

# EMPLOYEE



# HANDBOOK

2025-2026



# CARROLL COUNTY SCHOOLS

164 Independence Drive | Carrollton, Georgia 30116 | Phone 770.832.3568 | [carrollcountyschools.com](http://carrollcountyschools.com)

Carroll County 24STRONG Team:

Get ready for an exciting 2025-2026 school year! With the theme of Elevate 2.0, all of us – the board of education, administrators, faculty, and staff – are committed to reaching new heights together. Let's approach challenges with a growth mindset, celebrating both our significant and small wins along the way. Through collaboration, innovation, and mutual inspiration, we will achieve even greater impact.

Our vision is to be recognized as a premier school district, and your contribution is essential to this goal. Together, we empower students to graduate ready to be enrolled, enlisted, employed, and actively engaged in their community. Carroll County Schools is committed to making a positive difference by Focusing on Learning, Creating Future Focused Mindsets, Pursuing Premier Experiences, Maximizing Our Talent, and Serving Our Communities. This focus ensures Carroll County Schools will continue to be recognized among the best districts in the state.

We are proud to be recognized for our commitment to our employees, earning accolades as a Top Workplace by the Atlanta Journal-Constitution (2023 & 2024), a four-time Best Places to Work by the Atlanta Business Chronicle, and a six-time Best Employer by the Times-Georgian Reader's Choice. We believe that caring for our people is not only the right thing to do, but also essential for our ongoing success.

We encourage our students to be Future Focused, and this applies to all of us. Set goals, plan strategically, and commit to lifelong learning! We are invested in your professional development and offer a range of learning opportunities – we encourage you to actively participate in your growth. Your journey is important to us.

Thank you for choosing Carroll County Schools! We are proud to be 24STRONG with premier teachers, leaders, and schools – and we're glad you're part of this team.

Sincerely,

Scott K. Cowart  
Superintendent

*Their future is our mission.*

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*The information in this handbook does not create or amend any contract of employment.Changes made in Board Policy subsequent to the distribution of this handbook take priority.*

# Vision

Carroll County Schools will be recognized as a **premier** school district.

# Mission

Carroll County Schools empowers students to graduate ready to be **enrolled, enlisted, or employed, and engaged** in their community.

# Purpose

Carroll County Schools is committed to **positively changing lives**.

**Carroll County Schools is committed to:**

**Focusing** on Learning

**Creating** Future Focused Mindsets

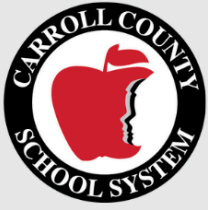
**Pursuing** Premier Experiences

**Maximizing** Our Talent

**Serving** Our Communities



24STRONG refers to the Carroll County Schools initiative to be unified in our direction, culture, values, beliefs, processes and practices to ensure all students receive a premier educational experience in our unique settings.

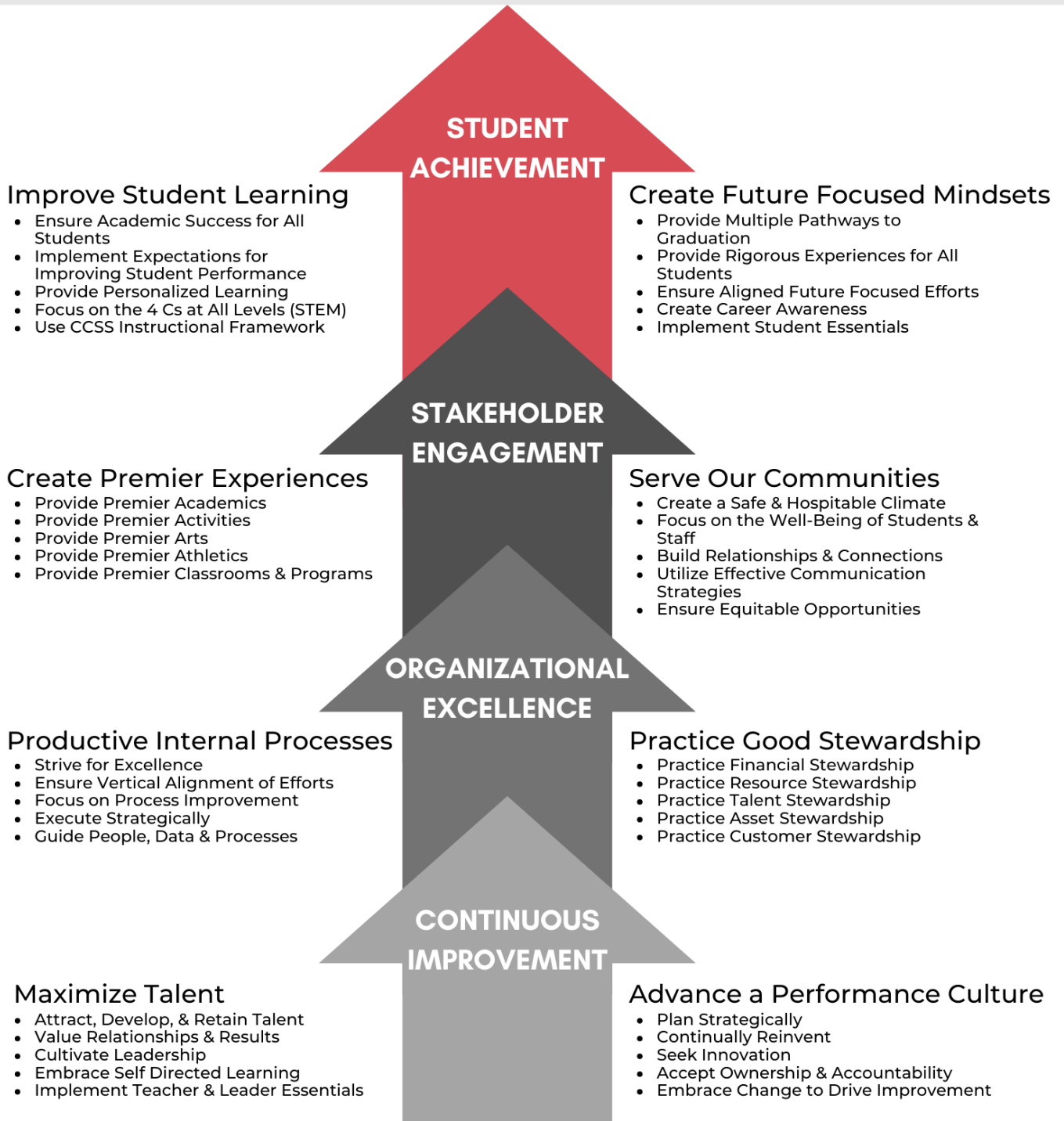


# 2025-2026 STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

**Vision:** To be recognized as a Premier School District.

**Mission:** To empower students to graduate ready to be enrolled, enlisted, or employed, and engaged in their community.

**Purpose:** To Positively Change Lives.



*Their future is our mission.*



## Purpose

This handbook is designed to answer frequently asked questions concerning policies, procedures, benefits, services, work rules and other areas of concern to employees. While it is intended to be as comprehensive as possible, the handbook may not cover every situation. For further information, please review the [Carroll County Schools website](#). The information in this handbook does not create or amend any contract of employment. The Carroll County Board of Education has the right to adopt new policies and procedures and to modify, amend or eliminate any of its existing policies and procedures. The Board of Education periodically undergoes a review of Board policies. Any changes will take priority over the information stated in this guide even if the changes have not been reprinted or substituted into the guidebook. Local schools may institute additional procedures relating to normal school operations, but those may not conflict with the Board Policy or items specified in this handbook.

## Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

The Carroll County School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability or sex in its employment practices. It is the policy of the Board of Education to comply fully with the requirements of Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and all accompanying regulations.

Any employee, applicant for employment or other person who believes he or she has been discriminated against or harassed in violation of this policy must make a complaint in accordance with the procedures outlined in [Policy GAAA](#).

## Community Connection and Equity

Fostering a welcoming, orderly, safe, respectful, and supportive atmosphere is critical for preparing students to participate in a complex, pluralistic, and interconnected society. We challenge ourselves to regularly evaluate and refine curricula, policies, and practices, and to commit the appropriate resources to ensure we embody these beliefs every day. We aspire for all members of our community – students, parents, caregivers, faculty, staff and community – to develop a sense of belonging and for our graduates to bring about positive change in the world.

To this end we look to:

- **Respect** all
- **Trust** each other to engage in difficult conversations
- **Share** our unique stories and listen to others
- **Learn** from different perspectives and experiences
- **Examine** our biases and endeavor to understand their influence
- **Foster** belonging, connectedness, and safety

## About Carroll County School System

The Carroll County School System is thriving, thanks to the efforts of our entire 24 STRONG Team. Total enrollment for the district is approximately 16,000 students, and the Carroll County School system employs approximately 2,000 staff members. Our schools have received local, state, and national recognition for innovative learning practices and all five high schools continue to earn record graduation rates. Additionally for the last several years the district has been named Best Employer in Carroll County, and a top workplace in the metro-Atlanta area.

As a member of the 24STRONG Team, you are our greatest asset. Your health and well-being are important to us, and we have resources available to support your success. The district provides free, confidential, supportive counseling services through our partners at Tanner Health System. And, each year all employees have the opportunity to participate in a district health challenge to encourage making healthy living and good nutrition a priority.

### 21st-Century Learning

In Carroll County, innovation and creativity drive academic instruction at all grade levels. By integrating science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) into hands-on, real world experiences we are preparing students to excel upon graduation. The district is one of only three school systems in Georgia to have a District STEM certification process and the only system in the state with a STEAM certification process. All Carroll County schools have earned district STEM certification, and 20 schools are nationally STEM certified by NISE.

### Graduation Pathways

Offering multiple graduation pathways has proven successful in our historic graduation rates. Students have the opportunity to take Advanced Placement courses on high school campuses, participate in dual enrollment through a multitude of participating colleges and universities, experience award-winning College and Career pathways at our two College and Career academies, and gain real world knowledge through work-based learning with businesses in our community.

### Positively Changing Lives

Being recognized locally and in the metro-Atlanta area as a top workplace is testament to the premier culture we strive for throughout the district. We believe strongly in professional development opportunities and cultivating leaders who serve as role models and as lead learners for our students and community.

Our people and their commitment to positively changing lives makes us incredibly proud every day. Carroll County teachers, leaders, and staff have not only provided premier opportunities in academics, arts, activities, and athletics, but they have also worked together to serve our community in a variety of ways. We have countless stories about students succeeding in the classroom and beyond because our 24STRONG team is dedicated to making a difference.



## Educating the Whole Child

Our district recognizes that students' education and life outcomes are significantly influenced by their access to safe, welcoming learning environments and enriching experiences both in and out of school. We are committed to creating a supportive atmosphere where students feel valued and empowered to explore and learn.

In addition to being an active PBIS school district, our schools implement Capturing Kids' Hearts, a program that focuses on social-emotional wellbeing, relationships, and student connectedness. We have observed the positive impact of this approach, noting strong correlations between emotional wellbeing and academic success, reduced disciplinary issues, and increased teacher satisfaction.

## **Board of Education**

The Carroll County School System is governed by a seven-member Board of Education. The Board exercises authority over the schools in accordance with applicable laws. It determines policy, delegates executive, supervisory and instructional authority to its employees, and appraises the results achieved in light of the goals of the school system.

The Board oversees the school system and establishes general policies for its operation in keeping with the State Board of Education rules and regulations and the requirements of the law. In carrying out this function the three fundamental duties of the Board are:

- Formulating and interpreting educational policies;
- Delegating administrative duties; and
- Making a continuous appraisal of progress

Reference: Policies: [BA](#) and [BBA](#)

## Leadership Essentials

Carroll County leaders are expected to exhibit the highest standards of ethical, professional and personal behavior. Additionally, they are expected to deliver high levels of performance in their job tasks. To clearly delineate what is expected of leaders, Carroll County Schools has established a set of four leadership essentials to guide how leaders should act; the cross-cutting attributes they are expected to display; and what they are expected to do in order to be successful in Carroll County. These essentials are displayed in the chart below with supporting clarification for each.

### Passionate – Courageous – Reflective – Committed

Lead by Example	Build Relationships	Accept Ownership and Accountability	Embrace Change to Drive Improvement
Leads staff in a clear direction, is energetic and acts professionally in the way they communicate, dress, treat people and treat information.	Builds others by listening to their opinion and ideas to make decisions. Develops credibility, promotes positive relationships and creates loyalty.	Accepts responsibility for improving the organization and personal performance.	Embraces and champions ways to improve performance and leverage success.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads a vision of academic success for ALL students</li> <li>• Demands excellence</li> <li>• Executes strategically</li> <li>• Practices inclusive leadership</li> <li>• Learns continuously</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Earns trust</li> <li>• Builds successful teams</li> <li>• Communicates effectively</li> <li>• Ensures connectedness</li> <li>• Promotes engagement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes initiative</li> <li>• Focuses on results</li> <li>• Manages people, data and processes</li> <li>• Monitors progress</li> <li>• Provides GREAT service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads change</li> <li>• Transforms school culture</li> <li>• Encourages innovation</li> <li>• Fosters creativity</li> <li>• Demonstrates resilience</li> </ul>

## Teacher Essentials

To clearly delineate what leaders should look for when looking for teachers to work for Carroll County Schools, the district has established a set of four teacher essentials - Lead by Example, Build Relationships, Accept Ownership & Accountability, and Embrace Change to Drive Improvement. These are used to guide what we are looking for in teacher applicants, the cross cutting attributes they are expected to display and what they are expected to do in order to be successful in Carroll County.

### Passionate – Courageous – Reflective – Committed

Lead by Example	Build Relationships	Accept Ownership and Accountability	Embrace Change to Drive Improvement
Serves as a role model in the way they deliver instruction and the way they look, communicate, treat people, and treat information.	Works in a collaborative way that builds credibility, mutual respect, trust and positive relationships with students, parents, and peers.	Demonstrates self-efficacy by embracing responsibility for student performance and professional growth.	Seeks and uses innovative practices to improve student achievement.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits a professional demeanor</li> <li>• Implements quality instruction</li> <li>• Uses effective pedagogy</li> <li>• Displays curricular and content knowledge</li> <li>• Contributes to the profession</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishes a positive learning environment</li> <li>• Engages students</li> <li>• Cultivates equity and inclusiveness</li> <li>• Plans collaboratively</li> <li>• Communicates effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes initiative</li> <li>• Improves student achievement</li> <li>• Creates a well-organized and managed classroom</li> <li>• Assesses for learning</li> <li>• Provides GREAT service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influences a positive school culture</li> <li>• Improves student literacy skills</li> <li>• Uses technology effectively</li> <li>• Differentiates student learning</li> <li>• Provides rigorous learning opportunities</li> </ul>

## KEY PERSONNEL POLICIES/PROCEDURES

For further information, refer to the [Carroll County Board Policy Manual](#).

### Certification

Professional employees of the Carroll County School System must hold proper certification from the [Georgia Professional Standards Commission](#) or be granted a waiver in accordance with the strategic waiver process. It is the responsibility of the individual to keep his/her certification current. Employees receive a renewal email from Human Resources with detailed instructions of steps required for recertification. This email is sent to employees in November of the fiscal year their certificate expires.

### Consulting

Administrative personnel serving as consultants outside the school district must have prior approval of their immediate supervisor before accepting consultation positions. Personal, annual or unpaid leave shall be used in situations where personnel are serving as paid consultants. All personnel must give priority to execution of contract duties before accepting consultation commitments.

Reference: [Policy CGPEA](#)

### Divisive Concepts

In Carroll County, our teachers and staff members are required to teach the Georgia Department of Education state standards. This instruction must be delivered in accordance with state law, including [HB 1084](#), which prohibits the assertion or indoctrination of certain "divisive concepts."

Employees are expected to practice tolerance and mutual respect, creating a classroom and/or working environment that is free of espousing personal and political beliefs and is aligned with state law prohibiting the promotion of divisive concepts. Instruction should be factual, age-appropriate, and allow for objective discussion of controversial topics when relevant to the curriculum, without compelling students to adopt a particular viewpoint.

Specifically, while performing official duties, staff members must not intentionally encourage, attempt to persuade, or indoctrinate students, school community members, or other school personnel to believe, profess, or affirm:

- That any race, ethnicity, or sex is inherently superior or inferior to another.
- That the United States is a fundamentally or systemically racist or sexist country.
- That an individual, by virtue of their race, sex, or ethnicity, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously.
- That an individual should feel discomfort, guilt, anguish, or any other form of psychological distress because of their race, sex, or ethnicity.
- That an individual bears responsibility for actions committed in the past by other members of the same race, sex, or ethnicity.

- That concepts such as meritocracy or traits such as a hard work ethic are racist or sexist or were created by members of a particular race to oppress members of another race.

Espousing personal beliefs concerning these or other divisive concepts, or attempting to advocate for such an individual's personal political beliefs, is not tolerated.

Furthermore, the [Parents' Bill of Rights](#) affords parents the right to inspect instructional materials and object if they believe materials teach, promote, or endorse these divisive concepts. This also includes the right to opt out of sex education, review those materials in advance, and object to photography of their children. Local school systems are required to have processes for reviewing and addressing complaints regarding alleged violations of these provisions.

## **Dress Code Guidelines for Employees**

### **Purpose**

Our dress code supports a positive and professional learning environment for students and the wider community. By presenting ourselves professionally, we set an excellent example and ensure consistency across our system. These guidelines aim to clarify expectations for all employees.

### **General Expectations**

- Professionalism First: All employees are expected to dress professionally to perform their duties and serve as role models.
- Modesty and Cleanliness: Always maintain a clean, neat, and modest appearance.
- Standard Attire: Business casual apparel is the minimal expectation. Casual clothing should not be worn to work unless explicitly approved by your principal or supervising administrator.
- Appropriate Fit: Clothing should fit well. Avoid garments that are overly tight, excessively baggy, low-cut, or revealing.
- Minimizing Distractions: Avoid piercings (beyond traditional earlobes), body art, hairstyles, or other adornments that could be distracting or detrimental to the learning environment.
- Identification: Employees should wear some form of identification (e.g., ID badge) at all times.

### **Approved Exceptions**

- School Spirit Days: Business casual dress is appropriate, which includes casual slacks, denim (jeans) garments, school spirit shirts, and athletic shoes.
- Physical Education (PE) Teachers: May wear appropriate wind/jogging suits, athletic shorts, t-shirts, and athletic shoes when actively teaching physical education classes.
- Department-Specific Dress Codes: Employees in departments with specific uniforms or established dress codes (e.g., Maintenance, Transportation, School Nutrition, Nurses) should adhere to their departmental guidelines.

- Summer Dress (12-Month Employees): Business casual is appropriate during the summer months.
- Health Accommodations: Special accommodations can be made for dress code based on health reasons, provided they are documented by a physician's note.
- Special Events: Building-level principals or supervising administrators have the discretion to make adaptations to these guidelines for specific events such as field days, field trips, or other school-approved special occasions.

### **Final Authority**

The building-level principal or supervising administrator will make the final decision regarding appropriate dress.

### **Drug and Alcohol Testing Procedure**

The Carroll County Board of Education is dedicated to providing safe and efficient transportation for students transported on school buses. The Board recognizes that safe student transportation depends on unimpaired judgment, physical dexterity, reflex action and unimpaired senses of sight and hearing of employees in safety-sensitive functions. The goal of this Board is, therefore, to provide our employees and students with an environment which promotes health and safety.

In order to meet this goal, effective January 1, 1995, the Carroll County Board of Education implemented and continues to comply with the Omnibus Transportation Employee Testing Act of 1991 as it applies to Drug and Alcohol Testing and regulations of the Federal Highway Administration. The purpose of this policy is to deter the use of drugs and alcohol in the workplace by establishing standard procedures for drug and alcohol testing for all employees required to hold a Commercial Driver's License and who are engaged in safety-sensitive functions. Employees engaged in safety-sensitive functions are: employees of a local school system who hold a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and who also operate or have reason to move a school bus. Other employees engaged in safety-sensitive functions include, but are not limited to, mechanics, school bus drivers who are coaches, teachers and administrators.

This Board will not tolerate unauthorized use, abuse, possession or sale of controlled substances by its employees. Training and education will be provided. Additionally, information will be provided on other assistance available to our employees to help them understand their responsibilities in achieving an alcohol and controlled substances free environment. Non-compliance with this policy or violation of the regulations may result in severe disciplinary action including suspension or dismissal.

Reference: [Policy GCRA \(1\)](#)

## **Drug-Free Workplace**

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 Board of Education hereby declares that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession of or use of a controlled substance or alcohol is prohibited in the workplace, on school premises, or as a part of any of the school's activities for all school system employees. As a condition of employment, employees will abide by the terms of this policy and shall notify the Superintendent of any criminal arrest or conviction not later than five (5) days after such conviction.

Reference: [Policy GAMA](#)

## **Dyslexia Informational Handbook**

Effective in April 2025, the new Georgia Early Literacy and Dyslexia Act (HB 307) unifies and expands upon prior legislation (Senate Bill 38, 2019, and HB 538, 2023) to significantly enhance literacy education and support for students with characteristics of dyslexia across Georgia's public schools. This comprehensive law mandates universal reading screeners three times a year for K-3 students, requires evidence-based reading interventions for those demonstrating significant reading deficiencies, and explicitly prohibits the use of the "three-cueing" instructional method. Furthermore, it places a strong emphasis on providing extensive training for educators in the science of reading and structured literacy to ensure that all students receive high-quality, research-based reading instruction. All personnel employed by the LEA must review the [2025-2026 Dyslexia Informational Handbook](#) to understand these requirements. Educators are encouraged to read the handbook in its entirety.

## **Employee Assistance Program (EAP)**

Carroll County Schools believes the health and well-being of our employees is of critical importance. In recognition of this, a free and confidential Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available for our employees and their families, through an expanded partnership with Tanner Health System.

The Tanner Employee Assistance Program can be mandated, strongly encouraged or self-selected. For more information, visit the [Tanner EAP website](#), [Introduction to Tanner EAP](#), or call 770-834-8327.

An EAP can provide employees with support in many areas including, but not limited to:

- Stress, Depression, Anxiety
- Relationship Issues
- Job Stress, Work Conflicts
- Anger, Grief, Loss
- Family and Parenting Problems
- Substance Abuse



## **Employee Complaints and Appeals**

The Carroll County Board of Education supports the process of certified personnel having the right to present and resolve complaints relating to certain matters affecting the employment relationship at the lowest organizational level possible. The Board of Education encourages all employees to resolve their complaints informally in a spirit of collegiality where possible.

Teachers who have accepted from their local board a school year contract for the fourth or subsequent consecutive school year may appeal the following issues:

1. Summative performance ratings of “Unsatisfactory” or “Ineffective” contained in personnel evaluations conducted pursuant to Code Section 20-2-210;
2. Procedural deficiencies on the part of the local school system or charter school in conducting an evaluation; and,
3. Job performance.

*Reference: Policies [GAE \(2\)](#); [GBIA](#)*

## **Employee Work Calendars, Payroll Calendar, and Certified Salary Schedules**

The work calendars provide the scheduled work days for all categories of employees. The calendars include holidays and school closings. Some categories of employment have floating adjusted work calendar days that will be scheduled by the employee’s supervisor. Employee work calendars, payroll calendar and certified and paraprofessional salary schedules are posted on [www.carrollcountyschools.com](http://www.carrollcountyschools.com) on the [Business and Finance page](#).

## **Evaluation**

All employees of the Board of Education will have their performance evaluated annually by an appropriately trained evaluator. Performance evaluation records are a part of the personnel evaluation file and are confidential. All certified teachers will be evaluated with Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) or GaLEADS Elevate and all certified administrators will be evaluated with Leadership Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) unless otherwise notified. All other certified and classified employees will be evaluated with a board approved, position-based evaluation tool.

## **Fundraising**

Approval for all fundraising efforts is required from the Carroll County Board of Education before initiating any fundraising activity. Fundraising requests must be submitted to the school principal who will submit the requests to the Assistant Superintendent of Support Services. If approved, the school bookkeeper should be informed of the fundraiser. Fundraising efforts include but are not limited to the following: raffles, sales, direct solicitations (such as text-a-thons, pledge drives, or requests for contributions). Maintain transparency through clearly communicating the purpose of the fundraising. Avoid conflicts of interest by not soliciting donations from students or parents under your authority, and ensure that fundraising activities do not create conflicts of interest.

Employees are expected to adhere to the Code of Ethics Standard 5: Public Funds and Property, educators are prohibited from misusing public or school-related funds, failing to account for funds collected, or co-mingling public funds with personal funds.

For all fundraising activities, the use of personal payment accounts such as PayPal, Cash App, Zelle, or Venmo is strictly prohibited. All funds must be collected and managed through official school or district approved channels to ensure proper accounting and transparency.

**Wish Lists:** Asking for personal items, money, gift cards, or gift certificates to purchase items is prohibited. Teachers may make a list for donations of items needed in the classroom for instructional purposes, celebrations, or cleaning supplies. The school principal must approve and review all wish lists before the list is distributed or posted online.

### **Identification and Security Badges**

All employees of the Carroll County School System will have picture identification badges. The badge allows the employee and one guest to be admitted to Carroll County extracurricular activities for no fee; this excludes tournaments and certain other events as posted by individual schools and special programs. Badges for terminated employees should be returned to the Human Resources Department.

## **Internet Acceptable Use Agreement for Employees and Social Media Guidelines**

### **Purpose and Philosophy**

The Carroll County School System recognizes the immense educational value of technology in supporting curriculum, student learning, resource sharing, innovation, and communication. We are committed to fostering a supportive and innovative learning environment while ensuring the ethical and responsible use of technology and safeguarding the privacy and rights of students, faculty, and staff.

This policy outlines the expectations for all employees when using district technology and when engaging in social media activities, both on and off duty. Adherence to these guidelines is crucial for protecting the integrity of our learning environment, maintaining professionalism, and upholding the reputation of the Carroll County School System.

This policy applies to all employees of the Carroll County School System whenever they are using district-provided technology (including computers, networks, software, internet services, and district email accounts) or when engaging in social media activities.

## **General Expectations for Technology Use**

By using Carroll County School System technology, employees agree to abide by the provisions of this policy.

- **Responsible Use:** All use of district technology must be in support of education and research, aligned with the educational goals and objectives of the Carroll County School System.
- **Compliance with Laws & Policies:** Employees must comply with all applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as all Board policies. This includes, but is not limited to, laws concerning copyright, trademark, defamation, privacy, anti-discrimination, anti-harassment, and any other applicable regulations.
- **Prohibited Content:** Transmission or access of any material that is threatening, obscene, sexually explicit, pornographic, discriminatory, or otherwise illegal or unethical is strictly prohibited. This includes material protected by trade secret or copyright, unless proper permissions are obtained.
- **Commercial/Political Activities:** Use of district technology for commercial activities by for-profit institutions, product advertisement, or political lobbying is prohibited.
- **Identification:** All use of the system must be under the employee's assigned account. Employees must keep usernames and passwords confidential and never share secure information with unauthorized users.
- **Security:** Employees are responsible for immediately reporting any security problems (e.g., unauthorized access, suspected malware) to their school administrator. Do not attempt to demonstrate or fix the problem yourself or share it with other users.
- **Vandalism:** Any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, or any public or private provider connected to the system, including uploading or creating computer viruses, is strictly prohibited. Violations may result in loss of services, disciplinary action, and legal referral.
- **Network Etiquette:** Employees are expected to abide by generally accepted rules of network etiquette and professional conduct..

## **Social Media Guidelines**

Social media refers to online communication tools that allow for creating, sharing, and exchanging information, ideas, and content (e.g., Facebook, X/Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok, blogs, forums, wikis, etc.).

- **Personal Responsibility:** When participating in social media activities, even off duty and off premises, such activities must not violate any Board policies or otherwise interfere with the employee's or co-workers' job performance.
  - **Professionalism & Judgment:** All policies governing employee behavior, ethics, performance, and professionalism apply to social media. Employees are expected to exercise professionalism and good judgment at all times.
  - **Public Representation:** You are a role model for students and an ambassador for the Carroll County School System. Carefully consider the public nature of online

platforms and act in a way that properly represents both your professional reputation and the district.

- Respectful Communication: Express ideas and opinions respectfully. Avoid insulting students, staff, parents, community members, or other school districts. Do not use racial slurs, innuendos, obscenity, or other inappropriate content. Do not post, share, comment on, or engage with rumors or unsupported information.
- Permanent Record: Always remember that once content is posted online, it can be public for a long time, may be discoverable in legal actions, and can be seen by a wide audience regardless of privacy settings. Consider if you would be comfortable if your content was seen by colleagues, students, parents, the School Board, or reported in the media. If not, do not share it.
- Content Restrictions: Content should not include provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, or material showing or promoting excessive/irresponsible consumption of alcohol or illegal drug use, or any activity students are legally prohibited from doing.
- Privacy Settings: You are responsible for understanding and controlling privacy settings on each social network you use. Always assume default settings make your profile and content publicly accessible.
- District Email: Never use your district email address on personal social media sites or for off-duty social media activities not connected with or approved by the district. Use personal email addresses for personal accounts.
- Official Representation: Do not claim to be speaking or issuing opinions on behalf of Carroll County Schools without prior written consent from the appropriate supervisor.
- District Branding: Do not use any school logo or image on personal sites without permission. They may be used on district-sanctioned sites.
- District Accounts: Do not create any social media account, blog, or website intended to represent Carroll County Schools without express prior consent from the superintendent or designee. This ensures brand protection, content consistency, and alignment with district communication standards.

## **Employee-Student and Employee-Parent Online Relations**

The district acknowledges the importance of communication and collaboration in the educational process but emphasizes the need for caution and professionalism in online interactions.

- Professional Boundaries: Employees are never obligated to accept friend or follower requests from any student or parent, nor are they required to use personal social media accounts to engage with students or participate in district projects.
- Privacy Awareness: Unless your account has privacy settings correctly configured, everything you post on a personal account may be publicly accessible to students, whether you are directly connected to them or not.
- Caution with Connections: Employees must exercise great care in connecting with students on any social media channels.
  - No Permission-Based Requests: Do not send permission-based friend or follower requests (e.g., Facebook friend request) to students.

- Discretion in Acceptance: Use discretion when accepting permission-based friend or follower requests from students.
- Recommendation for Broad Acceptance: If an employee decides to accept friend or follower requests from students, it is recommended to accept *all* such requests, rather than selectively limiting interactions to avoid perceptions of favoritism.
- Prohibited Messaging Platforms: To ensure transparency and maintain professional boundaries, employees are prohibited from using messaging applications with disappearing message capabilities (e.g., Snapchat) when communicating with students or parents
- Limited Exceptions: There may be limited exceptions for online connections with students who are family members or relatives, or when an employee's interaction is a direct result of certain established extra-curricular activities (e.g., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, religious organizations, sports teams with district approval).
- Appropriate Content & Professional Nature: Any employee-student communications or relationships via social media must:
  - Be of an appropriate professional nature.
  - Have content appropriate for both the communication medium and the audience.
  - Comply with all applicable laws and policies, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), safeguarding confidential student information.
- Reporting Inappropriate Communications: Employees are responsible for immediately reporting any inappropriate communication received from a student to the district. This protects both the employee and the student. Any content or communication inappropriate in the classroom is also inappropriate when shared via social media.

## **Artificial Intelligence (AI) Use**

Employees are permitted to responsibly integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools into their work to enhance productivity and efficiency, provided that:

- AI use complies with all relevant policies and does not compromise the quality of education or the privacy of students and staff.
- Employees understand the ethical implications of AI and commit to safeguarding the privacy and rights of students, faculty, and staff when using AI tools.
- Confidential student or personnel information must never be entered into public AI tools unless explicitly approved by the district for specific, secure, and controlled applications.

## **Limitations of Service & User Risk**

The Carroll County School System makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for electronic services provided. Carroll County Schools is not responsible for any damages suffered while on this system. Potential damages may include, but are not limited to, loss of data, non-deliveries, deliveries to unintended recipients, or service interruptions. Use of any information obtained via the information system is at your own risk. Carroll County Schools specifically denies any responsibility for the accuracy of information obtained through these services.

## **Privilege, Not a Right**

The use of district technology and information systems is a privilege, not a right. Inappropriate use will result in the cancellation of those privileges. The school administrator may close an account at any time deemed necessary. The administration of a particular school may request that the system administrator deny, revoke, or suspend specific user accounts.

Access to district-provided applications (e.g., Infinite Visions, Infinite Campus, Google Workspace) will automatically end on the day after the last day of employment.

## **Employee Responsibility for Student Use**

While employees cannot be held responsible for individual student misuse of the network when students are using it for individual work or in the context of another class, employees *are* responsible for instructing students in their classes on acceptable use of the network and proper network etiquette.

Reference: [Policy IFBC](#)

## **Mentor Program**

The mentor program is designed to support new teacher induction and provide a positive impact on teacher effectiveness, retention and leadership. Mentor teachers are assigned to new teachers who hold Induction Certificates and may also be assigned to those lacking certification. The job-embedded support is structured to meet the timely needs of the teacher and impact student growth and learning.

## **Professional Development**

All employees are required to participate in required training designed to maintain or improve their job skills. The Carroll County Board of Education requires the development and implementation of a system-level comprehensive school improvement plan that prioritizes staff and professional development.

Reference: [Policy GAD](#)

## **Reassignment**

The Superintendent is authorized by the Board to reassign at his/her discretion any employee to a location other than the one previously assigned. The right to reassign and transfer personnel to other positions should be for the betterment of the school system when such conditions as the following exist:

- Increases or decreases of enrollment in various grades
- Opening of new buildings or closing of old ones
- Changes in organization of the school system
- Addition or elimination of an educational service

- Vacancies created by promotions, leaves of absences, death, retirement, resignation and the like
- Personnel adjustments
- Compliance with federal court orders and new state or federal requirements

## **Reduction in Force**

Under certain circumstances, the Carroll County Board of Education may implement a reduction in force. Examples include:

- A decrease in student enrollment in the School District which would necessitate a decrease in personnel or a discontinuation of programs;
- A change in state or local curriculum, personnel, or financial practices which would necessitate a change in or elimination of program or services provided by the School District;
- A loss of funds due to a reduction in state funds, reduction in local funds or other funds that make necessary a reduction in spending;
- A lack of funding for programs, personnel, or services provided by the School District;
- Any reasonable reorganization plan to achieve a more efficient school district.

If the Board acts at the recommendation of the Superintendent to terminate an employee under contract or to downgrade an employee's position, the Superintendent shall notify the affected employee in a manner consistent with the provisions of Georgia's Fair Dismissal Law and he or she shall have whatever rights the Fair Dismissal Act provides for such employee.

Reference: [Policy GAKA](#)

## **Staff Meetings**

Regular staff meetings are a necessary part of the district operations. Each school shall have a schedule for staff meetings on a regular basis. The principal shall call special staff meetings for professional learning, accreditation and/or workshops as deemed necessary. All staff members are required as part of their teaching/employment responsibilities to attend any or all such meetings as designated by the principal.

## **Staff-Student Relationships**

Staff are required to professionally accept all assigned students, fostering their progress and well-being. Student assignments are an administrative function, made in the child's best educational interest. All personnel must maintain professional, ethical relationships with students, strictly prohibiting fraternization, undue familiarity, and dating

## **Suspension/Termination**



If the Board acts at the recommendation of the Superintendent to terminate an employee under contract or to downgrade an employee's position, the Superintendent shall notify the affected employee in a manner consistent with the provisions of Georgia's Fair Dismissal Law and he or she shall have whatever rights the Fair Dismissal Act provides for such employee.

Since classified personnel are employed by the Board of Education for an indefinite period of time, their employment may be suspended or terminated at any time by the Board upon the recommendation of the Superintendent.

References: [Policy GAKA](#)

## **Tobacco/Vape Products**

All Carroll County Schools are tobacco/vape free zones. All employees of the Carroll County Board of Education shall be prohibited from the use of tobacco or vaping products while performing their duties as an employee of the Carroll County Board of Education. All persons at off-campus school sponsored events are prohibited to use tobacco/vape products.

## **Transfers**

An employee recommended for employment for the next school year may request a transfer to another school or department. Employees wishing for a transfer to another school should apply for any open positions for which they are qualified through the application system used by the school district. The window for transfers will be set by the Human Resources Department. The Superintendent's decision shall be final in all transfer cases.

## **Travel**

Employees must obtain approval prior to incurring work-related travel and mileage expenses. Carroll County Schools adheres to the State of Georgia Travel Policy when determining reimbursement allowability and requirements. Employees are responsible for adhering to these requirements. The State of Georgia Travel Policy is located at: <http://sao.georgia.gov/travel/state-travel-policy>.

## **Vector Solutions**

Vector Solutions is an online training system that focuses on the safety of Carroll County Schools employees. It provides information and strategies for employees to help prevent injury and comply with state and federal mandates. The information and strategies are provided through online training courses that pertain specifically to different departments as well as courses that apply district wide. Each employee will receive an email with directions on how to access the program and complete the courses required for their specific department.

## **Workers' Compensation**

Employees may be entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits if injured on the job. The injury must arise out of and in the course of employment. The injured employee must provide notice of the injury immediately, but no later than 24-hours after the accident, to the employer, the employer's representative or the employee's immediate supervisor. Failure to do so may result in the loss of benefits. The injured employee may select a medical care provider from the list posted by the Board of Education Panel of Physicians. Only those providers listed are authorized to provide medical care for a work-related injury. It is the employee's responsibility to schedule follow-up visits/treatments outside of work hours. The Panel of Physicians is posted in visible locations at all schools and in all facilities maintained by the Carroll County Board of Education.

### **Workers' Compensation Early Return-to-Work-Program**

The Early Return-to-Work program is a proactive approach by the Carroll County School System to help an injured worker stay or return to productive and safe work as soon as physically possible. With proper implementation, this program can benefit all parties involved. The employee is responsible for actively participating in the program, while the school and supervisor are responsible for its implementation and for monitoring the program's outcomes. The board office and supervisors will work in conjunction with the authorized treating physician to obtain information about physical limitations and to develop a position that accommodates the specific restrictions. The school system values the contributions of all employees; therefore, every effort will be made to accommodate physical restrictions. Once a First Report of Injury is submitted, the Return-to-work Coordinator will contact the injured worker to discuss participation in the Early Return-To-Work program.

Panel of Physicians		
Physician Name	Address	Number
Georgia Vision Institute (Ophthalmology)	158 Clinic Avenue Carrollton, GA 30117	770-834-1008
Caduceus Occupational Medicine - Douglasville (Occupational Medicine / Industrial Clinic)	7421 Douglas Boulevard Suite A Douglasville, GA 30135	678-483-0288
Piedmont Orthopedics by OrthoAtlanta Mark S. Duffield (Orthopedic Surgery)	2976 Chapel Hill Rd Suite 200 Douglasville, GA 30135	770-949-8558
Peachtree Immediate Care (Urgent Care)	209 Cooley Drive Suite 101 Villa Rica, GA 30180	770-456-0911
Resurgens Orthopaedics Freddy A. Achecar, Jr. (Orthopedic Surgery) Raj Bhole (Orthopedic Surgery)	6001 Professional Parkway Suite 1040 Douglasville, GA 30134	770-949-7400
Tanner Occupational Health Clinic (Walk In Only) (Occupational Medicine / Industrial Clinic)	1480 Hwy 27 S Carrollton, GA 30117	770-836-9445
Carrollton Ear, Nose, and Throat	150 Clinic Avenue Suite 201 Carrollton, GA 30117	770-832-1488
Orthowest (Orthopedic Surgery)	150 Clinic Avenue Suite 101 Carrollton, GA 30117	770-834-0873

## **INSURANCE AND BENEFITS**

Carroll County Schools offers a comprehensive benefits package to employees. New employees have 30 days to select their benefits options. All employees can make changes to benefits plans during the annual Open Enrollment period, held each fall. Below is brief information on benefits that are available to employees.

### **Health Insurance**

The System's Health Insurance Program is administered by the State of Georgia, Department of Community Health, and offered through a defined carrier. Employees may choose from the program that best meets his/her needs. The school system pays an employer's share of each employee's health insurance premium. Employees on leave under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) who exhaust all paid leave will be responsible for the employee's portion of health care premiums.

An employee going on unpaid leave may be able to continue health insurance for a limited time. The benefits department can provide details regarding coverage and possible premium increases. Employees who retire (and will be receiving a monthly pension check) may be able to continue their health insurance coverage. Employees whose health insurance is terminated for other reasons, or covered dependents of employees whose health insurance is terminated, may continue their coverage for a limited period under COBRA.

### **Short-Term and Long- Term Disability**

Insurance Short-Term Disability (STD) and Long-Term Disability (LTD) insurance is available for purchase by eligible employees. The employee pays 100% of the premiums.

### **Basic Group Term Life Insurance**

Life insurance is provided free to all active, regular employees in amounts based on their classification.

### **Optional & Supplemental Group Term Life and Accidental Death & Dismemberment Insurance**

Optional and Supplemental Life Insurance and Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D) Insurance is available for eligible employees at group rates. Spousal and children's coverage is also available. AD&D coverage pays only in the event of an accidental death or dismemberment, and should not be considered "life" insurance. The employee pays 100% of the premiums. Optional and Supplemental Life Insurance is offered when an employee is hired. If it is refused at that time, and the employee later seeks to enroll, proof of insurability will be required.

### **Dental Insurance**

Dental Insurance is available for eligible employees, spouses and dependent children. The Dental Insurance plan provides benefits for Preventive, Basic, Major and Orthodontic procedures. There is

no waiting period for coverage under the plan if enrolled at time of hire. The employee pays 100% for dental coverage.

### **Vision Insurance**

Vision Insurance is available for eligible employees, spouses and dependent children. Benefits are available for both in-network and out-of-network providers and procedures. The employee pays 100% of the vision insurance.

### **Medical Flexible Spending Account**

A Medical Flexible Spending Account (MFSA) is available for eligible employees, spouses and dependent children. A MFSA is not insurance, but rather a way to pay for certain qualified, non-reimbursed medical expenses in a pre-tax salary reduction. The amount which can be placed in an MFSA each year may be limited by the Internal Revenue Service, but may not exceed the annual maximum established by the school system. The employee contributes 100% to the MFSA.

### **Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account**

A Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account (DCFSA) is available for eligible employees, spouses and dependent children. A DCFSA is not insurance, but rather a way to pay for certain qualified dependent care expenses in a pre-tax salary reduction. The amount which can be placed in a DCFSA each year may be limited by the Internal Revenue Service, but may not exceed the annual maximum established by the school system. Any monies placed in a DCFSA against which qualified expenditures cannot be filed are forfeited according to Federal Law. A DCFSA cannot be used if claiming a Dependent Child Credit on your Federal Income Tax return for that year (please consult a tax professional for specific details). The employee contributes 100% to the DCFSA.

### **Cancer, Accident, and Critical Illness Insurance**

Cancer, Accident and Critical Illness Insurance offers you and your family supplemental insurance protection in the event you or a covered family member is diagnosed with cancer or one of the other specified diseases covered under this plan or an accident occurs. It protects you and your family 24-hours a day, seven days a week, and is easily convertible. This plan pays benefits directly to you. The employee pays 100% of the premium.

### **Social Security and Medicare Insurance**

The school system participates in the Social Security and Medicare portion of FICA. Generally, 6.2% will be withheld from your earnings for Social Security and 1.45% of your earnings will be withheld for Medicare. The withholding amounts are determined based on IRS regulations.

### **Tax Deferred Investments**

Current IRS regulations allow employees to participate in tax deferred investments under Sections 403(b) and 457(b) of the Internal Revenue Code (commonly known as 403(b)/457 plans) if they qualify. All full time employees are eligible to participate.

## **EMPLOYEE LEAVE**

### **General Attendance Expectations**

All employees are expected to be present and punctual for their scheduled workdays. Regular attendance is crucial for the effective operation of our schools and contributes to student success. Your attendance record is a component of your annual performance evaluation and may be considered during contract renewal.

### **Reporting Absences (Scheduled & Unplanned)**

#### 1. For Scheduled Absences (e.g., appointments, planned personal leave):

- Absences should be reported using the Frontline Absence Management website several days in advance.
- Each employee has a unique Frontline ID username and password.
- Enter your absence request directly into the Frontline system.

#### 2. For Unplanned Absences (e.g., sudden illness, emergency):

- If you are unable to enter the absence into Frontline Absence Management due to the sudden nature of the absence, you must immediately notify your school absence approver by phone or email as early as possible on the day of the absence.
- You should still enter the absence into Frontline as soon as you are able to do so.

#### 3. Frontline Support:

- For questions or technical issues with Frontline Absence Management, please contact Frontline Support directly at 877-983-2244 or Support@ESS.com.

### **Substitute Teacher Procedures (Applicable to Teachers)**

- Lesson Plans: Comprehensive lesson plans are required for all substitute teachers. Please ensure these are readily available.
- Substitute Support: Identify a team member who can provide support to your substitute in your absence. This should be communicated to the substitute and the identified team member prior to your absence.
- Leaving During the School Day: If a teacher needs to leave school for more than one (1) class period but less than four (4) hours, they must secure a substitute and take a ½ day leave time. This must be recorded appropriately in Frontline.

### **Employee Leaves and Absences**

This [policy](#) shall apply to all employees of the Carroll County Board of Education. Deductions in pay will be made for absences not covered by this policy. Any incentives for perfect attendance

will be addressed in the employee handbook.

### **Accrual Of Sick Leave And Absence For Medical And Related Reasons**

Benefits-eligible employees of Carroll County Schools shall be entitled to annual sick leave with pay to be accrued at the rate of one and one-fourth (1 1/4) days for each completed month. All employees' unused sick leave shall be accumulated from one fiscal year to the next up to a maximum of ninety (90) unused sick leave days, although the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia allows participating employees to accumulate an unlimited number of unused sick leave days for credit towards retirement. All certified employees may transfer forty-five (45) unused sick leave days from another system. Accumulated sick leave may be transferred to another Georgia school system within the limits set by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-850.

The leave provided for under this policy is available only for personal illness, injury or exposure to contagious diseases, or for absences necessitated by illness or death in the employee's immediate family. For purpose of absences for medical and related reasons, members of the immediate family are defined as spouse, children, father, mother, brother, sister, grandparents, grandchildren, in-law equivalents of the above, other relatives living in the household, or any individual listed on the employee's most recent tax return.

For any absence in which sick leave is used, the superintendent shall have the right to require a physician's certificate stating that the employee is ill and is unable to perform his or her duties. However, if the local school Board disagrees with the doctor's statement of disability or ability, it may appoint a physician for the purpose of receiving independent medical judgment.

It will be the responsibility of the employee to fill out a report for the days absent for sick leave.

Employees may be required, at the discretion of the supervisor, to provide a written doctor's excuse for any absence after five (5) sick days have been used.

An employee may donate up to ten (10) accumulated sick leave days to his or her spouse given the spouse is also an employee for purposes of maternity leave, illness, or death of a family member.

Carroll County School System does not pay for unused sick leave when an employee leaves the system. Carroll County Schools follows guidelines from TRS and/or other retirement entities regarding sick leave procedures.

### **Personal Leave**

Three (3) days of an employee's accumulated sick leave may be utilized during each school year for personal reasons provided prior approval from the Superintendent or authorized supervisor is obtained. The principal or supervisor shall withhold approval of personal leave when the absence of the employee would jeopardize the effectiveness of the school operation. Any personal leave taken by an employee beyond that accumulated will result in the loss of pay for those days. Personal leave will not be granted during pre-planning, post-planning, in-service days or on the



day before or day after holidays, unless the principal in his or her discretion recommends that such leave should be granted. Employees are not required to disclose the purpose for which such absence is sought.

## **Paid Parental Leave**

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

1. An employee of the Board of Education shall be eligible for paid parental leave for qualifying life events upon satisfying the following criteria:
  - a. The employee is classified as full-time by the District and is eligible to participate in the TRS (Teacher Retirement System of Georgia) or the PSERS (Public School Employees Retirement System); and
  - b. The employee has six continuous months of employment with the Board, regardless of whether he or she is eligible for paid or unpaid leave under federal law. An employee paid on an hourly basis must have worked a minimum of 700 hours over the six-month period immediately preceding the requested paid parental leave date.
2. A qualifying life event means:
  - a. The birth of a child of an eligible employee;
  - b. The placement of a minor child for adoption with an eligible employee; or
  - c. The placement of a minor child for foster care with an eligible employee.
3. The maximum amount of paid parental leave that may be taken by an eligible employee during a rolling 12 month period is 240 hours, regardless of the number of qualifying life events that occur during such period.
  - a. The rolling 12 month period shall be measured backward from the date an eligible employee has a qualifying event.
  - b. Parental leave may be taken as needed and may be taken in increments of less than eight hours. The smallest increment of parental leave that may be taken is .5 of a work day.
  - c. Any unused paid parental leave that remains 12 months after the qualifying event shall not carry over for future use.
  - d. Unused paid parental leave shall have no cash value at any time of the eligible employee's separation from employment with the Board of Education.

Paid parental leave under state law shall run concurrently with any leave provided under federal law, ensuring that the employee receives paid leave initially while also counting that time towards their total FMLA leave entitlement, thereby not extending the total leave period beyond what FMLA allows. For more information, please refer to the [Ga Paid Parental Leave SOP](#).

## **Professional Leave**

The Superintendent may authorize professional leave for attendance of personnel at state, regional, and national meetings without pay deduction and with expenses paid by the district

according to established allowances. The number of absences for professional leave is a judgment value on the part of the Superintendent of Schools and is subject to budget limitations for employing substitutes and reimbursement for travel, meals and lodging.

### **Observance Of Religious Holidays**

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

### **Jury and Witness Leave**

Each person employed by the Carroll County School System shall be allowed leave with pay for the purpose of serving as a juror in any court or when attending a judicial proceeding in response to a subpoena to testify in a case arising out of the employee's duties. Any employee who serves as a juror or witness shall not have the jury or witness leave deducted from sick, personal or professional leave. Employees who serve on juries or who are subpoenaed to testify in a case arising out of their duties shall be allowed to keep any jury/witness pay they receive.

Employees who are subpoenaed to appear in court for reasons that are not job related may use any unused personal leave or be docked for such absence.

### **Military Leave**

Employees of the Board of Education are entitled to take leave for the purpose of complying with ordered military duty with full employment and reinstatement rights as provided by law. The term "ordered military duty" shall mean any military duty performed in the service of the armed forces of the United States or State of Georgia, including but not limited to, attendance at any service school or schools conducted by the armed forces of the United States by an employee as a voluntary member of any force of the organized militia or any reserve component of the United States or State of Georgia pursuant to orders issued by the competent state or federal authority, without the consent of the employee.

An employee shall be paid regular salary for a period or periods of absence while engaged in the performance of ordered military duty and while going to and returning from such duty, not to exceed a total of eighteen (18) days in any one federal fiscal year.

In the event the Governor of Georgia declares an emergency that results in an employee being ordered to military duty, the employee is entitled to leave not exceeding thirty (30) days in any one federal fiscal year. Employees who have military commitments shall inform the Superintendent or designee annually and shall cooperate to the extent possible in scheduling such leave so as to minimize the disruption in those employees' duties and the mission of the Board of Education.

A request for military leave (paid or unpaid) must be submitted to the employee's supervisor and the appropriate personnel administrator with a copy of the official military orders.

## **Annual Leave**

Annual leave is granted only to 12-month, annual (240-day) employees. Unless otherwise approved by the Superintendent or the Board, annual leave shall be accumulated based on the number of verified continuous, consecutive years of service with the system, as follows:

0-5 Years      12 days; 96 hours

6-10 Years    15 days; 120 hours

11+ Years     18 days; 144 hours

Carroll County Schools leave accumulation service shall be credited on a fiscal year basis using the salary credit formula. If an employee breaks service with the system and is re-employed, leave accumulation reverts to zero (0) years of service. Regular part-time (at least fifty percent) employees in 12-month positions accrue annual leave in proportion to the percent of time worked. Employees are encouraged to use all earned vacation leave each year. Individuals may carry over up to but not more than twenty-five (25) unused days of annual leave from a prior fiscal year into the next fiscal year.

An employee will be paid for accrued, unused annual leave only if the employee leaves employment in good standing. Annual leave will be paid at the current rate of pay. If the employee is terminated, no payment for unused annual leave will be made.

## **Organ and Bone Marrow Donation Leave**

Employees of the Carroll County Schools System shall be granted a leave of absence for the purpose of donating bone marrow or an organ, in accordance with Georgia House Bill 235. This leave shall be provided with full employment benefits and job protection, and it shall not be charged against any other paid leave, such as sick or personal leave.

Employees may receive:

- Up to 30 days of leave in any 12-month period for the purpose of donating an organ; and
- Up to 7 days of leave in any 12-month period for the purpose of donating bone marrow.

Requests for organ or bone marrow donation leave must be submitted in advance to the employee's supervisor and the appropriate personnel administrator. The request must include written documentation from a licensed medical provider verifying the purpose and expected duration of the leave.

Leave granted under this provision shall be provided without loss of pay, seniority, or other benefits and shall run concurrently with applicable provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), where eligible.

### **Construction with the Family & Medical Leave Act**

To the extent that any provision in this policy conflicts with or is superseded by the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"), the regulations promulgated thereunder, or any other federal or state law, the provision of the FMLA, its regulations or other law, as the case may be, control.

Reference: [Policy GARH](#)

### **Family and Medical Leave**

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) is a federal law that helps employees balance work responsibilities with family and medical needs. At times, employees may need to take leave from their jobs for a temporary period to address certain family responsibilities or their own serious health conditions. Employees of the Board who have been employed by the Board for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave are eligible to take twelve (12) weeks unpaid leave under the FMLA subject to certification by appropriate health care provider. A "rolling year" shall be used to determine the twelve-month period during which the leave entitlement may occur. That is each time an employee takes FMLA leave, the remaining leave entitlement would be any balance of the number of weeks that has not been used during the immediately preceding 12 months.

The District will require that any accrued paid leave (sick, vacation, approved accrued compensatory time, or any other paid leave) be substituted for all or a part of the otherwise unpaid FMLA leave under the terms and conditions of the District's normal leave policies.

If an employee is eligible for FMLA and needs to be out ten (10) or more consecutive days for one of the reasons listed, an electronic FMLA Request must be completed and submitted. The electronic FMLA Request is on the Carroll County Schools website, eFMLA Request.

If you have any questions, please contact your school/building level FMLA point of contact.

Even if the employee has sick leave or sick leave pool to cover the ten (10) or more absences, the employee is required to submit an eFMLA request. FMLA is regarding time and job security, not pay. FMLA runs concurrently with sick leave, sick leave pool, and unpaid leave.

An employee may request FMLA leave for one or more of the following reasons:

- Birth of a son or daughter and to care for the newborn child;
- Adoption or foster placement of a son or daughter with the employee;

- To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent, if the person has a serious health condition; and
- Serious health condition of employee that prevents the employee from performing his/her job functions.
- Any qualifying exigency arising from the fact that the employee's family member (the covered service member) is on covered active duty. Qualifying exigencies are defined as short-notice deployment (seven or less calendar days); military events and related activities; childcare and school activities; financial and legal arrangements; counseling; rest and recuperation (up to five days per instance); post-deployment activities; additional activities where the employer and employee agree that the leave is an exigency and agree to both timing and duration of the leave; and
- Military caregiver leave to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent or next of kin of the service member.

If the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, the employee requesting leave must provide at least thirty (30) days advance notice to the Assistant Superintendent of Human Resources by completing the eFMLA Request. If such advance notice is not possible, the employee must give notice as soon as possible by completing the request, ordinarily within one or two working days of the need for leave. When planning medical treatment, the employee should make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment, subject to the approval of the health care provider, so that corresponding leave will not unduly disrupt the operations of the school district.

Upon return from leave, the employee is entitled to be reinstated to a position equivalent to the one the employee held when he/she left on FMLA leave, with equivalent pay, benefits and other terms and conditions of employment. and school or department held when he/she left on FMLA leave. Upon proper notice, however, the board of education may deny reinstatement under this policy to an employee whose salary is in the highest 10% of the employees employed by the school district if such denial is necessary to prevent substantial and grievous economic injury to the District's operation, as determined by the board of education. For more information, please refer to the [Applying for FMLA SOP](#).

Reference: [Policy GBRIG](#)

### **Sick Leave Pool**

Employees who are eligible for sick leave accrual may join the Carroll County Sick Leave Pool for the purpose of applying for additional sick leave after their own accrued leave has been exhausted. Employees who elect to become members of the Sick Leave Pool are required to contribute part of their accumulated sick leave to the Pool. Withdrawals from the Sick Leave Pool will be granted for catastrophic illness, injury, or non-elective surgery with debilitating consequences in accordance with guidelines established by the Sick Leave Pool Committee.

Reference: [Policy GARHA](#)

## **Procedures for Sick Leave Withdrawal**

A member of the Sick Leave Pool shall be eligible to make application for withdrawal of days from the Pool provided that:

- He/she has been absent due to catastrophic illness, injury or non-elective surgery, with debilitating consequences beyond their control at least 10 consecutive school days immediately prior to the day that Sick Leave Pool days are utilized for themselves or an immediate family member, to include spouse or child in life threatening situations. Consideration may be given to a parent, sibling, or other relative for whom the employee member is the primary caregiver as verified by a medical doctor;
  - He/she has exhausted all accumulated leave on record; and
  - He/she has been a member of the Sick Leave Pool for 30 days from the closing date of the open enrollment period.
- No member shall be permitted to use the Sick Leave Pool if he/she is receiving Workers Compensation or any other remuneration for the absences provided by the Carroll County Board of Education.
  - No member shall be permitted to use the Sick Leave Pool if the personal illness or personal temporary disability is related to any illegal activity.
  - Withdrawals will be considered only for catastrophic illness, injury, or non-elective surgery with debilitating consequences beyond their control that is verified by a medical doctor. Examples of serious illness, injury or non-elective surgery include, but are not limited to, the following: strokes or any major cerebrovascular rupture or aneurysm, cancer, organ transplant, heart surgery or cardiovascular rupture, heart attack, major trauma accident where major bones are broken (back, hip, etc.) and brain or head trauma.
  - All requests to withdraw days from the Sick Leave Pool shall be filed with the Committee on the Sick LeavePool Application Form.
  - Leave grants from the Sick LeavePool shall be in increments up to 20 workdays.

*Reference: Policies [GARHA](#) and [GARHA-R\(1\)](#)*

## **Pension**

All employees who are employed at halftime or more in the Carroll County School System must belong to one of two retirement systems (TRS or PSERS).

### **Teacher Retirement System (TRS)**

The majority of Carroll County School System employees participate in the Teachers' Retirement System of Georgia (TRS). TRS administers the fund from which teachers in the state's public schools, many employees of the University System of Georgia, and certain other designated employees in educational-related work environments receive retirement benefits. TRS offers a defined benefit plan, guaranteeing a monthly benefit – based on a member's average salary (two highest consecutive years) and service – which is payable for the life of the member, and when applicable, transferable to a member's spouse or beneficiary(ies). The State of Georgia guarantees TRS members will receive retirement income for life. Also, depending on the plan of retirement chosen, a TRS retirement benefit can be passed to a beneficiary at a member's death, and the beneficiary continues to receive this income until his or her death. For detailed information, visit the TRS website at [www.trsga.com](http://www.trsga.com).

### **Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS)**

The Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) serves all eligible Carroll County Board of Education employees not covered under the Teachers' Retirement System of Georgia. PSERS began in January 1970. The purpose was to provide a supplemental retirement plan for public school employees who did not belong to the Teachers Retirement System (TRS). This means that PSERS is intended as an addition to other retirement income. Members include bus monitors, bus drivers, bus shop personnel, school nutrition assistants and maintenance personnel. Some managers in these positions are members of TRS. If you have questions about which system you are a member of, please ask your payroll department. PSERS provides lifetime retirement benefits, disability benefits, and death benefits. These are available once you have enough years of service to qualify. For detailed information, visit the PSERS website at [www.ers.ga.gov](http://www.ers.ga.gov).



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

Effective January 1, 2024

***Note: This Code of Ethics applies to ALL employees of Carroll County Schools***

### 1) **Introduction.**

The [Code of Ethics for Educators](#) defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission (GaPSC) has adopted standards that represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction and provides guidance for protecting the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, and assuring the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.

### 2) **Definitions.**

- a) "Breach of contract" occurs when an educator fails to honor a signed contract for employment with a school/school system by resigning in a manner that does not meet the guidelines established by the GaPSC.
- b) "Certificate" refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate, license, or permit issued by authority of the GaPSC.
- c) "Child endangerment" occurs when an educator disregards a substantial and/or unjustifiable risk of bodily harm to the student.
- d) "Complaint" is any written and signed statement from a local board, the state board, or one or more individual residents of this state filed with the GaPSC alleging that an educator has breached one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators. A "complaint" will be deemed a request to investigate.
- e) "Educator" is a teacher, school or school system administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the GaPSC and persons who have applied for but have not yet received a certificate. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, "educator" also refers to paraprofessionals, aides, and substitute teachers.
- f) "Inappropriate" is conduct or communication not suitable for an educator to have with a student. It goes beyond the bounds of an educator-student relationship.
- g) "Physical abuse" is physical interaction resulting in a reported or visible bruise or injury to the student.
- h) "Student" is any individual enrolled in the state's public, or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual under the age of 18. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the school year of graduation.

### 3) **Standards.**

- a) Standard 1: **Legal Compliance** - An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the commission or conviction of a felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude; of any other criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, sale, or possession of a controlled substance or marijuana as provided for in Chapter 13 of Title 16; or of any other sexual offense as provided for in Code Section 16-6-1 through 16-6-17, 16-6-20, 16-6-22.2, or 16-12-100; or any other laws applicable to the profession. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought; a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted; and a situation where an adjudication of guilt or sentence was otherwise withheld or not entered on the charge or the charge was otherwise disposed of in a similar manner in any jurisdiction.
- b) Standard 2: **Conduct with Students** - An educator shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:
  - 1) Committing any act of child abuse, including physical and verbal abuse;
  - 2) Committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
  - 3) Committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
  - 4) Engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student;
  - 5) Soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student;
  - 6) Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or
  - 7) Failing to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by students under the educator's supervision (including but not limited to at the educator's residence or any other private setting).
- c) Standard 3: **Alcohol or Drugs** - An educator shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:
  - 1) Being on school or Local Unit of Administration (LUA)/school district premises or at a school or a LUA/school district-related activity while

under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs; and

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

- (i) For the purposes of this standard, an educator shall be considered “under the influence” if the educator exhibits one or more of the following indicators, including but not limited to: slurred speech, enlarged pupils, bloodshot eyes, general personality changes, lack of physical coordination, poor motor skills, memory problems, concentration problems, etc.

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

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

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

- 1) Misusing public or school-related funds;
  - 2) Failing to account for funds collected from students or parents;
  - 3) Submitting fraudulent requests or documentation for reimbursement of expenses or for pay (including fraudulent or purchased degrees, documents, or coursework);

- 4) Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts; and
  - 5) Using school or school district property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee.
- f) Standard 6: **Remunerative Conduct** - An educator shall maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:
- 1) Soliciting students or parents of students, or school or LUA/school district personnel, to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee;
  - 2) Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;
  - 3) Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
  - 4) Coaching, instructing, promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involves students in an educator's school system and from whom the educator receives remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee. These types of activities must be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the Georgia High School Association.
- g) Standard 7: **Confidential Information** - An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material and other information. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:
- 1) Sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law;
  - 2) Sharing of confidential information restricted by state or federal law;
  - 3) Violation of confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items, etc.; and

- 4) Violation of other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.
- h) Standard 8: **Required Reports** - An educator shall file with the GaPSC reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. §19-7- 5), or any other required report. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:
- 1) Failure to report to the GaPSC all requested information on documents required by the GaPSC when applying for or renewing any certificate with the GaPSC;
  - 2) Failure to make a required report of an alleged or proven violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for Educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner; and
  - 3) Failure to make a required report of any alleged or proven violation of state or federal law as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. These reports include but are not limited to: murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, kidnapping, any sexual offense, any sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving a controlled substance and any abuse of a child if an educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.
- i) Standard 9: **Professional Conduct** - An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to a resignation that would equate to a breach of contract; any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position; or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students; or failure to supervise a student(s).
- j) Standard 10: **Testing** - An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:
- 1) Committing any act that breaches Test Security; and
  - 2) Compromising the integrity of the assessment.

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

- a) Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of legal requirements and local policies and procedures for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the GaPSC must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, or other LUA/school district employee, etc.).
- b) The GaPSC notifies local and state officials of all disciplinary actions. In addition, suspensions and revocations are reported to national officials, including the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) Clearinghouse.

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

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

Educators. The superintendent and the educator designated by the superintendent/Local Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the superintendent and the superintendent's designee must hold GaPSC certification. Should the superintendent's certificate be revoked, suspended, or denied, the Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that the superintendent whose certificate has been revoked, suspended, or denied is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district.

- c) The GaPSC is authorized to determine no probable cause as provided in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-984.4(e) and § 20-2-984.5(e) if:
  - 1) After a preliminary investigation is concluded it is unlikely that there exists a preponderance of the evidence necessary to prove at a hearing that a violation occurred; or
  - 2) After a hearing the administrative law judge makes a determination that there is not a preponderance of the evidence necessary to prove that a violation occurred.
- d) The GaPSC is authorized to determine no further action is necessary pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-984.5(a) if after review of the report of the preliminary investigation, sanctions should not be imposed.

#### 6) **Sanctions.**

- a) As outlined in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-984.5(c), the GaPSC has the discretion to issue a probable cause sanction against an educator. Common violations and associated sanctions can be found in the accompanying GaPSC Guidance.
  - 1) Denial is the refusal to grant initial certification to an applicant for a certificate;
  - 2) Monitoring is the quarterly appraisal of the educator's conduct by the GaPSC through contact with the educator and his or her employer. As a condition of monitoring, an educator may be required to submit periodic criminal background check (GCIC). The GaPSC specifies the length of the monitoring period;
  - 3) Reprimand admonishes the certificate holder for his or her conduct. The reprimand cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action;
  - 4) Revocation is the permanent invalidation of any certificate held by the educator. A Voluntary Surrender is equivalent to and has the same effect as a revocation. A Voluntary Surrender shall be accepted and becomes effective upon receipt by the GaPSC;

- 5) Suspension is the temporary invalidation of any certificate for a period of time specified by the GaPSC; and
- 6) Warning informs the certificate holder that his or her conduct is unethical. The warning cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action.

7) **Application Procedures.**

- a) "Yes" answers to Personal Affirmation Questions (PAQs) require submission of information identified in the accompanying GaPSC Guidance.
- b) With respect to an initial applicant, an application and corresponding ethics case that is initiated pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-984.3(c) will automatically close and be placed on hold if the applicant fails to submit requested documentation to the Ethics Division within 45 days of the request to the applicant. The application will be placed on hold in anticipation of the submission of a new application and the applicant's responding to any requests for documentation in a timely fashion.

Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200



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