guidelines – Use common sense when posting online. It is a good practice to never post anything that would embarrass you or the Griffin-Spalding County School System, or that would call your professional reputation into question.
- At no time should you claim to be speaking or issuing opinions on behalf of the District or your school, except with prior consent from the appropriate Administrator.
- Respect the privacy and rights of both colleagues and students. Confidential student or personnel information should not be posted online. Take care to comply with all provisions of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act ([FERPA](#)).
- Any employee-student communication or relationship via social media should be of an appropriate professional nature.
- Employees are also responsible for immediately reporting to the district any inappropriate communication received from a student.

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### **CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT**

- All staff members are required by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the appropriate authorities.
- No staff member should abuse a child—do not hit, pinch, slap, push or otherwise cause any harm.
- All staff will receive annual training in procedures to follow for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect.
- All suspected cases of child abuse shall be reported to the principal or designee who in turn will make a report to that school’s assigned Social Worker.
- The school social workers are the official contact persons on child abuse and will make any other necessary contacts with the Department of Family and Children Services. (GBOE Rule JGI (160-4-8-.04) (O.C.G.A. 190705) [GSCS Board Policy JGI](#))

### **COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCES**

- 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 congeniality where possible.
- This policy and procedure is available where such efforts do not succeed or, where for any other reason, the certificated employee desires to pursue this procedure. [GSCS Policy Board GAE](#)

### **Equal Opportunity Complaint Procedure**

- **Employee complaints made to the board of education regarding alleged discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in violation of Title VI, on the basis of sex in violation of Title IX, or on the basis of disability in violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act, will be processed in accordance with the following procedure:**
  1. Any employee or other person with a complaint alleging a violation as described above shall promptly notify, in writing or orally, the appropriate designee for the school system. If the complaint is oral, the designee shall promptly prepare a memo or written statement of the complaint as made by the complainant and shall have the complainant read and sign the memo or statement if it accurately reflects the complaint made.
  2. The designee shall have fifteen days to gather all information relevant to the complaint made, review the information, determine the facts relating to the complaint, review the action requested by the complainant, and attempt to resolve the complaint with the complainant and any other persons involved. The designee shall prepare a written response to the complaint detailing any action to be taken in response to the complaint and the time frame in which such action will be taken and copies of this response shall be furnished to the complainant and the superintendent.
  3. If the complaint is not resolved at the conclusion of this fifteen-day period or if the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the complainant shall have the right, within five days of receiving a copy of the written response, to have the complaint referred to the superintendent.

4. The superintendent shall have fifteen days to review the complaint and the response of the designee and attempt to resolve the complaint. The superintendent shall furnish to the complainant a written response setting forth either his approval of the action recommended by the coordinator of the action to be taken by the system in response to the complaint or a new decision in lieu of that recommended by the designee and the time frame in which such action shall be taken.
5. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response of the superintendent, then the complainant shall have the right, within fifteen (15) days of receipt of the written response of the superintendent, to have the complaint referred to the board of education. In order to have the board of education review the superintendent's decision, the complainant must file with the superintendent a written statement setting forth the reasons he or she disagrees with the response of the superintendent and the action the complainant is requesting the system to take. The complainant shall also include in the written response a request that the complaint be referred to the board of education.
6. Within thirty days of receipt of the written request of the complainant, the superintendent shall present the matter to the board of education at its regular meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose. The board shall review the original complaint, the response of the coordinator, the response of the superintendent, and the response of the complainant. In addition, the board may but is not required to, hear directly from any individuals with knowledge of any relevant facts relating to the complaint.
7. The board of education will either uphold the recommendation of the superintendent or require the system to take some other action in response to the complaint. A copy of the action of the board will be furnished to the complainant, either as a part of the minutes of the board of education or as a separate written statement. The board shall be the final reviewing authority within the system.
  - This procedure is not intended to deprive any employee of any right they may have to file a grievance pursuant to any other policy of the board of education, specifically including policy GAE, where appropriate. This procedure is not intended to provide an alternative process for resolving evaluation and employment disputes where there already exists a due process procedure mandated by state law or state department of education regulations, specifically including, but not limited to, hearings to be conducted pursuant to the Fair Dismissal Act of Georgia, Official Code of Georgia Annotated 20-2-940 through 947. The complainant retains at all times the right to contact the Office of Civil Rights with regard to any allegations that the system has violated the statutes described above.

### **Whistleblower Policy ([GAEA Staff Protection](#))**

- The Whistleblower Policy encourages all employees of the Griffin-Spalding County School District to report any activity in the District constituting a violation of any rule, policy or law which applies to the operation of a public school system or its employees, fraud, waste, abuse, corruption, unethical behavior, forgery or alteration of official documents, bribery, use of official position for improper financial benefits, authorizing or receiving benefits for goods or service not performed or authorizing or receiving benefits for goods or services not performed or authorizing or receiving compensation for hours not worked. The District shall not retaliate against any employee for disclosing a violation of or failure to comply with a law, rule, policy or regulation (protected Disclosures) to a supervisor as outlined in this policy unless the disclosure was made with knowledge that it was false or with reckless disregard for its truth or falsity. See GSCS Board Policy [GAEA](#).
- **Contact information is as follows:**
  - Title VI – [Dr. Lisa Moore](#), (770) 229-3700, extension 10400
  - Title IX – Dr. Donald Warren (770) 229-3700, extension 10481
  - Section 504 and ADA (students) – [Charles Kelley](#) (770) 229-3700, extension 10333
  - Perkins Act – Dr. Donald Warren (770) 229-3700, extension 10381
  - ADA Coordinator - [Judi Battle](#) (770) 229-3710, extension 10365

- (Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964; Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 503 and 504; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; 45 CFR Part 84; Americans with Disabilities Act; Executive Order, 11246, as amended. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-211(d); 30-1-10 et seq.; 34-1-2; 34-6A-1 et seq.; 36-6A-1 et seq.; 45-19-20 et seq.) [GSCS Board Policy JAA-R](#) and [GSCS Board Policy GAAA-R](#)

### **USE OF TECHNOLOGY - AUP**

- Use of the internet must be in support of education and research and consistent with the educational mission, goals, and objectives of the school system.
- Most employees are expected to develop skills in using computers and other technology and to implement these skills in their assigned areas of responsibility.
- All users of the GSCS network will be required to consent to the Acceptable Use Policy agreement. Inappropriate use and violation of this or any other Board policy may result in the loss of privilege. [Acceptable Use Policy \(AUP\)](#).

## **SAFETY(GSCS Policy EBB)**

### **SYSTEM-WIDE SAFETY POLICY STATEMENT**

The Griffin-Spalding County BOE is committed to the provision of a healthy and safe workplace and work environment for all employees, students, contractors, visitors, and members of the general public who may be affected by the work of the school.

The Superintendent under the direction of the Board of Education recognizes and accepts this responsibility, and undertakes so far as is reasonably practicable to:

1. ensure the health, safety and welfare of employees while they are at work, and other persons who may be affected by the work of the District;
2. comply with all Federal and State guidelines regulating workplace safety;
3. provide the necessary resources to ensure that proper provision is made for health, safety and welfare;
4. regularly monitor the workplace and work activities to ensure the effectiveness of the Health and Safety policy and to ensure that safe systems of work exist and are followed by employees, students and visitors.

### **ACCIDENTS OR INJURY**

- No matter how insignificant an on-the-job injury may seem when it occurs, notify your supervisor, school nurse, or the Human Resources Department immediately
- Go to [Worker's Compensation Procedures](#).

### **STATE EYE PROTECTION STANDARD**

- Eye protection devices will be provided for students, teachers, and visitors in the designated laboratory courses.

## **CONDUCT ISSUES**

### **WEAPONS, DRUGS, ALCOHOL**

- It is standard procedure at all schools to report any situations involving the possession, distribution, or use of weapons, drugs, or alcohol to the principal or the Human Resources Department immediately. Offenses in this category require the implementation of mandated reporting procedures just like child abuse or neglect.

## **THREATS OF VIOLENCE**

- Because of the instances of violence on school campuses around the nation, the Board believes that it is increasingly important to take preventative measures to stop potentially violent situations before they occur.
- As a result, employees shall not assault, intimidate, coerce, provoke, fight with, threaten, verbally attack, or engage in horseplay with: students, teachers, visitors, supervisors, or any other persons.
- If the School System has reasonable cause to believe that an employee has engaged in behavior that threatens the safety of others or that indicates a propensity for violence, the system shall immediately terminate the employee.

### **Such conduct shall include, but not be limited to:**

1. assaults;
  2. threats of violence;
  3. possession of an unauthorized weapon;
  4. outbursts of abusive language.
- The immediate termination of violent employees is necessary to protect students, teachers, other employees, and the public.

## **POSSESSION OF A WEAPON ON SCHOOL PROPERTY**

- It is unlawful for any person to carry, possess or have under his control any weapon at a school building, school function, school property, school bus, or any other transportation furnished by the school.

## **CELL PHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES**

**Cell phones and other electronic devices can create a distraction and prevent proper supervision of students; therefore,**

- In order to protect the integrity of our instructional program and to provide the most responsible supervision of our students, personal cell phones and other personal electronic devices should not be activated or used during the school day by faculty or staff.
- Exceptions due to extenuating circumstances may be approved in advance by the principal or supervisor on an individual basis.
- Exceptions are also made for emergency situations where the health and welfare of students, faculty or staff is an issue.

**Note: It is imperative that no wireless communication devices be used during bomb threats, since frequencies emitted have the potential to detonate an explosive device.**

Students who are issued electronic devices are responsible for returning them to the custody of their teacher immediately following their use. (GBOE Rule JGF 160-4-3-.10), (O.C.G.A., 20-2-16; 20-2-1130; 20-9-1).

## **SOLICITATION OF CHARITABLE CONTRIBUTIONS / SOLICITATION FOR PERSONAL GAIN**

- Employees shall participate in charity or fundraising campaigns on a voluntary basis.
- Any solicitation or collections of funds from employees must be recommended by the building administrator and be approved by the superintendent.
- The superintendent shall establish administrative procedures to cooperate with community organizations as they solicit funds from employees for their charitable organizations. (GBOE Rule JKB (160-5-1-.11) (O.C.G.A. 16-12-33; 20-2-310; 20-2-1180) ([GSCS Board Policy GAI](#)))
- Use of system email to sell items for personal gain is strictly prohibited.

## **USE OF TOBACCO or Nicotine Delivery Devices**

- The use of all tobacco products by any employee of the Griffin-Spalding County School System is prohibited during the normal workday and during any time when the employee is supervising student activities or school sponsored events. ([GSCS Board Policy GAN](#))
- Furthermore, the use of tobacco products by anyone is prohibited in any building or vehicle owned by the GSCS system.
- Prohibited activity in relation to the “Georgia Smoke Free Act of 2005” is defined to include: cigarettes, cigars, pipes and any other smoking product; dip, chew, snuff, and any other smokeless tobacco product; and nicotine delivery devices, such as e-cigarettes—“E-Cigarette” means any oral device that provides a vapor of liquid nicotine, lobelia, and/or other substance, and the use of inhalation of which simulates smoking.
- FDA-approved nicotine replacement therapy products used for tobacco cessation are excluded from the above definition.

## **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

- All students in the Griffin-Spalding County School System shall be afforded daily the opportunity to pledge allegiance to the United States flag in the traditional, respectful manner as established by each individual school principal.
- It should be noted that this policy does not require that all students recite the pledge, only that each student who desires to do so is afforded daily opportunity. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-310(c); 50-3-3; 50-3-4.1) ([GSCS Policy IKDA](#))

## **CONFIDENTIALITY OF STUDENT INFORMATION/RECORDS**

**In accordance with state and federal regulations and to ensure student record confidentiality, the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education has established policies and procedures pertaining to student records.**

- If employees work with students, teachers, records, material, and other sensitive information, confidentiality must be maintained at all times.
- Protect confidential information by safeguarding it when in use, filing it properly when not in use, and discussing it only with those who have a legitimate business need to know.
- Employees should check with their supervisors to get more information about confidentiality in their respective areas of work.

## **Test Data**

- It is the policy of the Griffin-Spalding County Schools that no test data or results are to be released or made public in any way except through the appropriate central office personnel.
- All test information, gained in any manner within the Griffin-Spalding County Schools, falls within the jurisdiction of the school system and is not be used or released by any persons except with the written permission of the superintendent of the Griffin-Spalding County School System with the following exception: A child's individual test records are open to inspection by the parent or legal guardian of that child upon a request to the principal. (GBOE Rule II (160-3-1-.07) (O.C.G.A. 50-18-72) ([GSCS Board Policy II](#)))

## **SEXUAL AND OTHER HARASSMENT**

- The Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education forbids discrimination against any employee or applicant for employment on the basis of sex.
- The board of education will not tolerate sexual harassment activity by any of its employees.
- This policy similarly applies to non-employee volunteers who work subject to the control of school authorities.
- Employees are protected from retaliation of any kind against those who report violations of policy, procedure or those who are witnesses in a work-place investigation.

- While there can be no promise of confidentiality for those who file complaints or give information as witnesses, identities will be revealed only on a need-to-know basis.

## **Unwelcome Conduct of a Sexual Nature**

- **Conduct of a sexual nature may include verbal or physical sexual advances, including:**
  1. subtle pressure for sexual activity;
  2. touching;
  3. pinching;
  4. patting;
  5. brushing against;
  6. comments regarding physical or personality characteristics of a sexual nature;
  7. sexually-oriented "kidding";
  8. teasing;
  9. double-entendres;
  10. jokes.
- Verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature may constitute sexual harassment when the allegedly harassed employee has indicated, by his/her conduct, that it is unwelcome.
- An employee who has initially welcomed such conduct by active participation must give specific notice to the alleged harasser that such conduct is no longer welcome in order for any such subsequent conduct to be deemed unwelcome.

## **Sexual Harassment**

- **For the purposes of this policy, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment if:**
  1. submission to the conduct is made either an explicit or implicit condition of employment;
  2. submission to or rejection of the conduct is used as a basis for an employment decision affecting the harassed employee; or
  3. the conduct substantially interferes with an employee's work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

## **SPECIFIC PROHIBITIONS**

### **Administrators and Supervisors**

- It is sexual harassment for an administrator or supervisor to use his/her authority to solicit sexual favors or attention from subordinates when the subordinate's failure to submit will result in adverse treatment, or when the subordinate's acquiescence will result in preferential treatment.
- Administrators and supervisors who either engage in sexual harassment or tolerate such conduct by other employees shall be subject to sanctions, as described below.

### **Non-Administrative and Non-Supervisory Employees**

- It is sexual harassment for a non-administrative and non-supervisory employee to subject another employee to any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature.
- Employees who engage in such conduct shall be subject to sanctions as described below.

### **Reporting, Investigation, and Sanctions**

- It is the express policy of the board of education to encourage victims of a sexual harassment to come forward with such claims. This may be done through the grievance procedure, policy GAE or by verbally informing a supervisor or Human Resources.

- Employees who feel that administrators or supervisors are conditioning promotions, increases in wages, continuation of employment, or other terms or conditions of employment upon sexual favors, are encouraged to report these conditions to the appropriate administrator.
- If the employee's direct administrator or supervisor is the offending person, the report shall be made to the next higher level of administration or supervision.
- Employees are also urged to report any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature by supervisors or fellow employees if such conduct interferes with the individual's work performance or creates a hostile or offensive working environment.
- Confidentiality will be maintained as much as possible and no reprisals or retaliation will be allowed to occur as a result of the good faith reporting of charges of sexual harassment.
- In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment, the totality of the circumstances, the nature of the conduct and the context in which the alleged conduct occurred will be investigated.
- The superintendent or his designee has the responsibility of investigating and resolving complaints of sexual harassment.
- Any employee found to have engaged in sexual harassment shall be subject to sanctions, including, but not limited to, warning, suspension, or termination subject to applicable procedural requirements. ([GSCS Policy GAEB](#))

## **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE USE/ABUSE**

### **Drug Free Workplace**

- The Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education is concerned with the well-being of all employees of the Griffin-Spalding County School System.
- The board recognizes that a drug-free workplace encourages employee productivity and promotes the accomplishment of the board's missions and goals.
- In accordance with the [Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988](#), the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education prohibits the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of alcohol or a controlled substance in the workplace for all Griffin-Spalding County School System employees.

### **Definitions**

1. A controlled substance is defined as those drugs or substances listed in schedules I through V of the federal Controlled Substance Act, including but not limited to, marijuana, cocaine, heroin, opiates and amphetamines. Not included are substances used in accordance with a valid prescription.
2. The workplace is defined as a geographic location at which an employee performs work pursuant to his or her employment with the Griffin-Spalding County Board of Education, including any travel while in travel status.
3. Conviction means a finding of guilt (including a plea of nolo contendere) or imposition of sentence or both by any judicial body charged with the responsibility to determine violations of the federal or state criminal drug statutes.
4. A criminal drug statute is defined as a federal or non-federal criminal statute involving the manufacture, distribution, dispensing, use or possession of any controlled substance.

### **Procedures**

- As a condition of employment, employees will abide by the terms of the Drug-Free Workplace Policy ([GSCS Board Policy GAMA](#)) and shall notify the Human Resources of any charge within 48 hours.
- Any GSCS employee is subject to drug or alcohol screening if there is "reasonable suspicion" that he/she is under the influence while at work.

## **DRESS CODE(GSCSS Board Policy [GBRL](#) and [GBRL-R\(1\)](#))**

The Griffin-Spalding County School System acknowledges that our role is to educate and set a good example for our students. As such, we are all professionals and accountable to support and project an image that visually displays our values of competence and respect for our profession. While it is impossible to cover everything in a dress code, building administrators and department heads have the responsibility to enforce the dress code and also have the right to deem attire inappropriate.

In general, the Board expects all employees to dress in a manner appropriate for their employment positions. This expectation is predicated on the Board's desire to encourage and foster a spirit of professionalism and pride in the field of education as a profession and also in the District.

The Superintendent is responsible for setting standards for employee attire and professional presentation. For the most recent guidelines see GSCS Board Policy [GBRL](#) and [GBRL-R\(1\)](#).

## **CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS**

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. Go to the [Professional Standards Commission\(GaPSC\)](#) for the most current and complete standards. Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200; 20-2-981 through 20-2-984.5 The most recent contact information can be found at [GAPSC Ethics Division](#).

## **PROFESSIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### **CERTIFICATION**

- The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) is vested with the power to establish necessary requirements and to issue certificates required of teachers employed in the State's public schools. Detailed information is available on the [GaPSC website](#).
- All certified employees are expected to create an individual [MYPSC Account](#). The GaPSC communicates with educators electronically, and certificate records are available online.
- The Professional Standards Commission currently requires a single online application form for all types of certificates.

### **Certificate Renewal**

- In the late fall of the year preceding the expiration date of the certificate, employees should receive an email from the Human Resources Office describing renewal procedures.
- All certified employees must submit to a Criminal Background Check at the time of certificate renewal.
- The employee assumes the cost of the criminal background submission.
- Each teacher should be aware of the certification status of all certificates held.
- **Maintaining a valid in-field certificate is the teacher's personal responsibility.**
- Contact the Human Resources Department for assistance with any certification questions.

### **Georgia Professional Standards Commission – Certificate Upgrade Advisor**

Educators interested in earning an advanced degree for an upgrade should check the Upgrade Advisor to ensure that the program you are interested in meets all GAPSC upgrade rule requirements. For the latest updates check the [Upgrade Rule at GAPSC](#).

You are guaranteed an upgrade if you:

1. Access the [Certificate Upgrade Advisor](#) through your [MyPSC Account](#).
2. Select an allowable advanced degree program in the Advisor
3. Save the selected degree program in the Advisor
4. Enroll in the program within 1 year of saving approval confirmation
5. Complete the degree and submit all application materials to the [GaPSC](#).

Once you have logged in to the Certificate Upgrade Advisor, identified the degree(s) you are interested in completing, and added the program(s) of interest to your list, please scroll to the bottom of the page and save the list. Saving the list automatically creates a document on your certification file that will serve as a permanent record of the degree verification. No further approval confirmation is necessary. All information received through the Advisor is considered an official response, provided you have accessed the advisor through your MyPSC account and saved the information to the list. The GaPSC will not provide additional approval by phone or email for a program you have already confirmed through the advisor.

Please remember, the upgrade rule requirements are very specific:

1. A program must either be in-field to your current certification, or state-approved to lead to the addition of a new field to your certificate; and
2. The institution itself must also hold specific national accreditation at the time of your enrollment.

### Adjustment for New or Upgraded Certificate

- The salary schedules for a certified employee are based on the highest, valid Georgia certificate on file in the Human Resources Department.
- **(NOTE: Education Leadership may not qualify if the employee is not in a leadership position.)**
- State funds necessary to finance salaries are based on valid, in-field teaching certificates.
- Salary adjustments for new certificates will be processed during the month the new certificate is received by the Human Resources Department provided it is received prior to the payroll cut-off date.
- The school system's copy is e-mailed to the system if GSCSS was listed on the application. Necessary salary changes or adjustments cannot be made until the school system has the certificate on file.
- Salary adjustments will be retroactive to the effective date of the level of the certificate, or the date of employment, whichever is most recent.

### Newly-Employed Teachers

- Georgia law requires that teachers in Georgia public schools have a certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission.
- State funds are provided to local school systems based on the teaching certificate. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-200)
- In view of the legal and financial requirements, a teacher must have an in-field teaching certificate for all subjects/classes taught.
- If an employee is experiencing problems obtaining information, an appointment must be scheduled with the Human Resources Director.
- During this conference, all steps for securing a certificate will be reviewed and assistance will be provided, if needed.

### Certification Tests

- Check the [GACE website](#) for more information.

### Certification Ineligibility

- In the event a teacher is not able to meet the GAPSC's certification requirements **or** meet GSCS's Certified Professional Qualifications requirements, the teacher's contract can be terminated at the discretion of the school system or
- salary can be paid at the substitute teacher rate. (O.C.G.A. 20-2-940(a))

## Important Notes

- It is the responsibility of each staff member to study this document and become familiar with the rules, regulations and policies of the Griffin-Spalding County School System.
- This employee handbook supersedes all previous employee handbooks and management memos which may have been issued on subjects covered herein. The information provided in this handbook may contain excerpts from our board policies. Employees should view policies in their entirety from the website to obtain additional information about topics of interest.
- GSCS policies are subject to change during the year, as well as legislative issues that could impact items in this handbook. Board policy, Federal law, State law, GAPSC changes/upades could all have a bearing on the accuracy of information contained in this handbook during the course of a school year.
- It is the responsibility of each employee to review the information contained in the handbook and ask a supervisor or Human Resources professional if there are questions.
- It should be noted that cameras are located throughout schools and administrative offices, and there should be no reasonable expectation of privacy except in break rooms and bathroom areas.
- The following could be reasons for the Superintendent to recommend an employee's termination: (this is not an all-inclusive listing)
  - Violation of work rules
  - Possible violation of the Code of Ethics for Educators--all required reports will be made to the PSC
  - Misconduct
  - Violation of policy
  - Violation of law
  - Failure to report to work or other attendance-related issue
  - Failure to meet or maintain certification criteria
  - Failure to maintain a valid driver's license (if required by the job description)
  - Failure to return from Leave
  - Failure to work cooperatively and interactively with HR in the leave taking or accommodation process resulting in unauthorized time away from work
  - Any good and justifiable cause--other issues could arise that could also lead to a recommendation for termination.

**NO STAFF MEMBER SHOULD ABUSE OR NEGLECT ANY STUDENT. DO NOT CAUSE ANY HARM TO A STUDENT. THIS SCHOOL DISTRICT DOES NOT SANCTION OR AUTHORIZE CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF ANY TYPE. PHYSICAL RESTRAINT OF A STUDENT IS ONLY RECOMMENDED IF THE STUDENT IS POSING A DANGER TO SELF OR OTHERS. STUDENTS SHOULD BE SUPERVISED AT ALL TIMES--NO ISOLATION OR SECLUSION WITHOUT PROPER SUPERVISION.**