

Towns County Schools

Faculty and Staff Handbook

2020-2021

www.towns.k12.ga.us

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TOWNS COUNTY SCHOOLS
STUDENTS REACHING THEIR HIGHEST POTENTIAL

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WELCOME BACK...

Please let me extend a special welcome to our school system and provide an introduction to the policies and procedures that serve as a guide to our professional employment relationship.

The Towns County School System is an educational system that is interested in your successful employment. We firmly believe that if you meet with professional success in the workplace, the students we serve will meet with greater opportunities for success in their education.

This manual can serve as an excellent reference for many of your questions regarding compensation, benefits, personnel policies and procedures, and some of our other policies and procedures.

It is my sincere hope that you find employment with Towns County Schools fulfilling and satisfying as we serve the students of our community by providing the necessary structure and resources for all schools to operate in a manner conducive for student success.

*Sincerely,
Dr. Darren Berrong, Superintendent
Towns County Schools*

FOREWORD

The purpose of this handbook is to set forth, on a limited basis, procedures and rules for the Towns County Board of Education.

From time to time it may be necessary to revise procedures which might affect the operation of the schools of Towns County.

A copy of the Towns County Board of Education Policy Manual can be found online at <https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/index.aspx?S=4159>

NONDISCRIMINATION

In the operation of the Towns County School System no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, handicap, disability, or sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination in educational programs, activities, or employment practices. The following staff persons have been designated to field questions, comments, and complaints regarding instances of alleged discrimination.

Title II Coordinator	Mrs. Stephanie Moss 706-896-2279
Title V Coordinator	Mrs. Erica Chastain 706-896-4131
Title IX Coordinator (Equity in Sports Act)	Dr. Darren Berrong 706-896-2279
Americans with Disabilities Coordinator	Mrs. Michelle Pyrluk 706-896-4131
Carl Perkins Act Coordinator	Mrs. Melissa McConnell 706-896-4131
Section 504 Disabilities Act Coordinator	Mrs. Erica Chastain 706-896-4131

COMPLIANCE WITH FAIR LABOR STANDARDS ACT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) sets minimum wage, overtime pay, equal pay, record keeping, and child labor standards for employees who are covered by the act and are not exempt from specific provisions. Towns County School System employees who are non exempt from overtime and minimum wage requirements which include most non-certified positions are exempt from overtime requirements.

Non-exempt employees are not required to work beyond the 40 hour work week. All overtime must be approved in writing by the Superintendent or his/her designee in advance.

TOWNS COUNTY SCHOOLS VISION

Towns County Schools shall provide an exceptional education for all students in a safe, caring environment that develops lifelong learners who become responsible individuals, independent thinkers, and productive citizens.

TOWNS COUNTY SCHOOLS MISSION

The mission of Towns County Schools is that all students will achieve at their highest potential.

TOWNS COUNTY SCHOOLS BELIEFS

1. Students require a safe environment in which to learn.
2. Students learn best when provided challenging, rigorous educational opportunities utilizing current best practices.
3. Extra-curricular activities are important for the development of well-rounded students.
4. Effective teaching strategies guide students to actively engage in problem solving and higher order thinking skills that energize and maximize learning for all students.
5. The educational process involves shared responsibility, communication, and collaboration among home, school, and community.

THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS

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

Definitions

(a) “Breach of contract” occurs when an educator fails to honor a signed contract for employment with a school/school system by resigning in a manner that does not meet the guidelines established by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

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

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

(d) “Educator” is a teacher, school or school system administrator, or other education personnel who holds 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.

(e) “Student” is any individual enrolled in the state’s public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual under the age of 18. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the year of graduation.

(f) “Complaint” is any written and signed statement from a local board, the state board, or one or more individual residents of this state filed with the 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.

(g) “Revocation” is the invalidation of any certificate held by the educator.

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

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

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

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

(l) “Monitoring” is the quarterly appraisal of the educator’s conduct 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 **(m) “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.

(3) Standards

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

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

1. committing any act of child abuse, including physical and verbal abuse;
2. committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
3. committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
4. engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student that would violate a state or federal law;
5. soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student;
6. furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or
7. failing to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by students under the educator’s supervision (including but not limited to at the educator’s residence or any other private setting).

(c) Standard 3: Alcohol or Drugs - An educator shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. being on school or Local Unit of Administration (LUA)/school district premises or at a school or a LUA/school district-related activity while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs; and
2. being on school or LUA/school district premises or at a school-related activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcohol. A school-related activity includes, but is

not limited to, any activity sponsored by the school or school system (booster clubs, parent-teacher organizations, or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum i.e. Foreign Language trips, etc).

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

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

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

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

(f) Standard 6: Remunerative Conduct - An educator shall maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

(g) Standard 7: Confidential Information - An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material and other information. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law;
2. sharing of confidential information restricted by state or federal law;

3. violation of confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items, etc.; and

4. violation of other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

(h) Standard 8: Required Reports - An educator shall file reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5), or any other required report. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. failure to report all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission;

2. failure to make a required report of a violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner; and

3. failure to make a required report of any violation of state or federal law soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. These reports include but are not limited to: murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, kidnapping, any sexual offense, any sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving a controlled substance and any abuse of a child if an educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.

(i) Standard 9: Professional Conduct - An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to a resignation that would equate to a breach of contract; any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position; or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students.

(j) Standard 10: Testing - An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. committing any act that breaches Test Security; and

2. compromising the integrity of the assessment.

(4) Reporting

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

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

(5) Disciplinary Action

(a) The Georgia Professional Standards Commission is authorized to suspend, revoke, or deny certificates, to issue a reprimand or warning, or to monitor the educator's conduct and performance after an investigation is held and notice and opportunity for a hearing are provided to the certificate holder.

Any of the following grounds shall be considered cause for disciplinary action against the holder of a certificate:

1. unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 -10 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
2. disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 -10 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
3. order from a court of competent jurisdiction or a request from the Department of Human Resources that the certificate should be suspended or the application for certification should be denied for non-payment of child support (O.C.G.A. §19-6-28.1 and §19-11-9.3);
4. notification from the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan guaranteed by the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation (O.C.G.A. §20-3-295);
5. suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate
6. violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession (O.C.G.A. §16-13-111); and
7. any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.

(b) An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not serve as a volunteer or be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, substitute teacher or, in any other position during the period of his or her revocation, suspension or denial for a violation of The Code of Ethics. The superintendent and the educator designated by the superintendent/Local Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the superintendent and the superintendent's designee must hold GaPSC certification. Should the superintendent's certificate be revoked, suspended, or denied, the Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that the superintendent whose certificate has been revoked, suspended, or denied is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200; 20-2-981 through 20-2-984.5

CERTIFICATION

It is the responsibility of each certified employee to maintain a valid certificate issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. If an employee is unable to meet certification requirements that meet the professional qualifications established by Towns County Schools the daily pay rate for the employee will be adjusted to that of a substitute teacher retroactive to the beginning date of employment for the year or to the date the certificate became invalid, whichever is most recent. Failure to maintain a valid certificate meeting professional qualification requirements is grounds for termination.

Certificate Renewal Process

- All certificate renewals for employees of the Towns County School System are processed by the Personnel Director through an online GaPSC portal.
- Prior to submitting certificate renewal paperwork employees should contact the Personnel Department to set up an appointment to have the fingerprints/background check completed.
- Most of the process is now online. Employees should login to the mygapsc.org account to complete personal affirmation questions before the Personnel Director can request renewal.

- All employees holding a certificate must be making progress toward or have met their professional learning goal or plan in addition to participating in a professional learning community to satisfy professional learning requirements for renewals. The following criteria will require an employee to complete a professional learning plan instead of a professional learning goal:
 1. Holding an Induction Certificate
 2. Out of Field
 3. New to Position (changing schools etc.)
 4. Out of the profession for a while
 5. New to Georgia

Employment Requirement

As of July 1, 2015, employment by a Georgia LUA is required for renewal of any professional Georgia certificate. Those who are not employed at the time of renewal may receive a Certificate of Eligibility that may be converted to a professional certificate upon employment.

However, the employment requirement **does not apply** to renewal of professional certificates held by educators who have worked for at least one year on a renewable professional Georgia certificate at any time in their career.

Unsatisfactory Performance Evaluations

An educator who has received any combination of **2** Unsatisfactory, Ineffective, or Needs Development annual performance evaluations in the previous **5** year certificate validity period may not receive a renewable certificate until the performance deficiencies have been satisfactorily remediated. Please see the Performance Evaluations page at www.gapsc.com for more information.

PLUs Are No Longer a Requirement

In the past Professional Learning Units (PLUs) have been used by Georgia Educators to fulfill certificate renewal requirements. This is no longer a requirement. Educators will engage in job embedded learning with their colleagues supported by workshops when needed. Principals and superintendents will sign assurance forms attesting their educators have been engaged in continuous learning. Professional learning will be about the quality of the work rather than counting 10 PLUs. As of January 1, 2016, PLU courses should only be taken for certificate renewal if they are directly related to an employed educator's Professional Learning Goal or Plan.

Professional Growth Rating

Within the TKES platform supervisors will rate each employee holding a certificate on meeting their professional growth goal or plan utilizing the following rubric. Supervisors will also attest to the educator's participation in professional learning communities. Keeping documentation of participation is the responsibility of each individual educator. A blue professional learning folder has been provided for the purpose of maintaining documentation which will be turned into the supervising administrator at the end of the school year.

Towns County Schools Professional Growth Rubric

Level VI: The educator actively participates in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and other professional growth experiences and **continually** applies the knowledge and/or skills in job embedded practice and provides evidence that their experience has been extended to lead others in the acquisition and application of knowledge **and** skills, and the educator is making significant progress toward or has met his or her professional learning goals.

Level III: The educator actively participates in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and other professional growth experiences **and consistently** applies the knowledge and/or skills in job embedded practice, and the educator is making progress toward or has met his/her professional learning goals.

Level II: The educator actively participates in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and other professional growth experiences and **inconsistently** applies the knowledge and/or skills in job embedded practice, **and** the educator is making limited progress toward his/her professional learning goals.

Level I: The educator participates in Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and other professional growth experiences but **does not** apply the knowledge and/or skills in job embedded practice, or the educator does not participate in professional learning opportunities, or the educator has not made progress toward his/her professional learning goals.

Criminal Record Check Requirement

Certified Staff:

All certified personnel are required to be initially fingerprinted and/or submit to a criminal background check upon employment and renewal of certificate. Certificates are renewed on a 5 year cycle. The fingerprint/background check must be completed within the calendar year of the renewal. A fee is required for the fingerprint and/or background check for certified staff. This fee should be paid by check or money order made payable to the Towns County Board of Education. Prior to conducting the fingerprint services information will be provided to the employee with the current price for the service. Currently the cost is \$40 but is subject to change slightly depending on the price established by the agency processing the background check service.

Classified Staff:

All classified personnel are required to be initially fingerprinted and/or submit to a criminal background check upon employment. Fingerprints/background checks will be renewed on a five year cycle. If the classified personnel holds a certificate through the GaPSC the background check will be conducted during the renewal year.

Paraprofessional Certification

Federal Requirements: Paraprofessionals hired after January 8, 2002, shall have one of the following:

- Completion of at least 2 years of study at an institution of higher education; or
- An associate's (or higher) degree; or
- Met a rigorous standard of quality and can demonstrate through a state or local academic assessment:
 - A. Knowledge of, and ability to assist in instructing, reading, writing, and mathematics; or

- B. Knowledge of, and ability to assist in instructing reading readiness, writing readiness, and mathematics readiness, as appropriate

Georgia Requirements: All Georgia Paraprofessionals must hold a valid state license issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. The Towns County School System is responsible for ensuring that all applicable federal hiring requirements are met.

The Clear Renewable license is valid for five years. The ending date is to be June 30 of the fifth license year. To renew the license the paraprofessional must:

- Be employed as a paraprofessional in a Georgia school system;
- Have a criminal record check
- Participate in ongoing job embedded professional learning related to their professional learning goal or plan and participate in a professional learning community.

It is the responsibility of each paraprofessional to maintain a valid license issued by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. Failure to maintain a valid license is grounds for termination. A license may be renewed beginning October 1 prior to its expiration the following June 30th.

The following documents must be submitted to the Central Office in order to apply for certificate renewal.

- Certificate Update Application
- Verification of Lawful Presence with valid documentation
- All renewals are processed electronically from the Central Office to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

No conditional Paraprofessional Licenses are issued.

ANNUAL PERSONNEL EVALUATIONS

The Quality Basic Education (QBE) Act requires that personnel employed by local systems have their performance evaluated annually by appropriately trained evaluators. To comply with this portion of the QBE Act, personnel in the Towns County School System will have their performance evaluated annually using the instruments and processes described below.

Superintendent: The Towns County Board of Education will evaluate the Superintendent using the Superintendent's Evaluation Instrument developed by the Georgia School Board Association.

Central Office Certified Personnel: The Superintendent will evaluate all certified central office personnel using the Georgia Leadership Evaluation Instrument (GLEI) following the procedures specified in that instrument.

Central Office Classified Personnel: The Superintendent or designee is responsible for the annual performance evaluation of all classified central office personnel using locally developed instruments appropriate to each job role.

Principals: The Superintendent will evaluate each principal using the Georgia Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) following the procedures specified in this instrument.

Assistant Principals: The Principal will evaluate his/her assistant principal(s) using the Georgia Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES) following the procedures specified in that instrument.

Counselors: The Principal is responsible for the annual performance evaluation of the counselor(s) at his/her school using the state developed evaluation instrument.

Media Specialist: The principal is responsible for the annual performance evaluation of the media specialist at his/her school using the state developed evaluation instrument.

Teachers: The Principal is responsible for the annual performance evaluation of each teacher assigned to his/her school. He/she may engage the assistance of appropriately trained assistant principals in completing the annual performance evaluation for teachers. The Special Education Director will evaluate teachers in the Special Education Department. The Georgia Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) will be used to evaluate all teachers except the In School Suspension Coordinator. The TKES Evaluation will be used consistently with the procedures outlined in the TKES Evaluation Manual.

School Nurse: The Elementary School Principal is responsible for the annual performance evaluation of the School Nurse. He/she may engage the assistance of the principals in the other schools in completing the annual performance evaluation for the School Nurse. The School Nurse will be evaluated using a locally developed instrument appropriate to the job.

Speech Language Pathologist: The Special Education Director is responsible for the annual performance evaluation of the Speech Language Pathologist using the Georgia Speech Language Pathologist Evaluation Instrument.

School Psychologist: The Special Education Director is responsible for the annual performance evaluation of the School Psychologist using a locally developed evaluation instrument.

In School Suspension Coordinator: The Towns County High School Principal is responsible for the annual performance evaluation of the ISS Coordinator using a locally developed instrument.

Paraprofessionals:

The Principal is responsible for the evaluation of all paraprofessionals assigned to his/her staff. He/she may engage the assistance of assistant principals, and/or teachers with whom the paraprofessional works to complete the evaluation. The Special Education Director will be responsible for paraprofessionals in the Special Education Department. The evaluation will be done using a locally developed instrument.

School Secretaries: The Principal is responsible for evaluating the secretary(s) at his/her school using a locally developed instrument.

Maintenance Supervisor/Maintenance Personnel:

The Facilities Director will evaluate the Maintenance Supervisor using a locally developed instrument appropriate to the job. The Facilities Director will also evaluate other Maintenance Personnel but may engage the assistance of appropriately trained Maintenance Supervisors. Maintenance Personnel will be evaluated using a locally developed instrument appropriate to the job.

Custodians:

The Facilities Director is responsible for evaluating the custodians at the schools using a locally developed instrument.

Cafeteria Manager/School Food Services Bookkeeper: The School Nutrition Program Supervisor will evaluate all cafeteria managers and the school food service bookkeeper using a locally developed instrument.

Cafeteria Personnel: The School Nutrition Program Supervisor will evaluate each cafeteria employee using a locally developed instrument.

Transportation Director, Bus Drivers and Bus Mechanic: The Superintendent will evaluate the Transportation Director using a locally developed instrument, The Transportation Director will evaluate each bus driver and bus mechanic using a locally developed instrument.

Evaluation Information:

All personnel will have their annual performance evaluation discussed with them and will be asked to sign the evaluation indicating receipt of the evaluation.

All aspects of the personnel evaluation process and results are confidential and are shared only with appropriate personnel (evaluated employee, school administrators, appropriate personnel (evaluated employee, school administrators, appropriate supervisors and superintendent). All evaluations are filed in personnel files at the Central Office. Official evaluation records may be transferred from one school to another; however, they will not be transferred outside of the system without written permission of the employee evaluated.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Professional learning is the continuing education of teachers, administrators, and other school employees for improving learning of a diverse population.

In Towns County, we believe that professional learning is fundamental to school improvement and facilitates effective change and innovation. The Towns County School System is committed to improving student achievement by implementing and supporting research-based practices in professional learning.

Towns County School Professional Learning Goal Statement:

Towns County Schools has chosen to provide our educational team with academically focused and professional learning opportunities that facilitate positive and measurable outcomes that help the educational team achieve their highest potential.

Towns County Schools Professional Learning Motto:



Procedures for Professional Learning

Anyone wishing to attend professional learning (by his/her own choice or by administrative request) should follow these procedures:

1. **Prior to attending professional learning** complete the Professional Learning Request Google Form. The form has been shared with you and should appear when you go to Google Forms in your email account. A link to the form is also provided on the Towns County Schools website Professional Learning page. Submit the Professional Learning Request form as much in advance as possible. The Professional Learning Coordinator will communicate approval status of the request via email. **Approval must occur 2 weeks prior to the event.**
2. Prior to registration a purchase order must be approved for the cost of registration. The Professional Learning Coordinator will inform you if you need to do a purchase order. Typically these will be completed by the Professional Learning Coordinator or the supervising administrator. **Once a purchase order number is provided** the individual requesting professional learning should register for the professional learning opportunity unless otherwise instructed by the Professional Learning Coordinator.
3. **After professional learning is approved** the participant should enter an absence in Absence Management. This is a professional learning leave request and requires a note before submitting. In the note indicate the name of the professional learning and the location.
4. If the event requires travel please see the regulations for travel on subsequent pages.
5. After attending the professional learning event participants should complete the Employee Expense Statement (found on the Finance Department page of the TCS website). You must attach a copy of the agenda from the event. If an agenda is not available please attach a handout from the event.
6. Submit the Employee Expense Statement for approval to the building principal. The building principal will submit the form to the Central Office for approval.
 - **Requests for reimbursement must be received within 15 working days of the approved activity.**

TRAVEL PROCEDURES

The State of Georgia Statewide Travel Regulations are used by the Towns County Board of Education as a guide.

- Travel expenses will not be reimbursed unless the current employee expense statement is completed and submitted in a timely manner. **Travel expense forms should be submitted within 15 days following completion of the activity/expense incurred.**
- **Employees incurring lodging expenses should submit a purchase order for the cost of lodging in a timely manner. If the per diem for lodging found at <https://www.gsa.gov/travel/plan-book/per-diem-rates/per-diem-rates-lookup/> cannot be met please make a note on the purchase order and provide documentation of the reason.** The Finance Department will print a check for the employee to take to the hotel. The employee should present the check and the attached tax exemption forms to the clerk upon check in. The receipt for lodging should be returned to the Central Office with the travel expense form.
- The current mileage reimbursement rate is **\$0.575 per mile.**
- Meals associated with overnight travel are reimbursable; however, meals where overnight travel is not required are only reimbursed in very limited situations. The meal reimbursement is **\$28.00**

per day for three meals. The single meal reimbursement is **\$6.00 for breakfast, \$7.00 for lunch, and \$15.00 for dinner.**

- The travel regulations allow a higher meal reimbursement for high cost areas in Georgia. The meal rate for high cost areas is **\$36.00 per day** for three meals. The single meal reimbursement is **\$7.00 for breakfast, \$9.00 for lunch, and \$20.00 for dinner. The high cost areas are limited to Chatham, Cobb, DeKalb, Fulton, Glynn, and Gwinnett Counties.**
- **Employees are expected to participate in meals provided as a part of the conference registration fee. If the employee chooses to purchase a meal or meals in lieu of participating in conference provided meals the cost is not reimbursable.**
- Meal receipts are not required. Receipts are required for parking and registration fees.
- Please remember that employees spending the night within 50 miles of home or headquarters on a work assignment must have approval of their supervisor and must provide a copy of the approval with their expense statement. The statewide travel regulations can be used as a reference. The regulation provides specific examples of when an employee is authorized to spend the night within 50 miles of home or headquarters.
- It is the responsibility of the employee to ensure that his or her travel expense statement is forwarded to the employee's supervisor in a timely manner with the appropriate supporting documentation.
- It is the responsibility of the individuals approving travel expense statements to ensure that the employee in fact incurred the expenses for which the employee is seeking reimbursement.
- IRS regulations (Section 1.62-2(g)) states that an employee has 60 days from the date of travel to submit their travel claim to us in order that their reimbursement avoid taxation. Travel that is submitted over 60 days must be reimbursed through payroll.

PROCEDURES FOR REPORTING AN ABSENCE AND REQUESTING A SUBSTITUTE

Towns County Schools utilizes the online leave management system, Absence Management (Formerly Aesop). Each employee has an ID number (employee's phone number) and a unique pin to access his or her individual account. You can access the system via internet at <http://www.aesoponline.com> or by calling 1-800-942-3767 (1-800-94-AESOP).

Instructions:

Via Phone:

- Dial the number, enter your ID number and pin.
- Follow the instructions provided and make the appropriate menu choices.

Via Internet:

- Log in using the ID number and pin.
- Choose create absence.
- Complete the boxes indicating the date
- Choose an absence reason
- Indicate whether a sub is needed (if given the option in the system this does not apply to all employees)
- **Complete the note if entering an absence that is not a sick or personal leave request**

- Attach any documents you would like to provide for the substitute.

Things to Remember:

- **All absences must be entered in Absence Management.**
- Reporting your absence is your responsibility and should be done **as soon as you know** you will be absent. Often it is easier to fill an absence entered in advance than one that is recorded last minute. While these last minute emergencies and illnesses are ultimately going to happen please make every effort to enter a known absence as soon as you are aware of the need. If you need to cancel an entered absence you can do so before 6:00 am on the date of the absence.
- **Keep in mind that all absences other than sick leave must have prior approval and entered accordingly. Personal leave should be entered at least seven days prior to the absence.**
- Absences should be entered prior to or on the day of the absence. You cannot go back and add an absence after the fact. An administrator will need to be contacted if for some reason you cannot enter the absence.
- Never call a substitute teacher to cover your class. The system is set up to take care of this for you.
- If you have an emergency and cannot call or login please call an administrator as soon as possible to ask that they do this for you. Your principal and assistant principal can assist you in the case of an emergency.
- Further instructions can be found on the Absence Management website. If you need assistance beyond what your administrator can assist you with or you have a question about your leave balances contact the Personnel Assistant at the central office.

Board Policy: Employee Leave and Absences (GARH)

Last Revised Date: 12/13/2016

Original Adopted Date: 8/6/2012

The Board of Education provides a wide range of leave options to meet the needs of its employees. Leave options are as follows:

PERSONAL LEAVE: Each employee with less than 10 years of service in the Towns County School System is entitled to three days (3) personal leave days per employment term. Each employee with 10-19 years of service in the Towns County School System is entitled to four days (4) personal leave days per employment term. Each Employee with 20 or more years of service in the Towns County School System is entitled to five days (5) personal leave days per employment term. Personal leave will be charged against accumulated sick leave days. Use of more than the allowable number of personal leave days as described above will result in a reduction of salary in the same manner as described in "Deductions".

JURY DUTY: It is the policy of the board to grant leave for Jury Duty, which is a civic obligation. Time spent serving on a jury will not be subtracted from personal or sick leave, or vacation leave for those employees earning vacation. No deductions will be made from staff salaries for time spent serving on a jury. Employees may keep their juror remittance.

SICK LEAVE: Each person employed on a full-time basis (20 hours or more per week) by the Board of Education will be entitled to sick leave with pay computed on the basis of one and one-fourth working

days for each completed working month of employment. This means an employee earns eleven and one-fourth days in a 9 month working period, twelve and one-half days in a 10 month working period, thirteen and three-fourth days in an 11 month working period, and fifteen days in a 12 month working period.

For any absence in which sick leave is used, the Superintendent or designee may require a physician's certificate stating that the employee is ill and is unable to perform his or her duties.

Sick leave may be used in accordance with state and local Board of Education policy for:

1. Personal illness or injury
2. Absence necessitated by exposure to contagious disease
3. Absence due to illness or death in the employee's immediate family
4. Personal reasons as defined below.

An employee shall be allowed to donate up to ten (10) sick leave days to his or her spouse for the purposes of maternity leave, illness, or illness or death of a family member, if such spouse is also an employee of the Towns County Board of Education.

For the purposes of absences for medical and related reasons, including bereavement leave, **members of the immediate family are defined as spouse, children, parents, siblings, such in-law equivalents, grandparents, grandchildren or relatives living in the employee's household.**

ACCUMULATION: Unused sick leave may be accumulated to a total of 90 days. Personal leave days may not be accumulated.

TRANSFER: Professional certified employees will be allowed sick leave transfer benefits according to state law.

DEDUCTIONS: For any sick leave or personal leave in an amount above that which is earned or accumulated as provided in this policy, there shall be a deduction equal to one day's salary for each day of sick leave (or the appropriate percentage of the day's salary) made from the employee's salary. The amount of the deduction shall be computed according to state board regulations.

ILLNESS IN FAMILY: Employees are allowed to be absent from school without loss of pay on account of illness in the immediate family.

In the event that sick leave is used to care for a member of the immediate family, the Superintendent or designee may require a physician's certificate stating that the employee is needed to care for the sick family member. If an employee is absent for three consecutive days of sick leave, a physician's certificate may be required at the discretion of the Superintendent or designee.

MILITARY LEAVE: All persons employed in any capacity in the school system (other than those employed on a temporary basis) shall be entitled to military leave for ordered military duty with full employment and reinstatement rights as provided by law. An employee shall be allowed a leave of absence from his or her duties while performing ordered military duty.

Definition: The term "ordered military duty" shall be as defined by Georgia Code, Ann., Section 38-2-279.

Compensation: An employee shall be paid a salary or other compensation for a period of absence while engaged in the performance of ordered military duty and while going to and returning from such duty, not exceeding a total of 18 days in one federal fiscal year and not exceeding 18 days in any one continuous period of such absence.

State Emergency: In the event the governor declares an emergency and orders an employee to State active duty as a member of the National Guard, such employee shall be paid a salary or other compensation while performing such duty for a period not exceeding 30 days in any one federal fiscal year and not exceeding 30 days in any one continuous period of such State active duty service.

Religious Leaves and Absences: Employees may be absent from work for the observance of a religious holiday. Such absences must relate to the religious convictions of the employee's own faith. Employees may elect to use any or all of their allotted personal leave (up to three (3) days per school year) for the purpose of religious observances.

Bereavement Leave: Death in Immediate Family - In the event of a death in the immediate family of a professional employee, a leave of absence will be granted to a maximum number of five days in accordance with the rules and regulations of the board and such leave will not be charged against sick leave. Absence in excess of the maximum approved days due to death in the immediate family will be charged against sick leave. In the event of a death of a family member outside of the immediate family member definition, the employee can take one sick leave day and any available personal leave days.

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

Employment of a Substitute: Personnel utilizing sick leave under the provisions of this policy shall not be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute to serve in her absence while on sick leave.

NOTICE TO EMPLOYEES

EMPLOYEE RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

Basic Leave Entitlement

FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to eligible employees for the following reasons:

- For incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care or child birth;
- To care for the employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care;
- To care for the employee's spouse, son or daughter, or parent, who as a serious health condition; or
- For a serious health condition that makes the employee unable to perform the employee's job.

Military Family Leave Entitlements

Eligible employees with a spouse, son, daughter, or parent on active duty or call to active duty status in the National Guard or Reserves in support of a contingency operation may use their 12-week leave entitlement to address certain qualifying exigencies. Qualifying exigencies may include attending certain military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings.

FMLA also includes a special leave entitlement that permits eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a covered service member during a single 12-month period. A covered service member is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform his or her duties for which the service member is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy; or is in outpatient status; or is on the temporary disability retired list.

Benefits and Protections

During FMLA leave, the employer must maintain the employee's health coverage under any "group health plan" on the same terms as if the employee had continued to work. Upon return from FMLA leave, most employees must be restored to their original or equivalent positions with equivalent pay, benefits, and other employment terms.

Use of FMLA leave cannot result in the loss of any employment benefit that accrued prior to the start of the employee's leave.

Eligibility Requirements

Employees are eligible if they have worked for a covered employer for at least one year, for 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months, and if at least 50 employees are employed by the employer within 75 miles.

Definition of Serious Health Condition

A serious health condition is an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either an overnight stay in a medical care facility, or continuing treatment by a health care provider for a condition that either prevents the employee from performing the functions of the employee's job, or prevents the qualified family member from participating in school or other daily activities.

Subject to certain conditions, the continuing treatment requirement may be met by a period of incapacity of more than 3 consecutive full calendar days combined with at least two visits to a health care provider or one visit and a regiment of continuing treatment, or incapacity due to pregnancy, or incapacity due to a chronic condition. Other conditions may meet the definition of continuing treatment.

Use of Leave

An employee does not need to use this leave entitlement in one block. Leave can be taken intermittently or on a reduced leave schedule when medically necessary. Employees must make reasonable efforts to schedule leave for planned medical treatment so as not to unduly disrupt the employer's operations. Leave due to qualifying exigencies may also be taken on an intermittent basis.

Substitution of Paid Leave for Unpaid Leave

Employees may choose or employers may require use of accrued paid leave while taking FMLA leave. In order to use paid leave for FMLA leave, employees must comply with the employer's normal paid leave policies.

Employee Responsibilities

Employees must provide 30 days advance notice of the need to take FMLA leave when the need is foreseeable. When 30 days' notice is not possible, the employee must provide notice as soon as practicable and generally must comply with an employer's normal call-in procedures.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the employer to determine if the leave may qualify for FMLA protection and the anticipated timing and duration of the leave. Sufficient information may include that the employee is unable to perform job functions; the family member is unable to perform daily activities, the need for hospitalization or continuing treatment by a health care provider, or circumstances supporting the need for military family leave. Employees also must inform the employer if the requested leave is for a reason for which FMLA leave was previously taken or certified. Employees also may be required to provide a certification and periodic recertification supporting the need for leave.

Employer Responsibilities

Covered employers must inform employees requesting leave whether they are eligible under FMLA. If they are, the notice must specify any additional information required as well as the employees' rights and responsibilities. If they are not eligible, the employer must provide a reason for the ineligibility.

Covered employers must inform employees if leave will be designated as FMLA-protected and the amount of leave counted against the employee's leave entitlement. If the employer determines that the leave is not FMLA-protected, the employer must notify the employee.

Unlawful Acts by Employers

FMLA makes it unlawful for any employer to:

- Interfere with, restrain, or deny the exercise of any right provided under FMLA;
- Discharge or discriminate against any person for opposing any practice made unlawful by FMLA or for involvement in any proceeding under or relating to FMLA.

Enforcement

- An employee may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Labor or may bring a private lawsuit against an employer.
- FMLA does not affect any Federal or State law prohibiting discrimination, or supersede any State or local law or collective bargaining agreement which provides greater family or medical leave rights.
- If you need to request Family Medical Leave, contact Stephanie Moss at 706-897-2279.

Board Policy: Federal Family and Medical Leave Act (GBRIG)

Last Revised: 3/9/2015

Original Adopted Date: 3/10/2008

It is the purpose of this policy to set out in summary form the provisions of the Family and Medical Leave Act ("the Act" or "FMLA") and its implementing regulations. The Board of Education ("Board") does not intend by this policy to create any additional rights to leave not provided by the Act; provided, however, the Board does wish to extend the rights of the Act to certain employees who have worked at least 12 months for the Board. The Board does intend to elect certain options as the Act authorizes. Any portion of this policy inconsistent or contrary to the Act is unintentional and shall not be given effect. As to the interpretation of this policy, the Board's employees should look to the Act itself and its regulations.

ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES

Employees of the Board who have been employed by the Board for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1250 hours during the 12 month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave are eligible to take unpaid leave under the FMLA.

DEFINITIONS

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

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

"Covered Servicemember" (for military caregiver leave) means the employee's spouse, child, parent or next of kin who is

(1) a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness; or

(2) a veteran who was a member of the Armed Forces at any time during the five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes such medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

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

"Next of Kin" of a covered servicemember means the nearest blood relative other than the covered service member's spouse, parent, son or daughter, in the following order of priority: blood relatives

granted legal custody, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and first cousins, unless the covered servicemember has specifically designated in writing another blood relative for purposes of FMLA caregiver leave.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AMOUNT AND TYPE OF LEAVE TAKEN

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

- Birth of a son or daughter and to care for the newborn child;
- Adoption or foster placement with the employee of a son or daughter and to care for the newly placed child;
- To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent, if that person has a serious health condition;
- Serious health condition of the employee that prevents the employee from performing his/her job functions;

Any qualifying emergency arising from the fact that the employee's family member (the covered servicemember) is on covered active duty. Qualifying emergencies 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

Military caregiver leave to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the servicemember.

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

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

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

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

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

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

INTERMITTENT OR REDUCED LEAVE

An employee may take leave on an intermittent or reduced leave schedule where it is medically necessary due to the serious health condition of a covered family member, the employee, or the serious injury or illness of a covered servicemember, or when necessary because of a qualifying exigency. The District will require a certification, in the form designated by the District, to document the necessity of such intermittent leave or reduced schedule leave.

NOTIFICATION OF LEAVE

If the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, an employee requesting leave must provide at least 30 days advance notice to the Superintendent or his/her designee. If such advance notice is not possible, the employee must give notice as soon as practicable, which means as soon as both possible and practical, taking into account all of the facts and circumstances in the individual case. If an employee does not provide at least 30 days notice of foreseeable leave, he or she must explain why such notice was not practicable if so requested by the District. When the need for leave is not foreseeable, an employee must provide notice as soon as practicable, which generally should be according to the District’s usual and customary leave requirements. When planning medical treatment, the employee should make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment, subject to the approval of the health care provider, so that any corresponding leave will not disrupt unduly the operations of the District.

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

BENEFITS AND RETURN TO WORK

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

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

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

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

REQUIRED CERTIFICATION AND REPORTING

The District requires that a request for leave due to a serious health condition of an employee or an employee's family member or a serious injury or illness of a covered servicemember be supported by certification by the appropriate health care provider of the eligible employee or family member on a form to be provided by the District. This certification for a serious health condition must include (1) the name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the healthcare provider and type of practice/specialization; (2) the approximate date on which the serious health condition commenced, and its probable duration; (3) a statement or description of appropriate medical facts regarding the patient's health condition for which FMLA leave is requested; (4) if the purpose of the leave is to care for a family member, a statement that the employee is needed to care for the family member and an estimate of the frequency and duration of the leave required for such care; (5) if the leave is due to the employee's own serious health condition, a statement that the employee is unable to perform his/her essential job functions, the nature of other work

restrictions, and the likely duration of such inability; and (6) if intermittent or reduced schedule leave is requested, information sufficient to establish the medical necessity for the same and an estimate of the dates and duration of treatments and any periods of recovery. The employer may require that the eligible employee obtain subsequent recertification on a reasonable basis as requested by the District in accordance with the FMLA regulations.

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

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

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

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

SPECIAL PROVISIONS

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

If an instructional employee begins leave more than five weeks before the end of a semester, the District may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if the leave will last at least three weeks; and the employee would return to work during the three-week period before the end of the term. If an instructional employee begins leave for a purpose other than the employee's own serious

health condition during the five-week period before the end of the semester, the District may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if the leave will last more than two weeks; and the employee would return to work during the two-week period before the end of the term. If an instructional employee begins leave for a purpose other than the employee's own serious health condition during the three-week period before the end of a semester, and the leave will last more than five working days, the District may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester.

Board Policy: School Ceremonies and Observances (IKD)

Original Adopted Date: 4/14/2008

It is the responsibility of principals in the Towns County School System to insure that each student is afforded the opportunity each school day to recite the pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. This observance will be conducted in a serious and dignified manner preferably at the opening of the school day.

The following form of the Pledge will be used:

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, One Nation, Under God, Indivisible, With Liberty and Justice for all."

Participation in this observation is not a requirement for students or teachers, and no action will be taken against those who choose not to participate.

Additionally, in each classroom, the teacher in charge shall, at the opening of school upon every school day, conduct a brief period of quiet reflection for not more than 60 seconds with the participation of all the pupils therein assembled.

The moment of quiet reflection is not intended to be and shall not be conducted as a religious service or exercise but shall be considered as an opportunity for a moment of silent reflection on the anticipated activities of the day.

Board Policy: Employee Tobacco Use (GAN)

Original Adoption Date 3:10/2008

Last Revised Date: 4/10/2017

100% Tobacco-Free School

The Towns County School Board recognizes that the use of tobacco products is a health, safety, and environmental hazard for students, employees, visitors, and school facilities. The Board acknowledges that adult employees and visitors serve as role models for students and that the Board's acceptance of any use of tobacco products implies school approval, if not endorsement, of such use. In addition the Board recognizes that it has an obligation to promote positive role models in schools and promote a healthy

learning and working environment, free from unwanted smoke, for the students, employees, and visitors to the school campus.

Finally, the board recognizes that it has a legal authority and obligation pursuant to the Georgia Smoke Free Air Act of 2005 the federal Pro-Children's Act and the Georgia Youth Access law.

Tobacco Use Prohibited

No student, staff member or school visitor is permitted to use any tobacco product, including the use of E-Cigarettes, at any time, including non-school hours 24 hours per day, seven days per week:

- In any building, facility, or vehicle owned, leased, rented or chartered by Towns County Schools
- On any school grounds and property-including athletic fields and parking lots-owned leased, rented or chartered by Towns County Schools or
- At any school-sponsored or school-related event on-campus or off-campus

In addition, no student is permitted to possess a tobacco product. The policy may permit tobacco products to be included in instructional or research activities in public school buildings if the activity is conducted or supervised by the faculty member overseeing the instruction or research and the activity does not include smoking, chewing, or otherwise ingesting the tobacco product.

Tobacco Products and Tobacco Use

Tobacco products are defined to include cigarettes, candy cigarettes, chewing tobacco, blunts, blunt wraps, pre wrapped blunt cones & tubes, cigars, cigarillos, bidis, pipes, e-cigarettes, vaping products cigarette packages or smokeless tobacco containers, lighters, ashtrays, key chains, t-shirts, coffee mugs, and any other items containing or reasonably resembling tobacco or tobacco products. Tobacco use includes smoking, chewing, dipping, using electronic nicotine delivery systems or other combustible tobacco products.

School Grounds and Property

School grounds and property means and includes land, school facilities and school vehicles used for the provision of academic, extracurricular programs and administration by the district. School grounds include playgrounds and recreational places. School grounds include that portion of land, school facilities and other facilities owned by municipalities, private entities or other individuals during those times when the school district has exclusive use of a portion of such land, school facilities, or other facilities for the provision of extracurricular programs.

Enforcement

No student, staff member, or school visitor is permitted to use any tobacco product at any time.

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

- Students violating the policy will be subject to disciplinary actions in accordance with the code of conduct provisions at their school.
- Volunteers and visitors on school property will be reminded of this policy in a tactful and courteous manner and will be asked to adhere to the policy.

Board Policy: Drug Free Workplace (GAMA)

Original Adoption Date: 3/10/2008

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

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

If, prior to an arrest for an offense involving a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug, an employee notifies the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee that the employee illegally uses a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug and is receiving or agrees to receive treatment under a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the Board, the employee shall be entitled to maintain his or her employment for up to one year as long as the employee follows the treatment plan. During this period, the employee shall not be separated from employment solely on the basis of the employee's drug dependence, but the employee's work activities may be restructured if practicable to protect persons or property. No statement made by an employee to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee in order to comply with this code section shall be admissible in any civil, administrative or criminal proceeding as evidence against the public employee. The rights granted by this policy shall be available to an employee only once during a five year period and are intended to be and shall be interpreted as being the same as those minimum

rights granted pursuant to the Georgia Drug-Free Workforce Act and any subsequent amendments thereof.

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

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

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

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

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

The school district shall provide such staff development as required by state or federal law to inform employees of the dangers of drug abuse, the availability of employee assistance and drug counseling and treatment and the terms of this policy.

Board Policy: Student Record (JR)

Original Adopted Date: 5/12/2008

Last Revised Date: 12/13/2016

It is the policy of the Board of Education that all employees shall comply with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), Pupil Protection Rights Amendment (PPRA), and the Student Data Privacy, Accessibility, and Transparency Act of Georgia (the Act). For the purposes of this policy, a "parent" is defined as a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the

absence of a parent or guardian. An "eligible student" is defined as a student who has reached 18 years of age or is attending an institution of postsecondary education.

The Superintendent shall implement procedures whereby every principal is directed to develop a means to notify, on an annual basis, parents and eligible students, including parents or eligible students who are disabled or who have a primary or home language other than English, of their rights under the FERPA, PPRA, and the Act, either by letter or through a student handbook distributed to each student in the school or by any means that are reasonably likely to inform them of their rights. Generally, a parent or eligible student will be permitted to obtain a copy of the student's education records upon reasonable notice and payment of reasonable copying costs.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

Confidentiality of student records shall be preserved while access is provided to parents, eligible students and school officials with legitimate educational interests, as described in the annual parent notice.

With the exception of directory information as defined below, personally identifiable information will not be released by the school district from an education record without prior written consent of the parent or eligible student, except to the extent authorized by the FERPA and its implementing regulations t 34 C.F.R.§99.31.

The Board of Education designates the following information as "directory information." Unless a parent or eligible student makes a timely request to the principal of the school where the student is enrolled that such information not be designated directory information for the individual student, such information will not be considered confidential and may be disclosed upon request.

1. Student's name, address and telephone number;
2. Student's date and place of birth;
3. Student's participation in official school clubs and sports;
4. Weight and height of student if he/she is a member of an athletic team;
5. Dates of attendance at schools within the school district;
6. Honors and awards received during the time enrolled in the district's schools;
7. Photograph; and
8. Grade level

PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)

Definition of Terms Used in PPRA:

"Instructional Material" - Instructional material that is provided to a student, regardless of format, including printed or representational materials, audio-visual materials, and materials in electronic or digital formats (such as material accessible through the Internet). The term does not include academic tests or academic assessments.

"Invasive Physical Examination" - Any medical examination that involves the exposure of private body parts, or any act during such examination that includes incision, insertion, or injection into the body, but does not include a hearing, vision, or scoliosis screening.

"Personal Information" - Individually identifiable information including: (1) a student or parent's first and last name; (2) home address; (3) telephone number; or (4) social security number.

Requirements:

No student shall be required to submit to a survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent; or
8. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program), without prior written consent of the parent or eligible student.

A parent of a student may, upon request, inspect any survey created by a third party containing one or more of the items listed as (1) through (8) above before the survey is administered or distributed by a school to a student and may choose to opt the student out of participation in the survey. The Superintendent shall develop procedures for: (1) granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to such survey within a reasonable period of time after the request is received, and (2) making arrangements to protect student privacy in the event of the administration or distribution of a survey to a student containing one or more of the items listed as (1) through (8). The requirements of PPRA do not apply to a survey administered to a student in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

A parent of a student may, upon request, inspect any instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum for the student. The Superintendent shall develop procedures for granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to instructional material within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.

Parents shall be notified prior to the administration of physical examinations or screenings that the school may administer to students. This notice shall offer the parent the opportunity to opt the student out of any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening that is (1) required as a condition of

attendance; (2) administered by the school and scheduled by the school in advance; and (3) not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student, or of other students.

The parent of a student shall be notified prior to the commencement of activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the purpose of marketing or for selling that information (or otherwise providing that information to others for that purpose). Such notice shall offer the parent the opportunity to inspect, upon request, any instrument used in the collection of such information before the instrument is administered or distributed to a student and to opt the student out of such activities. The Superintendent shall develop procedures that: (1) make arrangements to protect student privacy in the event of such collection, disclosure, or use, and (2) grant a request by a parent for reasonable access to such instrument within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.

Board Policy: Student Code of Conduct (JCDA)

Original Adopted Date: 5/12/2008

It is the policy of the Towns County Board of Education that each school within this school district shall develop and implement age-appropriate student codes of conduct designed to improve the student learning environment and which will comply with state law and State Board of Education Rules. Each code of conduct shall include the following, at a minimum:

1. Standards of student behavior during school hours, at school related functions, on school buses and at school bus stops designed to create the expectation that students will behave themselves in such a way so as to facilitate a learning environment for themselves and other students. The standards should be designed also to encourage students to respect each other and school district employees, to motivate students to obey student behavior policies adopted by this Board and to obey student behavior rules established at each school within this school district;
2. Behavior support processes designed to consider, as appropriate in light of the severity of the behavioral problem, support services available at each school, the school system and other public entities or community organizations which may assist students to address behavioral problems;
3. Progressive discipline processes designed to create the expectation that the degree of discipline imposed by each school will be in proportion to the severity of the behavior of a particular student, the previous discipline history of the student and other relevant factors, while ensuring that each student receives the due process mandated by federal and state law;
4. Parental involvement processes designed to enable parents, guardians, teachers and school administrators to work together to improve and enhance student behavior and academic performance. The process should enable parents, guardians and school employees to communicate freely their concerns about student behaviors that detract from the learning environment.
5. All other specific requirements as set forth in any existing State Board of Education Rule or in Georgia law.

Each school shall involve parents in developing and updating student codes of conduct. Each code shall require disciplinary action for each infraction of the code. A copy of each student code of conduct shall be provided to the board for approval.

The student code of conduct shall be distributed to each student and the student's parents or guardians during the first week of school and upon enrollment of each new student. The parents shall be requested to sign an acknowledgment of the receipt of the code of conduct and return promptly the acknowledgment to the school. The student code of conduct shall be available in the school office and each classroom.

TEACHER REPORTING REQUIREMENT

It is the policy of the Board of Education that the Superintendent shall fully support the authority of principals and teachers to remove a student from the classroom pursuant to Georgia law as cited in 20-2-738 and 20-2-751.5(d).

A teacher shall have the authority, consistent with Board policy, to manage his or her classroom, discipline students, and refer a student to the principals or his designee to maintain discipline in the classroom. Any teacher who has knowledge that a student has exhibited behavior which violates the student code of conduct and repeatedly or substantially interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in his/her class or with the ability of each student's classmates to learn shall file a report of such behavior with the principal or his designee. The principal and teacher shall thereafter follow the procedures set forth in Georgia law, specifically O.C.G.A. 20-2-737-738.

The Superintendent and/or his designee shall ensure that procedures are disseminated as necessary for implementation of this policy and applicable state laws.

Board Policy: Fraud Prevention (DIE)

Original Adopted Date: 3/9/2015

The Towns County School District shall not tolerate fraud of any kind, and has an established system for the reporting of suspicious activities.

“Fraud” is defined as a false representation of a matter of fact, whether by words or by conduct, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed, that is used for the purpose of misappropriating property and/or monetary funds from federal, state, or local grants and funds.

Employees and parties maintaining a business relationship with the school district who suspect fraud, whether it pertains to federal, state, or local programs, should report their concerns to the superintendent or his/her designee. If fraud is suspected by the superintendent, such allegations should be reported to the chairperson of the Board of Education.

All reports of suspected fraud may be made in confidence and shall be handled under the strictest confidentiality. Informants may remain anonymous but are encouraged to cooperate with investigators and to provide as much detail and evidence of the alleged fraudulent act as possible.

Any and all reports of suspicious activity and/or suspected fraud will be investigated. Results of an investigation shall not be disclosed to or discussed with anyone other than those individuals with a legitimate need to know until the results become subject to public disclosure in accordance with state and/or federal law.

Student Reporting of Acts of Sexual Abuse or Sexual Misconduct

(a) Any student (or parent or friend of a student) who has been the victim of an act of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a teacher, administrator or other school system employee is urged to make an oral report of the act to any teacher, counselor or administrator at his/her school.

(b) Any teacher, counselor or administrator receiving a report of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct of a student by a teacher, administrator or other employee shall make an oral report of the incident immediately by telephone or otherwise to the school principal or principal's designee, and shall submit a written report of the incident to the school principal or principal's designee within 24 hours. *If the principal is the person accused of the sexual abuse or sexual misconduct, the oral and written reports should be made to the superintendent or the superintendent's designee.*

(c) Any school principal or principal's designee receiving a report of sexual abuse as defined in O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 shall make an oral report immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. The report should be made by telephone and followed by a written report in writing, if requested, a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Resources, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.

Reports of acts of sexual misconduct against a student by a teacher, administrator or other employee not covered by O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 or 20-2-1184 shall be investigated immediately by school or system personnel. If the investigation of the allegation of sexual misconduct indicates a reasonable cause to believe that the report of sexual misconduct is valid, the school principal or principal's designee shall make an immediate written report to the superintendent and the Professional Standards Commission Ethics Division.

“Sexual abuse” means a person's employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor who is not that person's spouse to engage in any sexual act as defined in O.C.G.A. 19-7-5.

“Sexual misconduct” includes behavior by an educator that is directed at a student and intended to be included, but is not limited to, the following behavior:”

1. Made sexual comments, jokes, or gestures.
2. Showed or displayed sexual pictures, photographs, illustrations, or messages.
3. Wrote sexual messages/graffiti on notes or the internet.
4. Spread sexual rumors (i.e. said a student was gay or lesbian).

5. Spied on students as they dressed, showered or used the restroom at school.
6. Flashed or “moonied” students.
7. Touched, excessively hugged, or grabbed students in a sexual way.
8. Forced a student to kiss him/her or do something else of sexual nature.
9. Talked or asked about a student’s developing body, sexuality, dating habits, *etc.*
10. Talked repeatedly about sexual activities or sexual fantasies.
11. Made fun of your body parts.
12. Called students sexual names.

Staff members must complete Reporting of Sexual Misconduct training on an annual basis.

PROCEDURES FOR MOVIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Movies should be shown in the classroom only when appropriately related to the curriculum taught. Ratings should be appropriate for the age group of students viewing the movie. Any movie shown during class time should be approved by the principal **prior** to being presented to the students.

ADULT CAFETERIA CHARGES

Employees of Towns County School System are allowed to charge meals and ala carte items to their accounts. All charges must be paid on the last operating day of the month the charges are incurred.

BENEFITS

The purpose of this section of the handbook is to provide basic information about benefits that are available. More detailed information and application forms on each specific benefit are available from the payroll department or an agent with the benefit provider. Questions regarding Workers’ Compensation should be directed to the Central Office.

CAFETERIA PLAN

Insurance benefits are a very important part of the opportunities available to you as an employee with the school system. Benefits such as State Health insurance, dental insurance, along with disability, cancer and life insurance make up a well-rounded portfolio of voluntary benefits to meet the needs of each employee and his/her family.

As an added bonus, most benefits within the system qualify for Section 125 pre-tax status otherwise known as the Cafeteria Plan. This means that all dollars spent for qualified pre-tax benefits do not count

as taxable income. Within the Cafeteria Plan, you may also elect to have pre-tax dollars set aside for paying for daycare or out-of-pocket medical expenses.

American Fidelity Insurance administers the Cafeteria Plan for the system. An agent of the company will meet with each new employee to discuss its benefits and options. The agent will also be available during the open enrollment period for State Health Benefit insurance each year and also during the spring open enrollment period to assist employees with any changes in their benefits under the Cafeteria Plan.

STATE HEALTH INSURANCE PLAN

Basically the Health Plan is designed to pay a percentage of the charges which members and all of their enrolled dependents incur for the medically necessary care and treatment of most kinds of illness and injury; and protect members from catastrophic medical bills by limiting the amount of money you spend out of pocket for eligible healthcare expenses.

All employees in the following categories are eligible to become members of the State Health Benefit Plan.

- All full-time employees working at least 20 hours or more a week.

A service employee who is employed in a non-certificated position; who is eligible to participate in the Teachers Retirement System or its local equivalent; and who works at least 60% of the time necessary to carry out the duties of the position (but not less than 20 hours a week).

An employee who is eligible to participate in the Public School Employees Retirement System and who works at least 60% of the time necessary to carry out the duties of the position (but not less than 15 hours a week).

Enrollment in the health plan is strictly optional. A membership form or a declination form must be completed no later than 31 days after the date of employment. If an employee joins the health plan during that first opportunity, his/her coverage will go into effect on the first day of the calendar month after he/she completes one full calendar month of service (provided he/she is at work on the first scheduled workday of that calendar month). If an employee fails to join the health plan upon employment, he or she will have to wait for one of the following opportunities to enroll:

- During an open enrollment period. (These are specified periods that occur once a year, and they are announced in advance each year. Coverage requested during open enrollment goes into effect on January 1 and continues through December 31.)
- When an employee experiences a qualifying event that would permit a change. Qualifying events include, but are not limited to: marriage or divorce, birth or adoption of a child, death of a spouse or child, or your spouse or dependent eligibility for or loss of eligibility for other group health coverage.

Once an employee joins the health plan, he/she is basically locked in for the duration of that Plan Year (January – December). It is necessary to wait until the next open enrollment period-or until a qualifying event triggers the opportunity to reduce or discontinue your coverage.

An employee has a choice of several options under the State Health Benefit Plan.

*Additional information is available online at: www.dch.georgia.gov/shbp_plans

ADDITIONAL INSURANCE BENEFITS AVAILABLE

American Fidelity offers several different benefits to employees: life insurance, dental, vision, cancer, disability, and long term healthcare. You may contact American Fidelity to discuss options available to you. Open enrollment for these benefits occurs in the spring of each year and benefits begin July 1 of the same year. If you have any questions about these benefits, you may contact Jimmie Jackson at 1-800-450-3506, ext. 6472.

TEACHER RETIREMENT SYSTEM (TRS) OF GEORGIA

Many employees who are employed one-half time or more in covered positions of the state's public school systems, regional libraries, county libraries, and regional educational service agencies are required to be members of the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS) as a condition of employment. Covered positions include teachers, administrators, supervisors, clerks, teacher aides, secretaries, paraprofessionals, public school nurses, and School Nutrition Director, Director of Maintenance/Transportation and employees of the Agriculture Extension Service.

TRS members contribute a defined percentage of their salary to TRS by payroll deduction. The Board of Education contributes a defined percentage of a member's salary to TRS. The Board's contribution helps fund TRS for current and future retirement benefits and is not part of any individual member's account.

Eligibility for Retirement Benefits

Service Retirement

A member is eligible for monthly retirement benefits by one of the following:

- Completion of 30 years of creditable service-regardless of age.
- Completion of at least 10 years of creditable service AND attainment of age 60.
- Completion of at least 25 years of creditable service. If a members retires under this provision his/her benefit will be permanently reduced by the lesser of one-twelfth of 7% for each month he/she is below age 60, OR 7% for each year or fraction of year by which you have less than 30 years of creditable service.

Disability Retirement

If you are mentally or physically disabled (not able to satisfactorily perform your current work duties due to health reasons), and you have at least 9.5 years of creditable service, you are eligible to apply for disability retirement with the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS).

Retirement Benefit Formula

Benefits from TRS are calculated by using the percentage of salary formula. That is two percent is multiplied by a member's years of creditable service established with TRS, including partial years (not to exceed 40 years). This product is then multiplied by the member's average monthly salary for his/her two highest consecutive years of service. Any nine or more months of service within a fiscal year would constitute a full year of service credit. The resulting product is the member's monthly retirement benefit under the Maximum Plan of retirement.

More information on teacher's retirement is available on the web at:

www.trsga.com

PUBLIC SCHOOL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM (PSERS) OF GEORGIA

Employees of public school systems who are not eligible for membership in the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) must establish membership in the PSERS as a condition of employment. (This does not include substitute employees who work less than 60% of the time during a monthly period.) Specifically this includes all school bus drivers, food service employees, custodians, maintenance employees, and some other employees. Certain managers are eligible for TRS membership. No employee can be a member of both PSERS and TRS at the same time.

Members contribute a defined amount per month during the school year--September through May.

Retirement benefits are calculated as follows: Creditable Service (years and months) x the Current Benefit Rate = the Monthly Benefit.

Normal monthly retirement benefits can begin at age 65 with 10 years of creditable service. Early monthly retirement benefits can begin at age 60 with 10 years of creditable service. Retirement before age 65 results in a reduction of ½ of 1% for each month under age 65.

ADMINISTRATIVE/OFFICE STAFF

Towns County Board of Education – Central Office Staff

67 Lakeview Circle Suite C Hiawassee, GA 30546 Phone (706) 896-2279 Fax (706) 896-2632

- Dr. Darren Berrong - Superintendent
- Paula Whitehead - Secretary to Superintendent
- Stephanie Moss - Curriculum/Personnel Director
- Myra Underwood - Finance Director
- Diane Adams - System Bookkeeper
- Tasha Goodwin - Personnel Assistant

1400 US Highway 76 East Hiawassee, GA 30546 Phone (706-896-4131) Fax (706) 896-2632

- Erica Chastain - Facilities Director/Federal Programs Director
- Michelle Pyrlik -Special Education Director
- Allan Rogers - Maintenance Supervisor
- Scott Hamilton - Transportation Director
- Becky Mullins -Cafeteria Manager/Supervisor
- Trena Stroud -Technology Director
- Sherri Demos - School Psychologist

Towns County Elementary School

1150 Konahetah Road Hiawassee, GA 30546 Phone (706) 896-4131 Fax 706-896-9872

- Shannon Moss - Principal
- Latisha Usher - Asst. Principal
- Hailey Silvey - Counselor
- Julie Thompson - Media Specialist
- Felisea Shook - School Secretary
- Elaina Turpin - Registrar/School Bookkeeper
- Rebecca Flanagan - School Nurse

Towns County Middle School

1400 US Highway 76 East Hiawassee, GA 30546 Phone (706-896-4131) Fax (706) 896-2632

- Dr. Connie Hobbs - Principal
- Lana Parker -Counselor
- Sandra Shook - Media Specialist
- Phyllis Clemons - School Bookkeeper
- Beatrice Thurman - Registrar
- Joyce Rogers - Receptionist

Towns County High School

1400 US Highway 76 East Hiawassee, GA 30546 Phone (706-896-4131) Fax (706) 896-2632

- Roy Perren - Principal
- Jim Melton -Asst. Principal
- Dionne Berrong -Counselor
- Sandra Shook - Media Specialist
- Phyllis Clemmons - School Bookkeeper
- Beatrice Thurman - Registrar
- Joyce Rogers - Receptionist



**Towns County Schools
2020-2021
School Calendar**

Teacher Pre-Planning	August 10-14, 2020
First Day of School	August 17, 2020
Labor Day Holiday	September 7, 2020
Progress Reports	September 16, 2020
End of 1st Nine Weeks (42 Days)	October 12, 2020
Teacher Work Day	October 15, 2020
Fall Break	October 16, 2020
Progress Reports	October 21, 2020
Progress Reports	November 18, 2020
Thanksgiving Holidays	November 23-27, 2020
End of 2nd Nine Weeks (42 days)	December 18, 2020
End of 1st Sem. /Early Release (84 days)	December 18, 2020
Christmas Holidays	Dec. 21 – January 1, 2021
Teacher Work Day	January 4, 2021
Students Return	January 5, 2021
MLK Day	January 18, 2021
Progress Reports	February 3, 2021
President’s Day	February 15, 2021
End of 3rd Nine Weeks (46 days)	March 11, 2021
Progress Reports	March 17, 2021
Spring Break	April 5 – 9, 2021
Progress Reports	April 21, 2021
End of 4th Nine Weeks (46 days)	May 21, 2021
End of 2nd Sem. /Early Release (92 days)	May 21, 2021
Graduation	May 22, 2021
Memorial Day	May 25, 2020
Teacher Post Planning	May 24-27, 2021

174 Student Days

185 Teacher Days

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Towns County Board of Education										
Superintendent										
High School Principal	Middle School Principal	Elementary Principal	Special Education Director	Curriculum/ Personnel Director	Federal Programs Director/ Facilities Director	Cafeteria Manager/ Supervisor	Technology Director	Transportation Director	Finance Director	Secretary to the Superintendent
*Assistant Principal *HS Athletic Director *Teachers *Para-professionals *Media Specialist *Counselor *School Book Keeper *School Secretary *School Registrar *School Nurse *Substitutes	*Assistant Principal *MS Athletic Director *Teachers *Para-professionals *Media Specialist *Counselor *School Book Keeper *School Secretary *School Registrar *School Nurse *Substitutes	*Assistant Principal *Teachers *Para-professionals *Media Specialist *Counselor *School Book Keeper *School Secretary *School Registrar Nurse *Substitutes	*School Psychologist *Speech Pathologist *Special Education Teachers *Special Education Para-professionals	*Gifted Coordinators *Personnel Assistant	*Maintenance Supervisor *Maintenance Manager *Maintenance Staff *Custodial Staff	*School Cafeteria Manager *School Food Service Assistants	*Technology Supervisor *Technology Specialist	*Transportation Assistant Bus Drivers	*Central Office Bookkeeper	

