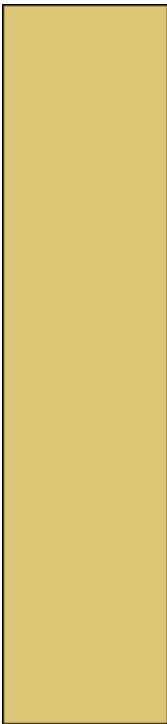


Employee Handbook

DECATUR COUNTY SCHOOLS

EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK



Welcome

Dear DCS Faculty/Staff:

I would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to Decatur County Schools. We are eager to get to know you and look forward to working alongside you during the 2025-2026 school year. At Decatur County Schools, we are committed to preparing our students for a promising tomorrow with an unrivaled educational experience today. We are certain that you will play an integral role in helping prepare our students for college and career success. Our goal is simple: We are committed to moving our students into a promising future as we represent a proud and accomplished tradition. It is the “Bearcat Way.” **This year, we proudly embrace the theme *Inspire.Ignite.Influence*. as a call to action-encouraging each of us to inspire excellence in others, ignite passion for learning, and positively influence every classroom and campus across our district.**

As we begin the 2025-2026 school year, there are multiple plans that have been developed to ensure that no aspect of a typical school day has not been addressed. Our principals, administrators, and central office staff have worked tirelessly in preparation for a successful school year. Decatur County Schools is blessed with personnel who have diverse experiences and are available to provide necessary support as we progress through the school year.

I encourage you to build those professional relationships that will allow you to be at your best each day. We stand ready to support each of you as we meet the needs of our students across our district. As we allow ourselves to serve selflessly on behalf of our children, there will be days that we will be a resource for others and days that we will need to rely on others as a resource. This is a clear sign of a successful school system. Thank you for your selfless service for our children.

This handbook contains employee information that will help guide you this year. This resource contains expectations, policies, and procedures of the Decatur County Schools. I encourage you to become familiar with the handbook and use it as a reference as an employee. If you have specific questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Again, we look forward to working with you this year and can not wait to celebrate our successes with you throughout the year.

Go Bearcats!

Boyd K English

Boyd K. English, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Decatur County Schools

Disclaimer

This handbook has been prepared to help familiarize you with some of our administrative rules and forms and to present the information in a form that will be readily available for reference. Although the contents of the handbook are based on the administrative rules and Board policies of the Decatur County Board of Education, the actual policies and rules could be far more lengthy and detailed, so they have been summarized to make the handbook more readable. There are additional administrative rules and policies not discussed in the handbook. In the event of a conflict between the handbook and Board policy, the Board policy shall control. Nothing in this handbook is intended to create a contract of employment or an entitlement to any particular benefits or terms and conditions of work. The Superintendent has the right to change or modify any of its administrative rules or forms at any time. For additional, more detailed information or if you have questions, please refer to your immediate supervisor for more information or the Board of Education Policy Manual which can be found at the District's

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Workplace/On-The-Job

- **Accidents and Emergencies**

All employees are responsible for maintaining a safe working environment and should report safety concerns to their supervisors so that corrective action can be taken. In the event of an accident sustained in the performance of job duties, employees should report the injury to their building-level administrator as soon as possible and complete a Report of Injury with their building-level administrator. Workers' Compensation guidelines should be followed if medical treatment is necessary. As part of our commitment to the workplace safety and compliance, all employees involved in a workplace injury or illness investigation under the Workers' Compensation process will undergo drug and alcohol testing. This testing ensures a safe work environment and supports accurate injury assessments. All Decatur County Schools have access to emergency services and resources.

- **Alcohol and Controlled Substance Testing**

The health and well-being of students and employees depend on the judgment, physical dexterity, reflex actions, and unimpaired hearing and sight of all employees, including those engaged in safety-sensitive functions. The Decatur County Board of Education will not tolerate and specifically prohibits the unauthorized use, abuse, possession, or sale of alcohol or controlled substances or the measurable presence of alcohol in any employee. Employees participate in an alcohol and controlled substance testing program providing training, education, and other assistance.

Policy/Rule reference: GAMA

Items containing Hemp Oil can produce a positive result in drug tests. Although hemp oil is derived from the same plant as marijuana, it contains compounds that may be detected in drug screenings. To avoid unintended consequences, we advise caution when using products with Hemp Oil, especially if you are subject to regular drug testing.

- **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protects people with disabilities from discrimination. For more information, visit ada.gov

- **Attendance**

Attendance is a part of performance; employees must be at work on time. Employees who will be late to work or absent should personally notify their supervisor in advance or as quickly as possible to cover their responsibilities appropriately. Absences for reasons that the Decatur County Board of Education does not approve may be considered job abandonment. Employee absences without approval for three consecutive days will be considered a voluntary resignation by the employee.

Policy/Rule reference: GARH

Checkmate is required daily to record the arrival and dismissal of your job duties and responsibilities.

- **Chain of Command**

The school system's chain of command is designed to promote the overall effectiveness of school programs. If there is a question or problem to be resolved, staff at the local school level will follow the chain of command established by their principal. The principal is directly responsible to his/her Superintendent.

- **Child Abuse**

Georgia law, as well as Decatur 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. 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. Policy/Rule reference: JGI

- **Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA)**

Children's Internet Protection Act governs the filtering of Internet access; acceptable use; and digital citizenship education Federal Agency with Oversight. As an educator you are responsible for knowing and following CIPA guidance.

- **Children's Online Privacy & Protection Act (COPPA)**

Children's Online Privacy & Protection Act governs the collection, use, and disclosure of personal information collected from children under age 13. As an educator, you are responsible for knowing and following COPPA guidelines.

- [Employee Documents for COPA,CIPA,FERPA](#)

- **Code of Ethics**

The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission has adopted standards that represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code defines unethical conduct, justifies disciplinary sanction, provides guidance for protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of students and educators, and assures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession. All employees of the Decatur County School System are expected to adhere to the standards and expectations described in the Code of Ethics for Educators.

The Georgia Professional Standards Commission publishes the Code of Ethics for Educators which is subject to revision at any time. Please reference the Commission website at www.GAPSC.com for the most current version (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01)

- **Employees with Communicable Diseases**

Employees who have or are suspected of having any communicable disease may be required to take any and all recommended precautions to ensure the health and safety of students and other employees. The Board of Education, the Decatur County Health Department, and/or the Georgia Department of Human Resources may require quarantine or surveillance of carriers of diseases and persons exposed to or suspected of being infected with infectious diseases during such period until they are found free of the infectious agent or disease.

Policy/Rule reference: GANA.

- **Complaints and Grievances**

When workplace problems or disputes cannot be resolved informally, employees can turn to the Decatur County School District's internal grievance process. This process addresses alleged violations, misinterpretations, or misapplications of the District's statutes, policies, rules, regulations, or written agreements. It does not apply to performance ratings, job performance, termination, non-renewal, demotion, suspension, reprimands, or the revocation, suspension, or denial of certification of any certified employee. The complaint must be sent in writing to a Level 1 Supervisor (Superintendent) within 10 calendar days of the event/incident as stipulated in Board Policy. Policy/Rule reference: GAE(2) The purpose of this policy is to implement the provisions of O.C.G.A. 20-2-989.5, et seq. In accordance with the foregoing, it is the policy of the Board of Education that certificated personnel shall have the right to present and resolve complaints relating to certain matters affecting the employment relationship at the lowest possible organizational level. The Board of Education encourages all employees to resolve their complaints informally in a spirit of collegiality where possible. This policy and procedure is available where such efforts do not succeed.

Policy/Rule reference: GAE

- **Computers/District Devices**

Decatur County School District hardware, software, and data should be used only for assigned responsibilities and protected from damage, destruction, viruses, theft, and unauthorized access and use. Employees should not expect privacy when using DCBOE electronic resources and should minimize using the Internet for personal reasons during working hours.

Policy/Rule reference: IFBG,IFBGE, IFBGE

- **Confidential Nature of Work**

Student and employee files, records, documentation, and other information are private and confidential. Disclosure of such information is limited by applicable federal and state laws.

- **Conflict of Interest/Dual Pay**

All employees are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards of conduct. While the Decatur County School District recognizes the right of employees to engage in private activities outside their employment with the school district, business dealings that conflict with the interests of the Decatur County School District are not acceptable. Employees should disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including those where the employee's influence could result in personal gain for the employee or an immediate family member.

Employees paid for outside work during regular work hours must forfeit one of the salaries. Employees can be paid for outside work while on vacation leave, jury duty, personal days, or services performed outside the regular workday.

Policy/Rule reference: GAG

- **Critical Days**

Employees cannot take personal/professional leave on days before or after a holiday period during the school year without approval from the superintendent. The principal or director may designate additional critical days as needed and provide them at the beginning of each new school year.

Professional Development days are critical work days, and attendance is expected.

- **Dress Code**

Employees should maintain an appropriate level of personal hygiene and dress appropriately for the school or workplace situation and level of formality. Principals and Directors can determine if the dress is inappropriate and take necessary means to ensure we are all appropriately dressed.

Appropriate Attire: Staff must dress in business or business casual attire. This includes slacks, dress pants, skirts, dresses, blouses, button-down shirts, and appropriate footwear. Professional jeans are acceptable on Friday only unless approved by the supervisor.

Inappropriate Attire: The following items are not permitted during work hours: hats indoors, shorts, exercise clothes (Including yoga pants and gym wear), leggings (unless worn under a dress or skirt of appropriate length) and body forming outfits.

- **Drug-Free Workplace**

A drug-free workplace encourages productivity and helps accomplish the Decatur County School District's mission and goals. The unlawful and/or unauthorized manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance and/or alcohol is prohibited in the workplace for all employees, students, and visitors. In addition, the Decatur County School District will take appropriate personnel action against any employee convicted of a criminal drug offense. All employees are subject to drug and alcohol testing based on reasonable suspicion.

Policy/Rule reference: GAMA

- Drug Screening

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

In order to meet this goal, the Board hereby endorses the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration's anti-alcohol and controlled substances policies, regulations and procedures for transportation workplace drug and alcohol testing programs. The Board shall require testing for alcohol and controlled substances by employees engaged in safety sensitive functions in accordance with federal and state law, which shall include pre-employment, post-accident, random, follow-up and reasonable suspicion testing.

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

The Board will not tolerate unauthorized use, abuse, possession or sale of alcohol or controlled substances by its employees. Individuals who have positive controlled substance test results shall be terminated, as shall individuals whose test results reveal blood alcohol concentrations 0.04 and above and individuals who refuse to submit to a required alcohol or controlled substance test. Individuals whose test results reveal blood alcohol concentrations of at least 0.02, but less than 0.04, and individuals who engage in other conduct prohibited by the regulations may, in the Board of Education's discretion, be terminated.

Drivers must inform their immediate supervisor of any therapeutic drug use, whether by prescription or "over the counter", and must provide a statement from their treating physician that the substance does not adversely affect the driver's ability to operate the bus.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish the procedures needed to ensure that all employees who are subject to the alcohol and drug testing requirements of this policy are provided information that explains the testing requirements with which they must comply.

Policy/Rule reference: GCRA(1)



- **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)**

All employees are entitled to equal treatment in hiring, promotions, compensation, training, and discipline decisions. The Decatur County School District does not consider race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, military status, disability, or any other legally protected status in any employment decision or employment practice. Further, the Decatur County School District does not tolerate retaliation against employees for any legally protected status or for engaging in legally protected conduct. The District will consider requests for accommodation on the basis of religion and will provide reasonable accommodation on the basis of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) qualified disability if it can do so without undue hardship or safety threat. Also see Administrative Regulations, Superintendent's Statements, and EEO Procedures. Also see Responsibilities for Responses to Civil Rights Concerns. Policy/Rule reference: GAAA

- **Use of Equipment and Resources**

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

- **Ethics**

All employees must adhere to the high standards and expectations determined by the Decatur County Board of Education and those described in the Professional Standards Commission Code of Ethics. As public employees are expected to uphold the public trust, employees should not use their positions or professional relationships for personal gain. **All employees of the District are required to notify the superintendent by the end of the next business day following any arrest.** Any misstatement or omission of required information may be reason for dismissal or non-employment. All employees are required to cooperate with any investigation.

- **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act protects the privacy of student education records. As an educator, you are responsible for knowing and following FERPA guidance. <https://www2.ed.gov/ferpa>

- **Employee Fund Drives/Fundraising**

The Decatur County Board of Education must approve all fund-raising, product sales, and employee assistance campaigns.

All fundraising ideas must be submitted annually to the building-level administrators and then submitted for Board Approval. Fundraising is anything that generates funds for financial support. This includes generating funds for a specific employee classroom, project, school, organization, etc.

The Decatur County Board of Education must approve donation requests. Donation ideas include but are not limited to the following:

- ❖ Bring canned food or other items to support a specific organization, individual, family, etc.
- ❖ Setting up Donor Chose or similar requests for specific item donations to support teachers or students
- ❖ Setting up Amazon Wishlist
- ❖ ReallyGoodStuff

● **Illness**

The administrator or his/her designee is to be contacted according to the established procedures at the school/worksites if the employee is too ill to report to work. Medical documentation may be required when employees are absent due to illness or when questions arise concerning approval of requests for sick leave. Unsubstantiated and/or unapproved leave will be entered as Leave Without Pay (LWOP), and will be investigated for further employment action.

Medical Documentation will be required for absences beyond days earned.

Family Medical Leave Paperwork will be required following 5 consecutive absences.

● **Inclement Weather**

When schools and district offices are closed due to inclement weather, announcements will be made via social media and the school call-out system. To update your contact information on Infinite Campus, please see your school's contact person or work site.

● **Internet**

Electronic resources should be used to support assigned responsibilities. Employees should not expect privacy when using electronic systems and should minimize Internet use for personal reasons during working hours. Employees should never access pornographic or other sites prohibited by law or CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) compliance during working hours or any other time when using Decatur County School's electronic resources.

Policy/Rule reference: IFBG, IFBGC, IFBGE

● **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy**

All employees have a right to be treated with respect and dignity and to work in a professional environment free of bias, prejudice, and harassment. The Decatur County School District prohibits harassment, discrimination, or differential treatment of any employee and encourages employees who believe they have been discriminated against or harassed to report the incident to any school or district administrator promptly.

Policy/Rule reference: GAEB

- **Nursing Mothers Act (PUMP ACT)**

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires employers to provide reasonable break time for an employee to express breast milk for their nursing child for one year after the child's birth each time such employee has need to express the milk. Employees are entitled to a place to pump at work, other than a bathroom, that is shielded from view and free from intrusion from coworkers and the public.

- **Pregnant Workers Fairness Act**

Generally, the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA) requires a covered employer to provide a “reasonable accommodation” to a qualified employee’s or applicant’s known limitations related to, affected by, or arising out of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions, unless the accommodation will cause the employer an “undue hardship.”

- **Professional Learning**

Employees can participate in staff development activities that will enhance their professional capabilities.

Policy/Rule reference: GAD

For specific information regarding what qualifies as PD and the approval process, visit the Professional Learning Guidance from Curriculum.

- **Professional Publishing**

Board employees are encouraged to write and prepare professional materials for publication in their area of expertise. Employees who prepare material on their own time without use of school facilities or equipment are not required to submit such material for review prior to publication.

Employees who desire to copyright or patent, and to market, material prepared totally or partially on school time, shall submit a copy of such material to the Superintendent for review. The material shall be accompanied by the following information:

1. The names of persons who participated in preparation of the material;
2. The percentage of duty time spent by these persons during preparation; and
3. A statement as to whether any fees or royalties would be waived in any use or purchase of the material which might be made by the School District.

The Superintendent may authorize the sale of copies of, or reproduction rights to, instructional material prepared by the School District to other school systems, organizations or commercial firms. If the materials so produced are prepared for the School District, the District may choose to own the copyright. Policy/Rule reference: GBT

- Responsibilities for Responses to Civil Rights Concerns

All employees are required to fully comply with all federal and state non-discrimination laws, including Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination and Employment Act (ADEA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Public Law 101-476, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

Questions concerning these policies and procedures should be directed to the administrative offices of the Decatur County Board of Education, 1417 Dothan Road, Bainbridge, GA 39817.

- Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is unlawful and specifically prohibited. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature will not be tolerated. Examples of prohibited conduct include, but are not limited to, unwelcome intentional touching of intimate body areas; employees dating students; graphic or degrading comments about an individual or his/her appearance; the display of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cards, or letters; lewd or suggestive comments or gestures; and off-color language or jokes of a sexual nature. Individuals who believe they are being sexually harassed should immediately notify a building or system-level administrator. Retaliation against a complainant for making a complaint is strictly forbidden.

Policy/Rule reference: GAEB



● Social Media

The use of social media must meet both the public and professional standards we have set for ourselves when communicating not only amongst ourselves but particularly with students and parents.

Educators are strongly cautioned to keep their personal information password-protected from public view. Never allow or encourage students or parents to access personal sites and information. It is inappropriate to “friend” or otherwise personally communicate with, share information, texts, photographs, etc., with a student on any digital platform or device. The following guidelines should be implemented:

- **DCBOE related content should not be posted on your personal media platforms. Instead, you should share the media from the DCBOE page.**
- Please post nothing you would not be comfortable sharing with your students, their parents, or your professional colleagues.
- Never use language that may be deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, libelous, or derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Do not discuss students, parents, or coworkers or publicly criticize school system policies or personnel.
- Do not post images that include students without checking for media release notices on all students.
- Do not reference your students.
- With every post, consider whether it puts your effectiveness as an educator at risk.

● Social Security Number

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

● Solicitation

When dealing with students, parents, or employees, employees cannot solicit, advertise, or endorse one product over another.

No person, firm, corporation, or business can solicit money from, sell, trade, or barter merchandise with students, employees, or school clubs or organizations without the superintendent's approval.

Policy/Rule reference: KJ



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- **Staff Meetings**

Regular staff meetings are necessary for district operations. As necessary, the principal and/or director can call special staff meetings for professional learning, accreditation, and/or workshops. All staff members must attend any or all such meetings designated by the principal and/or director as part of their teaching/employment responsibilities. Meetings may occur afterschool.

- **Strategic Waiver**

Under the Georgia Strategic Waiver School Systems (SWSS) program, certain state education requirements and mandates have been waived for our school system. This waiver allows us greater flexibility to implement innovative practices and tailor our educational approaches to better meet the needs of our students. Please be aware that some traditional procedures and regulations may no longer apply. To request a copy of our waiver, please email the Director of Federal Programs.

- **Telephone/Cell Phones**

Telephone use should be kept to a minimum during working hours. Personal phones should not be used during instructional time without administrative approval for personal business.

- **Tobacco-Free Schools**

Tobacco use is a health hazard inconsistent with the concepts and principles taught in the Decatur County School District. Employees and visitors are prohibited from using tobacco at all school-sponsored events and in/on all school property, including buildings, offices, trucks, automobiles, and buses.

Tobacco-Free includes the use of vapes.

- **Trips Away**

All employees are required to seek permission from their supervisor before leaving campus during work hours. Additionally, employees must sign in and out using the Checkmate system to ensure accurate record-keeping and accountability. This policy helps us maintain a safe and secure environment for everyone.

- **Vehicle Searches**

All vehicles parked on Decatur County School District property (Including but not limited to student, staff, and visitor vehicles) are subject to search.

- Violence in the Workplace

The DCBOE District strongly believes all employees should be treated with dignity and respect. Acts of violence will not be tolerated. Any instance of violence must be reported to the employee's supervisor. All complaints will be fully investigated.

- Weapons

It is unlawful and a violation of Decatur 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.

- Work Day/ Workweek

An employee's workload is defined as those work-related responsibilities assigned to the position and for which the employee is expected to satisfactorily discharge in return for the specified salary. The minimum workday for teachers is eight (8) hours, and the minimum workweek is forty (40) hours. Duties for which the base salary is paid include teaching and teaching preparation, staff meetings, parent and student conferences, 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 employment-related duties.**

Employees should check with their supervisor about their particular schedule. Principals and administrators may schedule staff best to accommodate the needs of their school or building.



Whatever we believe about ourselves
and our ability comes true for us.

Susan L. Taylor

HubSpot

Employment

- **Addendums**

Addendums to employee contracts, which may include provisions for sports, extended day, extended year, and supplemental duties, will be issued in July of each school year. These addendums are subject to review and are not guaranteed from year to year. Employees should be aware that the issuance and continuation of these addendums depend on various factors, including budgetary considerations and program needs.

- **Annual Performance Evaluation**

All employees are evaluated by their immediate supervisor using approved evaluation plans and procedures. Decatur County School System is committed to performance assessment that encourages continuous quality improvement for all employees. All personnel shall have their performance evaluated annually as required by Georgia Code § 20-2-210. Certified personnel are assessed using the GaLeads and the Leader Effectiveness System or other appropriate evaluation programs as determined by the district. Classified employees are assessed using a job description assessment. All employees should receive a copy of their annual evaluation. All certified employees and paraprofessionals are to be evaluated by the end of the school year. Other classified employees are to be evaluated before June 30. Appeals for evaluations can be found in policy GBIA.

- **Assignment**

Employees are assigned to positions based on the Decatur County School District's needs, as well as the employee's training, certification, and other factors.

- **At-Will Employment**

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

- **Background Check**

All new employees must pass a criminal background check as Georgia State Law requires. State law also requires employees to sign a consent form authorizing the District to conduct periodic criminal and/or driver's history record checks for the duration of employment.

Policy/Rule: GAK(1)

• Certification

It is the responsibility of each employee to initiate and complete the application process for the Georgia Educator Certificate and Clearance Certificate, including all forms, transcripts, and other documents that may be required by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Human Resource Services may provide assistance in this process. Certification questions may be answered by visiting the Georgia Professional Standards website at www.GAPSC.com.

- ❖ Certified employees must be eligible for certification before being employed and must maintain certification during employment. All coursework must be approved by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) at www.gapsc.com.
- ❖ Due to the large number of alternative certification programs and the increase in 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 (using the Upgrade Advisor tool) regarding the accreditation and certification of the program in which they are interested before enrolling in the program. Additional information may be found at: www.GAPSC.com.

• Clearance Certificate

All educators, including paraprofessionals, shall hold a valid Georgia Clearance Certificate.

• Contract

Contracts for certified employees and other Board-approved personnel are issued for no more than one school year. A contract of employment is made between an employee and the Decatur County Board of Education as an employee of the system.

Breach of Contract occurs on or after June 1st and will be reported to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

Employees will not be released from their contract unless a suitable replacement is obtained or approved by the superintendent.

Employees fulfilling a full-year contract for the current year must be notified by **May 15** if a contract for the ensuing year will not be offered. All employees must have an Oath of Allegiance on file.

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● Discipline

Discipline is necessary and will be implemented when there is unsatisfactory and/or unacceptable employee performance and/or conduct. Depending on the nature or severity of the offense, Decatur County School District may provide employees with an opportunity to bring their performance up to standard through the use of the following: (1) immediate feedback regarding unsatisfactory performance, (2) factual documentation of performance, (3) employee input and commitment to improving performance, (4) final resolution of the performance issue(s), (5) Professional Development Plan, and/or (6) Progressive Discipline. The District utilizes progressive discipline in which disciplinary actions normally follow a gradually escalating path. However, depending on the seriousness of the offense, more than one Progressive Discipline Action may occur simultaneously, or it may be determined that progressive discipline is not appropriate, and any disciplinary action may be imposed. The action should be consistent with precedent in similar situations, appropriate to the offense, and documented. An employee who holds a certificate with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission may be reported at any time for violating the Code of Ethics for Educators.

● Fair Dismissal

According to the State of Georgia's Fair Dismissal Act [Act 20-2-940], Certified employees can be dismissed or suspended based on incompetence; insubordination; willful neglect of duties; immorality; inciting, encouraging or counseling students to violate state and local laws, regulations and ordinances, or policies and rules of the Decatur County Board of Education; failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training; to reduce staff due to the loss of students or programs; and any other good and sufficient cause. Suspensions are without pay and can last up to 60 days. The Decatur County School District Superintendent or his/her designee can relieve any employee from duty for up to 10 days if the employee's presence could cause serious harm or disrupt students, the school, or other employees. The Decatur County School District Superintendent or his/her designee may also write letters of reprimand for any valid reason. These letters are placed in the employee's District personnel file. Demotions and non-renewal of contracts of certain certified employees are governed by Code Section 20-2-942. A demotion is a job with less pay, less responsibility, and less prestige. The Fair Dismissal Act does not cover transfers.

● Hiring

Individuals are employed by the Decatur County Board of Education on the superintendent's recommendation. Principals and/or system-level administrators will make the offer of employment on behalf of the Superintendent after the individual has successfully completed the required employment and screening process, although some post-employment screening or testing may be necessary.

- **Employee Integrity**

Employees should exemplify honesty and integrity during employment with the Decatur 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, social media presence, 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.

- **Interviewing**

Supervisors will interview the most qualified applicants for positions. The interviewing supervisor recommends hiring decisions to the Superintendent, who then approves them by the Board of Education.

- **Job Abandonment**

Absences for reasons that the Decatur County Board of Education does not approve may be considered job abandonment. Employee absences without approval for three consecutive days will be considered voluntary resignations.

Policy/Rule reference: GARH

- **Job Description**

Human Resources maintains a valid job description for each position. Job descriptions should be updated and maintained regularly, and employees should see their supervisor regarding a request for their job description.

- **Job Posting**

Certified job vacancies will be posted electronically through www.teachgeorgia.org and on the system web page at www.dcboe.com. Classified positions will be posted on the system web page. All positions are posted in a designated area on all school sites.



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- **Open Enrollment Consideration**

Decatur County Schools recognizes special consideration for enrollment of children who are under the primary legal guardianship of full-time DCBOE employees.

Effective 08/01/2024: ALL parents/guardians should recognize School Choice week and follow set guidelines/protocol established for applying for enrollment in the requested primary school for the upcoming school year. DCBOE employees will need to apply during the School Choice window.

- **Personnel Records**

Information in an employee's personnel file is not made public unless required by law or requested by the employee in writing (with a three-day notice).

Employees are entitled to review their employment records upon request. The review must occur in the presence of a member of the agency's human resources office. An employee cannot remove any contents of the file, but photocopies must be provided within a reasonable time after the employee reviews the file and at the employee's expense, pursuant to the Georgia Open Records Act. Unless specifically exempted by federal law, state law, or an order of court documents can be inspected following the request.

It is the employee's responsibility to notify the District of any changes in personal information.

Employees must complete documentation online to change personal information (Name Change-Address-Phone Number). A social security card with the new name is required for name changes.

- **Reassignment**

The Decatur County School District may reassign employees at any time. Some reasons for reassignments are reorganizations, changes in attendance zones, changes in approved programs, changes in student enrollment, and the opening or closing of schools. This list of reasons is not all-inclusive.

- **Reduction in Force (RIF).**

A reduction in force may be caused by a number of factors, including reorganization, the elimination of or a change in programs, or a loss of funding. Suppose it becomes necessary to reduce the certified workforce. In that case, the Decatur County School District will rely on a process that maintains the effectiveness and quality of the educational programs and services and minimizes the number of employees negatively impacted. The Superintendent will authorize a written plan identifying the underlying conditions, the positions affected, and why. Employees who receive written notice that their positions have been eliminated can choose to resign or accept separation under the RIF.

● Re-Employment

The contracts for Administrative/Supervisory and Certified personnel are automatically considered for renewal each year. Individuals whose contracts will not be renewed are notified in writing. Administrative and Certified personnel employed after the contract year begins may be recommended for re-employment after April 15.

● Reference Checks

Personal and professional references are checked for each prospective employee.

● Representation in Meetings

All employees shall be allowed to have an individual of their choosing, excluding attorneys, spouses, and immediate family members (as defined in Administrative Rule GARH-R), present in any Disciplinary Conference. A Disciplinary Conference is any conference held, whether requested by the administrator/supervisor or the Employee, related to a Suspension without Pay, Demotion, Reprimand by the Superintendent, Termination, or Nonrenewal. Annual performance evaluation conferences are not considered Disciplinary Conferences. **Employees should notify the supervisor if representation will be present.**

● Resignation

Certified employees who want to terminate their contracts for the new contract year must submit written notification to their immediate supervisor before **June 1** of the current school year. Certified employees who want to resign after June 1 must contact the Superintendent for approval. The employee cannot terminate the contract without the written consent of the Superintendent. Breach of Contract can be reported to The Professional Standards Commission beyond June 1, and teaching certificates can be sanctioned.

Breach of Contract occurs on or after June 1st. Employees will not be released unless a suitable replacement is obtained.

Classified employees are asked to submit a resignation letter at least two weeks before leaving the Decatur County School District.

● Retirement

- ❖ Teachers, Supervisors, Paraprofessionals, Administrators, Clerical, Campus Police Officers, and School Nurses employed one half-time or more are eligible and required to participate in the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia (TRS).
- ❖ Bus Drivers, Food Service Assistants, Custodians, and Maintenance Workers who work at least 60 percent of their normal work week must establish membership in the Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS). Retirement contributions are payroll-deducted.
- ❖ **Employees are not permitted to use excess leave days in an attempt to "burn" them when approaching retirement.** Our Code of Ethics emphasizes the importance of honesty and

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integrity in all actions. Falsifying sick leave or any other type of leave is a serious violation of this code. Such behavior can be reported and may significantly tarnish an employee's ethical standing within the organization. We expect all employees to adhere to these principles and maintain the highest standards of conduct.

- ❖ Certified staff are required to sign contracts annually, committing to a full school year. Retirees are also expected to fulfill their contractual obligations. Should a retiree wish to leave before the end of the contract period, they may do so only if a suitable replacement is found to ensure continuity and stability in our educational programs.
- ❖ Important Retirement and Social Security Information- As a school system employee it is important to know whether you're contributing to Social Security. For the Decatur County School District, Social Security taxes are not withheld for the following positions: Certified Staff Members, Clerical Positions, and Technology Positions.
- ❖ Planning your retirement is an important step, and DCS is committed to making the process as smooth as possible while respecting the procedures of the many departments involved in your exit. Although TRS may offer different retirement dates, our system follows these guidelines: employees assigned 190 days of work retire on June 1, and employees assigned more than 190 days retire on July 1. We're here to support you every step of the way.

● Substitute Teachers

Substitute Teachers must attend in-service training and meet other requirements. Work days for substitute teachers are 7 hours with a 30-minute break for lunch. After meeting all criteria and being placed on the board-approved substitute teacher list, you may be called for work but are not guaranteed monthly employment, nor will there be any summer pay. Substitute Teachers are expected to follow the Code of Ethics and can be removed from the sub list. See Substitute Handbook for more information.

● Sporting Events

Employees are welcome to attend regular-season sporting events free of charge by showing their employee badge at the entrance. Please note that this benefit does not extend to playoff games, state or regional competitions, or out-of-town games. We encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to support our teams and show your school spirit.

● Transfers

Employees may voluntarily initiate a transfer to another school or department if they meet transfer requirements. Transfers are considered if there are vacancies at the requested job site and the needs of the district. Transfers are not guaranteed based on a vacancy.

An employee is eligible to apply for a transfer if she/he

- ❖ has been recommended for employment for the next school year,
- ❖ has worked at the current site for two years, and
- ❖ is not on a limited contract or professional development plan due to poor job performance or attendance.

Employees requesting the transfer must hold certification in the field where they seek a transfer at the time of the request.

All employees must submit a request by completing the Google Form. Transfer requests will occur annually during January. Requests received are considered through June 15th, and all employee placements are final as of July 1st. Transfer requests must be applied for annually.

Once an employee receives a transfer, the employee is not eligible for another transfer for three years.

Compensation

- **Contracts**

Contracts for certified employees and other Board-approved personnel are issued for up to one school year. A contract of employment is made between an employee and the Decatur County Board of Education as an employee of the system.

Breach of Contract occurs on or after June 1st. Employees will not be released unless a suitable replacement is obtained.

An employee fulfilling a full-year contract for the current year must be notified by May 15 if a contract for the ensuing year will not be offered. All employees must have an Oath of Allegiance on file.

- **Deductions**

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

- **Direct Deposit**

All new employees are required to participate in Direct Deposit for payroll checks. Deposits can be viewed through the employee YOSS portal. **Changes to bank routing information must be done in person at the Board of Education.**

- **Extended Day/Year**

Supplemental pay may be provided to employees who work an extended school day or school year to meet program responsibilities or student needs. For example, some High School Teachers may be asked to work an additional hour beyond the normal eight-hour day to provide student instructional services or to teach an additional period of instruction. Local school administrators must approve Extended Day/Year pay because of student and school needs; such pay cannot be based on tasks normally performed during the regular workday.

- **Overtime**

Employees classified under the Fair Labor Standards Acts as non-exempt are compensated at a rate of 1 ½ their hourly rate beyond 40 hours and/or 1 ½ hours of compensatory time off for each hour over 40 hours within a work week. Overtime worked without advance approval may subject the employee to disciplinary action. Employees classified under the Fair Labor Standards Act as exempt are paid a fixed rate and are not eligible for overtime pay.

Policy/Rule reference: GCRD

- **Pay**

All employees are paid monthly. The central office payroll department will send bookkeepers at each facility a schedule for exact payday before the fiscal year. Payroll will only be released on those dates and as approved by the Superintendent. Pay advances are not allowable.

Pay is calculated by multiplying the number of work days for the assigned position by the employee's daily rate. That amount, plus any supplements, is divided into twelve to determine the monthly pay rate, which runs from September through August. First-year employees' pay may be divided by 13 and will run from August through August for their first year.

- **Retirement**

Except for employees over 60, eligible employees are required to participate in one of the designated Retirement Systems for their employed position. Contributions are payroll-deducted.

Those considering retirement should contact the human resource department two years before retirement for a sick leave calculation and again the year they plan to retire from DCBOE.

Planning your retirement is an important step, and DCS is committed to making the process as smooth as possible while respecting the procedures of the many departments involved in your exit. Although TRS may offer different retirement dates, our system follows these guidelines: employees assigned 190 days of work retire on June 1, and employees assigned more than 190 days retire on July 1. We're here to support you every step of the way.

Employees are not permitted to use excess leave days in an attempt to "burn" them when approaching retirement. Our Code of Ethics emphasizes the importance of honesty and integrity in all actions.

Falsifying sick leave or any other type of leave is a serious violation of this code. Such behavior can be reported and may significantly tarnish an employee's ethical standing within the organization. We expect all employees to adhere to these principles and maintain the highest standards of conduct.

- Certified staff are required to sign contracts annually, committing to a full school year. Retirees are also expected to fulfill their contractual obligations. Should a retiree wish to leave before the end of the contract period, they may do so only if a suitable replacement is found to ensure continuity and stability in our educational programs.

- **Salary**

Salaries for Certified employees are determined by the Georgia teaching certificate they hold and the years of experience approved by the Decatur County Board of Education. Classified employees are paid based on a classified pay scale approved by the Decatur County Board of Education. An experience verification form must be sent to previous employers to verify years of experience. The employee must mail these forms at earlier employers, beginning with the most recent. Salary will be based on verified experience at the end of the first pay period.

- **Sick Leave Calculation**

The human resource department can receive sick leave requests at any time. Retiree requests will be completed ahead of all other requests, and all other requests will be completed as time permits.

- **Social Security**

In accordance with HB37, please be advised that DCBOE does not withhold Social Security taxes from the pay of certified staff members, clerical, and technology positions. Employees are eligible to participate in alternative plans.

At Decatur County Schools, we offer a standout retirement package designed to maximize your financial future. Unlike traditional Social Security participation, we provide a powerful alternative that gives you more flexibility and control over your retirement savings.

WHY OUR RETIREMENT PLAN STANDS OUT:

No Social security deduction
Keep more of your paycheck in your control.

8% Total Contribution to YOUR Personal Account
If you contribute 4% of your salary, we'll MATCH up to 4%
Control & Flexibility

With a 403(b) or 457 plan, you decide how to invest—tailor your portfolio to your goals and risk tolerance. No reliance on SS uncertainties.

Tax-Advantaged Growth
Your retirement savings grow tax-deferred, letting your money work harder for you over time.

- **Teaching Experience**

Certificated employees new to the District will be placed at step one of the appropriate salary and certification level. The salary will be appropriately adjusted upon receipt of verified experience and a valid in-field certificate. Teaching experience gained outside the District in an accredited, Georgia-recognized program will be credited year after year. The daily pay rate for certified employees can be adjusted if the District determines that an employee's initial certification status has changed.

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- Travel Reimbursement

Personal and professional expenses associated with Decatur County School District-approved travel will be reimbursed at the approved District travel rates. To be reimbursed for travel, an employee must submit an approved professional leave form, travel expense statement, confirmation and agenda from the meeting/training/workshop/conference, original hotel or lodging receipt for the date approved on the professional leave form, and a Google map with round trip mileage estimate from the assigned work location to the meeting location.

- Tutoring for Pay

Private tutoring for pay must be done off-campus and not include students assigned to the teacher. Immediate supervisors should be informed if any tutoring services are offered each year.

Benefits

Your employee benefits can be an essential part of the total employment package you receive as an employee – and may add 30% of your salary to your total compensation from the district. Like your personal auto and homeowners insurance, the insurance products offered to Decatur County School employees are designed to protect you and your family members “when life happens.” **Retirement and supplemental plans are provided to help you prepare for the future.** As a school district, several of our benefits are developed and administered by the State of Georgia, and the rules are set by state law. The other benefits options are designed by Decatur County Schools with assistance from our broker/consultant and contracted with various insurance companies and other providers.

The benefits information provided in this Employee Handbook is a simple summary of the benefits available to you and how they work. More information is available upon request to the Decatur County central office benefits department. However, the insurance policies, plan documents, and state regulations for each benefit are the only documents with accurate, specific, and binding information about the actual details of the plan. **These benefits are subject to change at any time.** Nothing in this section of the Employee Handbook creates or implies a contract of employment or an entitlement to any particular benefit.

Benefits Disclaimer

Additional requirements and conditions for benefit plans are not discussed in this handbook. In the event of a conflict between the handbook and a requirement and condition, the Plan Description will prevail. Nothing in this handbook section creates a contract or an entitlement to any particular benefits. Benefits are subject to change at any time.

- Benefit Eligibility

Benefits coverage is available to employees, the employee’s legal spouse under Georgia law, and the employee’s natural children, adopted children, step-children, children in the employee’s legal custody, and those children for whom the employee has a legal requirement to provide coverage. Children can be covered until the end of the month when they turn 26. Children who are disabled by the 26th birthday may continue on coverage with proper documentation of the disability.

- **Benefit Options**

Eligible employees may participate in the State Health Benefit Plan for health coverage. Employees may purchase Supplemental Life insurance for themselves and family members, Dental Reimbursement, Vision Care insurance, Short Term Disability insurance, Legal Services coverage, Cancer insurance, and Critical Illness insurance. Employees may also make pre-tax deferrals to Flexible Spending Accounts for medical and dependent care expenses. The providers of these products, the coverage levels, and the coverage terms and conditions are subject to change. Employees receive notification of such changes during the Open Enrollment period each year. The employee is responsible for notifying the Decatur County Payroll office of any changes that will affect their monthly payroll deductions.

- **Effective Dates of Deductions & Coverage**

Benefits coverage starts on the first of the month following or coincident with one month of employment. Deductions are taken “in advance,” so deductions will start with the paycheck(s) for the month before coverage begins. However, deductions for the Flexible Spending Accounts are “current” for the month they are deducted. Many benefits deductions are taken on a pre-tax basis. If you miss a paycheck due to being on leave without pay or other reasons, you must make payment directly to the Payroll Office, or your coverage will be terminated.

- **Employment Assistance Program**

Decatur County Schools partners with New Foundations Family Services Inc. to provide counseling support for employees. Employees can access counseling services by calling and scheduling an appointment at 229.412.3452. DCS covers the costs beyond what insurance does not pay.

- **Enrollment**

Employees may enroll in benefits upon employment, during the annual Open Enrollment period for the following year, or a Qualifying Event. The Decatur County Payroll office should be notified immediately following any qualifying event. Forms should be completed and received in the Payroll Office within 20 days of employment or the Qualifying Event so changes can be forwarded to the insurance companies by the 30-day deadline. Certain benefits or coverage levels will require you to complete a personal health questionnaire and be approved by the insurance company before coverage and deductions begin. All eligible employees should participate in the Open Enrollment process each year to learn about new benefits options or changes. Open Enrollment typically starts in October each year. Qualifying Events are those changes in family status that the Internal Revenue Service recognizes, making you eligible to change your benefits elections for the year. Qualifying Events include but are not limited to, your marriage or divorce, the birth or adoption of a child, and your or your spouse’s change in employment status that affects benefits eligibility (including your spouse’s Open Enrollment period).

● Retirement Plans

All eligible employees must participate in one of the state-provided retirement plans. New hires who are over 60 years of age upon employment may choose not to participate. The primary plans (TRS and PSERS) are defined benefit pension plans, meaning that your retirement benefit is described in the plan materials, and your contribution combined with Decatur County School's contribution will fully fund your retirement benefit.

Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia – All regular employees who work at least half-time in their positions are required to participate in TRS. A portion of your salary will be contributed to the plan each payday. Covered positions include Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Administrators, Nurses, Clerical Staff, and Campus Police Officers. Refer to the guidelines and regulations at www.trsga.com

Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) of Georgia – All other non-temporary employees of the school district who are not eligible for TRS will participate in PSERS. Covered positions include non-supervisory positions in the Maintenance and Food Services departments, Custodial Employees, Bus Drivers, and Bus Monitors, among others. Refer to the guidelines and regulations at www.ers.ga.gov

- 403(b) and 457 Supplemental Plans
- Decatur County/ Core Bridge(Valic)

The district offers pre-tax deferral to annuity plans under these sections of the Internal Revenue Code. These are supplemental retirement plans, so the funds are not readily or easily available until retirement.

● Returning to Work After Retirement

Returning to work after retirement is subject to salary and service limitations outlined by Georgia law and TRS, PSERS, and ERS policy. Employers must certify and obtain approval from the appropriate retirement system before a retiree returns to work. It is strongly advised that retirees contact their retirement system before returning to employment to determine if and how their benefits may be affected.



ATTENDANCE/ ABSENCES & RISK MANAGEMENT

- Attendance

Daily attendance and punctuality are performance expectations for all employees. In the event that absence is necessary, employees are responsible for contacting their supervisor prior to the start of the workday. The specific call in protocol for each school or department will be discussed and reviewed during pre-service meetings at each school. Employees are expected to call in for each day of absence unless they are otherwise notified by their supervisor, or unless they are placed on an approved leave of absence. Employees who are excessively absent are subject to disciplinary action up to and including the recommendation to terminate employment. Employee absences without approval for three consecutive days will be considered a voluntary resignation by the employee.

- Deductions

While an employee receives Sick Leave pay, benefits deductions continue to be taken from the paycheck. If the employee uses all available Sick Leave before the end of the FMLA period or if the employee is receiving payments from Workers Compensation, he or she must continue to pay for benefit deductions directly to the payroll office each month or any benefit coverage may lapse. In the event coverage lapses, deductions and coverage may begin again when the employee returns to work depending on the requirements of the particular coverage in question.

- Leave

When you are on leave, whether it be for vacation, personal reasons, or medical purposes, **no other work duties should be performed** during this period.

- Bereavement Leave

Georgia law allows school district employees to use accrued, unused Sick Leave as Bereavement Leave to receive pay for up to **five days** away from work due to the death of an **immediate family member**. (Relatives are defined as husband or wife, parents, children, brothers, sisters, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, and any relative living in the immediate household of the employee).

Such leave must be approved by the immediate supervisor. Leave taken for bereavement shall be subtracted from the accrued sick leave of the employee.

Policy/Rule: GARH

- Family Medical Leave (FMLA)

Employees are eligible for a leave of absence under the FMLA once they have worked for the district for twelve months and a total of 1250 work hours. Leave under the FMLA can be approved for up to 12 weeks in a rolling 12-month period for 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 exigency arising from the fact that the employee's family member (the covered service member) is on covered active duty. Qualifying exigencies are defined as short-notice deployment (seven or less calendar days); military events and related activities; child care and school activities; financial and legal arrangements; counseling; rest and recuperation (up to fifteen calendar days per instance); post-deployment activities; parental care; 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 caregivers leave to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the service member.

Employees seeking FMLA leave must fill out the appropriate forms with the human resource department prior to or immediately following any extended absences.

Absences covered by Workers' Compensation are considered to be FMLA leaves of absence.

Employees who deliver a baby during the first twelve months of employment will be allowed to take a leave of absence for the period of disability after delivery (normal delivery six weeks and cesarean delivery eight weeks).

Policy/Rule: GARH, GBRIG



- Paid Parental Leave Act (PPLA)

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

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.

A qualifying life event means:

The birth of a child of an eligible employee;

The placement of a minor child for adoption with an eligible employee; or

The placement of a minor child for foster care with an eligible employee.

The maximum amount of paid parental leave that may be taken by an eligible employee during a rolling 12-month period is 240 hours, regardless of the number of qualifying life events that occur during such period.

The rolling 12-month period shall be measured backward from the date an eligible employee first uses parental leave.

Parental leave may be taken as needed and may be taken in increments of less than eight hours. The smallest increment of parental leave that may be taken is 2 hours.

Any unused paid parental leave that remains 12 months after the qualifying event shall not carry over for future use.

Unused paid parental leave shall have no cash value at any time of the eligible employee's separation from employment with the Board of Education.

Paid parental leave under state law shall run concurrently with any leave provided under federal law.

Eligible employees requesting paid parental leave must submit the district's designated form to the Superintendent or designee at least 20 school days in advance of the requested leave start date.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop paperwork needed to administer paid parental leave, which shall specify the documentation required to establish the existence of a qualifying life event.

- Jury Duty

Employees will receive regular pay when absent due to a jury duty summons. Employees who are subpoenaed as a witness and who have no direct personal interest in the legal proceedings will be allowed to be absent and will receive regular pay.

Policy/Rule: GARH

- Living and 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.

Police/Rule: GARH

- Military Leave

Employees who are members of the National Guard or Reserves may be granted up to 18 days of paid leave each federal fiscal year for training or active duty. Documentation of the duty and dates of service must be provided in advance.

Policy/Rule: GARH

- Personal Leave

Georgia law allows school district employees to use up to three days of accrued, unused Sick Leave each school year to receive pay during absences due to personal reasons. Advance approval of this Personal Leave is required except in emergency situations. Personal Leave will not be approved for the day immediately preceding or following school holidays, during pre-planning, post-planning, or on a teacher in-service day without prior approval of the Superintendent.

Policy/Rule: GARH

- Professional Leave

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

Policy/Rule: GARH

- Return to Work

Employees are expected to return to work at the end of the FMLA period with a full release to perform all duties. The employee will return to the same position and work location as prior to the leave of absence in most circumstances. Employees who are unable to return to work at the end of the approved leave of absence will resign and are eligible for re-employment when they are cleared to work by the physician.

- Sick Leave

Sick Leave will NOT be advanced at the beginning of the year. Earned leave will post at the end of each month. Earning months are as follows:

10 Month (Total for Year 12.50) July-April

11 Month (Total for Year 13.75) July-May

12 Month (Total for Year 15) July-June

Sick Leave is provided under Georgia law so employees can receive pay during absences related to medical issues for the employee or an immediate family member, as well as for certain other absences. Sick Leave is accrued at 1 ¼ days per working month for certified employees, and classified employees. Sick leave is meant to be used only when needed. Documentation may be required any time employees are absent due to illness or whenever questions arise concerning approval of requests for sick leave. Employees are not paid for unused sick leave when they separate from employment.

Policy/Rule: GARH

Employees are not permitted to use excess leave days in an attempt to "burn" them when approaching retirement. Our Code of Ethics emphasizes the importance of honesty and integrity in all actions. Falsifying sick leave or any other type of leave is a serious violation of this code. Such behavior can be reported and may significantly tarnish an employee's ethical standing within the organization. We expect all employees to adhere to these principles and maintain the highest standards of conduct.

- Vacation

All twelve month employees, except custodians, earn ten (10) vacation days per school year. Custodians earn five (5) vacation days per year. The Superintendent or designee shall prepare employee holiday and work schedules each school year. Vacation schedules must be approved by the building administrator or immediate supervisor. All earned vacation must be taken during the school year, July 1-June 30, and any unused vacation days will be forfeited.

Policy/Rule: GBRK

- Workers' Compensation

Employees are entitled to workers' compensation benefits for payment of medical treatment and wage loss of compensation on the job injuries. Employees must treat with a physician listed on the District's Panel of Physicians. A Traditional Panel of Physicians is posted in common areas e.g. break rooms, meeting areas for employees etc. If an employee sustains an on the job injury they are required to provide immediate notification to their building level Principal or district level administration. Delay in notification can result in denial of the workers' compensation claim. A completed Report of Injury should be completed and sent to the District Office within 48 hours of the accident. As part of our commitment to the workplace safety and compliance, all employees involved in a workplace injury or illness investigation under the Workers' Compensation process will undergo drug and alcohol testing.

- **Sick Bank**

The Decatur County School District provides a sick leave bank for all contributing employees to utilize after their accumulated sick leave has been exhausted. Employees may join and utilize sick bank only in accordance with the administrative procedure set in Board policy. For more questions regarding sick bank contact the payroll department at the Central Office.

Policy/Rule: GBRIB(1)

- **Voting**

Polls in Georgia are open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m., and often advance voting is allowed before the day of elections. Therefore, it is unlikely that time away from work would be necessary for an employee to vote. Employees should consult their supervisor to arrange for time for voting, if needed.

Additional Resources

- [Media Handbook](#)