

Employee Handbook

2016-2017



**103 Eldridge Street
Sylvester, GA 31791
(229) 776-8600 Fax (229) 776-8603
www.worthschools.net
*Updated October 2016***

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WORTH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of the Worth County School District is to ensure a quality education for all students leading to graduation and productive citizenship.

WORTH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT BELIEFS

We believe that...

- All students can learn and are unique learners;
- Education is a shared responsibility of the student, home, school, and community;
- Schools should maintain a safe and structured learning environment;
- All students should meet or exceed educational standards provided by a rigorous and relevant curriculum;
- All decisions should be driven by accurate and relevant data;
- College and career readiness activities prepare students for the future workforce;
- Students engaged in co- and extra-curricular activities perform better;
- Readily accessible technology resources improve teaching and learning;
- The system should employ and retain highly qualified personnel who demonstrate a high degree of professionalism;
- Job embedded professional learning results in improved instruction and increased student achievement;
- Prompt and regular attendance by all leads to improved performance;
- Effective and open communication is essential for the achievement of educational goals.

WORTH COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT VISION

- Our vision for the Worth County School District is for our graduation rate to reach 80% or above, and for students to meet or exceed established accountability measures.
- We will achieve this vision by providing high expectations, a relevant and rigorous curriculum, data driven standards-based instructional practices, appropriate interventions, and celebrations of success as we move forward.
- As a result of our success, we will attract and retain high quality teachers provide a foundation for community economic growth, and prepare graduates for post-secondary success.

WORTH COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr. William Jenkins – Chair – bjenkins@worthschools.net

Mr. Melvin Jefferson – District 1 – mjefferson@worthschools.net

Mr. Jerry Jones – District 2 – jjones@worthschools.net

Mr. William Oliver – District 3 – bolivar@worthschools.net

Mr. Randy Bacon – District 4 – rbacon@worthschools.net

Board of Education Meetings

Regular monthly meetings of the Worth County Board of Education are held at the Worth County Board Office (103 Eldridge Street) on the second Thursday of each month at 7 PM.

Disclaimer

This handbook has been designed to help familiarize you with some of our policies, procedures, benefits, work rules, and other areas of concern to employees of the Worth County School District. The information in this handbook does not create or amend any contract of employment. The Worth 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. Any changes will take priority over the information stated in this handbook even if the changes have not been reprinted or substituted into the handbook. 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. While this document is transmitted to you electronically, it is requested that you keep it in a location which is accessible. Feel free to make a hard copy if needed.

For additional, more detailed information or if you have questions, please refer to the Worth County Board of Education Policy Manual, which can be located at the district's web site (www.worthschools.net – Quick Links – Board of Education – Board Policies) or contact the Human Resources Department.

CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF

SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

Superintendent of Schools
Secretary to the Superintendent
Receptionist

Kay S. Mathews – kmathews@worthschools.net
Martha Rutherford – mrutherford@worthschools.net
Kanicee Walker – kwalker@worthschools.net

BUSINESS & FINANCE DEPARTMENT

Director of Finance
System Bookkeeper
Accounts Payable
Payroll Specialist
Benefits Specialist

Lisa Deariso – ldeariso@worthschools.net
Kim Oliver – koliver@worthschools.net
Estelle Allen – eja@worthschools.net
Lacey Heard – lheard@worthschools.net
Melissa Emerson – memerson@worthschools.net

CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT DEPARTMENT

Director of Curriculum & Instruction
Student Support Services Coordinator
Curriculum Secretary
Instructional Technology Specialist

Dr. Amy Chafin – achafin@worthschools.net
Sandi Giddens – sgiddens@worthschools.net
Amanda Carter – acarter@worthschools.net
Christy Haskins – chaskins@worthschools.net

FEDERAL PROGRAMS DEPARTMENT

Director of Federal Programs
Federal Programs Secretary

Christie Foerster – cfoerster@worthschools.net
Brittany Young – byoung@worthschools.net

HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT

Director of Human Resources
HR Secretary

Felecia Cook – fcook@worthschools.net
Kristi McDaniel – kmcdaniel@worthschools.net

MAINTENANCE DEPARTMENT

Director of Maintenance
Assistant Director of Maintenance

Jimmy Odom – jiodom@worthschools.net
Glen McDonald – gmcdonald@worthschools.net

SCHOOL NUTRITION DEPARTMENT

Director of School Nutrition
School Nutrition Bookkeeper

Kristen Garland – kgarland@worthschools.net
Janet Smith – jsmith@worthschools.net

SOCIAL WORKER

School Social Worker
Attendance Clerk /Leave Specialist

Tracie Turner – tturner@worthschools.net
Marilyn Powell – mapowell@worthschools.net

SPECIAL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

Director of Special Education
Special Education Secretary
Medicaid Billing

Dr. Yolanda Smith – ysmith@worthschools.net
Naverah Jimmerson – njimmerson@worthschools.net
Lee Hobby – lhobby@worthschools.net

TECHNOLOGY DEPARTMENT

Director of Technology

Justin Judy – jjudy@worthschools.net

TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT

Director of Transportation
Assistant Director of Transportation
Transportation Secretary

Farrell Lawrence – flawrence@worthschools.net
Elaine Bozeman – ebozeman@worthschools.net
Jackie Cuffie – jscuffie@worthschools.net

SCHOOL/BUS SHOP INFORMATION

Worth County Primary School

1304 North Isabella Street
Sylvester, GA 31791
Phone: (229) 776-8660
Fax: (229) 776-8665
Principal: Jared Worthy
Grades: PreK – 2

Worth County Middle School

1305 North Isabella Street
Sylvester, GA 31791
Phone: (229) 776-8620
Fax (229) 776-8624
Principal: Tiffany Sevier
Grades: 6 – 8

Worth County Achievement Center

103 Eldridge Street
Sylvester, GA 31791
Phone: (229) 776-8600
Fax (229) 776-8603
Coordinators: Dr. Alicia Hill and Will Smith
Grades: 6 – 12

Worth County Elementary School

1906 GA HWY 313
Sylvester, GA 31791
Phone: (229) 776-8605
Fax: (229) 776-8607
Principal: Dr. Steven Rouse
Grades: 3 – 5

Worth County High School

406 West King Street
Sylvester, GA 31791
Phone: (229) 776-8625
Fax (229) 777-2075
Principal: Scott Chafin
Grades: 9 – 12

Bus Shop

142 Rebecca Drive
Sylvester, GA 31791
Phone: (229) 776-8612
Fax (229) 776-8666

GUIDELINES: WORKPLACE/ON-THE-JOB

Accreditation

The Worth County School District provides quality educational programs for students. The Worth County School District is accredited with AdvancED and the Georgia Accrediting Commission.

Alcohol and Controlled Substance Testing

The health and well-being of students and employees depend on the unimpaired judgment, physical dexterity, reflex action, and unimpaired senses of sight and hearing of employees engaged in safety sensitive functions. The Worth County Board of Education will not tolerate and specifically prohibits the unauthorized use, abuse, possession or sale of alcohol or controlled substances, as well as a measurable presence of alcohol in any employee. Employees engaged in safety sensitive functions participate in an alcohol and controlled substance testing program. **Reference Policy: GAMA**

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The Worth County School District will not discriminate against any qualified employee because of a disability. Employees must be able to perform the essential duties of the job. Reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with a disability will be provided following the ADA guidelines.

Code of Ethics for Educators

All employees in the Worth County School District are required to observe the Code of Ethics for Educators – a code that protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and staff, and ensures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the school district.

The following changes to the Professional Standards' Code of Ethics will be effective in the Worth County School District:

- a) **Definitions:** An educator will include any employee of our school district.
- b) **Standard 8:** Although non-certificated personnel do not receive contracts, all employees are expected to fulfill the terms and obligations of their jobs.
- c) **Disciplinary Action:** The district will not report violations of non-certificated personnel to the Georgia Professional Standards but will take disciplinary action as authorized by law and board policy.

Effective June 15, 2015

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

(2) Definitions

(a) "Certificate" refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate, license, or permit issued by authority of the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

(b) "Child endangerment" occurs when an educator disregards a substantial and/or unjustifiable risk of bodily harm to the student.

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

(d) "Student" is any individual enrolled in the state's public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual between and including the ages of 3 and 17 under the age of 18. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the year of graduation.

(e) "Complaint" is any written and signed statement from a local board, the state board, or one or more individual residents of this state filed with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission alleging that an educator has breached one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators. A "complaint" will be deemed a request to investigate.

(f) "Revocation" is the invalidation of any certificate held by the educator.

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

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

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

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

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

(l) “No Probable Cause” is a determination by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission that, after a preliminary investigation, either no further action need be taken or no cause exists to recommend disciplinary action.

(3) Standards

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

(b) Standard 2: **Conduct with Students** - An educator shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. committing any act of child abuse, including physical and verbal abuse;
2. committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
3. committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
4. engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student that would violate a state or federal law;
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 who are 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).

(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 and/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: **Abandonment of Contract** - An educator shall fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or education agency for the duration of the contract. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

(i) Standard 9: **Required Reports** - An educator shall file reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5), or any other required report. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. failure to report all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission;
2. failure to make a required report of a violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner; and

3. failure to make a required report of any violation of state or federal law 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.

(j) Standard 10: **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 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.

(k) Standard 11: **Testing** - An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. committing any act that breaches Test Security; and
2. compromising the integrity of the assessment.

(4) Reporting

(a) Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of legal requirements and local policies and procedures for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, or other LUA/school district employee, etc.).

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

(5) Disciplinary Action

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

1. unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
2. disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
3. order from a court of competent jurisdiction or a request from the Department of Human Resources that the certificate should be suspended or the application for certification should be denied for non-payment of child support (O.C.G.A. §19-6-28.1 and §19-11-9.3);
4. notification from the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan guaranteed by the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation (O.C.G.A. §20-3-295);
5. suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate;
6. violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession; and
7. any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.

(b) An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not serve as a volunteer or be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, substitute teacher or in any other position during the period of his or her revocation, suspension or denial for a violation of The Code of Ethics. The superintendent and the educator designated by the superintendent/Local Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or

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

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

Complaints and Grievances

In implementing the provisions of the Act of the General Assembly, O.C.G.A. 20-2-989.5, the Worth County Board of Education sets forth policy for certified personnel to have a right to present and resolve complaints relating to certain matters affecting the employment relationship at the lowest organizational level possible. The board encourages all employees to resolve their complaints informally in a spirit of collegiality where possible. Policy and procedure are available where such efforts do not succeed or, where for any other reason, the certificated employee desires to pursue this procedure. **Reference Policy: GAE**

Computer and Internet Acceptable Use

The Worth County Board of Education is committed to providing all students and employees with appropriate access to computer technology and believes that the use of the Internet in instructional programs is an educational tool which facilitates communication, innovation, resource sharing and access to information. Due to the complex nature of accessible networks and the magnitude of potential information available to students utilizing computer resources and the Internet, the board believes comprehensive guidelines in the form of administrative procedures are warranted in order to serve the educational and instructional needs of staff. Employees violating the board's policy and administrative procedures shall be subject to revocation of privileges and potential disciplinary and/or appropriate legal action. **Reference Policies: IFBG and IFBGE**

Confidentiality

Much of what personnel may see or hear in schools is confidential by law. Any information concerning student achievement and behavior is confidential. The confidentiality rights of students are protected through state and federal regulations, and employees become liable for protecting students' rights. Confidential information regarding students or staff is not to be discussed in the community. A breach of this confidentiality can result in termination of employment.

Dress Code

Employees should maintain an appropriate level of personal hygiene and dress appropriately for the school or workplace situation and level of formality.

Drug-Free Workplace

The Worth County Board of Education declares that the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of controlled substances, marijuana and other dangerous drugs in an unlawful manner or being at work under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances, marijuana or other dangerous drugs is a serious threat to the public health, safety and welfare. With this in mind, the board declares that its work force must be absolutely free of any person who would knowingly manufacture, distribute, sell or possess a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug in an unlawful manner. This prohibition specifically includes, but is not limited to, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance or alcohol in the employee's workplace. This prohibition also includes, but is not limited to, an employee being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances while on duty.

Any employee who is convicted for the first time, under the laws of this state, the United States, or any other state, of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug shall be subject to disciplinary action. At a minimum, such an employee shall be suspended for a period of not less than two months and shall be required to complete, at his or her own expense, a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the board. At a maximum, such an employee may be terminated from his employment with the school system. Any employee who is convicted for a second or subsequent time under the laws of this state, the United States, or any other state, of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug shall be terminated from his or her employment and shall be ineligible for employment for a period of five years from the most recent date of conviction.

If, prior to an arrest for an offense involving a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug, an employee notifies the superintendent or the superintendent's designee that the employee illegally uses a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug and is receiving or agrees to receive treatment under a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the board, the employee shall be entitled to maintain his or her employment for up to one year as long as the employee follows the treatment plan. During this period, the employee shall not be separated from employment solely on the basis of the employee's drug dependence, but the employee's work activities may be restructured if practicable to protect persons or property. No statement made by an employee to the superintendent or the superintendent's designee in

order to comply with this code section shall be admissible in any civil, administrative or criminal proceeding as evidence against the public employee. The rights granted by this policy shall be available to an employee only once during a five year period and are intended to be and shall be interpreted as being the same as those minimum rights granted pursuant to the Georgia Drug-Free Work Force Act and any subsequent amendments thereof.

As a condition of employment, each employee must abide by the terms of this policy and must notify the board within five days after any arrest on any drug-related criminal charge and further notify the board within five days of any conviction of a drug-related offense.

A copy of this policy shall be disseminated to all employees either directly or through employee handbooks.

The Worth County Board of Education shall not consider for employment any applicant who has been convicted for the first time of any drug offense as described above for a three month period from the date of conviction nor shall the board consider any applicant for employment who has been convicted for the second time of any drug offense as described above for a five year period from the most recent date of conviction.

For purposes of this policy, "conviction" refers to any final conviction in a court of competent jurisdiction, specifically including acceptance of a plea of guilty, nolo contendere, or any plea entered under the First Offenders Act of Georgia or any comparable state or federal legislation.

No certified employee or employee with a contract for a definite term shall be subject to suspension or termination pursuant to this policy except in compliance with the provisions of the Fair Dismissal Act of Georgia, Official Code of Georgia Annotated 20-2-940 through 947. This policy is not intended and shall not be interpreted as prohibiting the school system from taking appropriate disciplinary action against any employee where there exists evidence that an employee uses, distributes or sells illegal drugs even though the employee has not been convicted of any criminal offense or where there exists evidence that an employee is under the influence of alcohol while on duty, except that the school system may not use the statement of any employee to the superintendent requesting treatment as described in this policy.

The school district shall provide such staff development as required by state or federal law to inform employees of the dangers of drug abuse, the availability of employee assistance and drug counseling and treatment and the terms of this policy. **Reference Policy: GAMA-Drug-Free Workplace**

Employee Integrity

Employees should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of employment with the Worth County Board of Education. It is expected that employees will deal honestly, accurately, and responsibly with employment qualifications, work hours and time sheets (signing in and out), absenteeism and tardiness to work, expense forms, personal property, school/activity funds or property, and all work-related issues. An employee who fails to act with integrity may be subject to discipline.

Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)

No person shall be denied employment, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination in any program or activity on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, veteran status, genetic information, or age. If students and/or parents have concerns, then they should bring such concerns in writing to the attention of the principal. If employees have concerns, then they should bring such concerns in writing to the attention of their immediate supervisor. The following persons have been designated to handle inquiries and concerns regarding the district’s non-discrimination policies:

Reference Policy: GAAA

Title IX Coordinator	Athletic Director
Employee Section 504 & ADA/Title VI Coordinator:	Human Resources Director
Student Section 504 Coordinator	Student Support Services Coordinator

Harassment Policy

It is the policy of this school district to prohibit any act of harassment of students or employees by other students or employees based upon race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age or disability at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity. Any such act by a student or employee shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment or suspension or expulsion of the student. **Reference Policy: GAEB**

Safety Guidelines

The Worth County School District is committed to providing a safe work environment for all district personnel. It is our goal to reduce the frequency and severity of accidental injuries by providing employees with safety information as a means of protecting employee welfare.

All employees are expected to abide by all safety procedures and rules applicable to their particular work situation. Each employee is accountable for their own safety and shares responsibility for the safety of other employees. The school district will enforce all safety procedures and rules through appropriate action. It is the duty of all employees to play an active role in creating a safe and healthy workplace.

General Safety Rules

Safety rules are established to reduce the frequency and severity of accidental injuries. All accidents are preventable. It is the responsibility of each employee to follow all safety rules pertaining to their job. These rules are a supplement to the safety rules that must be followed when doing particular jobs or operating certain equipment.

- ❖ Keep all walkways and pathways clear of boxes, materials, and clutter.
- ❖ Never carry anything that will block your view while walking.
- ❖ Move electrical cords out of walkways or tape them down.
- ❖ Report all hazards to your supervisor.
- ❖ Clean up spills, drips, and leaks immediately.
- ❖ Post signs or barriers to warn others of hazards.
- ❖ Obey all safety warning signs.
- ❖ Wear appropriate footwear when weather or working conditions pose slippery conditions. Appropriate footwear means non-slip treads.
- ❖ Close all drawers and cabinets when not in use.
- ❖ Always use handrails while walking up and down stairs.
- ❖ Never run up or down stairs.
- ❖ Do not climb or stand on chairs, desks, or items not designed for that purpose.
- ❖ Always use a stepladder or stool for reaching overhead. Request assistance from maintenance when possible.
- ❖ Do not climb ladders with objects in your hand. Have someone hand them to you.
- ❖ Do not step on the top rung of any ladder.
- ❖ No more than one person is allowed on a ladder at the same time.
- ❖ Materials stored on shelves will be stacked in a way that prevents items from falling off. Do not overload shelves.
- ❖ Avoid lifting and bending when possible. Use carts and/or hand trucks instead. Request assistance from maintenance if necessary.
- ❖ Avoid lifting objects higher than your shoulders.
- ❖ Never do anything that is unsafe in order to get the job done. If the job is unsafe, report it to your supervisor.
- ❖ When in doubt about a safety procedure or hazard in the workplace, ask your supervisor.
- ❖ Learn the safe way to do the job and then always do it that way.
- ❖ All work must be carried out according to appropriate safe work practices and job procedures.
- ❖ Pay close attention to your work. Avoid unsafe actions.
- ❖ All tools are to be used for the purpose in which they were intended.
- ❖ Learn the locations of emergency equipment (e.g. first aid kits, fire extinguishers, etc.).
- ❖ Read and be familiar with the school district emergency handbook that outlines emergency procedures for staff.
- ❖ If you should get hurt, you are responsible to report it to your supervisor immediately.

Social Media Rules and Guidelines

I. Purpose

The Worth County School District recognizes the educational value inherent in the responsible use of social media. The district also recognizes, however, that potential misuse of these sites by employees or students may harm the safety, reputations, and/or careers of those involved, as well as to the reputation of the district and the teaching profession in general.

The purpose of this policy is to establish rules and guidelines for the acceptable use of social media by Worth County School District employees. This policy sets forth regulations governing: 1) the use and management of professional social media accounts by authorized users on behalf of a school and 2) the use of personal social media

accounts by Worth County School District employees.

In addition to the rules and guidelines contained within this policy, an employee's use of social media may also be subject to applicable rules contained in other Worth County School District policies or other applicable law, rules, or regulations.

II. Definitions

“Social Media” means any internet-based technology or website that facilitates or promotes interactive communication, participation or collaboration. Examples of social media include, but are not limited to, the websites or applications Blogger, Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Tumblr, Foursquare, Meetup.com, Flickr, YouTube, Yelp, Second Life, and Wikipedia and the interactive tools and functions they provide to users.

“Social Media Content” means and includes any materials, documents, photographs, graphics and other information that is created, posted, or transmitted using social media.

“Social Media Account” means any account, or other method of private access, which allows the creation or posting of social media content to any social media website or application.

“Professional Social Media Account(s)” means a social media account created and used for the sole purpose of creating social media content related to Worth County School District activities and consistent with the terms and conditions contained herein.

“Personal Social Media Account(s)” means a social media account which is created and used by an individual for personal use or any other use unrelated to Worth County School District activities. Such accounts are not sanctioned, monitored, or approved by Worth County School District.

III. Professional Social Media Accounts

A. Creation and Management of District-wide or School-wide Professional Social Media Accounts

The Worth County School District central office may create and maintain professional social media accounts for the purpose of releasing general news and information. Schools, at the discretion of the principal, may also create and maintain professional social media accounts for such purposes. Schools which create and maintain professional social media accounts must add, at a minimum, the school principal or his/her designee and the Worth County School District Technology Director or his/her designee as co-administrator or co-owner of any such professional social media accounts.

Worth County School District employees who are charged with creating or managing district wide or school wide professional social media accounts must refrain from allowing personal or political viewpoints to dictate the social media content which is shared. Such employees are expected to post only important and relevant information which will be useful to and appreciated by the public.

Such employees should use proper spelling and grammar in creating any such social media content and must abstain from using “text talk” unless necessary to meet character limits.

District-wide or school-wide professional social media accounts require commitment to ensure that such accounts remain an up-to-date source of information. Therefore, such employees are encouraged to post often. Examples of appropriate and post-worthy materials include, but are not limited to:

- Good news/What's happening at your school/site;
- Picture of the Day/Other school-related pictures;
- Event reminders;
- Congratulations on big accomplishments;
- Notifications related to school bus operations; or
- Emergency notifications (weather or otherwise)

Worth County School District employees charged with the management of any professional social media account may: 1) block subscribers who post abusive or inappropriate content or otherwise post content which would constitute a violation of any provision contained herein if posted by a Worth County School District Employee; or 2)

delete comments that contain inappropriate social media content or would otherwise constitute a violation of any provision contained herein if posted by a Worth County School District Employee.

Worth County School District does not expressly approve of or ensure the accuracy of any social media content. No social media content shall constitute a binding representation, agreement, offer, or endorsement on behalf of Worth County School District. Liking, linking, retweeting, or subscribing to another post or “fan page” does not constitute an endorsement on the part of Worth County School District of that post or “fan page’s” creator, or of his or her opinion, product, or service; the same applies to comments posted by others to any professional social media accounts.

B. Creation and Management of other Professional Social Media Accounts by Teachers

In cases where an employee desires to use social media as an enhancement to his or her instructional or school-based responsibilities, the use of a personal social media account is prohibited. Instead, the creation and use of a professional social media Account may be appropriate for such purposes. Employees who desire to engage with students via a professional social media account must notify their administrator and provide a link to such professional social media account and also provide the username and password for such professional social media account. However, this requirement shall not be applied to require any employee to provide their username or password for any personal social media accounts. Schools and departments should designate one administrator to be responsible for maintaining username and password information for professional social media accounts.

IV. Personal Social Media Accounts

District employees are expected to comply with the standards set out herein when using a personal social media account.

In some instances, an employee’s use of a personal social media account may reflect poorly on the Worth County School District, may wrongly appear to represent a district policy or opinion, or may wrongly appear to be on behalf of the district. For these reasons, social media content posted on personal social media sites: 1) Shall not contain the Worth County School District logo or any likeness thereto; and 2) Shall not suggest or imply in any manner that such content is made or published on behalf of the district; 3) Shall not contain any information which refers to individual students.

Additionally, Worth County School District employees are strongly discouraged from each of the following activities with respect to a personal social media account:

1. Accepting or initiating invitations to “friend” students (family and relatives excluded) or otherwise providing students with direct access to an employee’s personal social media account.
2. Engaging in private messaging exchanging with students (family and relatives excluded). All online conversations between a district employee and a student should be carried out on the social media’s public messaging or public comment area.

Employees should refrain from using personal social media accounts during student contact hours.

V. Prohibited Uses of Social Media in General

Worth County School District employees are prohibited from using social media (whether through the use of a professional social media account or a personal social media account) in any manner which:

1. Publishes or re-publishes any racial or ethnic slur, profanity, personal insult, or similar language;
2. Intentionally involves any district employee in any dispute or conflict with other district employees;
3. Intentionally interferes with the work or duties of any district employee;
4. Intentionally disrupts the smooth and orderly operation of Worth County School District;
5. Intentionally creates or contributes to a harassing, demeaning, or hostile working environment for any district employee;
6. Intentionally places in doubt the reliability, trustworthiness, or sound judgment of the Worth County School District or any of its employees.

7. Intentionally harms the reputation of WCSS or intentionally casts Worth County School District in a bad light or tends to discredit the district;
8. Discloses any information about the district or its employees which might reasonably be considered to be private or confidential;
9. Discloses any information in violation of FERPA, as described in Section VI hereof;
10. Otherwise impairs or compromises his or her ability to interact with the public and/or to carry out the functions of his or her job; or
11. Otherwise violates any applicable law, rule, or regulation.

VI. FERPA Compliance

The disclosure of information regarding Worth County School District students is governed by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (“FERPA”) and the regulations promulgated thereunder.

As provided in the annual notification issued by the Worth County School District, the district is authorized by FERPA to disclose certain routine information, referred to as “directory information”, without consent. Directory information includes the student's name, address, telephone listing, electronic mail address, photograph, date and place of birth, major field of study, grade level, enrollment status (e.g., undergraduate or graduate, full-time or part-time), dates of attendance, participation in officially recognized activities and sports, weight and height of members of athletic teams, degrees, honors, and awards received, and the most recent educational agency or institution attended. Notwithstanding any other provision contained herein, social media content may not contain any further or other information regarding a Worth County School District student. Further, if a parent, guardian, or eligible student has exercised the right to opt-out of the disclosure of directory information as explained in the Worth County School District annual notification regarding FERPA, then no such information regarding or related to that student may be contained or published within any social media content.

V. Employee Discipline

In the event that any Worth County School District employee violates any provision contained herein, such employee may be subject to disciplinary action up to and potentially including termination.

VI. Governing Law

If any provision of this policy is inconsistent with any applicable state or federal law, rule, or regulation, then such provision shall yield and the applicable law shall govern.

Nothing in this policy is intended to stifle or violate any person’s right to free speech under the First Amendment.

Reference Policy: IFBG-R(1)

Social Security Number

The Worth County School District reserves the right to use an employee’s social security number in employment-related practices. All employees who handle documents containing employee identification data such as social security numbers should use reasonable precaution to preclude compromise or identity theft.

Tobacco Use

In accordance with the Georgia Smoke Free Air Act of 2005, smoking shall be prohibited at any time in any school building or property owned or leased by the Worth County School District, including outdoor events held in stadiums, or at any time in any school-owned vehicle, including any school buses. In addition, this prohibition includes the use of other tobacco products by employees at all times, including when such employees are directly instructing or supervising students. Direct supervision includes coaching, band directing, acting as a sponsor or advisor of a club or similar school organization and other instructional roles. Employees shall not store or possess tobacco or tobacco-related products on their person or in their belongings in such a manner that such products are visible to students.

School district employees who violate this policy may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including reprimand, suspension with or without pay or termination. **Reference Policy: GAN**

Use of Equipment and Resources

Employees entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, misusing school-related funds or property; failing to account for funds collected from students or parents; and submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses.

Computers

Worth County School District computer hardware, software, and data should be used for assigned responsibilities only and should be protected from damage, destruction, viruses, theft, and unauthorized access and use. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using Worth County School District electronic resources. **Reference Policy: IFBG**

Internet

Electronic resources should be used to support assigned responsibilities. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using electronic systems, and should minimize use of the Internet for personal reasons during working hours. **Reference Policy: IFBG and IFBGE**

Telephone

Personal use of telephones should be kept to a minimum during working hours. Personal long-distance calls should not be charged to Worth County School District telephones or accounts.

Work Day/Work Week

Depending on the position, full time classified employees are expected to work their scheduled number of hours per day not to exceed 40 hours per week. Employees should check with their supervisor for their particular schedule.

The minimum work day for teachers and other certified instructional staff is eight hours, and the minimum work week is 40 hours. Duties for which the base salary is paid include, but are not limited to, teaching and preparation, staff meetings, parent and student conferences, and other assigned duties.

GUIDELINES: EMPLOYMENT

Annual Performance Evaluation

Worth County Schools is committed to performance assessment that encourages continuous quality improvement for all employees. All personnel have their performance evaluated annually as required by Georgia Code 20-2-210. Employees may have multiple evaluations during the year. All employees are evaluated by the deadline established by Human Resources. All employees will have a summative evaluation using the instrument designated by Worth County Schools.

Assignment

Employees are assigned to positions based on the needs of the Worth County School District as well as the employee's training, certification, and other factors. Staff assignments shall be made by the board upon recommendations of the superintendent. The basic consideration in the assignment of professional personnel is the well-being of the program of instruction.

At-Will Employment

Georgia recognizes at-will employment; that is, an employee is hired at-will and employment can be terminated at the will of either party, for any reason or no reason at all. Employees who are issued board approved contracts do not have at-will employment.

Background Check

All personnel, certificated as well as non-certificated, employed by the Worth County Board of Education shall be fingerprinted and have a criminal history check. All certificated personnel employed in this school district shall have a criminal history check made as required by law upon any certificate renewal application to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Criminal history checks of non-certificated personnel in continued employment in the school district shall occur each fifth (5th) year of employment. The cost of the criminal history checks for all certificated and non-certificated personnel shall be the responsibility of each employee. **Reference Policy: GAK(1)**

Certification Qualifications and Duties

Certified employees must be eligible for certification before being employed and must maintain certification during employment. All coursework must be approved by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission (www.gapsc.com).

Discipline

Discipline is necessary and will be implemented when there is unsatisfactory and/or unacceptable employee performance and/or conduct of any type. Depending on the nature or severity of the offense, Worth County School District may provide employees with an opportunity to bring their performance up to standard through the use of the following: 1.) immediate feedback regarding unsatisfactory performance; 2.) factual documentation of performance; 3.) employee input and commitment to improving performance; 4.) final resolution of the performance issues(s).

Worth County School District utilizes a progressive discipline method in which disciplinary actions normally follow a gradually escalating path. **However, depending on the seriousness of the offense, progressive discipline may not be appropriate and any disciplinary action may be imposed.** The action taken should be consistent with precedent in similar situations, appropriate to the offense, and documented. An employee who holds a certificate with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission may be reported at any time for a violation of the Code of Ethics for Educators.

Fair Dismissal

According to the State of Georgia's Fair Dismissal Act [Act 20-2-940], certified employees can be dismissed or suspended based on incompetence; insubordination; willful neglect of duties; immorality; inciting, encouraging or counseling students to violate state and local laws, regulations and ordinances, or policies and rules of the Worth County Board of Education; failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training; to reduce staff due to the loss of students or programs; and any other good and sufficient cause.

Suspensions are without pay and can last up to 60 days. The Worth County School District Superintendent or his/her designee can relieve any employee from duty for up to 10 days if the employee's presence could cause serious harm or disrupt students, the school, or other employees. The Worth County School District Superintendent may also write letters of reprimand for any valid reason. These letters are placed in the employee's district personnel file. Demotions and non-renewal of contracts of certain certified employees are governed by Code Section 20-2-942.

Personnel Records

Information contained in an employee's personnel file is not made public unless required by law or requested by the employee in writing. **It is the employee's responsibility to notify the district of any changes of personal information.** Employees must notify their supervisor and the Human Resources Department when their names and/or home address and/or contact numbers change. Forms are available at each school and from the Human Resources web page.

Professional Learning

Employees have the opportunity to participate in professional learning activities that will enhance their professional capabilities. The Curriculum, Instruction, & Assessment Department submits an annual comprehensive plan designed to address individual and instructional program needs for employees. **Reference Policy: GAD**

Recruitment

The Worth County School District recruitment process is designed to attract and retain competent and qualified personnel to work in the district. Job vacancy announcements are placed on the Worth County School District jobs portal. Certified job vacancies are also posted on the TeachGeorgia website. Announcements are also advertised in newspapers and at local technical colleges when applicable. **Reference Policy: GBC**

Reduction in Force

The most important functions of the Worth County Board of Education are to employ personnel and manage resources within the limitations defined by the funding sources of the school district. Consequently, it shall be the prerogative of the Worth County Board of Education (hereinafter the "board") to abolish job positions, to reduce the length of the work year and salary (hereinafter "to downgrade") and/or to reduce the number of employees when seeking to cope effectively with program changes or financial exigency.

The board shall consider a reduction in the professional work force to include the abolition of job positions, the downgrading of an employee's position, and/or the reduction of the number of employees, as a response to the following:

1. A decrease in student enrollment in the school district which would necessitate a decrease in personnel or a discontinuation of programs;
2. A change in state or local curriculum, personnel, or financial practices which would necessitate a change in or elimination of programs or services provided by the school district;
3. 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;
4. A lack of funding for programs, personnel, or services provided by the school district;
5. Any reasonable reorganization plan, to include the elimination of programs or services, to achieve a more efficient school district.

Reference Policy: GAKA

Resignations

Certified employees who want to terminate their contracts for the new contract year must submit written notification to their immediate supervisor and to Human Resources as soon as possible, but no later than June 1 of the current school year. Certified employees who want to resign during the contract period because of emergency situations should submit a statement of resignation and request for release from contract at the earliest possible date. The contract cannot be terminated by the employee without the written consent of the Worth County Board of Education. Classified employees are asked to submit a letter of resignation at least two weeks prior to leaving the Worth County School District.

Retirement Membership

Teachers, supervisors, paraprofessionals, administrators, clerical staff, school nurses, and some specified managerial positions who are employed more than half-time are eligible and required to participate in the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia (TRS). Bus drivers, bus monitors, school nutrition assistants, and maintenance workers who work at least 60 percent of their normal work week must establish membership in the Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS). Retirement contributions are payroll-deducted.

Substitute Teachers

Principals or their designees are responsible for securing a substitute teacher from the list of substitute teachers approved by Human Resources. A substitute can be used for up to 10 days in the same classroom. A vacancy that lasts 11 days or more may be filled with an approved long-term substitute teacher.

Transfers

Personnel may be assigned or reassigned on the basis of the needs of the system, qualifications and certification, and/or expressed desires. Transfers of employees within a school can be made at the discretion of the supervising principal. An employee may request a transfer to another location as vacancies arise throughout the district.

Request for Transfer Procedures

- Employee should complete and submit a Request for Transfer form to the Human Resources Department between February 15 and April 30.
- Human Resources will inform principals of requested transfers to their schools.
- Administrators will review all transfer requests when they review other applications for vacancies.
- Transfer applicants may or may not be interviewed.
- If an employee requesting a transfer is selected for a vacancy, the hiring administrator will contact the current supervisor to obtain approval. A current supervisor may find it necessary to deny a request for transfer because of expected disruption in the school or departments' continuity.
- If approved by all parties, the transfer may be recommended to the superintendent for approval.
- If approved by the superintendent, the current supervisor will fill out a transfer form and forward the recommendation to the Human Resources Department.

GUIDELINES: COMPENSATION

Contracts

A contract for the school year will be issued to certificated personnel upon approval by the Worth County Board of

Education. Any person who is tendered a contract and who elects to be employed by this school district must sign and submit the contract to their immediate supervisor no later than ten (10) days from the date of receipt of the contract. If the signed contract is not received by the 11th day, the position shall be declared vacant.

Deductions

Payroll deductions include, but are not limited to, federal and state taxes required by law; retirement systems contributions; and medical, dental, and other deductions authorized by the employee.

Direct Deposit

All employees are required to participate in direct deposit for payroll checks.

Extended Day/Year

Supplemental pay may be provided to employees who work an extended school day or school year to meet program responsibilities or student needs. Employees who work on an extended day schedule are expected to work an additional hour beyond the normal eight-hour day.

Overtime

Overtime is defined as those hours worked by a public employee who qualifies for time-and-one-half overtime pay or time-and-one-half compensatory time as required by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Overtime for Worth County School District non-exempt employees refers to those hours or major fractions of hours beyond 40 hours within a work week. The work week begins at 12:01 AM on Monday and ends at 12:00 AM on Sunday.

Employees classified under the Fair Labor Standards Act as non-exempt are compensated at a rate of one-and-one-half times their hourly rate after 40 hours within a work week and/or one-and-one-half hours of compensatory time off for each hour over 40 hours within a work week. Overtime for non-exempt employees must be approved in advance by their supervisor (except in emergency situations). Unauthorized (unapproved) overtime worked may subject the employee to disciplinary action. Non-exempt employees cannot waive their rights to overtime pay or volunteer to perform normal job functions outside normal work hours.

Employees classified under the Fair Labor Standards Act as exempt are paid a fixed rate and are not eligible for overtime pay. **Reference Policy: GCRD**

Pay Schedule

Employees are paid monthly based on the following schedule.

Months Worked	Days Worked	Payroll Dates
School Nutrition	180-190	September to August
9 Months	180-189	September to August
10 Months	190-209	September to August
11 Months	210-229	August to July
11 Months	228	July to June
12 Months	230-240	June to July

Salary

Salaries for certified employees are determined by 3 factors: (1) the number of days worked, (2) the employee's Georgia teaching certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission, and (3) accepted and verified experience as defined by the Georgia Department of Education. Lack of proper certification within thirty days of employment may result in termination from the Worth County School District. Salaries for non-certified employees are determined by 3 factors: (1) the number of days worked, the employee's hourly or monthly rate, and (3) accepted and verified experience. Pre-K employees' salaries are based upon the Bright from the Start salary scale.

Step Increases

Employees who receive a Needs Development or Ineffective on their summative evaluations will not receive salary credit for the year the ratings were received. The employee should receive verbal and written documentation during the year indicating that performance has not met expectations. Employees who work less than 120 days during the school year will also not receive a salary step increase for that year.

Travel Reimbursement

Approval from the principal or immediate supervisor must be obtained **before** an employee travels during school time on professional leave, whether or not he/she expects reimbursement for travel. If the employee desires reimbursement or will be traveling outside the school district, **written** approval must be obtained in advance utilizing a *Professional Leave Form* (RPL).

Reimbursement for official travel will be made with submission of an *Employee Expense Statement* in compliance with Statewide Travel Regulations. An individual will be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred while traveling on approval school system business. It is the policy of WCBE that employees car-pool and share rooms whenever possible. For overnight travel, reimbursement rates are reduced by 25% for travel (to/from) days. When meals are allowed for non-overnight travel, reimbursement is reduced by 25% as well. Meals provided by any other source are not allowed for reimbursement.

Allowable Travel Expenses:

1. Meals-**receipts required for reimbursement from school activity accounts only**
2. Lodging – **detailed receipt required**
3. Mileage – **odometer reading and tag number required**
4. Parking, Toll Fees, and Miscellaneous expenses – **receipt required**
5. Travel by Public Transportation (plane, train, rental, car, taxi, shuttle) – **receipt required**

1. Meal allowances are as follows:

	REG.	HI
Breakfast	\$6.00	\$7.00
Lunch	\$7.00	\$9.00
Dinner	\$15.00	\$20.00

High cost areas: Cobb, Chatham, DeKalb, Fulton, Glynn, & Richmond Counties

2. Detailed hotel bills (bills that show ALL charges and payments) must be attached to the travel expense statement in order to be reimbursed for it. It is the policy of WCBE that rooms be shared when possible. When sharing a room with another person, note on the expense statement their name(s). You may ask the hotel to divide the cost of the room, or note who paid for the room so that we can adjust the travel expense appropriately. When traveling overnight, you should take a ***Hotel/Motel Tax Exemption Request form***. This form should be presented to the clerk when checking in. If for any reason the hotel/motel will not accept the tax exemption form, have the attendant to sign the bottom of the form & write “will not accept”. You must return this form with your travel expense statement in order to get reimbursement for county and municipal tax.
3. A **readable** copy of the *Professional Leave Form* as well as a detailed agenda of the conference/seminar must be attached to the expense statement. If you do not use a *Professional Leave Form*, the purpose of your trip(s) must be written on the expense statement. Your school bookkeeper or program clerk must indicate the expense account to be charged and initial the expense statement. The statement should then be signed by the program director or superintendent before being sent to the Business Department for processing.
4. As of January 1, 2016, the reimbursable mileage rate is \$0.54 per mile. In order to be reimbursed for miles, **the beginning and ending odometer readings** must be included on your travel expense statement. Allowable miles begin from your work location or your home. However when traveling to or from your home, you will **not** be allowed to claim the number of miles **between your home and your normal place of work**. A van is available for group travel and should be utilized when possible.

The Worth County Board of Education **does not** pay travel expenses in advance. A *Professional Leave Form* must be approved in advance by all appropriate parties. When traveling overnight, expense statements should be submitted within a **week** of returning from your trip. Frequent daytime travel can be turned in once a **month**. All travel should be turned in within 45 calendar days of the event. **Travel submitted in excess of 60 days may not be paid**. If it is approved to be paid by the superintendent, it must be paid through payroll and reported on the W2. **Travel submitted after the year end cut-off date, will not be paid**. Travel that is turned in by noon on Tuesday will generally be paid on Friday of the same week provided that the travel expense statement is **complete and accurate** (meaning all information is on the form and accurate, all required documentation is attached, and all required signatures obtained). The check can be picked up **after 3:30 PM** on Friday or it will be mailed.

A complete copy of the travel regulations is available at: www.sao.georgia.gov. Any questions about travel

reimbursement should be directed to the Business Department.

GUIDELINES: BENEFITS

Benefits are subject to change at any time. There are additional requirements and conditions for benefit plans not discussed in this handbook. In the event of a conflict between the handbook and a requirement and condition, the plan description will prevail. For detailed information concerning employee benefits, please contact the benefits specialist. Nothing in this section of the Employee Handbook creates or implies a contract of employment or an entitlement to any particular benefit.

Benefit Eligibility

Health, dental, vision, cancer/critical illness, optional life, dependent life, and short and long-term disability insurance coverage becomes effective on the first day of the month after the employee has completed one full State of GA calendar month of employment assuming the proper premiums have been deducted. Employees can enroll in benefits when they are initially hired or during the annual open enrollment period. During this period, employees have the opportunity to change their elections. Some plans require late entries to complete a Personal Health Application to determine if the insurance will be awarded. Open enrollment occurs in the fall of each year, and coverage requested at that time takes effect on January 1. Mid-year changes are allowed at the time of a qualifying event. Qualifying events are those changes in family status that the Internal Revenue Service recognizes making you eligible to change your benefits elections for the year. Visit the [Employee Benefit Information](#) site for more information.

Benefit Deductions

Employees will have deductions taken from their payroll to pay premiums, and the core insurance premiums can be paid for with pre-tax dollars. Employees on leave without pay are required to pay all insurance premiums directly to the benefits specialist in the Finance Department. The employee is responsible for requesting information about the direct payment of insurance premiums from the benefits specialist.

Benefit Options

Eligible employees may participate in the State Health Benefit Plan for health coverage. Optional voluntary benefits include the following: dental, vision, life insurance, cancer/critical illness, short-term disability, and long-term disability. Employees may also make pre-tax deferrals to flexible spending accounts for medical expenses and dependent care expenses. The providers of these products, the levels of coverage, and terms and conditions of coverage are subject to change. Employees usually receive notification of such changes during the open enrollment period each year.

Retirement Plans

All eligible employees are required to participate in one of the state-provided retirement plans. The primary plans (TRS and PSERS) are defined benefit pension plans meaning that your retirement benefit is defined in the plan materials and your contribution will fund your retirement benefit.

Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia – All regular employees who work at least half time in their position are required to participate in TRS. A portion of your salary will be contributed to the plan each payday. Covered positions include teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, nurses, and clerical staff. Refer to the guidelines and regulations at www.trsga.com.

Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS) – All other non-temporary employees of the school district who are not eligible for TRS will participate in PSERS. Covered positions include non-supervisory positions in the Maintenance and School Nutrition Departments, bus drivers, and bus monitors.

Workers' Compensation

Employees may be entitled to workers' compensation benefits if injured on the job. The injury must arise out of and in the course of employment. The injured employee must provide notice of the injury immediately, but no later than 30 days after the accident, to the employer. Failure to do so may result in the loss of benefits.

If an injury occurs, notify your immediate supervisor or designee immediately. For all injuries (no matter how minor), an injured employee must see the school nurse. A *Work Related Incident Report* must also be completed. If medical treatment is needed, the employee must select from the workers' compensation physicians panel. This panel of approved physicians is posted in common areas (e.g. break rooms, meeting areas for employees, etc.). Only

those providers listed on the panel are authorized to provide medical care for a work-related injury. In the event of a serious emergency, the injured employee should be transported to the nearest hospital emergency room. All forms must be submitted to Human Resources by the designated person at each location within 24 hours of occurrence **for all injuries** (even if the employee does not seek medical attention).

In accordance with Georgia State Board of Workers' Compensation Bill of Rights for the Injured Worker, the injured employee must choose to either use sick leave or be docked for the first seven (7) days of a job related injury. Employees are required to complete a *Workers' Compensation Leave Option* form and submit it to Human Resources with all other required workers' compensation forms.

In the event the injured employee must be absent from work because of a work-related injury, the employee shall be eligible for benefits in accordance with the workers' compensation insurance paid by the district. If the employee is absent from work 5 or more consecutive days, long term sick leave will be coordinated to run concurrent with the workers' compensation related absences. Workers' compensation pay and sick leave pay may not be collected simultaneously. A *Fitness for Duty* form must be submitted to Human Resources before the employee is allowed to return to work. Questions about workers' compensation should be directed to the Human Resources Department.

403(b) and 457 Supplemental Plans

The district offers pre-tax deferral to annuity plans under these sections of the Internal Revenue Code. These are supplemental retirement plans so the funds are not readily or easily available until retirement. A list of vendors offering these products can be found on the [Employee Benefit Information](#) site.

GUIDELINES: ATTENDANCE AND ABSENCES

Attendance

In order for an organization to achieve its desired goals, good attendance and punctuality are necessary. Therefore, regular and prompt attendance is expected and required for all employees. Employees who will be late or absent should notify their supervisor as soon as possible so that their responsibilities can be covered appropriately.

Employees may not leave their work locations prior to the end of the work day without specific permission of their supervisor or designee. This includes any and all field trips. Unapproved employee absences which are for three consecutive days or more may result in termination for job abandonment. Sign-in/sign-out procedures must be followed at each job site. Attendance records are subject to review at all times.

Bereavement Leave

In the event of a death of a member of the immediate family of an employee, a total of three days cumulative bereavement leave will be granted. Members of the immediate family shall be defined as father, mother, grandparents, grandchildren, husband, wife, son, daughter, stepson, stepdaughter, brother, sister, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, or relatives living in the home of the employee. All such bereavement leave will be charged against the employee's sick leave.

Reference Policy: GBRH

Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)

It is the purpose of this policy to set out in summary form the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act ("Act") as adopted by the U.S. Congress on February 5, 1993 and which became effective August 5, 1993. The Worth County Board of Education does not intend by this policy to create any additional rights to leave not provided by the Act. The board does intend to elect certain options as the Act authorizes. Any portion of this policy inconsistent or contrary to the Act is unintentional and shall not be given effect. As to the interpretation of this policy, the board's employees should look to the Act itself and its regulations.

A. ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES

Employees of the Worth County Board of Education who have been employed by the board for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1250 hours for the board are entitled to 12 weeks of unpaid leave per year (fiscal year - July 1 - June 30).

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

1. Birth of a child and to care for the newborn child;
2. Adoption or foster placement of a child with the employee;

3. To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent, if that person has a serious health condition;
4. Serious health condition of employee that prevents the employee from performing the job functions.

In the event of the birth, adoption or foster placement of a son or daughter, all leave must be completed within 12 months after the birth, adoption or foster placement.

B. DEFINITIONS

"Instructional employee" means an employee whose principal function is to teach and instruct students in a class, a small group or an individual setting.

"Parent" means a biological parent or one who acted in place of a parent when the employee was a child. The term "parent" does not include parent "in-law".

"Serious Health Condition" means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

"Son or daughter" means a biological, adopted or foster child, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee acts as a parent. The son or daughter must be under age 18 or, if the son or daughter is age 18 or older, he/she must be incapable of self-care on a daily basis due to a mental or physical disability.

"Spouse" means a husband or wife.

C. AMOUNT AND TYPE OF LEAVE TAKEN

In most circumstances, an employee may take a total of 12 weeks leave during any twelve-month period. The 12-month period shall be measured backward from the date the employee begins using any FMLA leave. See 29 C.F.R. 825.200(b)(4).

If both spouses work for the board and both are eligible for FMLA leave, they are authorized to take only a combined total of 12 weeks during any one 12 month period to care for a newborn or adopted child, a child placed with the employee for foster care, or a parent with a serious health condition. Both spouses are authorized unpaid leave to care for a spouse or child with a serious health condition for twelve (12) weeks.

Employees seeking to take Family and Medical Leave to care for a newborn or adopted child, a child placed with the employee for foster care, a parent, spouse or child with a serious health condition, or because of their own serious health condition, must substitute any personal leave, paid vacation, applicable accumulated sick leave, and any other applicable paid leave for their Family and Medical Leave.

D. INTERMITTENT OR REDUCED LEAVE

An employee is not permitted to take leave on an intermittent or reduced leave schedule unless it is medically necessary. The board will require a certification, in the form described in Section G below, to document the medical necessity of such intermittent leave.

E. NOTIFICATION OF LEAVE

If the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, an employee requesting leave must provide at least 30 days advance notice to the office of the superintendent. If such advance notice is not possible, the employee must give said notice as soon as practicable, ordinarily within one or two working days of learning 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 any corresponding leave will not unduly disrupt the operations of the school district.

F. BENEFITS AND RETURN TO WORK

Employees will be eligible to maintain health care benefits, provided by the school district, while on FMLA leave. The board will pay the employer's portion, if any, of such benefits. The employee will pay the same portion, if any, of such benefits as the employee paid before beginning the leave.

The board may recover any health care benefit premiums paid on behalf of an employee if the employee does not return to work after the leave period has expired, unless the employee did not return due to a serious health condition of the employee or the employee's spouse, parent or child, or other circumstances beyond the employee's control. The board may require certification from the health care provider that a serious health condition of the employee or family member prevented the employee from returning to work.

With the exception of paid vacation, personal, medical or sick leave required to be substituted for unpaid leave under Section C above, the employee's absence during leave will not alter benefits which the employee accrued before taking leave.

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. Upon proper notice, however, the board 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.

G. REQUIRED CERTIFICATION AND REPORTING

The Worth County Board of Education requires that a request for leave due to a serious health condition be supported by a certification issued by the appropriate health care provider of the eligible employee or of the son, daughter, spouse, or parent of the employee on a form to be provided by the board.

This certification must include: (1) the date on which the serious health condition commenced, (2) the probable duration of the condition, (3) if the purpose of the leave is to care for a son, daughter, spouse or parent ("family member"), a statement that the employee is needed to care for the family member and the estimated amount of time needed for such care, and (4) if the leave is due to the employee's own serious health condition, a statement that the employee is unable to perform the job functions. The employee may require that the eligible employee obtain subsequent recertification on a reasonable basis as requested by the school district.

The board, at its own expense, may obtain the opinion of a second health care provider of the board's choice, if it should choose to do so. If a conflict exists between the opinion in the certification and the second opinion, the board may, at its own expense, obtain a third opinion from a health care provider upon which the board and the employee jointly agree. Such a third opinion as to the necessity for the leave is binding on both the board and the employee.

Upon an employee's return to work after leave for his/her own serious health condition, the board may require the employee to obtain certification from a health care provider that the employee is able to resume work.

The board may require an employee on FMLA leave to report periodically to the principal or supervisor on the employee's status and intent to return to work.

H. SPECIAL PROVISIONS

When an instructional employee seeks intermittent leave or leave on a reduced schedule in connection with a family or personal illness that would constitute at least 20% of the total number of working days in the period during which the leave would extend, the board may require the employee to elect to take leave in a block (not intermittently) for the entire period or to transfer to an available alternative position within the school system that is equivalent in pay, for which the employee is qualified, and which better accommodates the intermittent situation.

If an instructional employee begins leave more than five weeks before the end of a semester, the board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if:

- (i) The leave will last at least three weeks; and
- (ii) The employee would return to work during the three-week period before the end of the term.

If an instructional employee begins leave for a purpose other than the employee's own serious health condition during the five-week period before the end of the semester, the board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if

- (i) The leave will last more than two weeks; and
- (ii) The employee would return to work during the two-week period before the end of the term.

If an instructional employee begins a leave for a purpose other than the employee's own serious health condition during the three-week period before the end of a semester, and the leave will last more than five working days, the board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester. **Reference Policy: GBRIG**

Jury and Witness Leave

Each person employed by the board shall be allowed leave with pay for the purposes of serving as a juror in any court or when subpoenaed to testify in a case arising out of the individual's duties as a school district employee. Jury and/or witness leave shall not be deducted from an individual's accumulated personal, professional or sick leave. No employee utilizing jury and witness leave shall be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute to serve during his or her absence for such leave. Employees who serve on juries or who are subpoenaed for reasons arising out of their employment with the school district must remit the jury/witness pay they receive to the Worth County Board of Education within one week after receiving such payment.

In the event of jury duty or witness leave for a case arising out of the individual's duties as a school system employee, a copy of the notice or subpoena, or a Certificate of Juror Service form, or another Worth County School District approved equivalent should be presented to the leave specialist. Employees must also remit any pay received for jury or witness pay to the leave specialist within one week after receiving payment. A salary deduction of one (1) day's work for each day missed may be made at the most appropriate payday unless the money and/or subpoenas are received by the central office within 1 week after receiving payment.

An employee serving as a juror or as a subpoenaed witness will return to work on any day that he/she is released by court officials by 2:00 PM. Travel time from the court to the central office is considered court time. **Reference Policy: GBRH**

Military Leave

Employees who are members of the National Guard or Reserves may be granted up to 18 days of paid leave each federal fiscal year for training or active duty. Request for such leave shall be made in writing (*Application for Leave*) to the employee's immediate supervisor or designee. A copy of the military orders should be attached to the request for leave. **Reference Policy: GBRH**

Personal Leave

Employees may take three (3) days of personal leave if prior approval of the absence has been given by the employee's immediate supervisor and if the presence of the employee requesting absence is not essential for effective school operation. A leave form must be filed and approved by the principal one (1) week prior to leave. Unless otherwise approved by the superintendent or his/her designee, personal leave will not be granted during pre-planning, post-planning, in-service days or on the day before or day after holidays. In addition, personal leave will not be granted during the first week of the student school year or during the last week of the student school year, unless the superintendent, in his or her discretion, determines that such leave should be granted due to emergency or extenuating circumstances beyond the employee's control. The superintendent or his/her designee may refuse to allow an employee to take personal leave if qualified substitutes are not available. No carry-over of personal days will be allowed from one year to the next. Unused personal leave will be carried over as accumulated sick leave. **Reference Policy: GBRH**

Professional Leave

Employees who attend a conference, seminar, or workshop at the discretion of the district are considered to be absent for professional learning purposes. This professional leave is not deducted from any of the employee's leave accounts as it is considered worked time.

Employees may request up to three (3) days of **allowed** professional leave. This request should be made by using a *Leave Request Form*. Requested dates should be listed under "Personal" on the form. Leave must be approved by the immediate supervisor at least one week prior to the leave dates.

Important Note: Employees are only allowed three (3) days of personal leave and/or allowed professional leave combined. Employees **do not** receive three days of personal leave and three days of allowed professional leave. Only three (3) days per school year can be used for either personal and/or allowed professional leave. **Reference Policy: GBRH**

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, with **prior** approval of the Worth County Board of Education, 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. An *Application for Leave* must be completed and submitted in enough time for the board to approve the leave prior to the employee taking time off. **Reference Policy: GBRH**

Sick Leave

Sick Leave is provided under Georgia law so employees can receive pay during absences related to medical issues for the employee or an immediate family member, as well as for certain other absences. Upon returning to work

after any sick leave, each employee is required to sign the *Leave Request Form* provided by the school principal's office or the central office, indicating the reason for absence. Even if a substitute teacher is not required, the form must be signed by the employee and supervisor, giving the reason for the absence, dates of absence, and "no substitute" inserted in place of the name of the substitute teacher.

Each employee will receive a statement of sick leave balance as of June 30th at the beginning of each school year. For each unused day of current year sick leave earned in excess of sixty (60) days and not applied to TRS, a payment of \$22.50 per day will be made.

Up to 45 days of unused sick leave earned after July 1, 1978 may be transferred when an employee changes employment from one local board of education to another local board of education in Georgia. However, no local board shall be required to transfer funds to another local board. According to state statute, the transfer of leave must take place within 1 year of termination from the previous position as stated in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-850(b) (1).

Elective surgeries or procedures – Employees are encouraged to schedule elective surgeries during holidays and breaks. However, any surgical procedure whether during scheduled work days or during breaks requires the submission of a *Fitness for Duty Certificate*. The Certificate must be received at the Central Office prior to the employee returning to their work location. It must state the date the employee is released and whether the employee is released with or without restrictions. Procedures which require release include but are not limited to ones which require anesthesia, could hinder the performance of an employee's job, or require the use of any type of immobility support, orthopedic appliance, mobility aid, patch, etc.

Upon receipt of the *Fitness for Duty Certificate*, an email will be sent to the employee's supervisor advising whether the employee has been cleared to return to work and if there are any restrictions. In addition, a Receipt of Certificate will be forwarded to the supervisor. The actual certificate will be maintained in the employee's file in the Leave Specialist's Office in compliance with HIPPA.

Restricted Duty – Employees who are placed on restricted duty must provide updated *Fitness for Duty Certificates* every 30 days or as determined by the superintendent or his/her designee. An employee may return to work if able to properly perform the essential functions of the job.

In case of a dispute, final determination of the ability to so perform the essential functions of the job shall be made by the board after a hearing in which the employee and the superintendent or other representatives of the local system shall be heard. The superintendent or board may require that the employee submit to an examination by a physician selected and paid by the board, and a refusal by the employee to submit to such examination shall be grounds for terminating the contract or other employment of such employee.

If the superintendent determines that the status of an employee's ability to perform properly the essential functions of the job may change within a short period of time, the superintendent may require that the employee present a physician's statement on a weekly basis.

Long-Term Sick Leave

Long-term sick leave shall be defined as an absence of 5 or more working days. **A request for long-term sick leave does not guarantee that leave will be granted.** Long-term sick leave may be granted to employees in accordance with the following guidelines:

- **Determination of Commencement.** The long-term sick leave shall begin at a time to be determined by the employee, the physician, the employee's supervisor, and the superintendent or his/her designee. If the need for leave is foreseeable, an employee requesting leave must provide **at least 30 days advance notice** to the immediate supervisor and the leave specialist. If such advance notice is not possible, the employee must give said notice as soon as practicable, ordinarily within 1 or 2 working days of learning 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 any corresponding leave will not unduly disrupt the operations of the school district. An *Application for Leave* must be signed by the employee, the employee's supervisor, and the superintendent or his/her designee. Completion of this application does not constitute approval of leave.

Any employee anticipating physical disability may continue in active employment as long as they are able to properly perform the essential functions of the job. In case of a dispute, final determination of the ability to so perform shall be made by the board after a hearing in which the employee and the superintendent or other representatives of the local system shall be heard. The superintendent or board may require that the

employee submit to an examination by a physician selected and paid by the board, and a refusal by the employee to submit to such examination shall be grounds for terminating the contract or other employment of such employee.

If the superintendent determines that the status of an employee's ability to perform properly the essential functions of the job may change within a short period of time, the superintendent may require that the employee present a physician's statement on a weekly basis.

- **Notice of Eligibility.** Upon receipt of the *Application for Leave*, a Notice will be issued to the employee as to whether they are eligible for their leave to be protected under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA). If leave does not meet the requirements of FMLA, approval of the requested leave is not guaranteed.
- **Notification of Anticipated Leave.** Except where circumstances are such that reasonable advance planning is not possible, employees must provide his/her immediate supervisor and the Leave Specialist at least thirty (30) days' notice of the date when a leave is anticipated to begin. With respect to foreseeable family or employee illness, the employee shall make reasonable effort to schedule treatment – including intermittent and reduced hour leave so as not to disrupt unduly the operations of the school district, subject to approval of the employee's or family member's health care provider.
- **Medical Certification.** A *Medical Certification* form will be forwarded to the employee after receipt of the *Application for Leave*. The completed certification form is due to the central office from the employee's physician within 15 days of issuance. This statement must include an anticipated date and length of physical disability. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that this form is received in a timely manner.
- **Designation Notice/Leave Approval.** Once the completed Medical Certification form is received, a designation notice stating whether the leave qualifies for protection under FMLA will be sent to the employee. If the leave does not qualify under FMLA, a notice will be sent stating whether the requested leave has been approved.
 - Leave Used. The employee shall be required to utilize all available sick, vacation and other leave for long term absences due to illness, injury, or other temporary disability, or other causes described previously.
 - Duration/Return to Work. All employees must submit a *Fitness for Duty Certificate* to the central office prior to returning to work at their location. An employee who has been granted long-term sick leave under FMLA shall be entitled to return to active employment upon presentation of a physician's statement certifying the ability of the employee to perform the essential functions of the job. If the superintendent and board concur with such statement, the employee with FMLA approved leave shall return to work in accordance therewith, to be assigned to a substantially equivalent position to be approved by the superintendent. If the employee is on non-FMLA leave, reinstatement upon receipt of a *Fitness for Duty Certificate* is at the discretion of the superintendent or his/her designee.

Upon receipt of the *Fitness for Duty Certificate*, an email will be sent to the employee's supervisor advising whether he/she has been cleared to return to work and if there are any restrictions. In addition, a Receipt of Certificate will be forwarded to the supervisor. The actual certificate will be maintained in the employee's file in the Leave Specialist's Office in compliance with HIPPA.

Employees who are placed on restricted duty, must provide updated restricted duty notices every 30 days or as determined by the superintendent or his/her designee

In case of a dispute, final determination of the ability to so return shall be made by the board after a hearing in which the employee and the superintendent or other representatives of the local system shall be heard. The superintendent or board may require that the employee submit to an examination by a physician selected and paid by the board, and a refusal of the employee to so submit shall be grounds for termination, or not issuing of a new contract if the employee wishes to return at the beginning of a new school year.

The school system will have discharged its responsibility under this policy after offering active employment for the first vacancy for which the employee is qualified that occurs after the individual has been declared eligible for return to active employment. **Reference Policy: GBRH**

Vacation Leave

Ten (10) days of vacation leave are available to all employees who work 240 days or more. These days will be available on July 1st. Vacation days must be approved in advance by the superintendent or designee. Unused vacation days may accrue each year. All employees scheduled to work 240 days or more who leave the district during the school year will have their available vacation days prorated based on the actual number of days worked in the school year. These employees will only be reimbursed for any unused vacation days earned in the current year.

GUIDELINES: GENERAL INFORMATION

Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting

All Worth County School District employees and volunteers are mandated reporters under law (O.C.G.A. 19-7-5(a)). The school social worker shall be the appropriate local district person to coordinate and record reports of suspected child abuse and neglect for Worth County Schools. Employees suspecting child abuse and neglect shall report such suspicions to the school counselor, school principal, or appointed designee. A report will then be made to the Worth County Department of Family and Children Services and the school social worker. The school counselor shall be the school liaison with protective services staff of the Worth County Department of Family and Children Services.

Crisis Intervention Plan

The school district and each school have an Emergency Preparedness Plan approved by GEMA. Plans are on file in each location. Training is provided by the appropriate administration at each site.

Fraud Prevention

PURPOSE: To promote and ensure the reporting of suspicion of fraudulent activity, the Worth County Board of Education ensures employees, clients and providers of confidential channels to report suspicious activities.

Definitions:

Fraud:

The intentional deception perpetrated by an individual or individuals, or an organization or organizations, either internal or external to federal, state, or local governments, which could result in a tangible or intangible benefit to themselves, others, or the district or could cause detriment to others or the district, state, or federal governments. Fraud includes a false representation of a matter of fact, whether by words or by conduct, by false or misleading statements, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed, which deceives and is intended to deceive.

Waste:

The intentional or unintentional, thoughtless or careless expenditure, consumption, mismanagement, use, or squandering of district, state, or federal resources to the detriment or potential detriment of the district. Waste also includes incurring unnecessary costs as a result of ineffective practices, systems, or controls.

Abuse:

Excessive or improper use of a thing, or to employ something in a manner contrary to the natural or legal rules for its use. Intentional destruction, diversion, manipulation, misapplication, maltreatment, or misuse of resources. Extravagant or excessive use as to abuse one's position or authority. Abuse can occur in financial or non-financial settings.

Examples of Fraud, Waste, and Abuse include:

- Personal use of district-owned vehicles
- Long distance personal calls
- Personal use of district-owned supplies or equipment
- Violations of system and/or state procurement policy
- Excessive or unnecessary purchases
- Falsification of official documents (timesheets, leave reports, travel vouchers, etc.)
- Contract fraud
- Conducting personal business on district time
- Inappropriate expenditures
- Embezzlement

Responsibilities

Worth County School District employees who suspect that fraud, impropriety, or irregularity has occurred shall

immediately report those suspicions to their immediate supervisor and/or the superintendent/designee, who shall have the primary responsibility for initiating the necessary investigations. Investigations shall be conducted in coordination with legal counsel and/or other internal or external departments or agencies as appropriate.

Reporting of Fraud, Waste, Abuse, or Corruption

Employees of Worth County Schools shall report verbally or in writing to their supervisor, department head, or other appropriate authority, evidence of activity by a district department, agency or employee constituting:

1. A violation of local, state, or federal law, rule or regulation;
2. Fraud;
3. Misappropriation of resources;
4. Substantial and specific danger to the public health and safety; or
5. Gross mismanagement, a gross waste of monies, or gross abuse of authority

Further, it is the rule of Worth County School District that employees be free of intimidation or harassment when reporting to public bodies about matters of public concern, including offering testimony to or testifying appropriate legislative panels.

Infections Disease

No otherwise qualified individual shall be denied employment in the educational programs of the Worth County Board of Education solely because he or she is infected with an infectious disease. An employee who is infected with an infectious disease will remain in his or her educational or employment setting unless he or she presents a significant risk of contagion as determined by the board after consultation with the student's or employee's physician, public health official knowledgeable about the disease and/or the board's physician if in the judgment of the superintendent it is necessary to consult a private physician.

The board provides educational opportunities for its employees to become informed concerning transmission of HIV infection and procedures to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV infection as well as other infectious diseases, including precautions to be taken in handling bodily fluids and blood whenever necessary. Whether or not an infected individual presents a significant risk of contagion shall be determined based upon reasonable medical judgment given the state of medical knowledge about:

1. The nature of the risk, i.e. how the disease is transmitted;
2. The duration of the risk, i.e. how long the carrier is infectious;
3. The severity of the risk, i.e. the degree of potential harm to third parties; and
4. The probability that the disease will be transmitted and will cause varying degrees of harm.

Once the employee's medical condition has been determined, the superintendent shall consult with the employee's physician, a public health official knowledgeable about the disease and/or a physician employed by the Worth County Board of Education at the option of the board in order to determine whether reasonable accommodations will allow the employee to meet the essential functions of his or her job. If an accommodation that does not impose undue financial hardship or administrative burdens can be made, then no employee shall be denied the right to employed by the Worth County Board of Education.

In order that the board may have time to obtain a reasonable medical judgment concerning the employee who is infected by a contagious disease, the superintendent is authorized to remove the infected employee from employment for a period not to exceed ten days during which time the board shall make a decision as to whether the employee can be accommodated and does not pose a significant risk to others. The employee shall be excluded only if the board determines after consultation as provided above that the infectious disease is of such nature or at a stage that the individual should not be in an educational setting.

Neither the Worth County Board of Education nor its employees shall disclose medical information about an employee with HIV infection or other infectious disease without the consent of the employee or only as required by law or court order. **Reference Policy: GANA**

RESOURCES

Certification Testing

www.gace.nesinc.com

Georgia Department of Community Health

<http://dch.georgia.gov>

Georgia Department of Education

<http://www.gadoe.org>

Georgia Professional Standards Commission

<http://www.gapsc.com>

Teacher Retirement System of Georgia

www.trsga.com

Worth County School District Website

www.worthschools.net

Worth County Schools Online Application

<http://www.applitrack.com/worthschools/onlineapp/>

United States Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov>