

Newton County School System Certified Employee Handbook



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Mission Statement

"The mission of the Newton County School System is to provide educational excellence for all students."

Belief Statements

Educational Excellence is the primary goal of the Newton County Schools so that graduates can think critically, solve problems, make good decisions and succeed in the workplace;

Schools should provide a leadership role in the development of a balanced educational experience, socialization, opportunity for personal, physical and mental fitness, and basic living skills;

The curriculum should provide students with knowledge, skills and attitudes for contributing to the betterment of society;

Quality faculties and staffs who model the attitudes and desire to learn are vital to successful schools. Recruiting and retaining a quality staff is a high priority in a quality school system. Educators should be pro-active regarding change;

A positive school climate providing self-enhancing experiences for students and staff is vital for achievement;

School personnel should have input in decision-making, especially when decisions affect them;

Parents have an obligation to nurture their child's educational development; schools have an obligation to involve parents in the education of their children;

The education of our youth is the responsibility of the entire community; Open communication and involvement are critical elements. Input from the community is welcome and desired by the board of education and administration.

Schools are affected by the values of the community and should seek to influence values in a "positive" way;

The opportunity for an education is a fundamental right;

Every student needs to feel they are cared about, have value and are capable of learning;

Education is a life-long process.

Message from the Superintendent,

We are pleased that you have chosen Newton County School System as the place to begin or continue your career. Our belief is that you are now part of a system of highly qualified and highly effective employees. You have been selected as a part of our workforce because we believe that you have the skills, experiences, and desire to assist our system in meeting its mission.

The Human Resources Department has prepared this handbook to highlight opportunities and benefits available to you as an employee and to inform you of Newton County Board of Education policies and procedures related to your employment. Complete system policy and procedure manuals are available at each work site, and can also be accessed by visiting our website: www.newtoncountyschools.org.

It is our belief that an informed employee has a greater potential for efficiency and excellence. Therefore, we will update this handbook as necessary. We have the expectation that you read and be familiar with the contents of the *NCSS Employee Handbook* and other information which may be available to you.

Sincerely,

Samantha M. Fuhrey, Ed.S.
Superintendent

Performance Evaluation

Newton 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 educators are assessed under state evaluation programs and/or locally developed evaluation programs. Classified employees are assessed using locally developed evaluation programs. Specific questions about the NCSS evaluation program should be directed to your building level administrator or supervisor.

Certification/Licensing

It is the responsibility of all certified employees to obtain and maintain Georgia certification. Certification forms and information are available at the Georgia Professional Standards Commission web site, <http://www.gapsc.com/>.

Teachers and administrators must hold certificates issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Certification requirements may be found at the Georgia Professional Standards Commission web site, <http://www.gapsc.com/>.

All paraprofessionals must hold a Paraprofessional Certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Certification requirements may be found at the Georgia Professional Standards Commission web site, <http://www.gapsc.com/>.

All nurses should possess licensure at the minimum of an LPN.

Questions regarding certification should be directed to the Newton County School System Certification Office. Please refer to the NCSS telephone directory for phone numbers and email addresses.

Penalty for Failure to Provide Certification

Employment contracts are issued to certificated staff. These contracts are contingent upon the employee securing and continuing to hold a valid in-field certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission in the area needed to perform the duties assigned to the employee. If an employee is not certified, the daily rate of pay may be adjusted to that of a substitute teacher retroactive to the beginning date of employment under the contract or to the date the certificate became invalid, whichever is most recent. In addition to this, the position of an individual who is not certified may be posted as a vacancy and filled by a candidate who is highly qualified in that area. Newton County School System adjusts salaries to conform to the certificate level approved by the Professional Standards Commission of Georgia.

Compensation

To attract and retain the most qualified teachers and support personnel, Newton County School System maintains competitive salaries by conducting regular individual job and market analysis of Griffin RESA and Metro Atlanta school districts as well as other employers.

Payday/Direct Deposit

All employees are paid monthly with earning statements issued on the last workday of the month, with the exception of November and December when employees are paid prior to the Holiday break. Direct deposit to a bank account is available to all benefit-eligible employees. However, direct deposit slips are no longer printed and distributed on payday. Employees can access and view their direct deposit information online from any NCSS network computer by clicking on the link <http://ng-4263-b/dsviewer/>.

Penalty for Failure to Meet Contractual Obligation

Employment contracts are issued to certificated staff. These contracts are contingent upon the employee securing and continuing to hold a valid in-field certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Newton County School System adjusts salaries to conform to the certificate level approved by the Professional Standards Commission of Georgia. Certificated staff must hold a valid Georgia certificate in the field to which assigned. If a person is unable to be appropriately certified, the daily rate of pay may be adjusted to substitute teacher rate from the date of employment or the date the certificate became invalid, whichever is most recent. In addition to this, the position of an individual who is not certified may be posted as a vacancy and filled by a candidate who is highly qualified in that area.

Annual Leave Days and Holidays

Employees who earn annual leave (12 month employees) will accumulate days at a rate of 0.84 days per month for a total of ten (10) days per year.

Vacation is earned at the rate of one day per twenty-three (23) days worked. Vacations may be taken at any time after the days have been earned subject to approval by the immediate supervisor and the Superintendent.

System Calendar

NEWTON COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM

2015-2016 Approved School Calendar

Jul 2015						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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July

- 20 New Teacher Orientation/Technology Conference (July 20-23)
- 24 Pre-Planning for All Staff (July 24-30)
- 28 Open House-High School (5-7 PM)
- 29 Open House-Elementary School (5-7 PM)
- 30 Open House-Middle School (5-7 PM)
- 31 First Day of School for Students!

September

- 3 Progress Reports Issued to Secondary Students
- 7 Labor Day Holiday
- 11 Early Release Day for Parent Conferences

October

- 2 End of 1st Nine Weeks
- 5 Teacher Work Day/School Professional Learning
- 8 Report Cards Issued
- 19 Fall Break (Oct. 19-23)

November

- 6 Early Release Day for District Professional Learning
- 12 Progress Reports Issued to Secondary Students
- 23 Thanksgiving Break (Nov. 23-27)

December

- 18 End of 2nd Nine Weeks
- 21 Winter Holiday Break (Dec. 21-Jan. 1)

January

- 4 Teacher Work Day/Planning Day
- 5 Students Report for Second Semester
- 7 Report Cards Issued
- 18 Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday
- 29 Early Release Day for District Professional Learning

February

- 10 Progress Reports Issued to Secondary Students
- 11 Winter Break/Bad Weather Make-Up Days (Feb. 11, 12, 15)
- 26 Early Release for Parent Conferences

March

- 11 End of 3rd Nine Weeks
- 14 Teacher Work Day/School Professional Learning
- 17 Report Cards Issued

April

- 4 Spring Break (April 4-8)
- 21 Progress Reports Issued to Secondary Students

May

- 24 Last Day of School for Students/Report Cards Issued
- 25 Post Planning Days for All Staff (May 25-26)
- 30 Memorial Day Holiday

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Benefits

Benefits are a large part of the total compensation package and are designed to meet the most important needs of Newton County School System employees. In order to meet the ever-changing needs of our employees, we are continually reviewing and updating these benefits offerings. The following pages are an overview of the benefits provided by Newton County School System. Because of the importance of the benefits package, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the details of these plans from a variety of sources including booklets, information sheets and our system website at www.newtoncountyschools.org under Departments/Business and Administration/Benefits.

Insurance Benefits

Insurance benefits become effective on the first day of the month following the completion of work for one full calendar month and a proper payroll deduction.

Temporary employees or employees who work less than halftime are not eligible for benefits.

Health Insurance

NCSS employees have the opportunity to subscribe to group health insurance. Both individual coverage and family coverage options are available. Employees may choose between several types of health plans:

Complete packets of information on all plans are available from the Employee Benefits Clerk in the Business Office.

Open enrollment is a period of time that occurs each year when employees may enroll or change options or coverage, subject to the conditions described in the plan. The open enrollment period, unless otherwise announced, usually occurs mid-October through mid-November. Coverage for changes or enrollments become effective the following January 1.

Dental, Hearing and Optical Plan

NCSS provides an optional Direct Reimbursement Plan for all full-time employees which cover 50% of most dental, optical, and hearing expenses up to a maximum of \$2,000 in annual reimbursements. Beginning July 1, 2012, full time NCSS employees may select from the following coverage options: Employee Only for \$16.80/month; One Spouse or Child for \$52/month, and Two or More Dependents for \$74.40/month. These premiums are paid pre-tax under the Section 125 Plan.

Life Insurance

NCSS provides free life insurance for each full-time employee in an amount equal to an employee's annual salary (rounded up to the next thousand) plus \$5,000. In addition to the coverage provided by the NCSS, a full-time employee may purchase an additional 1 to 3 times annual salary coverage (the cost of coverage is determined by your age). Coverage for a spouse and children is also available.

Supplemental Critical Care Insurance

NCSS offers, through Allstate, a supplemental policy for critical illness. The optional premium-based critical illness policy covers heart attack, stroke, and cancer. Employees of the NCSS may purchase the coverage at a monthly cost for the individual and/or family. These premiums are paid pre-tax under the Section 125 Plan.

Short Term Disability Insurance

Short-term disability insurance is available to all eligible employees on a payroll deduction basis. The weekly salary benefit equals 66.67% of the employee's basic salary, rounded to the nearest dollar, up to \$1,000/Weekly. If approved, short-term disability benefits begin on the 8th day after total disability occurs and will extend up to 25 weeks from the disability date. Pregnancy or its complications are covered as any other condition.

Long Term Disability Insurance

Long term disability is paid for by the school system for all full-time employees. A disabled employee would begin receiving benefits 180 days after the date the disability begins. If an employee is disabled the benefits would last until age 65. The amount of a disability benefit would be the lesser of 60% of monthly earnings to a maximum of \$6,000 or 70% of monthly earnings less any deductible sources of income.

Workers' Compensation

Employees may be entitled to Workers' Compensation benefits if injured on the job. The injury must arise out of and in the course of employment. *The injured employee must provide notice of the injury immediately, no later than three (3) days after the accident,* to the employer, the employer's representative, or the employee's immediate supervisor. Failure to do so may result in the loss of benefits. The injured employee may select a medical care provider from the panel posted by the Board of Education. Only those providers listed are authorized to provide medical care for a work-related injury. The panel of physicians is posted in conspicuous places in all locations maintained by the Board of Education and may also be obtained from the Worker's Compensation Representative in the Business Office. Please note that should an employee choose to receive medical care from a physician who is not on the approved list, such care would be considered unauthorized and the school system would not be responsible for the cost. Absences designated as worker's compensation injuries will run concurrently with FMLA. Employees who are absent from work on an approved leave of absence (STD, LTD, LWOP or Workers Compensation) for one (1) year and are unable to return to work in a 12 month period, will be terminated from employment with NCSS. This separation will be considered a voluntary separation from employment due to failure to return from a leave of absence; however, employees will have the option to reapply should they obtain clearance from their physician to return to work at a later date.

Generally, employees are not eligible for Workers' Compensation benefits for injuries sustained: Going to or coming from work; during deviations from the scope of employment (e.g., a person making a delivery drives to a place unconnected to the employment); as a consequence of imported danger (e.g., an employee's own attire or a personal weapon causes injury to the employee); when an employee engages in a prohibited act; when the employee engages in horseplay; during recreational or social activities; if an employee is found to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol; and during times in which the employee is not subject to the employer's control (e.g., not on the premises, not during the regularly scheduled work day). Any questions should be addressed to your immediate supervisor or the Worker's Compensation Representative in the Business Office.

Section 125 Plan (Cafeteria Plan)

Employees of Newton County School System participate in a plan that uses before-tax dollars to pay for benefits. Benefits that are included in the Section 125 Plan are medical, dependent care, and supplemental insurance. This will have the result of reducing an employee's gross taxable salary so that less federal and state taxes are paid.

Flexible Spending Reimbursement Accounts

Newton County School System provides two types of flexible spending accounts to be deducted before taxes. The Dependent Child Care Spending Account provides up to \$5,000 reimbursement for day care center and baby-sitter expenses or after-school care. The Medical Reimbursement Spending Account provides up to \$2,500 for reimbursement of medical, dental, vision, OTC medication and/or hearing expenses not covered by insurance. Please contact the Benefits office for more information or see additional information provided on our Benefits webpage at www.newtoncountyschools.org.

Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS)

Teachers, administrators, supervisors, clerical employees, paraprofessionals, and various Central Office staff are eligible members of TRS. Benefits become available after 30 years of service, regardless of age, at 25 years of service with early retirement penalties, or at age 60, after ten years of service. Employees who have 9 ½ years of service earn disability retirement benefits if permanently disabled, as well as survivor's benefits that are paid to a beneficiary. Members must contribute 6% of their salary. A booklet detailing the plan is available from the Newton County School System Employee Benefits Office. You can also gather additional information from the website <http://www.trsga.com/>.

Supplemental Retirement Savings Plan

Beginning in October 1988, the Newton County Board of Education began a supplemental retirement program for all full-time employees. **The Board will contribute 2.5% of the employee's annual salary to the supplemental retirement savings plan and employees are required to contribute at least one-half (0.5) percent to a supplemental program (403b Plan).** All employees are required to participate in the supplemental retirement savings plan.

Medicare

All employees hired after April 1, 1986, are required to pay Medicare contributions. Medicare provides the medical benefits within the Social Security Administration.

Credit Union

The Newton County School System is a participant in the Georgia Federal Credit Union. Services include share savings accounts, share draft checking, insured money market accounts, a variety of loan programs including mortgage and home equity loans, access to the AVAIL automated teller machine network, convenient payroll deductions and more.

Leave

Newton County School System recognizes that our employees will encounter personal situations that may require employees to take time away from their job. Our leave options are designed to not only be flexible and consistent with employee needs but also comply with legal leave requirements.

Sick Leave

Sick leave for full time employees is earned at the rate of 1.25 days per month times the number of months worked. Sick leave may be accumulated up to a maximum of 180 days. Please refer to [Board Policy GARH, Employee Leaves and Absences](#).

With the supervisor's approval, an employee may use sick leave for absences due to the following reasons:

- Illness or injury

- Exposure to contagious diseases which might endanger others
- Illness or death in employee's immediate family (spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, in-law equivalents of the above and any relative residing in the employee's home).

Certified employees who transfer to Newton County School System from other Georgia counties may transfer up to 45 days of sick leave earned after July 1, 1978. According to state statute, the transfer of leave must take place within one year of termination from the previous position.

Sick leave unused at the time of retirement may be applied to service credit with TRS, or purchased from employees according to current Board policy with the following stipulations:

- Employee must have been employed full time for a minimum of nine months.
- Employee must request payment for unused leave within one year or forfeit all monies due.
- Employees who have transferred sick leave from another Georgia school system must work for Newton County School System for at least one contract year to be paid for unused sick leave.

Personal Leave

Up to three days of accumulated sick leave may be used each year for personal or professional reasons. Approval of the supervisor is necessary prior to the date of the planned absence. The employee is not required to disclose the specific purpose for the leave. Personal leave may not be taken when the presence of the employee is considered essential for effective school/school system operation. **Teachers may not take personal leave on the day before or after a student holiday.** Personal leave may not be carried over from year to year. Unused personal leave will be carried over as accumulated sick leave. Please refer to [Board Policy GARH, Employee Leaves and Absences](#).

Military Duty Leave

Employees will be paid for a maximum period of 18 working days for ordered military duty. Applicable federal and state laws will be followed. Please refer to [Board Policy GARH, Employee Leaves and Absences](#).

Professional Leave for Certified Personnel

An employee may request leave to attend specific professional activities or to receive in-service training. Leave requests must be approved by the supervisor and submitted to the superintendent or designee for approval at least two weeks prior to the requested absence. Approval of the request does not commit the system to payment of any expenses.

Please refer to [Board Policy GARH, Employee Leaves and Absences](#).

Returning From Leave

When returning from medical/disability leave, the employee must submit to the supervisor a release from the physician stating that the employee is able to perform the essential functions of the job. A contracted employee who is returning to work after an approved leave of absence must notify Human Resources in writing by March 15th of their intention to return for the following school year. The employee will be placed in a job comparable to the one held before the leave upon the receipt of a release to return to work from a physician. Employees who have been on an extended leave without pay and did not participate in the annual benefits open enrollment process must contact the Benefits Office.

Effective January 1, 2011, employees who are absent from work on an approved leave of absence (STD, LTD, LWOP or Workers Compensation) for one (1) year and are unable to return to work in a 12 month period, will be terminated from employment with NCSS. This separation will be considered a voluntary separation from employment due to failure to return from a leave of absence; however, employees will have the option to reapply should they obtain clearance from their physician to return to work at a later date.

Jury Duty, Subpoena, and Other Court Order

All employees of the Board of Education are encouraged to serve as jurors when selected to do so. They will be paid their full salary during the time they serve and may retain any remuneration received from the court. Please refer to [Board Policy GARH, Employee Leaves and Absences](#). Employees who are absent from work due to having been subpoenaed regarding their employment with Newton County Schools will be paid their full salary during the time they are absent, but any remuneration will be assigned to the Board of Education. Employees will not be required to pay for a substitute while being served subpoenas related to their employment.

Family and Medical Leave Act

Newton County School System is in full compliance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993. The FMLA grants qualified employees twelve weeks of unpaid leave every twelve months, which may be used for the purposes listed below:

1. for incapacity due to the pregnancy, prenatal care, or the birth of a child;
2. to care for the employee's child after birth, or placement of a child by adoption or foster care;
3. to care for the employee's spouse, son/daughter, or parent with a serious health condition;
4. for the employee's own serious health condition;
5. to take leave during a family member's active duty due to a qualifying exigency; or
6. to care for an injured service member with a serious injury or illness (up to 26 weeks).

To be eligible for FMLA, an employee must have been employed by the school district for at least 12 months and for at least 1,250 hours during the prior twelve-month period.

The school system requires that any leave request based on a family member or employee's own serious health condition be supported by an approved health care provider's statement. Additionally, an approved health care provider's release to return to work will be required for all employees who were on leave due to their own serious health condition.

The employee must provide at least 30 days notice of their intention to take leave when possible. If 30 days notice is not feasible, the employee should submit a request for family/medical leave to their supervisor when they have been absent for five (5) or more consecutive days. Please note that the employee is also responsible for notifying the school/department of their absence and following their supervisor's normal leave procedures. The employee should make a reasonable effort to schedule any treatment related to the serious health condition in a manner that will not unduly disrupt the operations of the school district.

With limited exceptions, any eligible employee who takes leave under FMLA is entitled to be restored to their job or an equivalent position.

Detailed information concerning FMLA is available through Newton County School System Human Resources Department or [Board Policy GBRIG, Family and Medical Leave](#).

Medical Leave

Employees will be placed on Medical Leave due to a serious illness of the employee ONLY. FMLA eligibility will be determined based on the employee's length of service within the school system. Medical Leaves are granted to employees with less than one year of service or who have exhausted their 12 weeks of FMLA with the Newton County School system. Employees should complete the FMLA packet and return the leave request form to their immediate supervisor and the Human Resources department for processing. Medical leaves will not be granted to employees for the care of their family members. [The maximum leave period for medical leave is 12 months, but such leave may not extend beyond the current school year.](#) Employees who are absent from work on an approved leave of absence (STD, LTD, LWOP or Workers Compensation) for one (1) year and are unable to return to work in a 12 month period, will be terminated from employment with NCSS. Employees will have the option to reapply should they obtain clearance from their physician to return to work at a later date.

Policies and Procedures

Newton County School System recognizes the importance of meeting employee needs and utilizing employee abilities. For the effective operations of Newton's schools, it is necessary that sound personnel policies are known and understood by all employees. These policies ensure consistency and fairness for all employees.

Policy changes and clarifications are subject to change. These changes are made known to employees through memos, administrative bulletins, meetings, email correspondence, and system publications. Policies summarized in this book are meant to provide employees with only a general overview of Board policy related to personnel.

This handbook, the salary schedule, and references to the number of days to be worked should not be considered an employment contract. It is the responsibility of each employee to understand NCSS Board policies and administrative procedures. However, if clarification of information

contained in policies and procedures is needed, contact your immediate supervisor for assistance.

A listing of each section of NCSS Board policies can be accessed on the NCSS web site at www.newtoncountyschools.org under the Board of Education heading and sub-heading NCSS Policy Manual.

Equal Opportunity Employment

The Newton County School System will not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, race, color, disability, religion or national origin in the recruitment and selection of certificated professional personnel. It is the express policy of the NCSS Board of Education to comply with all appropriate laws and regulations relating to discrimination. Please refer to [Board Policy GAAA, Equal Opportunity Employment](#).

Employee Fingerprinting (Criminal Background Checks)

All personnel employed on or after July 1, 2000, must be fingerprinted. Fingerprinting of all employees will also occur on or before every 5th year of employment. Fingerprinting will run concurrently with the submission of certification renewal applications to the Professional Standards Commission for certificated employees. Non-certificated employees will be fingerprinted every five years based on the last digit in their hire date. Please refer to [Board Policy GAK \(1\), Criminal Background Check](#) for further details.

Contracts

Contracts for all certified employees and other Board-approved personnel are issued for no more than one school year. The employee is responsible for having the contract notarized.

Any certified employee who wishes to resign a position during the contractual period OR after they have signed their contract for the following school year, must submit a “Request for Resignation/Release” form to Human Resources and provide the Board of Education 30 days written notice. A request for release does not guarantee approval. If the request for resignation/release of contract is submitted after June 1st, only those requests which are listed in Board policy as acceptable reasons for release/resignation will be considered. The release from the contract will be pending the employment of a suitable replacement. The Board may approve a release with shorter notice in certain circumstances, if the situation is verified and deemed to be an emergency. Please refer to [Board Policy GBO, Professional Personnel Resignation](#).

An employee who is 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. An employee who holds a contract for less than one full year will not necessarily be offered a full contract for the ensuing year.

Certified and Classified Personnel Transfers and Separations

A reduction in force could result from changes in the size or nature of the student population, changes in the curriculum, consolidation of positions, or budgetary limitations. The determination of employees to be demoted or terminated is based on approved procedures established by the Board of Education and school system administration.

Employees who do not have a written contract are classified as “at-will” employees. Either the employee or the employer can terminate employment of “at-will” employees at any time with or without cause.

Transfers – Certified Personnel

Employee Requests for Transfers

After teachers have been employed for three consecutive years in the same school or department, they are given the opportunity to request an intra-system transfer by use of the Transfer Request Form that is distributed each spring. It is not necessary to determine the existence of an opening prior to listing a school as a preference. A list of personnel desiring transfers to a particular school will be available to each principal. Principals will consider requests for transfer when filling positions for the upcoming school year. It is the responsibility of the teachers desiring a transfer to contact the Principals regarding available positions when posted on the vacancy list. The deadline for intra-system transfers that do not require approval by the losing Principal will be announced each year. Transfers granted after May 1st require the approval of the losing Principal. Please refer to the Transfer Process guidelines found on SharePoint and on the NCSS website.

Lateral Transfers to New or Existing Schools

The Board of Education has the right to make lateral transfers in personnel when it becomes necessary due to the following reasons:

- Overstaffing within the teaching field or grade level;
- Change in attendance areas;
- Change in program or staffing within a program;
- Any reason that the Board of Education (within the limits of its authority to manage and control the school system) deems necessary for the orderly and effective management of the school system. *Please note that this may include lateral transfers of immediate family members employed by the NCBOE who are assigned at the same work location, school, or central office facility. Such transfers will be conducted based upon appropriate guidelines and NCSS standard operating procedure.*

The following criteria will be observed in effecting these transfers.

1. The needs of the instructional program and after-school activities of the school(s) involved must be considered.
2. A teacher must hold a valid Newton County contract and valid teaching certificate in the field in which the transfer is being considered.

3. When the need for a transfer is known, volunteers will be given top priority. Principals must inform qualified teachers of the vacancy and accept voluntary transfers when offered.

4. If there are no volunteers, involuntary transfers will be based upon seniority* within the building (elementary) or subject matter field where the transfer is needed except as follows: Teachers receiving or scheduled to receive a supplement for after-school activities may not be required to transfer.

*Seniority within the system takes precedence over seniority within the school.

Conflicts of Interest

Employees should be aware of situations and activities that may be construed as a conflict of interest. The Newton County Board of Education is committed to the employment and assignment of employees in a manner that best meets the needs of the school system. In keeping with this commitment, the Board realizes the importance of eliminating any question of impropriety in personnel practices which have the potential to foster staff conflict of interest, charges of favoritism or otherwise adversely affect the orderly operation of the system. Please refer to [Board Policy GAG, Staff Conflict of Interest](#).

Endorsements

Newton County School System employees carry the responsibility of being a representative of the school district. Employees should be aware that decisions and actions that could be interpreted as written or oral endorsements of a product or service should be considered in light of whether the action may be interpreted as a conflict of interest.

Actions that could be construed as a conflict of interest or a violation of the [Code of Ethics for Educators](#) may jeopardize the employee's employment relationship with NCSS. It is advised that before an employee makes a final decision concerning endorsements of any kind that they discuss the situation with their principal or supervisor.

Non-School Employment

Newton County School System employees are reminded that their job assignments within the school system are their first obligation and if outside employment is affecting their performance, the employee could be forced to choose between their primary employment with the school system and outside employment.

Each Principal/Administrator has direct responsibility for evaluating the effects of outside employment on personnel assigned to their operation.

Tutoring

A teacher may serve as a tutor when it is deemed beneficial to the student. However, teachers may not give private instruction for a fee to students presently enrolled in their classes. These students should receive help from the teacher after school hours if necessary. The preference of the Board is that a teacher serving as a tutor not be on the staff of the school in which the student is enrolled. Tutoring may not interfere with a teacher's regular school responsibilities.

Dual Pay

Newton County School System employees are prohibited from receiving dual pay for services rendered during the regular working hours. The employee must forfeit either the regular pay or the pay from the other agency, organization or individual. Employees may receive payment for services rendered while on a non-paid leave of absence or for services performed other than during the regular working day.

Child Abuse Reporting

Newton County School System employees are considered mandated reporters. Thus, any employee who has reason or cause to believe that a child is being or has been abused shall notify the principal or the school system's designee, who shall report that abuse immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. Any such reports of "suspected" child abuse are required to be reported in accordance with Georgia law and the protocol for handling child abuse cases for Newton County, Georgia. Please refer to [Board Policy JCI, Child Abuse or Neglect](#).

Political Involvement

The Board recognizes that employees have the same civic responsibilities and privileges as any other citizen including the privilege of campaigning for and holding public office and actively supporting candidates and causes in the political arena. The Board also recognizes that the school system is entrusted by the citizens of the county and the State of Georgia with a vitally important public mission and that an employee's political activities must not interfere or conflict with an employee's job or with the best interest of the school system.

An employee who participates actively in a political activity cannot be promoted, demoted, transferred, or terminated solely because of his/her political participation as long as such actions follow the guidelines stated in this policy. Please refer to [Board Policy GAHB, Staff Political Activities](#).

Personnel Attire

It is the expectation of the NCSS Board of Education that all personnel employed by Newton County Schools will dress in a professional manner. Dress should be appropriate for the position.

Personnel Time Schedule

All full time employees of the Board of Education work a minimum of 40 hours per week. The principal or supervisor sets a schedule within this policy for the time of arrival and departure of all employees assigned to their operation. Please refer to [Board Policy GBRC, Work Load](#).

In order for an organization to achieve its desired goals, good attendance and punctuality are necessary. Therefore, regular and prompt attendance is expected and required of all employees. If it is absolutely necessary to be absent or late to work, employees are responsible for contacting their supervisor at least one day in advance if possible.

Each employee is responsible for reporting absences and tardiness based on the protocol set forth by their immediate supervisor. If you are absent for at least three (3) consecutive days due to illness, you will be responsible for providing a doctor's excuse upon your return to work. However, if you fail to call in and notify your supervisor of your absence after three (3) days of consecutive absence, we will presume you have abandoned your position. If you must leave work for any reason before the end of the day, you must inform your supervisor. Violation of time and attendance guidelines will result in the employee being placed on an attendance plan in order to improve tardiness or absenteeism.

In case of emergency or other circumstances when it is impossible to give advance notice, employees are responsible for contacting their supervisor or designee prior to the time to report to work.

Staff Meetings

Regular staff meetings are a necessary part of the school operation. Each school shall have a schedule for staff meetings on a regular basis. Special staff meetings for professional learning, accreditation, and/or workshops as deemed necessary should be called by the principal. All contractual staff members are required as part of their teaching/employment responsibilities to attend all such meetings as designated by the Principal. Please refer to [Board Policy GBRC, Work Load](#).

Health and Safety

The Board recognizes the responsibility for ensuring the safety of all employees. Therefore, it is the policy of the Board to take all practical steps to develop and implement a safety program for all employees, which will provide and maintain safe and healthful working conditions, adequate protection equipment and develop operating procedures and practices that are in compliance with federal, state, and local legislation pertaining to accident prevention.

To help ensure this, an employee is responsible for the following activities:

- Knowing the potential hazards of the job;
- Learning and following the safety practices required by management;
- Using health and safety devices required by the job (the Newton County Board of Education has adopted a policy regarding Infectious Diseases; all employees are required to be familiar with [Board Policy GANA, Infectious Diseases](#));
- Correcting and/or reporting safety hazards immediately;
- Reporting immediately to supervisor any accident or injury;
- Obeying "No Smoking" regulations. All students are prohibited from tobacco use on campus or at school activities, functions, or events. While fulfilling their duties as school district employees, staff members shall not use tobacco in the presence of students or on school system property;
- Operating machinery or equipment only if qualified to do so;
- Maintaining good housekeeping practices including keeping all fire exits clear and firefighting equipment accessible.

Drug Free Workplace

The Board provides a drug-free workplace and professes that the use of illicit drugs and the unlawful possession and use of tobacco and alcohol is wrong and harmful.

Employees are prohibited from using or displaying drug, alcohol and tobacco products in front of students while the employee is on duty, during the normal school day or while on duty at any school or system sponsored function. Please refer to [Board Policy GAN, Employee Tobacco Use](#).

Personnel use of Illicit Drugs

For criminal drug statute convictions of employees for violations occurring in the workplace, the following steps must be followed:

- a. Employees must notify the Newton County School System administration in writing of any criminal drug statute conviction for a violation occurring in the workplace (in NCSS buildings and vehicles and at school sponsored activities) no later than five calendar days after such conviction.
- b. The Newton County School System will take one of the following actions, within 30 calendar days of receiving notice with respect to any employee who is so convicted:
 - (1) Take appropriate personnel action against such an employee, up to and including termination, consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; and/or
 - (2) Require such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state or local health, law enforcement or other appropriate agency.

An on-going drug-free awareness program is provided to inform employees about the dangers of drug abuse. See NCSS [Board Policy GAMA, Drug-Free Workplace](#), for the penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug abuse violations occurring in the workplace and drug and alcohol counseling, rehabilitation, and re-entry programs.

Personnel Smoking (Tobacco Use)

Employees are prohibited from using or displaying tobacco products in front of students while the employee is on duty during the normal school day or while on duty at any school or system sponsored function. Tobacco use is banned from all school system vehicles and shall not be used in any school system facilities. Please refer to [Board Policy GAN, Employee Tobacco Use](#).

Arrest Reporting Procedures

All employees of the District are required to notify their immediate supervisor and the Human Resources Department within five (5) business days or on the *first* day back at work following the arrest (whichever is earlier). The term arrest shall include physical arrest by law enforcement and/or any charges filed against the employee not resulting in a physical arrest.

Complaint Procedures

The 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 school level shall follow the chain of command established by their principal. The Principal is directly responsible to the Superintendent. System-wide personnel shall follow the chain of command established by their immediate supervisors.

Scope

The purpose of this policy is to provide a way for the Board and its employees to reach solutions to problems, disputes, or controversies that may occur. Employees maintain good morale and enhance effective job performance, and citizens of the community are better served when employers and employees exert sincere efforts toward constructive solutions to problems that may arise. The intent of this policy is to provide, in a clear and concise way, for the solution of complaints at the lowest feasible administrative level, as fairly and as expeditiously as possible. Complaints that may be addressed under this policy are more specifically defined below and generally include those matters that affect the terms or conditions of employment.

Employees who allege discrimination or harassment on the basis of age, gender, race, color, religion or disability may also use this policy specifically as a complaint procedure. In the case of alleged discrimination based on the aforementioned factors, employees may complain directly to the school system Title IX Coordinator who will make a prompt investigation. Any supervisor who becomes aware of such a complaint should notify the Title IX Coordinator no later than on the business day immediately following his/her knowledge of the complaint. A poster may be found at each worksite with the contact name and information for the aforementioned coordinator.

Please refer to the Newton County Board of Education [Board Policy GAE, Complaints and Grievances](#) for specific procedural steps. Complaint Procedure forms may be obtained from a supervisor or by calling the Human Resources Department.

Scope of Complaint: Exclusions

This complaint and grievance procedure applies to any claim by professional employees certificated by the Professional Standards Commission. These employees must have been affected in their employment relationship by an alleged violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of various compliances required of the school district.

This procedure does not apply to:

- Performance ratings contained in personnel evaluation and professional development plans;
- Job performance;
- Termination, non-renewal, demotion, suspension, or reprimand of any employee;
- The revocation, suspension, or denial of certificates of any employee

A certified employee, who chooses to appeal under Code §20-2-1160, shall be barred from pursuing the same complaint under this policy.

Procedure

Initiating a Complaint and Requesting a Hearing

In order to resolve matters in a fair, equitable, and expeditious manner, the Board of Education has developed a procedure outlined in Policy GAE. This policy is designed to

identify all parties involved, provide timelines, and assist in organizing complaint information.

Harassment Policy

The Board is committed to providing a workplace free from distractions caused by sexual harassment and all other forms of harassment or discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, age, national origin or handicap; or inappropriate or offensive conduct. It is the Board's expectation that all personnel conduct themselves in a highly professional manner and respect coworkers, students, parents, and customers. In this regard, the Board prohibits sexual harassment, all forms of discrimination, and other unprofessional conduct. Sexual harassment in the school environment is unacceptable conduct and will not be tolerated or condoned.

Sexual Harassment may include, but may not be limited to:

- unwelcome sexual advances;
- requests for sexual favors;
- verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature including subtle pressure for sexual activity, touching, pinching, patting, or brushing against;
- comments regarding physical or personality characteristics of a sexual nature;
- sexually oriented “kidding”, “teasing”, double-entendres, and jokes;
- demanding sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning an individual’s employment or educational status.

Please refer to [Board Policy GAEB, Harassment](#).

Personnel Records

It is the responsibility of employees to inform Human Resources when there are changes in the home address, phone number and number of dependents. It is important to be aware of the person named as beneficiary of the employee’s life insurance and retirement plans and to notify the Benefits Office should a change in beneficiary be desired.

Information contained in an employee’s personnel file is not made available to others except as may be required by law, requested by the employee, or to those school personnel in an official capacity on a need-to-know basis. Otherwise, requests for information not specifically approved by the employee will be referred to the Director of Human Resources. Georgia’s Open Records law lists certain records that are protected from public disclosure. Among those listed are medical records, home address information, Social Security Numbers and confidential evaluations.

The Newton County School System will release, with written approval from the employee,

information about the employee’s current salary, dates of employment, job title, and work location.

The employee may review personnel information, except for confidential references, contained in the employee’s personnel file. In order to review this file, an appointment with the appropriate representative in the Human Resources Department is required.

Any personnel records kept by principals or immediate supervisor shall also be kept confidential with access only to those school officials on a need to know basis in an official capacity. The immediate supervisor of active employees may retain a copy of the individual performance and evaluation records. Please refer to [Board Policy GAK, Personnel Records](#).

Use of Electronic Resources

The Newton County Board of Education recognizes that electronic media provides access to a wide variety of instructional resources in an effort to enhance educational opportunities for staff and students. Use of electronic resources must be in support of assigned responsibilities. All electronic, telephony, and communications transmitted by, received from, or stored in these systems are the property of the Newton County School System. Users of such systems shall have no expectation of privacy. Inappropriate use of these systems may result in disciplinary action. Please refer to [Board Policy IFBG, Internet Acceptable Use](#).

In addition, employees are not permitted to tape record conversations or meetings without the express permission and knowledge of other personnel and employees. Therefore, employees without official authorization to do so, should refrain from tape recording meetings, conferences, and other sanctioned events on NCBOE school grounds and/or property.

Standards of Conduct

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

Definitions

“*Certificate*” refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate, license, or permit issued by authority of the Professional Standards Commission.

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

“*Student*” is any individual enrolled in the state’s public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual between and including the ages of 3 and 17.

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

“*Revocation*” is the invalidation of any certificate held by the educator.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Standards

Standard 1: Legal Compliance – An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes.

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

Standard 2: Conduct with Students - An educator shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. committing any act of child abuse, including physical and verbal abuse;
2. committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
3. committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
4. engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student;
5. soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student; and furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student under the educator's supervision or control (including but not limited to the educator's residence) to consume alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs - An educator should refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. being on school premises or at a school-related activity while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs;
2. being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcohol. A school-related activity includes, but is not limited to, any activity sponsored by the school or school system (booster clubs, parent-teacher organizations, or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum i.e. Foreign Language trips, etc; and
3. failing to monitor and/or prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by students who are under the educator's supervision (including but not limited to at the educator's residence or any other private setting).

Standard 4: Honesty - An educator shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting or omitting:

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

Standard 5: Public Funds and Property - An educator entrusted with public funds and property shall honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. misusing public or school-related funds;
2. failing to account for funds collected from students or parents;
3. submitting fraudulent requests or documentation for reimbursement of expenses or for pay (including fraudulent, or purchased degrees, documents, or coursework);
4. co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts;
5. using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
6. using school system property for personal gain.

Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct - An educator shall maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee;
2. accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;
3. tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
4. coaching, instructing, promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involves students in an educator's school system and from whom the educator receives remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee. These types of activities must be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the Georgia High School Association.

Standard 7: Confidential Information - An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material and other information.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law;
2. sharing of confidential information restricted by state or federal law;
3. violation of confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items, etc.; and
4. violation of other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

Standard 8: Abandonment of Contract - An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or education agency for the duration of the contract.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

Standard 9: Failure to Make a Required Report - An educator should file reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5), or any other required report.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. failure to report all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission.
2. failure to make a required report of a violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner.
3. failure to make a required report of any violation of state or federal law soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. These reports include but are not limited to: murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, kidnapping, any sexual offense, any sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving a controlled substance and any abuse of a child if an educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.

Standard 10: Professional Conduct - An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the teaching profession.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position, or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students.

Standard 11: Testing - An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

Reporting

Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of local policies and procedures and/or the chain of command for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the Professional Standards Commission must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, personnel director, superintendent, etc.) The Commission notifies local and state officials of all disciplinary actions. In addition, suspensions and revocations are reported to national officials, including the NASDTEC Clearinghouse.

Disciplinary Action

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

1. unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11;
2. disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators;
3. order from a court or a request from DHR that the certificate should be suspended or denied for non-payment of child support;
4. notification from the GHEAC that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan;
5. suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate;
6. violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession; and
7. any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.

An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not serve as a volunteer or be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, substitute teacher or in any other position during the period of his or her revocation, suspension or denial for a violation of The Code of Ethics. The superintendent and the superintendent's designee for certification shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the superintendent and the superintendent's designee must hold GaPSC certification.