



# Oglethorpe County School System Employee Handbook

**2025-26**

***Excellence for every student, every day!***

*Revisions will be made as necessary. Updates will be posted on the electronic copy of the Employee Handbook found on the school system's website. Employees must consult the website on a regular basis in order to be familiar with any and all revisions to the handbook*

# Employee Handbook

The Employee Handbook contains important information about policies, procedures, and programs for Oglethorpe County Schools. In addition, the handbook includes critical information about the duties and responsibilities of employees. Employees should read this handbook at the start of the school year and keep the handbook for future reference.

The Employee Handbook is published annually and distributed to employees at the beginning of each school year. Inserts may be distributed as needed. Please direct questions or comments regarding the handbook to your immediate supervisor or contact the Central Office at 706-743-8128.

## **Board Meetings**

The Oglethorpe County Board of Education holds public meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 7:00 PM at the Central Office. A work session is held two weeks prior to that date.

## **Board Policies**

Please refer to the Oglethorpe County Board of Education Policy Manual for a complete list of all policies and procedures. The policy manual may be accessed via the school system website at <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/index.aspx?s=4124>

It is the policy of the Oglethorpe County Board of Education to maintain a learning environment that is free from all forms of discrimination and harassment on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, and disability. Please see Board Policies GAE and JCAC for further information.

## **Accreditation**

All schools in the Oglethorpe County School System are accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission and by AdvancED (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools).

# Table of Contents

The OCSS website, school employee handbooks, and Simbli contain more complete information regarding policies, documents, board meetings, strategic planning, continuous improvement, and accountability. Please use this handbook as a general rule while understanding that employees will follow the policies and guidance approved by the Board of Education and administered by the Superintendent and System Administration.

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# Oglethorpe County School System Strategic Philosophy

**Mission:**

Excellence for **every** student, **every** day!

**Vision:**

Oglethorpe County Schools will graduate every student with strong principles and prepared for college, career and a successful life.

**Beliefs:**

- We believe students are our top priority.
- We believe in meeting every student's academic, social, and emotional needs.
- We believe in providing safe, secure, and positive environments.
- We believe stakeholders are vital to student success.
- We believe in continuous improvement.

## Oglethorpe County Schools Board of Education Members

Guillermo Camacho	<a href="mailto:gcamacho@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us">gcamacho@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us</a>	District 1
Tim Poole, Vice- Chair	<a href="mailto:tpoole@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us">tpoole@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us</a>	District 2
Susan Robinson	<a href="mailto:srobinson@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us">srobinson@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us</a>	District 3
Jake Willcox	<a href="mailto:jwillcox@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us">jwillcox@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us</a>	District 4
Rebecca Soto, Chair	<a href="mailto:rsoto@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us">rsoto@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us</a>	District 5
Beverley Levine, Superintendent	<a href="mailto:blevine@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us">blevine@oglethorpe.k12.ga.us</a>	Superintendent

## Message from the Superintendent

Welcome to the 2025-26 school year in Oglethorpe County Schools. As a former teacher, assistant principal and principal in this district, I am fortunate to be part of a professional learning community that strives to promote excellence for every student, every day! We work each day to offer our full support to students, staff, parents, families, and other stakeholders that make up the Patriot community! Our common goal is to graduate every student with strong principles and prepared for college, career and a successful life. In partnership with our community and families, the Oglethorpe County School System provides excellence for *ALL* to achieve their full potential.

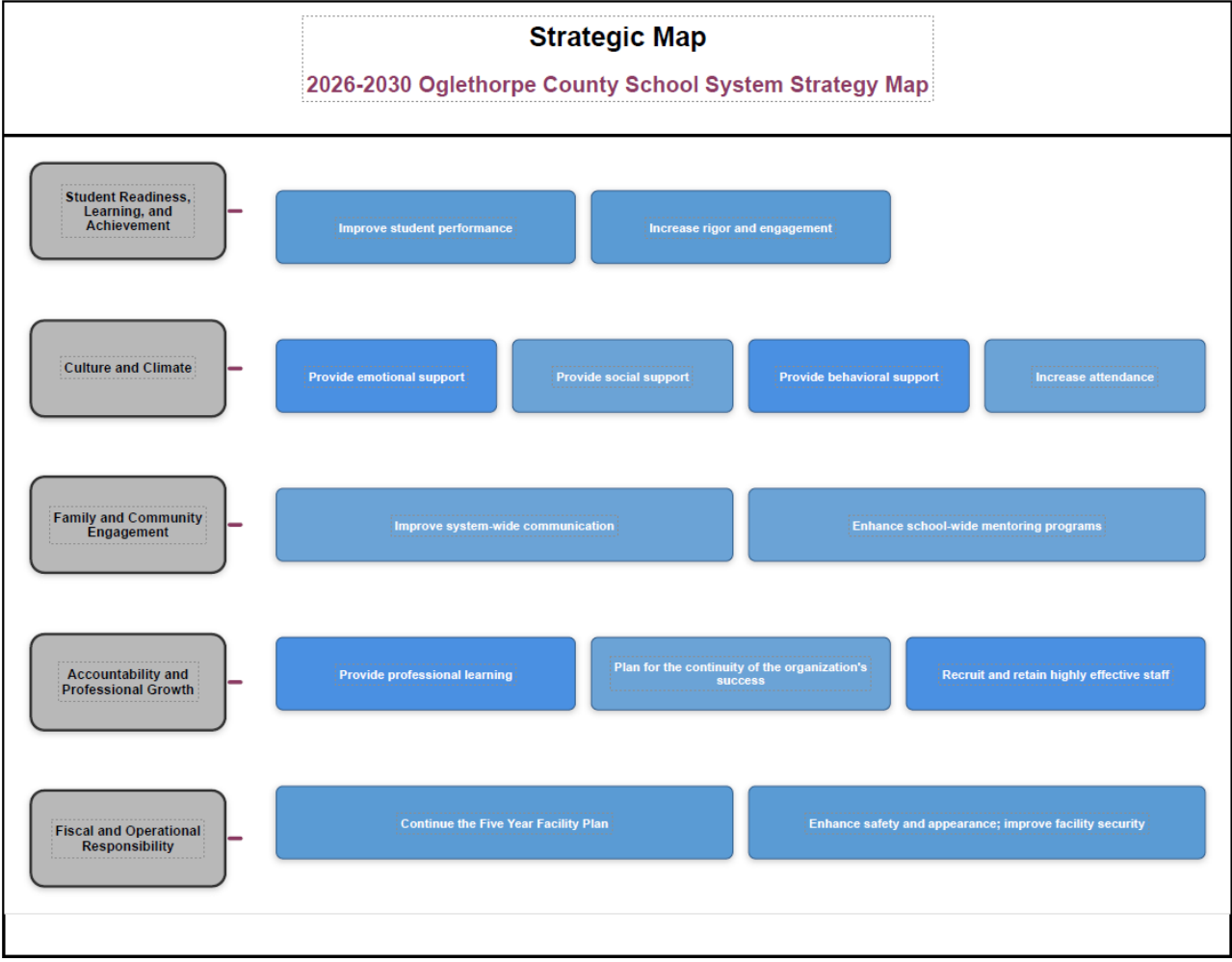
The Oglethorpe County School System educates over 2,240 students in grades Pre K-12 and employs about 350 people, making the school system the largest employer in the county. The district has one high school (grades 9-12), one middle school (grades 6-8), and one elementary school (grades Pre K-5), A close working relationship between teachers and parents is necessary for the mission to be accomplished.

The Oglethorpe County Board of Education, administrative team, faculty, and support staff work tirelessly to promote student learning in the classroom and through our extra-curricular activities. However, we recognize that we cannot do it alone, so we rely on our families and friends in the community and beyond to help us in this endeavor. As such, we seek to promote an atmosphere of collaboration, open and honest communication, hard work, and extreme dedication to our mission. We welcome you to join us!

If you have any questions about our schools, I invite you to contact our primary, elementary, middle, and high school offices. Do not hesitate to call or email us. Our staff and I look forward to welcoming you!

Beverley Levine  
Superintendent

# Strategic Map



## 2025-2026 Calendar

Pre-Planning	July 28 - 31
First Day for Students	August 1
Labor Day Holiday - - Student and Staff Holiday	Sept. 1
End of 1 <sup>st</sup> 9 weeks	Oct. 3
Teacher Planning/Student Holiday	Oct. 6-7
Fall Break – Student and Staff Holiday	Oct. 8-10
Thanksgiving Break	Nov. 24 – 28
Early Release	Dec. 19
End of 2 <sup>nd</sup> Quarter	Dec. 19
Winter Break – Student and Staff Holiday	Dec. 22 – Jan. 2
Teacher Planning/Student Holiday	Jan. 5
Students Return	Jan. 6
Teacher/Student Holiday (MLK)	Jan. 19
Winter Break/ Student and Staff Holiday	February 16-18
Teacher Planning Day/Student Holiday	February 19
System Planning Day/Student Holiday	February 20
End of 3 <sup>rd</sup> 9 weeks	March 12
Teacher Planning/Student Holiday	March 13
Spring Break - Student and Staff Holiday	April 6 – 10
Last Day of School (Early Release Day for Students)	May 22
End of 4 <sup>th</sup> Quarter	May 22
Graduation	May 22
Graduation Rain Date	May 23
Memorial Day – Staff Holiday	May 25
System Planning Day	May 26
Teacher Planning Day	May 27-28

# THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS

## 505-6-.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS (Effective January 2024)

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

**Please click the link for the entire code of ethics:**  
<https://www.gapsc.com/Ethics/CodeOfEthics.aspx>

# INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES

## **Curriculum**

The Teaching and Learning Department works collaboratively with teachers and administrators to ensure that the curriculum in Oglethorpe County Schools maximizes student achievement. The curriculum framework is aligned with local, state, and national standards, and serves as the basis for the selection of textbooks and other instructional resources. Consequently, all teachers are expected to use the curriculum framework as a primary resource when preparing for instruction.

## **Instructional Materials/Textbooks**

Oglethorpe County Schools follows the Georgia Department of Education instructional materials adoption cycle. An instructional materials adoption committee is established to obtain input from all schools. Teachers are expected to use the materials adopted by the Oglethorpe County Board of Education.

## **Teacher Lesson Plans**

Teachers are expected to develop lesson plans. School administrators can expect teachers to verify local and state requirements through their lesson plans.

## **Controversial Topics**

Teachers should consider very carefully any classroom instruction or assignments that may be considered controversial. When there is any doubt as to the possible controversy of an issue, the teacher should discuss the issue with the school principal for guidance, direction, or clarification.

## **Standardized Assessment**

Standardized assessment is an integral part of curriculum and instruction and has three (3) distinct purposes:

1. Testing provides key information relative to curriculum strengths and weaknesses.
2. Testing provides key information about individual student achievement for communication with parents.
3. Testing provides opportunities for teachers, grade levels, schools, and the school system to determine if students are functioning at optimum performance level.

The school system recognizes the value of student assessment and encourages the use of assessment to improve teaching and learning. Standardized assessment results are sent home to parents and copies are maintained in the administrative offices of the schools. Teachers are expected to be able to analyze, interpret, and utilize test results for the benefit of students and parents.

### **Student Absences**

All students are required to attend all scheduled classes. Whenever students are absent for any reason, students' parents or legal guardians must send a signed and dated written explanation of the absence to the school administrator. As used in this handbook, an absence will be treated as an excused absence if school or classroom attendance is missed due to the following:

1. Student illness that would endanger the student's health or the health of others.
2. Serious illness or death in the student's immediate family which would reasonably necessitate absence from school in the determination of the principal or his/her designee.
3. A scheduled medical, dental or eye examination.
4. Special and recognized religious holidays observed by the student's faith.
5. An order of a governmental agency, such as a court order or a pre-induction physical exam for military service.
6. An inability to attend school due to weather or other conditions making school attendance impossible or unreasonably hazardous.
7. Attendance upon a trip or event having significant educational value provided the principal is notified of the absence in advance and he/she determines the trip or event has significant educational value.
8. Unusual or urgent circumstances requiring the student's parents/guardians to be outside of Oglethorpe County overnight and where the parents/guardians determine that it would be in the student's best interest to accompany them. If prior notice cannot be given, a written explanation is to be provided no later than the first day the student returns to school after the absence.
9. Take Your Child to Work Day. Students who participate in this event will be excused but will be counted absent.
10. To visit with a parent serving in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard. If such parent has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, a student shall be granted excused absences, up to five school days per school year, for the purpose of visiting with his/her parent.

### **Make-up Work**

It is the student's and parent's responsibility, not the teachers', to make arrangements for make-up work. Students should ask their teacher for any missed assignments on the first day they return to school. The number of days allowed to complete make-up work will be determined by the principal or his/her designee.

Absences due to suspension from school are considered unexcused. Students assigned out of school suspension (OSS) will be allowed to make-up work upon returning to school.

### **Participation in Extracurricular Activities**

If a student is marked with an absence for the school day, the student will not be allowed to participate or attend extracurricular activities scheduled for the same day that the student is absent.

### **Graduation Ceremony**

All requirements for graduation must be completed before the student can participate in graduation exercises. A diploma will be presented upon completion of all graduation requirements.

The graduation date is subject to change if, during the school year, schools are closed due to inclement weather or any other emergency on a regular school day.

Students' participation in the graduation ceremony is a privilege and not a right. Therefore, the school has the right to prohibit a student's participation if the student is found to have violated any provision of the Code of Conduct. Participation in the graduation ceremony is voluntary.

Graduation ceremonies and all activities and attire associated with them are determined by the individual schools. Specific questions should be directed to the school principal.

## **EMPLOYMENT & EMPLOYMENT-RELATED DUTIES**

### **Recruitment**

The Oglethorpe County Board of Education recognizes that the first step in implementing a quality instructional program is the employment of qualified professional personnel. The Board further believes that this can be best accomplished through implementation of recruitment procedures that utilize all appropriate resources, both in and out of the system, in identifying qualified professional personnel for employment.

Available certificated positions shall be posted within the school system and submitted to a statewide online database maintained by the State.

Recruitment activities shall be conducted so as to assure that certification and employment requirements are met by personnel to be employed by the Board. In addition, recruitment activities shall be conducted in a manner that maintains the Board's position of being an equal opportunity and nondiscriminatory employer.

### **Criminal Background Checks**

All personnel employed by the Oglethorpe County School System shall be fingerprinted and have a criminal record check as required by Georgia law.

Teachers, principals and other certificated personnel whose employment is continued shall have a criminal record check made upon any renewal application to the Professional Standards Commission.

Those employees who are not considered to be certified personnel shall be fingerprinted and have a subsequent criminal record check during each five-year period based on the anniversary date of their initial employment with the System.

All new employees will be required to pay related fees for fingerprints and/or criminal record checks.

Information provided by the Georgia Crime Information Center or the National Crime Information Center shall be used only for purposes allowed by O.C.G.A. § 35-3-35 or by applicable laws, rules or regulations.

### **Employment Information/Records**

It is the responsibility of the individual to provide complete and accurate information to the Human Resource Services Department. Issuance of contracts and work assignments will be completed

only after the required information has been submitted. Incomplete and/or inaccurate personnel information can result in denial or termination of a contract of employment. Items such as social security number, certification, complete work experience, motor vehicle/criminal record check and fingerprinting and teacher retirement information are examples of personnel record information that are required. Test results and other performance information identified on contracts are to be provided by the employee.

It is the employee's responsibility to secure and maintain a valid, in-field educator certificate for the position held as required by law.

### **Employee Integrity**

Employees should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of employment with the Oglethorpe 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, including, but not limited to, termination from employment.

### **Employment Opportunities**

All employment opportunities within Oglethorpe County Schools are posted on the school system website: [www.oglethorpe.k12.ga.us](http://www.oglethorpe.k12.ga.us).

### **Notice of Equal Opportunity**

The Oglethorpe County Board of Education maintains a policy of equal educational, athletic, and employment opportunity. The Oglethorpe County Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, religion, veteran status, genetic information, or age in its programs. 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 have been designated to handle inquiries and concerns regarding the district's non-discrimination policies:

*Beverley Levine, Title VI and Title IX Coordinator*

Oglethorpe County Schools  
Superintendent  
735 Athens Road  
Lexington, GA 30648  
706-743-8128

*Karyn Gunter, IDEA*

Oglethorpe County Schools  
Special Education Director  
735 Athens Road  
Lexington, GA 30648  
706-743-8128

*Kanya Cornish, Section 504 Coordinator*

Oglethorpe County Schools  
Assistant Superintendent  
735 Athens Road  
Lexington, GA 30648  
706-743-8128

All employees are required to comply with our Equal Employment Opportunity Policy. Administrators and supervisors are expected to cooperate fully in meeting our equal employment

opportunity objectives and their compliance with this policy will be monitored closely. For additional information, please see local board policies GAAA, GAE, GAEB, JAA, and JCAC.

### **Contracts**

A contract for the school year will be issued to certificated personnel upon approval by the Oglethorpe County Board of Education. Any person who is tendered a contract and who elects to be employed by this school system must sign and submit the contract to the superintendent or designee no later than ten (10) days from the issuance date on the contract tendered. If the signed contract is not received by the 11<sup>th</sup> day, the position shall be declared vacant. If the person elects not to accept such employment, the superintendent shall be notified, in writing, no later than fifteen (15) days from the issuance date on the contract.

### **Assignment and/or Transfer**

The contract is with the Oglethorpe County Board of Education. Assignments to a specific school site/department are made on the referral of a principal/supervisor to the superintendent with the approval of the Board of Education. The superintendent may reassign an educator to another site at any time during the school year as the need arises. A principal/ supervisor may reassign an educator within a school site. School assignment preference of the individual will be considered whenever possible. Employees who wish to be considered for transfers to other schools will be given the opportunity to do so through the Human Resource Department.

### **Certified Personnel Resignation**

Any professional personnel desiring to terminate or be released from their contract with the Oglethorpe County Board of Education shall give the administration a minimum of thirty days written notice of their intentions, unless the Board of Education approve a release on shorter notice for just cause. Failure to provide such notice may result in denial or delay of the employee's request. Any professional employee failing to give such notice and who nevertheless abandons his/her position may be deemed guilty of unprofessional conduct, may be referred to the Professional Standards Commission, and/or may be subject to discipline up to and including termination, which action and conduct on the part of such personnel may be reflected in his/her permanent personnel records. Nothing contained herein shall be construed or interpreted to require the Board to approve, or entitle an employee to receive, approval of any individual request to be released from their contract.

### **Reduction in Force**

If it becomes necessary for the Oglethorpe County Board of Education to reduce the number of certificated professional personnel, the procedure outlined in Board Policy GAKA will be followed.

### **Certification Procedures**

It is the responsibility of each employee to initiate and complete the application process for the Georgia Educator Certificate, including all forms, transcripts, and other documents that may be required by the Professional Standards Commission. Human Resource Services will retain a copy of the application and all related documents.

A teacher must have a teaching certificate on file in the Human Resource Services Department no later than thirty (30) days following the effective date of employment. In the event an employee has not completed the certification application process for initial certification or renewal of certification, that employee will be paid on the basis of a daily substitute teacher until such time as a valid, in-field Georgia Educator Certificate is received by the Human Resource Services Department. In the event a teaching certificate is not provided to the Human Resources Department within thirty (30) days of the effective date of employment, an appointment must be scheduled with the Human Resource Services Department. During this conference, all steps for securing a certificate will be reviewed and assistance may be provided if needed. An appointment may be requested at any time prior to the thirty-day (30) period if assistance is needed.

Certificated employees are paid based on the official documentation submitted to the Human Resource Services Department. Salary is determined for the number of days worked based on the employee's valid in-field Georgia Educator Certificate and in accordance with accepted/verified experience as defined by the Georgia Department of Education.

Employees who do not have a valid in-field Georgia Educator Certificate will be paid for the number of days worked on a provisional salary basis until the conditional or renewable SRT-4, SRT-5, SRT-6, or SRT-7 Georgia certificate arrives.

When the employee receives a certificate higher than a provisional, the salary will be adjusted retroactively based on the daily rate of pay to the validity date and certificate level noted on the certificate. Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained herein, failure to provide proper certification to the Human Resource Services Department within 30 days of the effective date of employment may result in termination of contract with the Oglethorpe County Board of Education at the discretion of either the superintendent or the Board of Education. If retroactive pay is warranted, salaries will only be adjusted retroactively within the current fiscal year. Salary adjustments, if any, shall not extend beyond the current fiscal year.

### **Certification In-Field Status**

All professional personnel are expected to teach/work in the area in which they hold a valid, in-field Georgia Educator Certificate. Professional personnel are considered in field if they hold a valid certificate or permit and are assigned in the grade level(s) and in the field(s) for which they are certified.

### **Renewable Certificate (Valid for Five Years)**

Please reference the Professional Standards website at [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com) for information on certificate renewal. The Human Resources Department will visit all school starting in February to assist with certification renewal. All forms will be submitted by the HR Department on your behalf.

### **Supplemental Induction Certificate (Formerly - Non-renewable Certificate)**

Non-renewable certificates are valid for one year.

### **Georgia Teacher Certification Test**

Those who are required to take the GACE (Georgia Assessments for the Certification of Educators) Program Admissions test and/or the GACE content exam(s) may access all registration information and study guides through their MYPSC.com account.

### **Alternative Certification & Non-Traditional Degree Programs**

Due to the large number of alternative certification programs and the increase of internet/online college degree programs in and outside the State of Georgia, it is highly recommended that employees who are interested in such programs obtain, in writing, information from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission regarding the accreditation and certification of the program in which they are interested prior to enrolling in the program.

### **Teacher Responsibilities and Duties**

Classroom teachers are directly responsible to the principal and will have the following responsibilities and duties in addition to that of classroom instruction:

1. Be on duty **regularly, reliably, and predictably** for the number of hours per workday and workweek as set forth in Board policy.
2. Follow the system's uniform grading procedures as required by Board policy.
3. Use the Oglethorpe County Schools curriculum, texts, and other instructional materials approved by the Georgia Department of Education and the Oglethorpe County Board of Education.

4. Develop lesson plans that incorporate the goals, and objectives outlined in the Oglethorpe County Schools curriculum, establish short- and long-range teaching goals, provide optimum classroom instruction, and carry out other instructional duties as required from time to time.
5. Work cooperatively with the principal, other faculty members, and central office personnel in matters affecting the school program.
6. Participate in system and school professional learning activities as may be required.
7. Follow system and school procedures to inform parents and students about student progress.
8. Provide required reports by the time specified.
9. Maintain accurate records required by the principal and superintendent.
10. Follow the chain of command in channeling official business to the superintendent and other school officials **through the principal of the school**.
11. Follow the time and work schedule as assigned by the principal.
12. Follow and abide by all policies of the Oglethorpe County Board of Education including, but not limited to, handbooks, code of ethics and all policies and procedures.

It is critical that all employees become familiar with their responsibilities and duties. For additional information, please see your principal or contact the Human Resource Services Department.

#### **Annual Performance Evaluation**

Georgia law requires that all professional staff be evaluated annually. If there is a position for which the state has not completed an evaluation instrument, the Oglethorpe County Schools evaluation instrument will be used. All other professional staff with initial Georgia certification must meet state requirements regarding assessment.

#### **Employee Workload**

Oglethorpe County Board of Education and state policies require that the employee workload be governed by rules and regulations that contribute to the program through efficient economical administration and operation at the local school and system levels. The following procedures and regulations pertain to employee workload:

1. The workload of an employee is defined as those work-related responsibilities that are assigned to the position and for which the employee is expected to satisfactorily discharge in return for the salary specified.
2. The minimum workday for teachers is defined as eight (8) hours and the minimum work week is defined as forty (40) hours. Duties for which the base salary is paid include teaching and teaching preparation, staff meetings, parent and student conferences, developing IEP's, extra class activities in the community, and extra class activities such as before and after school duties. All teachers are expected to be available, if needed, before or beyond the scheduled workday for duties related to employment.

Oglethorpe County Schools reserves the right to modify the length of the workday and workweek pursuant to applicable laws.

#### **Classified Employees Overtime Pay**

The Board of Education authorizes overtime in accordance with administrative regulations set forth by the superintendent. Overtime is defined as time worked beyond the 40-hour work week (Sunday through Saturday) including emergency or planned overtime. The forty (40) hours are defined as actual hours worked and do not include hours or days for which the employee was paid for leave time such as sick leave, personal leave and annual leave.

Employees are not to perform overtime work or direct that overtime work be performed without the determination of the supervisor of the employee that there is no other viable alternative.

Cases involving approval for overtime compensation shall be the result of emergency situations, limited timelines, or when additional responsibilities are assigned individuals on a temporary basis. The supervisor who makes such a determination shall certify such determination in writing, in advance, and shall certify the amount of overtime approved for such classified employee, in advance, and shall obtain the signature of the employee, in advance, as to the amount of overtime authorized so that the employee, before working said overtime, shall know the maximum amount of overtime that has been authorized for that calendar week.

**No supervisor shall authorize any overtime for any classified employee unless the specific amount to be authorized is first approved by the superintendent or his/her designee.**

Compensation will be reimbursed at one and one-half the employee's regular rate of pay or compensatory leave at the same rate. **Violation of this policy concerning prior approval for overtime work may result in disciplinary action against the employee, up to and including termination.**

All classified employees who are considered "non-exempt" under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and are legally entitled to compensation for overtime work as provided by law and in accordance with this policy shall comply with any requirements of the district for documenting time actually worked and shall be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of such records.

An organization renting school facilities shall be informed that they will be obligated to pay any personnel costs incurred by the district pursuant to the renting of school facilities, including payment of hourly personnel costs and overtime compensation.

Employees shall be informed of the requirements of this policy on an annual basis. The superintendent is authorized to develop and implement regulations to carry out this policy.

#### **Time Sheets/Scheduled Breaks**

Each hourly employee and classified employee is required to read Policy GCRD – Classified Personnel Overtime Pay. Time sheets must be kept in order to document time worked and turned in to the supervisor in the required time frame. Any breaks over 20 minutes must be documented on the time sheets as time off the clock (not work time). In contrast, approved breaks of 5 to 20 minutes are considered work time. Time sheets must be signed by the employee, the immediate supervisor, and the principal (when applicable). Falsification of time on the time sheet will jeopardize employment.

A given work week is 40 hours. A work week for Oglethorpe County Schools normally runs Monday through Friday.

#### **Garnishments**

Employees are subject to garnishment according to laws that regulate garnishments.

## **COMPENSATION**

#### **Salary Schedule**

Teacher salary schedules are available on the Oglethorpe County School's website at [www.oglethorpe.k12.ga.us](http://www.oglethorpe.k12.ga.us).

Placement on the professional personnel salary schedule is determined by a current, valid in-field Georgia Educator Certificate, and years of approved prior teaching or related experience. Oglethorpe County Schools gives full credit in accordance with the salary schedule for former verified Georgia and out-of-state teaching experience that is regionally accredited.

Verification of prior service with an accredited public and/or private educational institution may merit an appropriate salary adjustment. Verification of previous experience must be submitted to Human Resource Department prior to September 30<sup>th</sup> of each year in order to be considered for

the current year's salary. If experience is submitted and verified after September 30<sup>th</sup>, experience will become a part of the following year's calculation. \*Note: a salary adjustment will not be made retroactively to a previous year.

**It is the responsibility of each employee to initiate and complete the process for obtaining a Georgia Educator Certificate including providing all forms, official transcripts, verification of prior teaching experience, and other documents and information as may be required by the Oglethorpe County Board of Education.**

In the event that an employee has not completed the certification application process for initial certification/renewal, that employee will be paid on the basis of a provisional certificate until such time as a valid, in-field Georgia Educator Certificate is received by the Oglethorpe County Schools. An employee of the Oglethorpe County Board of Education will receive a salary based on the verified experience and the highest, valid, in-field teaching certificate on file in the Human Resource Services Department.

An employee's contract with the Oglethorpe County Board of Education is contingent upon the employee securing and continuing to hold a valid, in-field teaching certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission. A lack/loss of a valid in-field teaching certificate shall result in termination of the employee's contract with the Oglethorpe County Board of Education.

All Georgia Educator Certificates carry three dates:

1. Certificate EFFECTIVE FROM date.
2. Certificate EFFECTIVE TO date.
3. Date of issue.

The **EFFECTIVE FROM** date is the critical date for placement on the salary schedule.

If an employee's certificate level changes during the school year (such as upon completion of a higher degree), the employee's pay will be adjusted on the employee's next scheduled payday. Utilizing the effective date of the higher certificate, the pay adjustment made in the employee's gross pay will be calculated based on the number of working days each certificate is in effect during the school year.

In general, when a higher level, valid, in-field teaching certificate is received midyear, the salary is adjusted retroactively to an effective date on the certificate or to the date of employment, whichever is more recent. A salary adjustment will not be made retroactively to a previous fiscal year. To be paid for a higher degree earned in a fiscal year, the new certification must be issued by the Professional Standards Commission prior to July 1 of that year.

In general, verification of prior service will merit an appropriate salary adjustment provided an in-field teaching certificate higher than a provisional is on file in the Human Resource Department. A salary adjustment will not be made retroactively to a previous fiscal year.

#### **Annual Advancement on the Salary Schedule**

The contract salary of a teacher holding a valid, professional in-field teaching certificate will be advanced to the next consecutive step on the salary schedule unless (1) the teacher is being paid at a step which requires more than one year for advancement, (2) the maximum progression step for the position has been reached, (3) services were rendered for fewer than 120 days in the previous academic year, (4) the Oglethorpe County Board of Education does not approve funds for step advancement on the salary schedule, or (5) the educator received an unsatisfactory or ineffective annual summative performance evaluation in any given year, or for the second year in which an educator received two consecutive annual summative needs development ratings (pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-212).

Personnel are paid monthly. Employees are required to enroll in direct deposit. A copy of the checks are delivered to the appropriate work location and distributed the last working day of the month. It is important that each employee keeps their address current with Oglethorpe County Schools.

## EMPLOYEE BENEFITS

Employee benefits are a large part of the total compensation package and are designed to meet the most important needs of Oglethorpe County School employees. In order to meet the ever-changing needs of our employees, we are continually reviewing and updating these benefit offerings.

### **Child of Oglethorpe County School System Employee**

If the Oglethorpe County School System employs a child's parent or step-parent as a full time, benefited employee, the child or step-child of this employee may be enrolled in the appropriate grade level in an Oglethorpe County School as long as that child lives with the parent or step-parent.

This option is not contingent upon school capacity at the requested school. However, approval to remain at the school may be revoked by the superintendent or designee due to attendance or behavior concerns. The transportation of students to and from school shall be the responsibility of the student's parents.

### **Deferred Compensation**

Lincoln Financial Group is a voluntary supplemental retirement plan that offers a participant the opportunity to invest money toward securing the retirement that he/she envisions. Lincoln offers four deferred compensation defined contribution plans in compliance with the Internal Revenue Code Section. Offered are 457, 403(b) ROTH 457 and ROTH (403)b enabling participants to save for retirement on a tax-deferred basis.

### **Credit Union**

The Pinnacle Credit Union is a cooperative savings and lending organization. All employees of Oglethorpe County Schools are eligible for membership through direct deposit.

### **Lincoln Financial Group Annuity Plan**

The Oglethorpe County Board of Education will match up to 2.25% of the employee's salary when placed in the 403(b) annuity. This benefit is for those not contributing to social security.

### **Health Insurance**

Employees have the opportunity to subscribe to group health insurance. The state and local system contribute a major portion of the cost with the remainder of the cost being paid by the employee through payroll deductions. Individual or family coverage may be selected from plans covered by State Health Benefit Program (SHBP). Enrollment in SHBP is limited to the period of Open Enrollment, usually October-November, time of hire, or during a qualifying event. Please refer to the benefits department for information on specific plans.

For information pertaining to the Affordable Care Act please visit <http://www.dol.gov/ebsa/healthreform/>

### **Additional Insurance Benefits**

- Dental
- Vision
- Volunteer Life Insurance
- Accidental Death & Dismemberment
- Short Term/Long Term Disability

- Aflac
- Flex spending (medical and dependent care)

Employees will be given the opportunity to begin or discontinue participation during Open Enrollment, at time of hire, or during a qualifying event.

**Life Insurance (Board Paid)**

The Oglethorpe County Board of Education currently provides a \$50,000 life insurance policy for all full-time benefit-eligible employees.

**Teacher Retirement System**

Teachers, administrators, supervisors, clerical employees, paraprofessionals, and various Central Office staff are eligible members of TRS. Benefits become available at 30 years of service, regardless of age, at 25 years with early retirement penalties, or at age 60 after ten years of service. Employees who have 10 years of service earn disability retirement benefits, if permanently disabled, as well as survivor's benefits that are paid to a beneficiary. For school year 2023-24, while each member contributes 6.0% of his/her salary, the school system contributes 19.98%. Staff who are eligible under TRS who retire and return to work are not benefit eligible.

**Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia**

Bus drivers, food service employees, some non-supervisory maintenance and custodial personnel, and other employees not eligible for membership in TRS are eligible for membership in the Public School Employees' Retirement System. Retirement benefits are available for members who are 60 years of age with at least 10 years of creditable service.

**School Activity Passes**

School Activity Passes are issued each year to all full-time employees of Oglethorpe County Schools. Use of the activity pass is limited to regularly scheduled Oglethorpe County School District activities. The pass is not valid for one-time events or events that are not regularly scheduled, including playoffs and tournaments, regardless of where these events take place. The activity pass entitles the employee to gain free admittance for themselves. The activity pass is non-transferable.

**Leaves and Illnesses**

All absences from school must be recorded under one of the following categories:

1. Professional Leave
2. Personal Leave
3. Sick Leave
4. Paid Parental Leave
5. Organ Donation
6. FMLA (See Policy GBRIG)
7. Annual Leave
8. Legal
9. Leave without Pay

**Professional Leave**

Any personnel may formally request professional leave at full pay to attend specific activities or receive advanced training. Examples of reasons for which professional leave may be granted include, but are not limited to, professional development opportunities and meetings of professional associations.

Request for professional leave must be submitted to the immediate supervisor and then to the superintendent prior to the date of leave. Professional leave must have the approval of the principal and is granted by the superintendent with consideration of the total educational program of primary importance.

Professional leave is restricted to those activities that promote professional growth and do not include social activities.

**Reimbursement for professional out of state travel requires prior BOE approval.** Approval of professional leave does not obligate the Board of Education for any expenses that may be incurred by the employee while attending professional meetings and expenses such as registration, food, lodging, travel, and/or materials. These costs incurred are to be assumed by the employee unless prior approval is given by the superintendent.

### **Personal Leave**

A maximum of three (3) days of accumulated sick leave shall be available to all personnel for personal or professional reasons, provided the superintendent or his/her authorized representative gives prior approval of the employee's absence. When possible, this leave must be scheduled with the principal or supervisor at least three (3) days in advance of the anticipated absence.

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

### **Sick Leave Eligibility**

Each teacher is eligible to receive sick leave with full pay computed on the basis of one and one-fourth working days for each completed school month of service, cumulative up to 90 days. Each person employed in the capacity of student services support personnel, administrative and supervisory personnel, clerical personnel, paraprofessional, instructional aide, and bus driver shall be entitled to sick leave with full pay on the basis of one and one-fourth working days for each completed contract school month. Other classified, non-certificated personnel shall earn sick leave at the rate of 1 day per month (12 days per year). Persons who work half time or more but less than full time earn sick leave at a rate proportional to their work time. Persons who work less than half time earn no sick leave.

### **Sick Leave-Transfer/Accumulation**

The number of days that can be transferred will not exceed 45 days. All persons employed in the Oglethorpe County School System and entitled to sick leave as defined above shall have such leave accumulated from one year to the next up to a maximum of 90 days.

### **Termination**

At the time of termination, all accrued sick leave not subject to transfer or TRS retirement certification will be forfeited by the employee.

### **Sick Leave-Crediting**

Accumulated sick leave from prior years and anticipated earnings for the current year shall be credited to each salaried employee at the commencement of each annual employment period. Anticipated earnings for the current month shall be credited to each hourly employee at the beginning of each month.

### **Sick Leave-Basis for Use**

Sick leave may be taken for absence due to illness, injury, or necessitated by exposure to contagious disease in which the health of others would be endangered by his/her attendance, or for illness in the employee's immediate family. The superintendent or principal may request a physician's statement to verify an illness on the part of the employee or in the employee's immediate family. However, if the local school disagrees with any doctor's statement of disability

or ability, it may appoint a physician of the same medical specialty as the employee's physician for the purpose of receiving independent medical judgment.

**Immediate Family-Defined**

For purposes of this subsection only, the term "immediate family" shall be interpreted to mean spouse, children, legal ward, brothers, sisters, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, in-laws in the above categories, and any other relative who lives in the house of the employer.

For absences in excess of those entitled by this policy, an amount equal to one day's salary for each day's absence shall be deducted.

**Short Term Sick Leave**

Short term sick leave shall be defined as absences for three consecutive working days or less. From time to time, the Board, superintendent, or supervisor may require permission to be given before short term sick leave is taken and/or a doctor's certificate provided of the teacher's inability to be present.

**Long Term Sick Leave (See also FMLA Policy GBRIG)**

Long term sick leave shall be defined as absences of four (4) or more consecutive working days or longer, up to the limit of accumulated sick leave by the employee. In many cases, long-term sick leave will qualify as leave under the District's Family & Medical Leave Act Policy, in which case such leave will be governed by Policy GBRIG/FMLA policy. In all other cases where an employee's request or use of long term sick leave does not qualify for FMLA leave, such leave shall be governed in accordance with the following guidelines:

(1) Notice: Physician's Statement. The employee shall notify the superintendent of his/her intention to take such leave as soon as practical. A doctor's statement (including a completed form WH-380, if applicable) of the nature, severity, anticipated date and length of illness, injury or serious health condition shall be provided by the employee in all cases. It shall be the responsibility of the superintendent or his/her designee to determine whether the employee's absence qualifies for leave under the FMLA, and/or to make such other inquiries as may be necessary to so determine.

(2) Determination of Commencement. The long term sick leave shall begin at a time to be determined by the employee, the physician and the local superintendent. The employee anticipating physical disability may continue in active employment as long as he/she is able to properly perform the required functions of his/her job in the view of the superintendent or his/her designee.

In case of dispute, the superintendent may require that the employee submit to an examination by a physician selected and paid by the Board. 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 required functions of his/her job may change within a short period of time, he/she may require that the employee present a physician's statement on a periodic basis.

(3) Sick Leave Benefits. The employee shall be entitled to utilize all of his accumulated sick leave for long term absences due to illness, injury, or other causes described above.

(4) Duration; Return to Work. An employee who has been granted long term sick leave shall be entitled to return to active employment upon presentation of a physician's statement certifying that he/she is able to perform all the required functions of his/her job. If the superintendent or his/her designee agrees, the employee shall return to work in accordance therewith, to be assigned to a similar position to be approved by the superintendent. In case of dispute, the superintendent or his/her designee may require that the employee submit to an

examination by a physician selected and paid for by the Board. A refusal of the employee to submit may be grounds for discipline, up to and including termination.

In any instance, an employee's return to active employment under this Long-Term Sick Leave policy may be delayed until the beginning of a quarter or semester.

### **Deductions**

For absences (not on school-request business) not covered by sick or personal leave, there shall be a deduction equal to one day's salary. Once an employee has exhausted available leave, These deductions shall be computed according to state board regulations (see DJCB/GAL) and will be deducted in equal amounts from the employee's paychecks beginning in the next payroll cycle.

When employment is terminated with the Oglethorpe County School System, the sick leave actually earned will be calculated and the difference between the leave earned for the current year and the leave credited will be calculated. This difference will be deducted from the employee's sick leave balance. Any negative leave balance will be deducted from the employee's final paycheck at the rate of one day's pay for each excessive leave day taken. Oglethorpe County School System does not pay out accrued unused vacation or sick leave for classified employees at the time of separation, but if qualified accrued unused sick leave will continue to count toward TRS retirement.

### **Annual Leave**

Annual leave for all twelve-month employees shall be earned from July 1 through June 30 of each school year at a rate of .8333 days per month. Ten days of annual leave are earned for each full year of employment.

All requests for annual leave should be made at least five days prior to such requested leave and must be approved by the immediate supervisor. Annual leave may not be accrued and must be used by June 30 of the year earned or, in the event annual leave is not used prior to June 30, all annual leave on the part of the employee is forfeited.

### **Legal Leave**

Employees who are called to jury duty serve with no loss of pay. Employees who are subpoenaed as witnesses in cases are allowed the absence with no loss of pay. Absences due to jury duty are not charged against the employee's accumulated leave.

### **Workers' Compensation**

Workers' compensation is a benefits program created by state law that provides medical, rehabilitation, income, death, and other benefits to employees and dependents due to injury, illness, and death resulting from a compensable work-related claim covered by the law.

To be eligible for workers' compensation benefits, employees must be injured while performing assigned job duties during assigned work hours. Injuries sustained while engaging in unassigned duties, during lunch, and breaks are not covered. In addition, injuries that occur during an employee's normal commute to and from work are not covered. An employee who has caused or contributed to an on the job injury must take a substance abuse test within 12 hours of the injury.

As soon as possible, after an accident occurs, you should **IMMEDIATELY** report your injury to your supervisor. Obtain and fill out the required paperwork and forward to your immediate supervisor for processing. Be as specific as possible when reporting your injury. If anyone witnessed your accident, inform your supervisor of such a witness. Prompt notification will enable your employer to begin your benefits in a timely manner.

The Oglethorpe County School District and/or the company responsible for handling workers' compensation claims generally investigate on-the-job accidents and injuries. Investigations are

necessary to determine why and how the injury occurred and to implement policies and procedures to make the workplace safer.

### **Paid Parental Leave**

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

1. An employee of the Board of Education shall be eligible for paid parental leave for qualifying life events upon satisfying the following criteria:
  - a. The employee is classified as full-time by the District and is eligible to participate in the TRS (Teacher Retirement System of Georgia) or the PSERS (Public School Employees Retirement System); and
  - b. The employee has six continuous months of employment with the Board, regardless of whether he or she is eligible for paid or unpaid leave under federal law. An employee paid on an hourly basis must have worked a minimum of 700 hours over the six-month period immediately preceding the requested paid parental leave date.
2. A qualifying life event means:
  - a. The birth of a child of an eligible employee;
  - b. The placement of a minor child for adoption with an eligible employee; or
  - c. The placement of a minor child for foster care with an eligible employee.
3. The maximum amount of paid parental leave that may be taken by an eligible employee during a rolling 12-month period is 120 hours, regardless of the number of qualifying life events that occur during such period.
  - a. The rolling 12-month period shall be measured backward from the date an eligible employee first uses parental leave.
  - b. Parental leave may be taken as needed and may be taken in increments of less than eight hours. The smallest increment of parental leave that may be taken is four hours.
  - c. Any unused paid parental leave that remains 12 months after the qualifying event shall not carry over for future use.
  - d. Unused paid parental leave shall have no cash value at any time of the eligible employee's separation from employment with the Board of Education.
4. Paid parental leave under state law shall run concurrently with any leave provided under federal law.

### **Organ Donations**

Each public school teacher and employee shall be entitled to receive the following leaves of absence without loss of pay:

1. Not more than seven (7) days for the purpose of bone marrow donation for transplantation; or
2. Not more than 30 days for the purpose of organ donation for transplantation.

Neither of these will be deducted from an employee's available sick leave and shall be included as creditable service for the purpose of determining any retirement or pension benefits.

### **Family Medical Leave Act**

It is the purpose of this policy to set out in summary form the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act ("the Act" or "FMLA") and its implementing regulations. The Board of Education ("Board") does not intend by this policy to create any additional rights to leave not provided by the Act; provided, however, the Board does wish to extend the rights of the Act to certain employees who have worked at least 12 months for the Board. 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 Board who have been employed by the Board for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave are eligible to take unpaid leave under the FMLA.

**B. DEFINITIONS**

“Covered Active Duty” means, for members of the regular Armed Forces, duty during deployment to a foreign country; for members of a Reserves component of the Armed Forces, duty during deployment to a foreign country under a call or order to active duty pursuant to federal law.

“Covered Servicemember” (for qualifying exigency leave) means the employee’s spouse, child or parent under a federal call or order to covered active duty.

“Covered Servicemember” (for military caregiver leave) means the employee’s spouse, child, parent or next of kin who is (1) a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness; or (2) a veteran who was a member of the Armed Forces at any time during the five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes such medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

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

“Next of Kin” of a covered servicemember means the nearest blood relative other than the covered service member’s spouse, parent, son or daughter, in the following order of priority: blood relatives granted legal custody, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and first cousins, unless the covered servicemember has specifically designated in writing another blood relative for purposes of FMLA caregiver leave.

“Outpatient Status,” with respect to a covered servicemember, means the status of a member of the Armed Forces assigned to either a military medical treatment facility as an outpatient; or a unit established for the purpose of providing command and control of members of the Armed Forces receiving medical care as outpatients.

“Parent” means a biological, adoptive, step or foster mother or father or one who acted in place of a parent when the employee was a child. The term “parent” does not include parent “in law.”

“Parent of covered servicemember” means a biological, adoptive, step or foster parent or any other individual who acted in place of a parent of the covered servicemember. The term does not include parents “in law.”

“Serious Health Condition” means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care requiring an overnight stay in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility or continuing treatment by a health care provider, all as further defined in the FMLA regulations.

“Serious Injury or Illness” means, an injury or illness incurred by a covered servicemember in the line of duty on active duty (or that existed before active duty and was aggravated by line of duty active service) that may render the servicemember medically unfit to perform the duties of the member’s office, grade, rank, or rating. In the case of a veteran, “serious injury or illness” means a qualifying injury or illness, as defined by the Secretary of Labor, incurred during or aggravated by active duty during the five years before undergoing treatment, recuperation, or therapy, and that manifested itself before or after the member became a veteran.

"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 due to a mental or physical disability at the time FMLA leave is to begin.

"Son or daughter of a covered servicemember" means a covered service member's biological, adopted, or foster child, stepchild, legal ward, or a child for whom the covered servicemember acted in the place of a parent, and who is of any age.

"Spouse" means a husband or wife as defined or recognized under Georgia law.

**C. AMOUNT AND TYPE OF LEAVE TAKEN**

- A. An eligible employee may request leave for one or more of the following reasons:
1. Birth of a son or daughter and to care for the newborn child;
  2. Adoption or foster placement with the employee of a son or daughter and to care for the newly placed child;
  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 the employee that prevents the employee from performing his/her job functions;
  5. Any qualifying demand arising from the fact that the employee's family member (the covered service member) is on covered active duty. Qualifying exigencies are defined as short-notice deployment (seven or less calendar days); military events and related activities; child care and school activities; financial and legal arrangements; counseling; rest and recuperation (up to five days per instance); post-deployment activities; additional activities where the employer and employee agree that the leave is an exigency and agree to both timing and duration of the leave; and
  6. Military caregiver leave to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the servicemember.

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

Except as provided below, an employee may take up to a total of 12 weeks leave during any twelve-month period. A "rolling year" shall be used to determine the twelve-month period during which the leave entitlement may occur. That is, each time an employee takes FMLA leave, the remaining leave entitlement would be any balance of the number of weeks that has not been used during the immediately preceding 12 months. See 29 C.F.R. § 825.200(b)(4).

If both spouses work for the District and both are eligible for FMLA leave, they are authorized to take only a combined total of 12 weeks leave 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 to take leave for twelve (12) weeks to care for a spouse or child with a serious health condition.

An eligible employee is eligible to take up to 26 weeks of military caregiver leave during a "single 12-month period." The "single 12-month period" begins on the date the employee first takes military caregiver leave and ends 12 months after that date, regardless of the method used to determine the leave entitlement period for other FMLA reasons.

If both spouses work for the District and both are eligible for FMLA leave, they are authorized to take only a combined total of 26 weeks during the "single 12-month period" described above for military caregiver leave or a combination of military caregiver leave and leave taken for other FMLA reasons.

The District will require that any accrued paid leave (sick, personal, vacation, or any other paid leave) be substituted for all or a part of the otherwise unpaid FMLA leave under the terms and conditions of the District's normal leave policies. Because leave pursuant to an employee's disability benefit plan or workers' compensation absence is not unpaid, the provision for substitution of accrued paid leave is not applicable in such cases.

**D. INTERMITTENT OR REDUCED LEAVE**

An employee may take leave on an intermittent or reduced leave schedule where it is medically necessary due to the serious health condition of a covered family member, the employee, or the serious injury or illness of a covered servicemember, or when necessary, because of a qualifying exigency. The District will require a certification, in the form designated by the District, to document the necessity of such intermittent leave or reduced schedule 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 superintendent or designee. If such advance notice is not possible, the employee must give notice as soon as practicable, which means as soon as both possible and practical, taking into account all of the facts and circumstances in the individual case. If an employee does not provide at least 30 days' notice of foreseeable leave, he or she must explain why such notice was not practicable if so requested by the District. When the need for leave is not foreseeable, an employee must provide notice as soon as practicable, which generally should be according to the District's usual and customary leave requirements. 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 disrupt unduly the operations of the District.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the District to reasonably determine whether the FMLA may apply to the leave request. When an employee seeks leave due to an FMLA-qualifying reason for which the District has previously provided FMLA leave, the employee must specifically reference either the previous qualifying reason for leave or the need for FMLA leave.

**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 District 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 District 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 a serious injury or illness of a covered servicemember or other circumstances beyond the employee's control. The District may require certification from the health care provider that a serious health condition of the employee or family member, or the covered service member's serious injury or illness, prevented the employee from returning to work.

With the exception of paid vacation, personal, sick, or any other paid 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. Any accrued benefits will not be lost during the 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 District 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 District.

## **G. REQUIRED CERTIFICATION AND REPORTING**

The District requires that a request for leave due to a serious health condition of an employee or an employee's family member or a serious injury or illness of a covered servicemember be supported by certification by the appropriate health care provider of the eligible employee or family member on a form to be provided by the District. This certification for a serious health condition must include (1) the name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the healthcare provider and type of practice/specialization; (2) the approximate date on which the serious health condition commenced, and its probable duration; (3) a statement or description of appropriate medical facts regarding the patient's health condition for which FMLA leave is requested; (4) if the purpose of the leave is to care for a family member, a statement that the employee is needed to care for the family member and an estimate of the frequency and duration of the leave required for such care; (5) if the leave is due to the employee's own serious health condition, a statement that the employee is unable to perform his/her essential job functions, the nature of other work restrictions, and the likely duration of such inability; and (6) if intermittent or reduced schedule leave is requested, information sufficient to establish the medical necessity for the same and an estimate of the dates and duration of treatments and any periods of recovery. The employer may require that the eligible employee obtain subsequent recertification on a reasonable basis as requested by the District in accordance with the FMLA regulations.

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

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

The District may require that a first request for leave because of a qualifying exigency arising from active duty or a call to active duty be supported by a copy of the covered service member's active duty orders or other documentation issued by the military. A certification form requesting the required information to support a request for exigency leave will be provided by the District upon request.

The District may require an employee on FMLA leave to report periodically to his/her 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 serious health condition or to care for a covered servicemember that would constitute at least 20% of the total number of working days during which the leave would extend, the District 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 District may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if the leave will last at least three weeks; and 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 District may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if the leave will last

more than two weeks; and the employee would return to work during the two-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 three-week period before the end of a semester, and the leave will last more than five working days, the District may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Animals in Schools**

Using animals for educational purposes is an acceptable practice under guidelines to assure the health and safety of students and staff. Permission is to be obtained from the principal before animals are brought to the classroom.

If students wish to bring animals for educational purposes, they are to consult with their teacher who, in turn, will request permission from the principal. Prior to permission being granted, student records must be checked for any known allergies existing among students. If permission is granted, the animal must be brought in and picked up by an adult. Animals are not to be transported on a school bus.

Animals must be appropriately housed, humanely cared for and handled. Only the teachers or students designated by the teacher are to handle the animals.

Under no circumstances will "wild" animals be permitted to be brought onto school property unless under the care of a trained animal care professional.

### **Assemblies**

Assemblies may be held to celebrate student success, enhance the instructional program aligned to standards of instruction, develop citizenship and communicate with the student body. No special programs financed by admission fees and scheduled for students during school hours are authorized without prior approval. Principals will approve all assemblies and determine participants.

### **Bodily Fluids**

It is extremely important that all employees receive directions in clean-up procedures relating to body fluids. Annual training will be provided to all employees. No employee should attempt to clean up any body fluid in any manner other than as instructed by the school system.

### **Cell Phone Use**

Although staff members are allowed to have cell phones at school, do not use your cell phone for personal reasons during class time or any time students are under your care. Cell phone use should never interfere with instructional time.

### **Centegix Badge Use**

Employees should wear their Centegix badge on a lanyard or securely clipped to their clothing at all times while on campus. In the event of an emergency — whether medical, behavioral, or a safety threat — the badge can be activated by pressing the button multiple times in quick succession. This immediately sends an alert to designated school responders and, if needed, emergency services. Three quick clicks alerts administration that there is an issue. Seven or more rapid clicks alerts 911. Staff should stay calm and follow all safety procedures once the alert is sent, knowing that help is on the way. It is essential to use it responsibly; activating the badge without a true emergency can delay assistance for real incidents.

### **Chain of Command**

It is appropriate and acceptable for teachers to discuss issues with the superintendent or Board members; however, teachers should follow the appropriate chain of command. It is as follows: (1) Department Chair/Team Leader, (2) School Administration, (3) Central Office Director, if appropriate, (4) Superintendent, and (5) Board of Education.

For classified staff, the appropriate chain of command is (1) Immediate Supervisor, (2) School Administration, (3) Central Office Director, (4) Superintendent, and (5) Board of Education. Superiors cannot address issues and concerns if they are not aware of them. Most issues and decisions can be dealt with professionally if communication lines remain open.

### **Child Abuse**

Georgia law, as well as Oglethorpe County Board of Education policy, includes mandated procedures for reporting suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate officials. Employees are required to follow these procedures. For more information on the reporting of child abuse, contact your principal/supervisor, school counselor or district school social worker.

If an Oglethorpe County School employee has reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred involving a person who attends to any child as an employee or volunteer of the school, the employee must report their suspicion of abuse to their principal or designee. Reports of suspected child abuse shall be made **immediately**, but not more than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred.

For additional information, please see local board policy, JGI, Child Abuse or Neglect, or contact the district social worker.

### **Communicable Diseases**

No otherwise qualified individual shall be denied employment in, nor shall a student be denied access to, the education programs of Oglethorpe County Board of Education, solely because he or she is infected with a communicable disease. An employee or student who is infected with a communicable 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 of Education after consultation with the student's or employee's physician, public health official knowledgeable about the disease and/or the Board of Education's physician if, in the judgment of the superintendent, it is necessary to consult a private physician.

The Oglethorpe County Board of Education provides educational opportunities for its employees to become informed concerning transmission of HIV infection, procedures to reduce the risk of transmitting HIV infection as well as other communicable diseases, including precautions to be taken in handling bodily fluids and blood whenever necessary.

Once an employee's or student's medical condition has been determined, the superintendent shall consult with the student's or employee's physician, a public health official knowledgeable about the disease and/or a physician employed by the Board of Education at the option of the Board in order to determine whether reasonable accommodations will allow the student to perform in the classroom or other educational setting or the employee to meet the essential functions of his or her job. If an accommodation, which does not impose undue financial hardship or administrative burdens can be made, then neither student nor employee shall be denied the right to participate in Board of Education programs or to be employed by the Board of Education.

In order that the Board of Education may have time to obtain a reasonable medical judgment concerning the student or employee who is infected by a contagious disease, the superintendent is authorized to remove the infected student or employee from Board of Education programs or employment for a period not to exceed ten school days during which time the Board of Education shall make a decision as to whether the student or employee can be accommodated and does not pose a significant risk to others; provided, however, that the superintendent may initiate multiple removals in emergency situations. The student or employee shall be excluded only if the

Board determines, after consultation as provided above, that the communicable disease is of such nature or at a stage that the individual should not be in an educational setting.

Neither the Board of Education nor its employees shall disclose medical information about a student or employee with HIV infection or other communicable disease without the consent of the employee or the student or his or her parent or guardian, whichever is applicable or as otherwise required by State or Federal law or court order.

### **Complaints and/or Grievances**

Please refer to local board policy GAE, Complaints and Grievances, for detailed procedures relating to employee complaints alleging discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, disability, veteran status, or genetic information.

### **Compliance Director**

All Employees are required to complete the trainings listed below by September 7, 2022:

- i. Code of Ethics
  - ii. Mandated Reporting
  - iii. Suicide Awareness and Prevention
  - iv. Human Sex Trafficking
  - v. Internet Safety
  - vi. Ethical Use of Social Media
- a. Below are the directions for registering with the platform:
    - i. Step 1: Type [oglethorpecounty.compliancedirector.org](https://oglethorpecounty.compliancedirector.org) into your browser.
    - ii. Step 2: Click on the "Register" button in the top right corner.
    - iii. Step 3: Enter the information requested on the registration page. Your email address (preferably your work email) will become your username. You will create your own password. If you do not have a work email address, a personal email address may be used. You should remember your username and password.
  - b. The Oglethorpe County Keyword is Workstation. **\*\* The keyword is case sensitive \*\***

### **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 at any time. A breach of this confidentiality can result in termination of employment.

### **Criminal Charges**

As a condition of continued employment, each employee must notify the superintendent of any immediate arrest. Further, employees are required to immediately disclose any convictions. The superintendent shall make an immediate written report to the Board of Education upon receiving information that a school system employee has committed certain specifically identified crimes. These crimes include murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault and/or battery, any sexual offense, including sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving marijuana or a controlled substance, any offense involving theft, and unlawfully operating a motor vehicle after being declared a habitual violator. If it is determined that an investigation is warranted, the Professional Standards Commission will be notified. The superintendent or designee is required to make a written administrative referral to the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) and will inform the Board of Education if a written complaint from any school employee or parent of a child is received by the superintendent contending that any "school system educator employed by the local unit of administration" has committed any one of the following crimes:

1. Violent crimes such as murder, manslaughter and kidnapping.
2. Sexual crimes such as rape and sexual exploitation of a minor.
3. Drug-related offenses.

4. Any offense involving theft.
5. Unlawfully operating a motor vehicle after being declared a habitual violator.

**Any school employee who is charged with a violation of any criminal law, other than a minor traffic offense which does not involve a criminal arrest, must inform the superintendent of the criminal charge and/or criminal arrest the next day subsequent to the employee's criminal charge and/or criminal arrest. Failure to timely report criminal charges and/or criminal arrests may result in adverse employment actions.**

#### **Dress Code**

All clothes worn by staff should reflect the professional atmosphere in which they work. Staff members are considered role models for the student population and the attire adults wear should reflect their professionalism. Those items categorized as inappropriate for students in the parent student handbook are also inappropriate for staff.

Each supervisor, in his or her discretion, may periodically designate spirit, casual or similar days (including incentive days) on which the dress code may be modified.

#### **Drugs and Alcohol**

The Oglethorpe Board of Education absolutely prohibits any employee from using, possessing, selling, exchanging, conspiring to possess or distribute, delivering, or manufacturing any illegal drug, controlled substance, dangerous drug, or alcohol on school property or while on duty. Notwithstanding any provision of this policy to the contrary, the Board specifically reserves its right to terminate any employee who violates this policy whether or not a criminal conviction is imposed and regardless of the employee's prior record.

All employees who operate any motorized vehicle provided by the Board of Education are required to be tested for misuse of alcohol or use of controlled substances. Such tests include pre-employment and/or pre-duty testing, reasonable suspicion testing, random testing, post-accident alcohol and controlled substance testing, and follow-up testing.

Any of the following acts is a serious violation of the law and is punishable by fine and/or imprisonment:

1. Possessing, using, selling, giving away, bartering, exchanging, or distributing any drug or substance declared unlawful.
2. Possessing any alcoholic beverage on school grounds.
3. Giving away, bartering, or exchanging alcoholic beverages to or with minors.

Please refer to the local board Policy GAMA for detailed information regarding Oglethorpe County Schools being a drug-free workplace. **Compliance with this policy is one condition of employment with the Oglethorpe County Board of Education.**

#### **Drug Free Workplace**

The Oglethorpe County Board of Education declares that the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of controlled substances, marijuana and other dangerous drugs in an unlawful manner 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.

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 superintendent in writing within five days after any arrest on any drug-related criminal charge and further notify the superintendent in writing within five days of any conviction of a drug-related offense. Failure to notify the superintendent in accordance with this policy may subject the employee to discipline, up to and including termination from employment.

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

The Oglethorpe 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 of Education 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 et seq. However, in no event is this policy intended and this policy 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, except that the school system may not use the statement of any employee to the superintendent requesting treatment as described in this policy.

### **Reasonable Suspicion**

In an effort to further assure a drug and alcohol-free workforce, the Oglethorpe County Board of Education reserves the right to require an alcohol and/or drug screening for any employee when reasonable suspicion exists that such employee is impaired or under the influence of

alcohol and/or drugs. Circumstances which may give rise to reasonable suspicion may include, but are not limited to, observations on the part of a supervisor that an employee's work performance or on-the-job behavior may have been affected in any way by alcohol or drugs, involvement by the employee in any on-the-job accident involving a fatality, bodily injury or damage to property, or other objective circumstances which reasonably support a suspicion that an employee may have alcohol or drugs present in his or her system. The superintendent or his/her designee shall be authorized to investigate the conditions attending any report by a supervisor regarding the reasonable suspicion of alcohol or drug use by an employee. Based upon circumstances, the superintendent or designee shall be authorized to require the employee to submit to an alcohol and/or drug screening during the course of any investigation. Refusal to submit to the alcohol and/or drug screening by the employee based upon reasonable suspicion may constitute grounds for disciplinary action (insubordination), up to and including termination. Upon receipt of the results of the alcohol and/or drug screening, the superintendent shall make a decision regarding the status of the employee in accordance with the policies of the Oglethorpe County Board of Education and the laws of the State of Georgia.

If any employee is found to be in possession of alcohol, controlled substances, or dangerous drugs in the workplace, his/her supervisor shall immediately inform the superintendent. Possession of alcohol, controlled substances, or dangerous drugs in the workplace may constitute grounds for disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

If an employee is suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the workplace or while performing job responsibilities away from the workplace, the employee may be required to submit to immediate testing for such substances. An employee who tests positive for alcohol or drugs as a result of such a test will be charged with violating this policy.

If a supervisor has reasonable suspicion to believe that an employee may have contributed to an on-the-job accident involving a fatality, bodily injury, or damage to property, the employee may be required to submit to an alcohol and/or drug test. An employee who tests positive for alcohol or drugs as a result of such a test will be charged with violating this policy.

### **Emergency Closings**

The superintendent or designee is authorized to take action to close one or more of the system's schools if conditions exist that may threaten the health and safety of students and personnel.

The superintendent or designee is also authorized to delay the opening hour of the school day and/release students and personnel before the normal school day ends if hazardous conditions exist.

Employees should listen to the television stations, expect an automated call from the superintendent and/or visit the Oglethorpe County School System website [www.oglethorpe.k12.ga.us](http://www.oglethorpe.k12.ga.us) or Facebook page for the latest updates related to weather closings.

### **Emergency Management Plan/Emergency Drills**

The Georgia Emergency Management Agency reviews and approves the school system's comprehensive School Safety Plan and each school's Emergency Management Plan. All school personnel have access to an Emergency Safety Plan, which is a guide for responding to various types of emergencies. Fire/evacuation drills are held on a monthly basis, and drills for severe weather and bus evacuation will be held at least once each year. Intruder lock-down drills are held twice a year, one announced and one unannounced. For additional information regarding school safety, contact your principal/supervisor.

### **Employee Types**

Full-time employees who are certified and contracted are covered by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940 (The Fair Dismissal Act of 1975) and are afforded certain rights under the Act. Other employees, including classified, and part-time employees, are employed under Georgia's "at-will" employment law and may be terminated at any time without cause.

### **Evaluations**

All personnel are evaluated annually for the purpose of improving educational services. Currently, the Georgia Department of Education requires that certified teachers and administrators be evaluated using the TKES/LKES evaluation system. At the beginning of the school year the evaluation procedure is explained and a copy of the procedure and the instrument distributed to each person. The evaluation conferences with supervisors take place throughout the year. Opportunities are provided for professional support of all staff members as a result of the evaluation process. Each staff member has access to his/her own evaluation.

### **Facility Modifications**

To ensure the Oglethorpe County Board of Education is adhering to local, state, and federal codes and regulations, and to provide for the safety of those who use school facilities, it is necessary to monitor and control all modifications to school facilities and property. All facility and property modifications, of any sort, must be submitted in advance and approved by the superintendent, regardless of the funding source for the work or who performs the work. Such modifications include, but are not limited to, additions, renovations, alterations, signage, lighting, fencing, drainage systems, playground systems, shrub and tree plantings, painting, wall and floor coverings, plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and electronic work.

### **Field Experiences/Student Teaching/Practicums/Observations**

The school system is pleased to cooperate with colleges and universities in the preparation of teachers. Generally, the activities common to pre-service preparation include practicums, internships, and student teaching. In order to preserve the integrity of all pre-service experiences, to ensure maximum effect to the students of the school system and to pre-service education students, the following expectations are set forth:

1. All requests for placement of any pre-service student must be sent to the principal or designee.
2. The principals will consult with teachers to place pre-service students with those who meet the appropriate requirements of the requesting college.
3. Building-level administrators are expected to cooperate with college officials in supervising any pre-service students approved for their school site. Any concerns about the performance of the pre-service student should be immediately communicated to the appropriate college official.
4. All approved pre-service students who are placed in Oglethorpe County Schools are expected to adhere to policies and procedures set forth by the school system, as well as those consistent with the Code of Ethics for Educators.
5. It is the expectation of Oglethorpe County Schools that the college or university in which the preservice student is enrolled will remove any pre-service student whose performance is detrimental to the students in the school system.

### **Field Trips/Overnight Sporting Events**

All field trips must receive prior approval. Submit your request for a day trip at least two (2) weeks before the event so that it can be approved, and transportation arranged. Let the lunchroom manager know in advance, so they can prepare lunches accordingly. Out-of-state field trips require approval by the Board of Education and should be submitted two weeks before the board meeting. Submit all requests for field trips to your immediate supervisor. Should you need to cancel a field trip, notify your administrator, the transportation director, lunchroom manager and parents/chaperones. Chaperones for ANY field trip who will be alone with students MUST have an up-to-date background check on file.

### **Homeless Children and Youth**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Act defines homeless children and youth as those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence. To obtain information regarding the specific provisions of this Act, please contact the District Social Worker.

**Lice**

The Board of Education authorizes the superintendent to issue any directive necessary in his or her discretion to address infestations of head lice.

**Money**

Any money collected/received must be recorded and turned in to the school bookkeeper so it may be deposited within 24 hours. Keep a receipt and record of all funds collected and turned in. Do not co-mingle school funds with your personal funds for any reason.

**News Media**

Informing the public about the successes experienced in Oglethorpe County Schools is an important component of public relations. News to be published should be coordinated and cleared for release to the news media. All school news, programs, or activities to be highlighted through any news media should be submitted to the principal prior to release to the media. The superintendent is the media spokesperson for the system. Before conducting any interviews or releasing any information concerning school news, school programs, or school activities to the news media, please consult your immediate supervisor.

**Parking**

School system employees, students, and visitors must park vehicles in parking spaces provided. Parking on the grass, ball fields, sidewalks, or other areas that are not designated as parking spaces is prohibited. This requirement is necessary for the safety of everyone, to maintain access for ingress and egress of emergency vehicles, to maintain access to handicap facilities, to be in compliance of the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA), and to prevent damage to landscaped areas of the school system facilities.

**Pledge of Allegiance**

Each student will be given the opportunity during the school day to affirm allegiance to the United States of America.

**Relationships with Students**

Relationships with students should remain professional at all times. It is advisable to refrain from having them as personal online friends/contacts or socializing with them. Do not put yourself in a compromising situation. Sexual relationships with students is a criminal offense.

**Rooms**

Rooms is the district's official communication tool, provided through Aptegey, to help teachers, staff, students, and families stay connected. All employees are expected to use Rooms to share classroom updates, important announcements, and direct messages with parents and guardians in a secure and timely manner. This platform ensures that communication is consistent, organized, and accessible to all families. Staff should check Rooms regularly, respond promptly and professionally to messages, and follow guidelines for appropriate communication with students and families.

For detailed instructions, please visit our support page:

<https://www.oglethorpe.k12.ga.us/page/room-support>

**Safe and Healthy Facilities**

To protect against the threat of fire, items such as electric skillets, crock pots and other cooking devices are prohibited for use in any location of the school other than the kitchen. In addition, candles or other open-flame devices are prohibited in any location of the school other than science labs that are equipped for such use. To protect the respiratory health of students and staff members, plug-in type air fresheners are to be approved prior to use in school facilities.

Please contact the Director of Maintenance for additional information regarding fire, safety and health regulations for facilities.

Employees are required to report to their administrator/supervisor if restraining orders or other problematic situations exist that may impact the safety of school premises.

### **School Counselors**

School counselors provide a range of services to give students the knowledge and skills they need to be effective learners and achieve their academic, career, and personal goals. School counselors work in collaboration with the entire school community and are committed to the education and emotional development of all students. Services provided by counselors address academic, social/emotional, and career and post-secondary development.

Parental permission is not required for students to see a counselor/participate in classroom guidance activities. Often the focus of the counseling activity centers on problem solving, decision making, and goal setting as the student and counselor work together towards college and career readiness.

School counselors **do not** take the place of private therapists and cannot provide long-term therapy for students. Parents, teachers, and students can initiate a referral to the school counselor.

### **School Nurses**

School nurses serve as care providers and advocates for the promotion and protection of the health status of all Oglethorpe County Schools' students. School nurses collaborate with parents, educators, and existing community health resources to provide appropriate information and/or services to address students' needs.

### **School Psychologist**

Our School Psychologist helps children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally and emotionally. He consults on academic and behavioral interventions with teachers, parents and Student Support Teams (SST). He can advise on every level of the Response to Intervention (RTI) process (now referred to as the Multi-Tier Support Systems), from the most basic approaches up to the level of highly specialized program interventions.

### **School Safety Reminders**

- Never prop open exterior doors; always ensure they are securely closed and locked.
- Wear your Centegix badge at all times and know how to use it in an emergency.
- Report any suspicious individuals or activities to an administrator immediately.
- Do not share door access codes or keys with unauthorized persons.
- Greet and escort visitors to the main office to check in.
- Know your school's emergency procedures and participate actively in all drills.
- Keep personal belongings and school equipment secured when unattended.
- Speak up if you notice a safety concern — **see something, say something**.

### **School Social Worker Services**

A district social worker works with students, parents, school personnel, and community agencies to build effective relations among all groups. The social worker establishes communication between individual schools and the home when chronic problems interfere with a student's education.

### **Sexual Harassment**

All staff members are entitled to a work environment free from all forms of discrimination, including sexual harassment. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature. Among behavior that might be considered sexual harassment is behavior: (1) which is not welcome, (2) which is personally offensive, (3) which debilitates morale, and (4) which therefore interferes with work effectiveness.

Offensive sexual flirtations, advances or propositions, verbal abuse of a sexual nature, graphic or degrading verbal comments about an individual or his/her appearance, the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, or any offensive or abusive verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature is strictly prohibited. No individual shall threaten or insinuate, either explicitly or implicitly, that a staff member's refusal to submit to sexual advances will adversely affect the staff member's employment, evaluation, wages, advancement, assigned duties, shifts, or any other condition of employment or career development.

If any staff member has questions concerning this policy or if any staff member believes that he or she has been subjected to sexual harassment, the staff member should contact the superintendent. Please refer to local board policy GAE and GAEB.

### **Silent Reflection**

At the opening of each school day, each classroom teacher shall conduct a brief period of quiet reflection. This moment of quiet reflection is not intended to be and shall not be conducted as a religious service or exercise but shall be considered as an opportunity for a moment of silent reflection.

### **Social Media**

The Oglethorpe County School System recognizes that today's students and parents engage in electronic forms of communication for their daily interactions with friends, family, and their larger social networks. OCSS has also, or will be, utilizing e-mail, websites, blogs, text messaging, and use of public social media networks such as Instagram, Facebook, and others to communicate with similar groups. Whereas these forms of communications are dynamic, mobile, and quickly reach their audience through technologies that have become an integral part of our online lives, they may, in some circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating with students and parents.

Staff members presently using social media sites, such as Facebook, to communicate with friends, family and their personal networks should ensure that their privacy settings are set to "Only Friends." If the "Friends of Friends" or "Networks and Friends" settings are used, staff members open their content to a much larger group of people, including students and parents. Employees should not use their District email address or phone number for communications on social media networks for personal accounts. The wall between the role of a public educator and personal friendships with students should always be visible and strongly communicated.

As educators we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online helps determine this image. As reported by the media, there have been instances of educators demonstrating professional misconduct while engaging in inappropriate dialogue about their schools and/or students or posting pictures and videos of themselves engaged in inappropriate activity. Some educators feel that being online shields them from having their personal lives examined. But increasingly, educators' online identities are too often public and can cause serious repercussions.

One of the hallmarks of social networks is the ability to "friend" others – creating a group of others that share interests and personal news. The district strongly discourages teachers from accepting invitations to friend students within these social networking sites. When students gain access into a teacher's network of friends and acquaintances and are able to view personal photos, the student-teacher dynamic is altered. Friending students provides more information than one should share in an educational setting. It is important to maintain a professional relationship with students to avoid relationships that could cause bias in the classroom.

For the protection of your professional reputation, the Oglethorpe County School System recommends the following practices as guidelines:

### **Friends and Friending**

- Do not accept students as friends on personal social networking sites (decline any student-initiated friend requests).
- Do not initiate friendships with students

- Remember that people classified as “friends” have the ability to download and share your information with others.
- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous. Exercise caution with regard to exaggeration, colorful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a teacher at risk.
- Post only what you want the world to see. Imagine your students, their parents, your administrator, visiting the site.
- Do not discuss students or coworkers or publicly criticize policies or personnel.
- Do not post images that include students
- Do not reference your students.

### **Smoke/Vape/CBD Free Workplace**

Tobacco use has been determined by the Surgeon General as a health hazard. Furthermore, the Oglethorpe County Board of Education has determined that tobacco use is inconsistent with the concepts and principles taught through the curriculum of the school district. Therefore, the possession or use of all tobacco, vapes and/or e-cigarette products by students, employees, or non-employees assisting in school activities shall be prohibited. This action applies to tobacco use in school district owned buildings, offices, motor vehicles, on school district owned property and at all off campus school sponsored activities 24 hours a day. The same tobacco prohibition shall apply to visitors on all school district owned property. School staff members shall be responsible for enforcing Georgia Law and Oglethorpe County School System policies and regulations concerning use of all tobacco products.

### **Substitute Teachers**

All substitutes are required to undergo four hours training prior to employment.

All teachers must notify their school site through Aesop before 7:30 a.m. of an absence for that day. An absent teacher must provide detailed plans for instruction and other duties.

### **Suspensions**

The superintendent has the authority to suspend an employee charged with felony misconduct, insubordination, incompetence or willful neglect of duties or other good and sufficient causes for a period of time to permit an investigation of the charges. The suspended party will be given due process within ten working days.

### **Solicitation**

Employees are prohibited from using any email list serve or email group announcing any event where the sender or the sender’s friends or family would benefit financially from the event. Examples include Tupperware® parties, fundraisers benefitting the employee directly, etc. Notices regarding benevolent fundraising activities to benefit another employee or community member is allowed. Examples include a fundraiser to help defray medical expenses of an employee, student, community member, or worthy cause. If you have a question about the activity, ask your principal.

### **Student Allegations of Employee Misconduct**

Instances of alleged inappropriate behavior by a teacher, administrator, or other school employee toward a student should be reported to the principal. As authorized by Georgia Law, if it is determined the student deliberately falsified or misrepresented information alleging employee misconduct, the student will be subject to disciplinary action that may include suspension or expulsion.

### **Teacher Authority**

The superintendent and principals support teachers having the authority to manage their classrooms. Teachers shall have the authority, consistent with Oglethorpe County Board of

Education policy, to discipline students and to refer students to the principal or his/her designee in order to maintain discipline in the classroom.

Any teacher who has knowledge that a student has exhibited behavior that violates the Oglethorpe County Schools Code of Conduct for students and has repeatedly or substantially interfered with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in his/her class or with the ability of classmates to learn, shall file a report of such behavior with the principal or his designee. The principal and teacher shall thereafter follow the procedures set forth in Georgia law, specifically O.C.G.A. § 20-2-737.

### **Vehicle Searches**

All vehicles parked on Oglethorpe County School District property (including but not limited to student, staff, and visitor vehicles) are subject to canine searches. Any canine alert or other canine response to sniffing may result in search of vehicle.

If school authorities have a reasonable belief that an employee vehicle, which is parked on school premises, contains an article or substance which is illegal, prohibited by school rules, or dangerous, school authorities may initiate a search of the vehicle. Failure of any employee to comply with a search conducted by a school authority may subject the employee to adverse employment action.

If a search yields illegal contraband or materials, said contraband or materials shall be deemed to be constructively possessed by the employee who owns, possesses and parks the searched vehicle on the premises owned by the Oglethorpe County School District, and said employee will be subject to disciplinary action for a violation of school rules and the Code of Ethics for Educators. Illegal or contraband items recovered from the search of an employee vehicle shall be turned over to the proper legal authorities for ultimate dispositions.

The act of bringing any vehicle onto Oglethorpe County School District property shall be deemed to be a consent by the owner and any user and passenger of such vehicle to any search of such vehicle as set forth in this handbook or in any other policy or procedure of the Oglethorpe County School District.

### **Weapons**

It is unlawful and a violation of Oglethorpe County School District rules for **any person** to carry, possess, or have under his/her control any weapon or explosive compound while at a school building or on school property, at a school function, or on a bus or other transportation furnished by the school, except to the extent specifically permitted by law. Any person violating, or believed to be violating, any law concerning a weapon or explosive compound, will be reported to the appropriate authorities for investigation. Violation is a felony punishable by a fine of up to \$10,000, imprisonment for not less than two (2) years and no more than ten (10) years, or both. Please see the Oglethorpe County Schools Student Handbook or the notice at the entrance of your school for a definition of an explosive compound or weapon. Adults, including employees, are subject to the same prosecution as students for violating this law.

### **Work-Related Injuries**

If you are injured while at work, notify your administrator immediately. **Employees MUST visit the nurse immediately following the action unless medical attention is necessary.** A drug test will be administered if medical treatment is needed. A list of approved medical providers is posted at each school. All accidents that occur while at work must be documented on an Accident Report Form and submitted to the central office.

## Network Usage Guide

### Introduction

The Oglethorpe County School System has actively pursued advanced technology and increased access to learning opportunities available to our students and staff. We believe computer technology will help propel our school system into the information age by allowing students and staff to access and use information sources from distant computers, communicate and share information with individuals or groups of other students and/or staff and significantly expand their access to knowledge.

With the increase in technology use comes a responsibility to follow rules of proper use of the technology as well as a responsibility to perform simple maintenance tasks to keep the technology operating at a high level. The purpose of this document is to enumerate acceptable and identify some unacceptable uses of school technology, and to educate staff and students about their responsibilities in using and maintaining school technology. School technology is defined as computers, storage media, electronic data transfer (including email), video creation, distribution, display and storage, and audio creation, distribution, display and storage (including telephone).

All users, defined as all school system staff and students, are required to read, sign and adhere to the rules and conditions within this document.

### Acceptable Use

School system technology is available to support learning by providing access to unique and current information for staff and students and increase the efficiency of support staff. Continued access to school system technology must be consistent with the approved educational objectives of the Oglethorpe County School System. User must not engage in unacceptable use of school technology. This includes, but is not limited to, using school technology to

Harm people

Interfere with other people's work

Steal property

Gain unauthorized access to local or Internet resources

Make hardware or software configuration changes without permission from the technology department and the department head

Introducing harmful software or bypassing school technology security hardware and software

Steal or Damage any school technology, hardware or software

Access, Upload, download, and/or distribute pornographic, hate-oriented, profane, obscene, or sexually explicit material

Connecting personal devices such as laptops, palm pilots, cell phones/PDA or "I Pods" to system technology (other computers or the network) without authorization

School system technology use is a privilege and not a right. Unacceptable use can result in loss of technology use, suspension, expulsion, termination and/or criminal charges.

Staff members who have computers checked out to them are responsible for performing simple preventive maintenance tasks as well as reporting any trouble with the technology by creating a Big Web Desk ticket.

The first task is to run disk cleanup at least once a month. The more often it is run, the less time it takes to run. A good example would be to start disk clean up on Fridays at lunch and it will complete before your return. Instructions for running disk clean up can be found on the Sharepoint site under technology how to documents.

The second task is to delete all the login profiles. Each time a new user logs on to a machine, a user profile is created. These profiles contain temporary files which slow down the operation of the computer. This task should be performed during post planning and on the in service day after the winter break.

### **Monitoring Use**

The Oglethorpe County School System reserves the right to review any material stored on technology storage. This includes user folders, emails and local computers. Users should never expect any information or data to be private. Select school system personnel have access to all data stored on school system technology. The school system, however, does not actively monitor email or data storage unless it is part of routine maintenance for full storage, virus infections or other similar problems.

### **Technology Etiquette**

Users are expected to abide by the generally accepted rules of network etiquette. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

Be polite. Do not get abusive in your messages to others.

Use appropriate language. Do not swear, use vulgarities or any other inappropriate language. Do not engage in activities which are prohibited under the law.

Do not reveal your personal address or phone number to strangers

Do not place confidential information on school system technology without properly protecting it. The technology department has many security devices in place to aid in protecting information, however, the user must also follow proper security procedures to prevent compromise of confidential information.

Use of system technology to circulate chain letters and pyramid schemes is not permitted. If someone says "Forward a copy of this to everyone you know", don't. Such messages often contain misunderstood or outdated information, or are outright hoaxes. Even if the information is legitimate, chain forwarding slows the internet with needless traffic.

Send electronic mail only to people you actually wish to contact, not to randomly chosen individuals who just happen to be in the same school. If you are unsure of an address, enter part of the name in the "To" line and click the "Check Name" tool above the address bar. A display of names matching the input should appear so you can select the correct address.

Never participate in schemes to deliberating flood system technology with excessive amounts of email. "Mail bombing" can incapacitate the entire network, not just the computer it is sent to.

Never falsify your name or status when using system technology. On some sites, anonymous communication is allowed, however, deceptive communication is never allowed.

Be aware emails may not come from the identity which appears in the "From" line. If you do not recognize the name or the subject, delete the email.

Do not use the technology in a way as to disrupt the use of technology for other.

### **Warranties**

The Oglethorpe County School System makes no warranties of any kind, expressed or implied. The Oglethorpe County School System will not be responsible for any damages you suffer using system technology. This includes, but is not limited to, loss of data, mail delays, non deliveries, or service interruptions caused by the Oglethorpe County School System's negligence or by your errors or omissions.

Use of information obtained over the internet is at your own risk. The Oglethorpe County School System specifically denies any responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through system technology. Uses must consider the source of the information obtained and its validity.

### **Security**

Your password is secret. Never share your password with unauthorized personnel. Giving your password to unauthorized personnel can be a violation of Georgia law. It is not a question of trusting the person you give your password to but does the school system authorize them to access the information your password has access to. Your computer login password and your login to the student information system should not be the same. If you write your passwords down, keep the document in a secure location.

If someone logs into system technology using your password, you are responsible for any actions which take place using your login. Never leave a computer logged in, always log out or lock the computer. If you find a security problem on any system technology, you are required to notify your teacher, principal or department head. Do not demonstrate the security breach to others.

### **Vandalism and Harassment**

Vandalism and harassment will result in cancellation of your privileges.

Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm, modify and/or destroy data of another user that is connected to the school system. This includes, but is not limited to, the uploading or creating of computer viruses or "Trojan horse". A virus is a hidden computer program that secretly copies itself onto a user's hard drive, often damaging data. A Trojan horse is a program with a hidden, destructive function, or a program designed to trick the user into revealing confidential information such as passwords. Even if the damage done by programs of these types is not readily evident, they confuse users, degrade computer performance, and waste the time of the technology staff removing them.

Physical vandalism is the destruction and/or theft of system technology. This includes, but is not limited to, stealing devices such as mice or keyboards, removing memory or hard drives from a

computer, putting foreign items into the computer through the air vents, CD ROM drive or any other opening, intentionally damaging any system technology or failing to report a known problem, possibly causing more damage.

Harassment is defined as the persistent annoyance of another user, or the interference of another users work. Harassment includes, but is not limited to, sending unwanted email, sending degrading messages about another user, modifying or deleting another user's data.

All users have them same rights to system technology. Equipment should not be intentionally damaged and supplies should not be wasted. Efforts are being made to make as much of the administrative process within the system paperless therefore every users should make every effort to avoid printing unnecessarily, wasting paper and ink.

### **Internet Use**

The internet is an abundant source of information for all users. Keep in mind it is provided for supporting education. It should not be used for personal gain or distribution of personal information. Great care should be taken to not download viruses or Trojan horses disguised as virus protection or anti-spyware programs. Users are responsible for what they download and what they publish on the internet.

### **Encountering Controversial Material**

The Oglethorpe County School System has installed an internet filter in accordance with the Child Internet Protection Act (CIPA). All internet traffic, both incoming and outgoing, is filtered. Internet sites are denied based on several factors, including page content, specific words, or sites placed on a black list. Any attempt to bypass the filter is prohibited and could result in the cancellation of privileges.

As hard as the technology department and the filter contractor work to keep ahead of persons posting inappropriate sites and the means to bypass filters, those people are working just as hard to get their information to the user. Unfortunately, this will result in users finding controversial material on the internet. When this happens, the user is required to report the finding to the technology department via a Big Web Desk trouble ticket. The ticket will include the site containing the controversial material so that it may be blocked by our filter.

### **Penalties for Unacceptable Use**

You can lose your technology privileges for violating these rules, and any applicable state and federal laws, or posted classroom and school rules. You may also be subject to other school disciplinary actions.

Using a computer without permission is theft of services and is illegal under state and federal laws. In addition, the following specific computer crimes are defined by state law (O.C.G.A. 16-9-90 et seq):

Computer theft (including theft of computer services, intellectual property such as copyrighted material, and any other property)

Computer trespasses (unauthorized use of computers to delete or alter data or interfere with others' usage)

Computer invasion of privacy (unauthorized access to financial or personal data or the like)

Computer forgery (forgery as defined by other laws, but committed on a computer rather than paper)

Computer password disclosure (unauthorized disclosure of a password resulting in damages exceeding \$500 – in practice, this includes any disclosure that requires a system security audit afterward)

Maximum penalties are a \$5000 fine and 1 year of imprisonment for password disclosure and a \$50,000 fine and 15 years of imprisonment for other computer crimes, plus civil liability

In addition, there is a specific law against electronic distribution of obscene material to minors (O.C.G.A. 16-12-100.1)

Federal law (18 USC 1030) provides for fines and imprisonment up to 20 years for unauthorized or fraudulent use of computers that are used by or for federal government (which includes many of the computers on the internet), and for unauthorized disclosure of passwords and similar information when this affects interstate commerce. (Recall that e-mail messages, as well as long distance phone calls, are interstate commerce and thus fall under this law.)

The Electronic Communications Privacy Act (18 USC 2701-2709) and other wiretap laws prohibit unauthorized interception of electronic communications, including electronic mail.

You must also obey laws against private use of state property, divulging confidential educational records, copyright infringement, fraud, slander, libel, harassment and obscenity. Laws against obscene or harassing telephone calls apply to computers that are accessed by telephone.

The Georgia Open Records Act applies to information stored on computers. This act gives citizens the right to obtain copies of public records, including any record prepared, received, or maintained by the Oglethorpe County School System in the course of its operations. Some kinds of records are exempt; among these are student records (including tests and homework), medical records, confidential hiring evaluations, trade secrets, and material whose disclosure would violate copyright. Moreover, the Open Records act is not a license to snoop; requests for information must be made through the proper administrative channels.

You must also obey the policies of our own Internet Service Provider.

## User Agreement

User: I understand and will abide by the above conditions, rules and acceptable use agreement. I further agree to all conditions set forth by the Board of Regents Acceptable Use Policy and the Children Internet Protection Act of 2000. I further understand that any violation of the above conditions, rules, and acceptable use agreement is unethical and may constitute a criminal offense. Should I commit any violation, my access privileges may be revoked, disciplinary action may be taken and/or appropriate legal action.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

User \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Parents or Guardian: As the parent or guardian of this student, I have read the conditions, rules and acceptable use agreement. I understand that this access is designed for educational purposes. Oglethorpe County School System has taken precautions to eliminate controversial material. However, I also realize it is impossible for Oglethorpe County School System to restrict access to all controversial materials and I will not hold them responsible for material acquired over the network. I hereby give permission to issue an account for my child and certify that the information contained in this form is correct.

\_\_\_ Yes, my child has permission to use the Internet

\_\_\_ No, my child does not have permission to use the Internet

It is the policy of the Oglethorpe County Board of Education to maintain an environment that promotes ethical and responsible conduct in all online network activities by staff and students. In accordance with the Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000, all Internet activity shall be filtered. It shall be a violation of this policy for any employee or student to engage in any activity that does not conform to the established purpose and general rules and policies of the network.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_