

# BEN HILL COUNTY SCHOOLS

## EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK 2023 – 2024



### **Mission**

Empowering all students for success

### **Vision**

One family committed to student success every day

**Ms. Dawn Clements**  
**Superintendent of Schools**

**Ben Hill Board of Education**  
**509 West Palm Street**  
**Fitzgerald, Georgia 31750-3253**  
[www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us](http://www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us)

### **Beliefs**

*In Ben Hill County Schools, we believe...*

- *Growth for all students is possible and expected*
- *Success is achieved when all students reach their potential*
- *Students deserve the best of all our efforts and resources*
- *Respectful relationships among all stakeholders create a positive learning experience*
- *Learning requires a commitment from all educators, students, parents, and other stakeholders*
- *“Community” encompasses all of Ben Hill County: its schools, citizens, and resources*

**All means all!**

## **TARGET AREAS AND GOALS**

### **Target Area I: Leadership Capacity**

Goal 1.1: Improve Communication with all Stakeholders

Goal 1.2: District-Wide Training and Professional Development

### **Target Area II: Learning Capacity**

Goal 2.1: Increase Student Achievement in All Subject Areas

Goal 2.2: Perfect Instructional Best Practices to ensure Teacher Effectiveness and Student Learning

Goal 2.3: Provide Early Learning to All 3 and 4 years old in the community.

### **Target Area III: Resource Capacity**

Goal 3.1: Ensure that the Five-Year Facility Plan is Compatible with Current Needs and Resources

Goal 3.2: Ensure that the Five-Year Technology Plan is Compatible with Current Needs and Resources

Goal 3.3: Continually Implement and Support effective Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) in the Ben Hill County School System to ensure Ben Hill County Schools maintain a diverse highly qualified staff.

### **Target Area IV: College and Career Readiness**

Goal 4.1: Empower/Inspire/Prepare All Students for Post-Secondary College or Career Success

Goal 4.2: Provide Opportunities for Students to be Successful for College or Career and Life

# **BEN HILL COUNTY SCHOOL DIRECTORY**

## **Ben Hill Preschool**

Mrs. Jaquetta Brown, Coordinator  
Mrs. Amy Sellers, Assistant Coordinator  
406 W Suwanee Street  
Fitzgerald, Ga. 31750

## **Ben Hill Primary**

Mrs. Christy Jacobs, Principal  
Mr. David Ray, Assistant Principal  
221 JC Hunter Drive  
Fitzgerald, Ga. 31750

## **Ben Hill County Elementary**

Mr. Earl Brown, Principal  
328 Lobingier Ave  
Fitzgerald, Ga. 31750

## **Ben Hill County Middle School**

Mr. Michael Heitzman, Principal  
Dr. Selena Dawson, Assistant Principal  
134 JC Hunter Drive  
Fitzgerald, Ga. 31750

## **Fitzgerald High School College & Career Academy**

Dr. David Sims, Principal  
Mrs. Haley Luckie, Assistant Principal  
Mr. John Gamble, Assistant Principal  
Mrs. Payton Dix, Chief Executive Officer College & Career Department  
Mr. Jason McDonald, Athletic Director  
553 Ocilla Highway  
Fitzgerald, Ga. 31750

## **Hurricane Transition Academy**

Mr. Isom Harmon, Director  
Mr. James Curtis, Coordinator  
601 Cypress Street  
Fitzgerald, GA 31750

## **CENTRAL OFFICE STAFF**

Central Office Main Switchboard

(229) 409-5500

**Ms. Dawn Clements, Superintendent**  
Debbie Sandiford, Administrative Assistant

**Mr. James Sirmans, Chief Operations Officer**  
Principals  
Human Resources  
TKES/LKES  
Roger Merritt, Transportation, School Operations, and School Safety  
Parental & Staff Concerns  
Jenny McCranie, Public Relations  
Jenny McCranie Recruitment & Retention  
Jenny McCranie, Parental Engagement

**Mr. Ben Webb, Exe. Director of Curriculum and Instructions**  
Isom Harmon, Title IX Coordinator  
Tracy Morgan, System Registrar, Elementary School  
Tammy Rowell, System Registrar Primary School  
Cindy Pope, System Registrar Middle School  
Laquisha Paschal, System Registrar High School  
Barney Hamlin, IT/SIS Data Specialists  
Wanda Kimbrell, Special Education Coordinator  
Kelly Singletary Assistant Special Education Coordinator  
Dee Wessel, PReK-5 Assistant Special Education Coordinator  
Darline King, Assessment Coordinator  
Kristy Henderson, Director of CTAE and Dual Enrollment  
Steve Harden, Federal Programs Coordinator  
Nora Roldan, Migrant Liaison  
Matt Smith, Director of Technology  
Brandelyn House, Assistant Director of Technology

**Mrs. Natalie King, Chief Financial Officer**  
Casey Hampton, Payroll and Benefits Coordinator  
Donna Thompson, Accounts Payable Clerk  
Nonie Cobb, Internal Auditor  
School Bookkeepers  
Martha Dixon, CNP Coordinator (Food Services)  
Lisa Harbuck, CNP Bookkeeper (Food Services)  
Dr. Tracy Barnes, Director of Transportation  
Ashley Newell, Director of Maintenance

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### **Delegation of Administrative Detail**

The board of education fulfills its primary responsibility to the community by establishing a framework of policies through which the school system functions. The administration of the school system on a day-to-day basis is delegated to the superintendent and his/her staff. The line of authority proceeds from the teacher to the principal to the superintendent to the board of education. Professional ethics require that this line of authority be followed.

### **Board Policies**

All staff are responsible for being aware of and adhering to board policies. Board policies may be located online at [www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us](http://www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us) . Select the "Policy" link on the left of the home page. Policies are posted for review and public comment after being approved as a "first read" and will remain "on the table" for thirty days before final approval.

### **Public Relations**

Establishing and maintaining public good will toward the school district requires a concerted effort by the entire staff. All personnel share the responsibility of keeping the community informed, involved, and interested in the activities of the local school system. A public that is made aware of its role in the educational process will be a more supportive public. In the district's endeavors to generate favorable public opinion, its most important public relations ambassadors are the staff members who work with children every day. They and all professional employees are encouraged to participate in the life of the community and the district, and to demonstrate by their words, works, attitudes, and actions the ideals and beliefs proclaimed by the Ben Hill County School System.

### **Equal Opportunity Employment**

The BHCS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or gender in its employment practices, student programs and dealings with the public. It is the policy of the Board of Education to comply fully with the requirements of Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and accompanying regulations. Any employee, student, applicant for employment, parent or other person who believes he or she has been discriminated against or harassed in violation of this policy must make a complaint in accordance with the procedures outlined below. Employment advertising, recruiting, interviewing, testing, employment, training, transfer, compensation, promotion, termination, layoff and recall, employment benefits, social, and recreational activities shall be administered without regard to race, color, creed, gender, national origin, age, disability or veteran status. If requested by an applicant or employee, BHCS will make reasonable accommodations for such qualified individual's known disability unless doing so would result in an undue hardship to BHCS or create a safety or health hazard for other applicants or employees. If an applicant or employee believes at any time that BHCS, or any employee is not acting in accordance with these standards of equal employment opportunity, then the affected individual is

encouraged to report the matter to his/her immediate supervisor or the Human Resource Department.

As in the case of any work-related problem, the employee has the right to use the Complaint Procedure to discuss any perceived harassment or discrimination. The applicant and employee should be assured that concerns and reports of perceived discrimination or harassment can be raised without fear of reprisal. An employee found to be engaging in unlawful discrimination shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. An applicant found to be engaging in unlawful discrimination shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including disqualification for employment.

### **Harassment**

It is the policy of this school district to prohibit any act of harassment of students or employees by other students or employees based upon race, color, gender, national origin, religion, age or disability at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity. Any such act by an employee shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment. Sexual harassment may include conduct or speech which entails unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, taunts, threats, comments of a vulgar or demeaning nature, demands or physical contact which creates a hostile environment for a student or employee. There may be other speech or conduct which employees or students experience as inappropriate or illegal harassment which should also be reported; harassment can take many forms, and it is not possible to itemize every aspect of the harassment forbidden by this policy.

Any student, employee, applicant for employment, parent, or other individual who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination by other students or employees of the school district as prohibited by this policy should promptly report the same to the principal of their school or to the appropriate coordinator designated in policy GAAA, who will implement the board's discriminatory complaints procedures as specified in that policy. Students may also report harassment or discrimination to their school counselor or any administrator.

Students and employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination. If at any point in the investigation of reported sexual harassment of a student, the coordinator or designee determines that the reported harassment should more properly be termed abuse, the reported incident or situation shall be referred pursuant to the established protocol for child abuse investigation.

It is the duty of all employees to promptly report harassment. All supervisors will instruct their subordinates as to the content of this policy and, through appropriate staff development, enlighten employees as to the varied forms or

expression of prohibited harassment. The principals of all schools shall ensure that students and parents are informed through student handbooks that such harassment is strictly forbidden, how it is to be reported and the consequences for violating this policy.

### **Complaint Procedure - Discrimination or Harassment**

Complaints made to the School System regarding alleged discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color or national origin in violation of Title VI, on the basis of sex in violation of Title IX or on the basis of disability in violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans With Disabilities Act will be processed in accordance with the following procedure:

1. Any student, employee, applicant for employment, parent or other person with a complaint alleging a violation as described above shall promptly notify, in writing or orally, either the principal for his/her school or the appropriate coordinator designated from time to time by the Board of Education. If the complaint is oral, either the coordinator or school principal to whom the complaint is made shall promptly prepare a memorandum or written statement of the complaint as made to him or her by the complainant and shall have the complainant read and sign the memorandum or statement if it accurately reflects the complaint made. If the complaint is made to a school principal, he or she shall be responsible for notifying the appropriate coordinator of the complaint.
2. If the alleged offending individual is the coordinator designated by the Board of Education, the complaint shall either be made by the complainant to the Superintendent or, if the complaint is initially made to the school principal, reported by the principal to the Superintendent.
3. The coordinator or his or her designee shall have fifteen work days to gather all information relevant to the complaint made, review the information, determine the facts relating to the complaint, review the action requested by the complainant, and attempt to resolve the complaint with the complainant and any other persons involved. The coordinator or designee shall prepare a written response to the complaint detailing any action to be taken in response to the complaint and the time frame in which such action will be taken and copies of this response shall be furnished to the complainant, the appropriate coordinator and the Superintendent or his or her designee.
4. If the complaint is not resolved at the conclusion of this fifteen-day period or if the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the complainant shall have the right within five work days of receiving a copy of the written response, to have the complaint referred to the Superintendent of Schools. If the alleged offending individual is the Superintendent, the Complainant may have the complaint referred to the Board of Education, rather than the Superintendent.



5. The Superintendent shall have fifteen (15) work days to review the complaint and the response of the coordinator or designee and attempt to resolve the complaint. The Superintendent shall furnish to the complainant a written response setting forth either his or her approval of the action recommended by the coordinator or designee or the action to be taken by the system in response to the complaint in lieu of that recommended by the coordinator or designee and the time frame in which such action shall be taken.

6. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response of the Superintendent, then the complainant shall have the right, within fifteen work days of the receipt of the written response of the Superintendent, to have the complaint referred to the Board of Education. In order to have the Board review the Superintendent's decision, the complainant must file with the Superintendent a written statement setting forth the reasons he or she disagrees with the response of the Superintendent and the action the complainant is requesting the system to take. The complainant shall also include in the written response a request that his or her complaint be referred to the Board of Education.

7. Within thirty work days of receipt of the written request of the complainant, the Superintendent shall present the matter to the Board of Education at its regular meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose. The Board shall review the original complaint, the response of the coordinator or designee, the response of the Superintendent, and the response of the complainant. In addition, the Board may, but is not required to, hear directly from any individuals with knowledge of any relevant facts relating to the complaint.

8. The Board of Education will either uphold the recommendation of the Superintendent or require the system to take some other action in response to the complaint. A copy of the action of the Board will be furnished to the complainant, either as a part of the minutes of the Board of Education or as a separate written statement. The Board shall be the final reviewing authority within the system.

9. This policy is not intended to deprive any employee of any right they may have to file a grievance pursuant to any other policy of the local Board of Education, specifically the policy designed to implement Official Code of Georgia Annotated 20-2-989.5, where appropriate. This policy is not intended to provide an alternative process for resolving evaluation and employment disputes where there already exists a due process procedure mandated by state law or State Department of Education regulations, specifically including, but not limited to, hearings to be conducted pursuant to the Fair Dismissal Act of Georgia. The complainant retains at all times the right to contact the Office of Civil Rights or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission with regard to any allegations that the system has violated the statutes described above. The school system shall be responsible for distributing and disseminating information relevant to this

policy and procedure to students, applicants for employment and employees through appropriate procedures.

10. No reprisal shall occur as a result of reporting unlawful harassment under this policy, and any attempt to retaliate against a complainant shall be disciplined as is appropriate.

11. The confidentiality of any individual making a complaint or report in accordance with this policy, to the extent it is reasonably possible, shall be protected, although the discovery of the truth and the elimination of unlawful harassment shall be the overriding considerations.

### **Criminal Background Check**

A criminal record check will be conducted at or prior to employment on every person who is employed by the Board of Education for the first time to fill either a full-time or part-time certified or classified position with this School District. For this purpose, the applicant shall be fingerprinted as required by state law.

Subsequent criminal record checks will be conducted on all personnel in accordance with state laws, state board rules, and rules of the Professional Standards Commission. All certified personnel whose employment is continued with this School District shall have a criminal record check made upon any certificate renewal application to the Professional Standards Commission. All classified employees whose employment is continued with this School District shall have subsequent criminal record checks on a periodic basis, not to exceed every five years, using procedures and schedules to be determined by the Superintendent or his designee.

For this purpose, the employee either shall be fingerprinted or shall provide a signed and notarized consent on a form designated by the School District, including the employee's full name, address, social security number and date of birth, based upon the requirement of state law or applicable rule.

Each person employed for the first time to fill a certificated position with the School District shall be issued a temporary contract which shall expire on the date the criminal record check has been received by the School District and the Superintendent or designee has notified the employee in writing that the criminal record check has been received or after 200 calendar days, whichever shall occur first. If the criminal record check reflects that the employee has not been arrested, charged, pled guilty or no contest, or been convicted of any criminal offense other than a minor traffic violation, the Superintendent shall have the authority without further authorization from the Board to sign on behalf of the Board a standard employment contract with the conditions of employment and the assignment of the employee as previously approved by Board.

In the event the criminal record check reflects the employee has been charged with, pled to or been convicted of an offense other than a minor traffic violation, the Superintendent shall bring the matter to the Board of Education at its next meeting or sooner, if warranted, for a decision. If the Superintendent elects, the employee may continue in the employment of the School District pending final Board decision.

The cost of such record checks for all personnel shall be paid by the applicant.

The Superintendent shall establish such procedures, fees and regulations needed to administer this policy.

### **Drug Free Workplace**

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 work force must be absolutely free of any person who would knowingly manufacture, distribute, sell or possess a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug in an unlawful manner. This prohibition specifically includes, but is not limited to, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance or alcohol in the employee's workplace. This prohibition also includes, but is not limited to, an employee being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances while on duty.

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

If, prior to an arrest for an offense involving a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug, an employee notifies the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee that the employee illegally uses a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug and is receiving or agrees to receive

treatment under a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the Board, the employee shall be entitled to maintain his or her employment for up to one year as long as the employee follows the treatment plan. During this period, the employee shall not be separated from employment solely on the basis of the employee's drug dependence, but the employee's work activities may be restructured if practicable to protect persons or property. No statement made by an employee to the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee in order to comply with this code section shall be admissible in any civil, administrative or criminal proceeding as evidence against the public employee. The rights granted by this policy shall be available to an employee only once during a five-year period and are intended to be and shall be interpreted as being the same as those minimum rights granted pursuant to the Georgia Drug-Free Work Force Act and any subsequent amendments thereof.

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

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

The 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.

### **Employee Tobacco Use**

Employees are prohibited from using or displaying tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco, on any school property, building or campus, including athletic facilities and stadiums, or while on duty supervising students at any school or system sponsored function.

### **Staff Political Activities**

The Board recognizes the right of Board employees to engage in political activities, including the right to seek elective positions. However, the Board also recognizes its responsibility to ensure that staff political activities do not detract from employees' job performance and do not occur during duty hours.

Thus, the Board establishes the following staff political activities guidelines: Political activities are prohibited during the employee's duty hours.

- Leave to engage in political activities -- including leave to serve in an elected office, attend meetings, conferences, etc. -- must receive prior Board approval.
- Leave granted for political activities shall be leave without pay.
- School supplies and equipment may not be used for staff political activities.

### **ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY**

The Ben Hill Board of Education and the Superintendent expect employees to be present and on time. Employees who are punctual and come to work regularly set good examples for our students and staff, foster efficiency and effectiveness, and create an environment that is conducive to the "teaching-learning" process.

Attendance and punctuality are critical components of employee performance evaluation. Failure to meet attendance and punctuality requirements may result in progressive discipline, dismissal, or failure to obtain tenure. School administrators shall review, monitor, and take appropriate corrective action in matters of employee attendance and punctuality. Failure by department heads/supervisors to properly evaluate employees or to cite and eliminate abuses shall form the basis for appropriate disciplinary action to be taken against said administrators.

The successful operation of Ben Hill County Schools is contingent upon the commitment of employees to demonstrate punctual attendance during each

scheduled workday. Excessive employee absenteeism and tardiness result in a system that is ineffective, inefficient and not conducive to the "teaching-learning" process. Therefore, implementation of the staff attendance policy of the Ben Hill County Board of Education shall be in accordance with these provisions:

For 190-day employees, six (6) absences per semester or twelve (12) absences per year shall be considered a "reasonable level" or normal amount of time an employee can be away from the job and shall serve as the benchmark for absence and tardy control regulations. For employees on extended contracts, a "reasonable level" shall amount to 6.5% of contracted work days.

- Anticipated absences shall be scheduled at least one day in advance. Notice of scheduled absences shall be made by the employee to the department head/supervisor.
- Employees shall not be able to change absences to an exempt leave category after the absence has occurred (i.e. – use of annual or personal business leave after an unscheduled absence).
- Medical certification shall be required for rise of leave attributed to personal illness or other illness reason for three (3) consecutive days over the course of the semester.
- Absences or tardies in excess of twelve (12) days within a defined work year shall result in corrective action.
- Absences for any critical day shall require prior approval by the department head/supervisor.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**ABSENCE** - any time away from duty/work.

**ABSENTEEISM** - absence from duty/work, especially such absence when habitual.

**OCCURRENCE** – any absence from duty/work, either individual or consecutive.

**SCHEDULED ABSENCE** - a planned absence, either excused or paid where the employee has given at least twenty-four hours notice to the department head/supervisor.

**UNSCHEDULED ABSENCE** – any unplanned absence, either excused or paid, where the employee has not given at least one day's notice; where the employee has reported such absence within one (1) hour of the start of the workday or has reported such absence after the start of the workday.

**TARDY** - arrival at work at any time after the official start time of the workday for the work-site.

**SCHEDULED TARDY** - arrival at work after the official start time of the work-site where the employee has given at least twenty-four hours notice to the supervisor.

**UNSCHEDULED TARDY** - arrival at work after the official start-time of the work-site where the employee has not given at twenty-four hours notice; where employee has reported such tardiness within one (1) hour of the start of the workday or has reported such tardiness after the official start time of the workday for the work-site.

**CRITICAL DAYS** - work days for which absences pose a serious hardship on system operations and for which any absence shall require advance approval by the department head/supervisor.

**CRITICAL DAYS** are defined as:

- Teacher professional learning days (including pre and post planning weeks).
- First and last day of school for students each semester.
- Any single day or consecutive days prior to and/or following a holiday or holiday period, pay period or prior to and/or following, approved annual or personal leave.
- Standardized testing period for students (Georgia Milestone and End of Course Test )

**EXEMPT ABSENCE** - an absence not subject to these regulations:

- First four (4) days of scheduled absences for illness-related reasons.
- Approved leaves of absence as follows:
  - Annual Leave
  - Personal business (3 paid days)
  - Military leave
  - Jury Duty
  - Professional leaves (educational/study, educational meeting/conference, in-service training, official school business, government service or special leave)
  - Leave granted under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
  - Worker's compensation leave
  - Disciplinary action by the employer, i.e. suspension

**JOB ABANDONMENT** - An employee who fails to report to work or contact the worksite for three (3) or more consecutive workdays without permission and/or proper notification will be considered to have abandoned his/her position and the District will move forward with the appropriate action. In any instance of less than three days, the employee shall present sufficient written justification and

attach to the justification appropriate documentation supporting the reason(s) for the absence and failure to contact or their position may still be declared abandoned.

**PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE/CORRECTIVE ACTION REQUIREMENTS**

Unscheduled absences and tardies must be monitored and appropriate corrective action promptly applied. The following provisions are applicable:

OCCURRENCE IN SEMESTER	REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION
2 <sup>nd</sup> unscheduled absence/tardy	Counsel employee and issue written warning signed by employee
3 <sup>rd</sup> unscheduled absence/tardy	Counsel employee and issue written letter of correction
4 <sup>th</sup> unscheduled absence/tardy	Counsel employee and place on PDP
5 <sup>th</sup> unscheduled absence/tardy	Counsel employee, document conference, also refer to EAP if circumstances warrant or recommend one (1) day suspension.
6 <sup>th</sup> unscheduled absence/tardy	Provide employee with documentation of problem, past corrective efforts, and notification of intent to recommend termination.

Scheduled absences and tardies must be curtailed and kept in check such that benchmarks are not exceeded. The following provisions are applicable to all absences and tardies that are not exempt from these regulations.

OCCURRENCE IN SEMESTER	REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION
Three (3) consecutive days	Require medical certification on Board-approved form.
Five (5) days	Counsel with employee, document conference.
Seven (7) days	Counsel with employee, document conference, issue written warning.
Ten (10) days	Document conference, place on PDP and refer to EAP, if extenuating circumstances.
Thirteen (13) days	Meet with employee, give documentation of all prior corrective efforts and give notification of intent to <b>recommend</b> termination.



## Money Handling Procedures

ALL money collected from students, vendors etc. for club activities, trips, fundraising, party events, donations etc. are processed as property of the Ben Hill County Schools as follows:

1. Recorded on a system cash collection sheet by collector (not the school bookkeeper):
  - To include description of funds collected (what you are selling; what you are collecting for)
2. Student name for cash and student/check writer name for checks to include check number. Only point of sale items, where goods are exchanged and refunds are not issued, is cash listed as a total. Checks are always listed;
  - Total breakdowns for multiple collection types (i.e. club dues, t-shirts, trip payment);
3. Counted, totaled and signed by the preparer;
4. Retain copy for potential refunds; and
5. Turned into the school designee for verification, signature and deposit preparation on a daily basis.

**Under NO circumstance is CASH paid to a vendor for goods or services. ALL money collected must be processed as stated above.**

Failure to comply with this procedure may:

1. Result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment; and
2. Be considered grounds for violation of Rule 505-6-.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS for Georgia Educators that may result in disciplinary action by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

## Most Frequently Asked Questions

### What are my work hours?

All staff are paid for an eight-hour day with the exception of child nutrition workers and bus drivers/monitors. Each principal or director will set the work hours for their staff according to the beginning and ending time for their school day. Work hours may be adjusted to accommodate early duty assignments. Employees must clock in immediately upon arrival and clock out before leaving the building. Any deviation from normal work hours must have prior approval of the principal or director. Frequently duties and responsibilities require extended hours for contracted employees. It is the employee's responsibility to comply with their designated work schedule.

### **What are the expectations for attendance and punctuality?**

The expectations for attendance and punctuality are set forth in board policy GBR and GBR-R(1) which is available on district website [www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us](http://www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us) under the link to Policies.

The successful operation of Ben Hill County Schools is contingent upon the commitment of employees to demonstrate punctual attendance during each scheduled workday. Excessive employee absenteeism and tardiness result in a system that is ineffective, inefficient and not conducive to the "teaching-learning" process. Therefore, implementation of the staff attendance policy of the Ben Hill County Board of Education shall be in accordance with these provisions:

For 190 day employees, six (6) absences per semester or twelve (12) absences per year shall be considered a "reasonable level" or normal amount of time an employee can be away from the job and shall serve as the benchmark for absence and tardy control regulations. For employees on extended contracts, a "reasonable level" shall amount to 6.5% of contracted work days.

- Anticipated absences shall be scheduled at least one day in advance. Notice of scheduled absences shall be made by the employee to the department head/supervisor.
- Employees shall not be able to change absences to an exempt leave category after the absence has occurred (i.e. – use of annual or personal business leave after an unscheduled absence).
- Medical certification shall be required for rise of leave attributed to personal illness or other illness reason for three (3) consecutive days over the course of the semester.
- Absences or tardies in excess of twelve (12) days within a defined work year shall result in corrective action.
- Absences for any critical day shall require prior approval by the department head/supervisor.

**Refer to Board Policy GBR and GBR-R(1).**

### **What should I do if I must leave campus during the school day?**

Occasionally there might be a family or personal emergency that would substantiate the need for an employee to leave campus during work hours. A written request should be submitted to the principal or designee for approval. There must be appropriate supervision available for your request to be approved. Employees should sign/clock out according to the procedures at the school site and sign/clock in upon return. YOSS Time Tracker is the official time documentation for the system.

### **How may I be reached during the school day if there is a family emergency?**

Personal calls should be limited to emergencies only. Calls should be made during planning periods so that instructional time will not be interrupted. The secretaries at each school can take messages for phone calls to be returned to parents. Personal cell phones should be turned off and secured while on campus. They are not to be used while in the classroom. School district cell phones or links are issued to designated personnel for security and safety purposes. These are to be used for school related business only. The school district assumes no responsibility implied or otherwise relative to personal cell phones.

**How do I earn sick leave? Reference board policy GBRH**

All employees of the Board of Education shall be entitled to sick leave, with full pay, computed on the basis of one and one-fourth (1 ¼) working days for each completed month (20 school days of service, which shall equal 1 ¼ days of sick leave). For certified employees, all unused sick leave shall be accumulated from one fiscal year to the next up to a maximum of one hundred twenty (120) days. Sick leave accumulated by a certified employee is transferable from one school system to another school system, up to a maximum of 45 days. Sick leave shall be earned at the rate of 1 ¼ days for each full 20-day work period. Classified personnel are not allowed to transfer accumulated sick leave days from other systems.

The leave provided under this policy is available only for personal illness, injury or exposure to contagious diseases, or for absences necessitated by illness in the employee's immediate family.

For any absence in which sick leave is used, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall have the right to require a physician's certificate stating that the employee is ill and is unable to perform his or her duties. In the event that sick leave is used to care for a member of the immediate family, the Superintendent or his/her designee shall have the right to 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 must be furnished.

For the purposes of absences for medical and related reasons, members of the immediate family are defined as spouse, children, father, mother, sisters, brothers, grandparents, grandchildren, aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, father-in-law, mother-in-law, sister-in-law, brother-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law or other relatives living in the household.

In order to qualify for sick leave in a 20-day work period, employees must work a minimum of ten (10) days or more.

Under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) employees who have been employed for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1250 hours during the 12 month period immediately prior to requesting leave are eligible to take 12

weeks of unpaid leave for birth of child, adoption or foster placement, to care for a family member with a serious health condition or for a serious health condition of the employee. **Reference Board Policy GBRIG.**

### **How many personal leave days do I earn and how do I request leave?**

Employees may take three (3) days of personal leave if prior approval of the absence has been given by the employee's immediate supervisor and if the presence of the employee requesting absence is not essential for effective school operation. A leave form in YOSS must be filed and approved by the principal one (1) week prior to leave. Personal leave will be charged against the employee's sick leave. Unless otherwise approved by the Superintendent, personal and professional leave will not be granted during pre-planning, post-planning, in-service days, or on the day before or day after holidays. In addition, personal leave will not be granted during the first week of the student school year or during the last week of the student school year, unless the Superintendent, in his or her discretion, determines that such leave should be granted due to any emergency or extenuating circumstances beyond the employee's control. The Superintendent may refuse to allow an employee to take personal or professional leave if qualified substitutes are not available.

Employees are not required to disclose the purpose for which such absence is sought but may be required to state whether the absence is for "personal" or "professional" reasons. Absences above those entitled by this policy, an amount equal to one day's salary for each day's absence shall be deducted.

### **What other leaves are allowable?**

#### Observance of Religious Holidays

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

#### Jury and Witness Leave

Each person employed by the Board shall be allowed leave with pay for the purposes of serving as a juror in any court or when subpoenaed to testify in a case arising out of the individual's duties as a school system employee. Professional leave forms must be completed for jury duty in YOSS or witness leave and follow the same approval process as other leaves for approval. Jury and/or witness leave shall not be deducted from an individual's accumulated personal, professional or sick leave. No employee utilizing jury and witness leave shall be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute to serve during his or her absence for such leave. Employees who serve on juries or who are subpoenaed for reasons arising out of their employment with the school system are permitted to retain the jury/witness pay they receive.

### Military Leave

All employees of the Board of Education are entitled to paid leave not to exceed eighteen days in any federal fiscal year for the purpose of complying with ordered military leave duty with the armed forces of the United States or State of Georgia, including duty as a voluntary member of the militia or reserve component of the United States or State of Georgia. Employees also are entitled to leave not exceeding thirty days in any one federal fiscal year if ordered to duty as a result of the declaration of any emergency by the governor or the appropriate officials of the United States armed forces. Employees who have military commitments shall inform the director annually and shall cooperate to the extent possible in scheduling such leave so as to minimize the disruption in those employees' duties and the mission of the Board of Education.

### Bereavement Leave

In the event of the death of a family member, up to three days cumulative bereavement leave will be granted. All such bereavement leave will be charged against the employee's sick leave.

### Professional Leave

Personnel may formally request professional leave at full pay to attend specific activities or receive advance training. Funding source must be secured prior to submitting the request. Examples of reasons for which professional leave may be granted include, but are not limited to, in-service training, conferences, and seminars that are directly related to the current district or school improvement plans.

The formal request should be submitted in the YOSS leave module to the principal for approval and then to the Superintendent of Schools prior to the requested absence. If possible, the request for professional leave should be submitted two weeks prior to the requested absence. If travel reimbursement is requested it should be indicated on the leave form. Unless prior approval is given, travel expenses may not be reimbursable.

### **What is the professional dress code?**

All classified and certified staff are to report to work wearing appropriate, professional attire. Clothing should be comfortable and neat to enhance not detract from or interfere with the learning environment. Members of the staff should be distinguishable in dress from student attire. Staff who are, in the opinion of the administration, are dressed inappropriately will be asked to change their attire. Subsequent violations for professional dress code could affect evaluations of professional performance or result in other disciplinary consequences. Staff attending extracurricular activities and representing the district should dress appropriately for those circumstances. Depending on the activity, the dress code of staff may be adapted for special occasions at the discretion of the principal but may not be violated as a means for fundraising. For example, staff members will

not be allowed to violate dress code by paying a fee to go to an organization. Staff are urged to support homecoming week activities or Red Ribbon week activities as appropriately outlined by the principal.

More specifically:

- All BHCS employees must wear professional work attire which reflects a school climate and culture that exhibits success.
- Professional work attire may differ depending on the position of the employee as well as the grade level to which the employee works. This applies to both male and females.
- Professional work attire must not be skin tight to where mobility is restricted.
- Clothing must fit so that undergarment and/or excessive skin are not exposed.
- Low cut blouses or “off the shoulder” tops are not allowed.
- Skirts, dresses, or jumpers must fall at the tip of your longest finger when your arms are extended to your side when standing.
- Capri pants may be worn. Tights, leggings, jeggings, and spandex may be worn **only** with an appropriate length top (falls to tip of longest finger).
- Jeans may be worn at the approval of the principal or superintendent. Jeans must be worn with a school system shirt or with a shirt that’s designated for a specific school or school system activity.
- Males are required to wear a collared shirt (tie/jacket optional) and slacks/dress pants. Males working in non-academic teaching settings will be allowed to dress according to the field to which they work.
- Professional footwear is required for all staff members except on jean days to which tennis shoes can be worn. Staff members with medical foot issues may wear footwear that’s recommended by their doctor.
- Professional work attire is designed to differ from the dress code of the students to whom you work with. Our students, our parents, our community, and our business partners should be able to look at you and know that you are a professional.

### **What benefits are available to the employee?**

You may reference information about the benefits offered to employees of Ben Hill County Schools at the following websites.

[www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us](http://www.ben-hill.k12.ga.us) District Web Page

[www.TRSGA.com](http://www.TRSGA.com) Teacher Retirement System of Georgia

<http://www.ers.ga.gov/default.html> Employee Retirement System of Georgia

<http://www.ers.ga.gov/plans/psers/psersmain.html> Public School Retirement of GA

[www.dch.georgia.gov/shbp](http://www.dch.georgia.gov/shbp) State Health Benefit Plans

## How do I receive travel reimbursement?

Approved Professional Leave requests must be marked complete in YOSS and have the following before payments can be made and to satisfy audit guidelines.

1. Receipts are required for all expenses except meals. Examples are taxi/uber fares, parking and bridge tolls. In the event that a receipt is lost a duplicate can be submitted or sworn notarized statement.
2. Mark complete forms must include auto tag number, odometer readings at time of departure and return for mileage requests. Total mileage should be calculated.
3. Copy of all receipts required, motel bills, registration fees, and proof of payment. These are to be uploaded to your file library in YOSS in Professional Growth and attached to your event from prior to making complete.
4. Meals are reimbursed only if travel is more than 50 miles from your residence and or work station AND are away for more than twelve (12) hours. Rates are per diem for that day. Any meals provided by the event will not be reimbursed.

Leave that is funded by Federal programs require that the agenda of meeting with sessions that are to be attached to request for reimbursement from federal funds. Requests must be completed within the following month after leave is taken. June travel must be submitted by JULY 10 due to the close of fiscal year requirements. Failure to do so could result in forfeiture of reimbursement by the employee.

Refer to <http://www.audits.state.ga.us> Statewide Travel Regulations for a more thorough explanation of statewide travel regulations and meal reimbursement rates. State and local government officials and employees traveling within the state on official business are **exempt** from paying the **county or municipal excise tax** on lodging ("hotel/motel" or "occupancy" tax) [OCGA 48-13-51 (H) (3)], regardless of the payment method being used. (*This exemption does not apply to travelers staying at an out-of-state hotel/motel.*) Travelers must be able to provide proper identification to document their employment as a state or local government employee.

Additionally, as an employee traveling on official State business, the lodging is eligible for **exemption** from **State of Georgia Sales Tax** when the payment method being used is either a direct bill to the agency, or a State of Georgia issued credit card. Travelers should make every effort to avoid payment of sales tax when the payment method is other than a personal payment method.

Travelers are required to submit a copy of the Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Form, which is located on the SAO travel website, upon registration at the hotel/motel. If the hotel refuses to accept the form at check-in, the traveler should attempt to resolve the issue with hotel management before checking out at the end of their stay. If the matter is not resolved by check-out time, the traveler should pay the tax. TTE system travelers should classify this tax separately as “occupancy tax” and/or “sales tax”, accordingly, and provide an explanation when submitting their expense report. Failure of the employee to submit the Hotel Occupancy Tax Exemption Form to the hotel/motel may result in non-reimbursement of the tax to the employee.

Per the Transportation Funding Act of 2015, effective July 1, 2015 hotels in the state of Georgia will charge a \$5.00 per room per night hotel tax to travelers. This tax is not exempted for State Employees.

**How do I obtain a substitute if I am going to be absent?**

**Teachers should make every effort to be present. No matter how effective the substitute is, they cannot take the place of the teacher.** Occasionally there will be a situation that requires the teacher to be away from the classroom. In the case of absence complete lesson plans should be available to the substitute so that instruction can be carried out. Staff will be responsible for insuring absences are filled by a substitute through ESS when necessary by utilizing the YOSS Absence Management Program via telephone, computer or mobile app. Absences should be entered into YOSS as far in advance as possible in order to secure a substitute.

Please inform your substitute of any duties you may be assigned. Complete lesson plans should be provided so that instruction can be carried out as thoroughly as possible. Also advise the substitute of the school procedures for documenting time. All substitutes will check in and out in the designated office on each school campus.

**How will I receive communication from the administration?**

Daily announcements via the school email network contain information about upcoming meetings, special programs and important reminders. In addition, the teacher should check their email and individual mailboxes several times during the day. Only personnel authorized by the principal will operate the intercom system at each school site.

**How will I obtain the necessary supplies and materials needed for classroom instruction?**

An electronic purchase requisition must first be filled in and routed to the proper authorities to authorize a purchase. The form is located in YOSS and every employee has access to this process.



For instructional materials not available at the school site, an electronic purchase requisition should be submitted to the principal for approval. An electronic copy should be maintained by the school bookkeeper. It will be forwarded to the central office for approval and routed for appropriate approval of program director, finance director and superintendent. Once proper approval has been obtained, a purchase order will be generated by the accounts payable clerk and returned to the originator. This process may take several days so allow sufficient time when submitting a purchase requisition. **Personal expenditures for supplies will not be reimbursed. The purchase of supplies, materials and services can only be purchased with a properly authorized purchase order. Any purchase made without a properly authorized purchase order will not be recognized by the system and may result in non-payment and assumption of the purchase by the employee. Always follow purchase requisition/order protocol.**

#### **What should I do if my classroom needs maintenance?**

Requests for maintenance require approval of the principal or designee and should be made on forms available online. The maintenance request will be forwarded to maintenance at Jit Bit Help Desk department for service.

#### **What do I do if I have problems with my computer or other technology tools?**

1. Report any computer or technology issue to your school administration.
2. Complete a technology maintenance request with your school librarian.
3. The technology specialist assigned to your school will address your issue(s).

#### **What means of communicating with parents/guardians are available?**

Frequent, accurate, and confidential communication with parents is required of all teachers. Effective involvement of parents positively impacts student achievement. Infinite Campus is available for school and system-wide notification to parents. Staff and parents should be sure that addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses are up-to-date.

#### **Confidentiality:**

School employees have access to confidential student information. Grades, discipline, medical, and personal information should be reported to parents/legal guardians only. Reporting to social agencies should be done through the appropriate counselor or administrator.

**Grades and attendance** – This can be monitored and updated through Infinite Campus.

#### **Parent Portal**

Web-based access for parents to monitor attendance and grades in grades K-12. Teachers are responsible for keeping this information accurate and current. Attendance should be recorded at the beginning of each class. Teachers in Grades K-5 will record proficiency levels for students biweekly using the proficiency scales and send those reports home to parents. Teachers in Grades 6-12 will update grades in Infinite Campus weekly to reflect students' mastery of the standards. Teachers are encouraged to record at least one grade per week in the student information system, giving students a minimum of nine grades per quarter in each subject. Any exceptions should be approved by the principal.

**Progress reports/Report cards:**

Progress reports are issued to students every four and a half weeks. Report cards are issued to students every 9 weeks.

**Conferences:**

Teachers are responsible for scheduling and holding parent conferences with parents as needed. These conferences provide an opportunity for teachers to share student strengths and weaknesses. Documentation of parent conferences and contact should be kept in the Contact Log for each student in Infinite Campus.

**Who should have access to student records? Reference board policy JR**

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) and the Pupil Protection Rights Amendment (PPRA). Confidentiality of student records shall be preserved while access is provided to parents, eligible students (those over eighteen years of age or enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions), professional educators with legitimate educational interests, and those federal or state officials whose access is authorized in connection with an audit or evaluation of federal or state supported education programs or for the enforcement or compliance with federal legal requirements related to those programs.

Any parent whose parental rights have not been specifically revoked by court order, any guardian, or any individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian may inspect the education records of his or her child. Generally, a parent will be permitted to obtain a copy of education records of his child upon reasonable notice and payment of reasonable copying costs.

**What procedures are in place to keep students and adults safe?**

Each school has an Emergency Plan in place that has been approved by state agencies. These are to be updated regularly under the direction of the administrator over the Emergency Safety Plan. It is important for staff members to familiarize themselves with these procedures for an emergency or natural disaster.

It is also important to become familiar with the Student Codes of Conduct and consistently enforce these codes at your school. Administration at each school is responsible for conducting drills and training of staff.

The best safety precaution is to be vigilant of visitors on campus and to be sure that students are supervised at all times by being visible in the halls during class change and present at duty stations when assigned. Report any suspicious behavior to the administration. Always wear the school issued ID badge when in the building. Classrooms should always be locked. The inside of the classroom should be visible from the hallways and are not to be covered.

**What are the expectations for working in a drug free workplace? Reference Board Policy GAMA.**

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 work force must be absolutely free of any person who would knowingly manufacture, distribute, sell or possess a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug in an unlawful manner.

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. **Reference policy GAMA.**

**What support structures are available for employees with alcohol or drug dependency or mental, psycho-neurotic, or personality disorders?**

The Ben Hill County Board of Education values each employee and has joined with Behavioral Health Services to provide an Employee Assistance Program. This program is designed to be a resource to assist employees and their families to maintain their health and well-being. Employee Orientation sessions are conducted for all employees regardless of utilization of services. Services may be scheduled by calling the crisis line, 1-229-671-3500 or for Tift Clinic, 229-391-2350. Staff should request an Employee Assistance Program appointment and be sure to inform them that you are a part of Ben Hill County Schools Employee Assistance Program. Posters and flyers describing services are available at all school offices. This program is confidential.

**How can I insure my students are safe while accessing the internet for research? Reference Board Policy IFBGE**

It shall be the responsibility of all members of the Ben Hill County School System to supervise and monitor usage of the online computer network and access to

the internet in accordance with Board Policy IFBGE and the Children's Internet Protection Act.

To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users on the Ben Hill County Schools online computer network when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications. All outside web-based email will not be available to staff and students. If students have email access, it will only be under their teacher's direct supervision using a classroom account.

To the extent practical, technology protection measures shall be used to block or filter Internet or other forms of electronic communications and access to inappropriate information. Specifically, as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, blocking shall be applied to visual depictions of material deemed obscene or child pornography, or to any material deemed harmful to minors. Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes. Procedures for disabling or otherwise modifying any technology protection measures shall be the responsibility of the designated representatives of the Technology Department.

#### **What are the email or internet use guidelines for employees?**

Ben Hill County School System recognizes that use of the Internet has many benefits for the system and its employees. The Internet and e-mail make communication more efficient and effective. Employees are to check their email accounts several times a day for messages regarding school events and announcements.

All system-supplied technology, including computer systems and company-related work records, belong to the system. Ben Hill County School System routinely monitors usage patterns for its phones, e-mail and internet communications. Although encouraged to explore the vast resources available on the Internet, employees should use discretion in the sites that are accessed. Since all the computer systems, software, e-mail and internet connection are owned by the Ben Hill County School System, all system policies are in effect at all times. **Employees are not to use the district e-mail system for personal reasons. Use of school property for any personal reason is a violation of the Code of Ethics of Educators and consequences for such actions may include but are not limited to sanctions or revocation of GAPSC certification or other disciplinary actions.** E-mail is not guaranteed to be private or confidential. Since the Internet is not secure, others could read or possibly alter your messages. Internal and external e-mail messages are considered business records and may be subject to discovery in the event of litigation. Please direct questions regarding appropriate use of the phones, internet, or e-mail to the Technology Department.

### **What does “professional” behavior mean?**

The Georgia Professional Standards describes “professional behavior” in the Code of Ethics for Educators. The complete Code of Ethics is included in the appendix or on the Professional Standards website at [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com). Principals review the expectations of the Code of Ethics to staff annually, and signatures are required indicating that educators have been oriented to the Code of Ethics.

### **What are the requirements for maintaining Georgia certification?**

Beginning July 1, 2010, no professional learning requirements shall be required for certificate renewal for clear renewal certificates for certificated personnel or for certificate renewal for paraprofessionals. LEAs may continue their own requirements for continued professional development. The Ben Hill County School District requires all employees to become life-long learners and keep their skills up-to-date by participating in on-going training.

### **For Professional certificates expiring in 2018 or later:**

- Completion of any outstanding Special Georgia Requirements that were outlined when the initial certificate was issued
- Employment by a Georgia LUA unless exempted as described in the Employment Requirement section below
- A GaPSC rule change regarding renewal of Professional certificates expiring in 2018 or later was recently initiated. You may read the adopted rule 505-2-.36. If the rule is adopted, renewal requirements for these certificates will be outlined in further detail here.

Certification renewal is the responsibility of the employee. Teachers and paraprofessionals need to be aware of the expiration date of their certificates. The certifications will be processed through the central office.

<http://www.gapsc.com>

### **How will I know which Professional Learning courses are offered?**

After the staff needs assessment is analyzed; surveys conducted; and achievement data has been analyzed; courses will be planned to meet the needs of staff in the designated areas for improvement. Ben Hill County Schools will continue to focus on the system initiatives by offering Professional Learning courses throughout the school year. Ben Hill County Schools believes that professional learning resources should be used to provide meaningful professional learning opportunities for teachers that will increase their individual and collective capacity to design and deliver instruction that will increase the likelihood of student success. Professional Learning is held at the school level through Professional Learning Communities (PLC). Each school maintains a record of teacher participation. This is used for teacher recertification.

The Coastal Plains Regional Education Service Agency (CPRESA) also offers Professional Learning courses. RESA courses are posted on the internet on a newly implemented on-line registration program beginning July 2012. This link can be located on the Ben Hill District website under Professional Development. Employees of BHCS will create a log in to become part of the CPRESA database which will enable them to participate in the courses offered by CPRESA. All course registrations must be pre-approved by the principal and District Professional Learning Coordinator. The courses selected must support the goals of the school improvement plan (SIP). Occasionally conferences or seminars will offer PLUs.

**Are there any incentives for participation in Professional Learning courses?**

When funding is available, stipends are paid upon completion of approved designated courses when teachers are off contract. All course requirements must be met before stipends will be paid. The amount of stipends is determined by availability of grant funds, and is in compliance with the District stipend policy.

**Fraudulent Activity Policy  
Administrative Regulations Addressing  
Fraud, Waste, Abuse, and Corruption**

All employees/staff in the Ben Hill County School District will be trained on procedures for safeguarding against fraud, waste, abuse, and corruption. All staff will receive professional learning at a system-wide meeting at the beginning of each school year on these procedures as a part of their Duties and Responsibilities training. A written copy of the policy/procedures will be disseminated during this time to each employee.

**Purpose:** To ensure the reporting of suspicion of fraudulent, wasteful, and abusive activities, the Ben Hill County Board of Education ensures employees, clients, and providers of confidential channels to report suspicious activities.

**Definitions: Fraud:** 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 grants.

**Statement of Administrative Regulations:** Ben Hill County Board of Education thoroughly and expeditiously investigates any reported cases of suspected fraud to determine if disciplinary, financial recovery and/or criminal action should be taken.

**Confidentiality:** All reports of suspect fraud, waste, abuse, and corruption must be handled under the strictest confidentiality. Only those directly involved in the investigation should be given information. Informants may remain anonymous

but should be encouraged to cooperate with the investigators and should provide as much detail and evidence of alleged fraudulent acts as possible.

#### **Procedures and Responsibilities:**

1. Anyone suspecting fraud concerning federal programs should report their concerns to the Superintendent's Office of the Ben Hill County Board of Education at 229-409-5500.
2. Any employee with Ben Hill County Board of Education (temporary staff, full-time staff, and contractors) who receives a report of suspected fraudulent activity shall disclose this information within the next business day to the superintendent's office at 229-409-5500. Employees have the responsibility to report suspected fraud, waste, abuse, or corruption. All reports can be made in confidence.
3. The Ben Hill County Board of Education shall conduct investigations of employees, providers, contractors, or vendors. Law enforcement will be included in investigations at the discretion of the Superintendent.
4. If necessary, the informant will be contacted for additional information.
5. Periodic communication through meetings should emphasize the responsibilities and channels to report fraudulent activity.
6. No employee, officer, or agent may participate in the selection, award, or administration of a contract supported by a federal award if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest.

#### **Employee Expectations for Transitioning to Online Learning as Needed**

- School will continue online for all students - Online or Paper Packets
- Teachers will work from their classrooms educating our students - no working from home. Childcare will be provided at each school by school staff.
- Observe the regular calendar days: PL and Holidays
- Teachers clock in at 8:00 and out at 4:00 everyday
- Teachers will have to take sick or personal leave for appointments or to be out from the school building
- Teachers will have lunch from 11:30 to 12:30 daily
- Teachers will have planning time for PLC meetings, RTI meeting, and professional development using social distancing, virtual meetings, etc
- Paras will be responsible for assisting with meal preparing, deliveries and childcare.
- Teachers will provide live small group tutoring sessions as needed
- Teachers will contact parents as needed to ensure students are completing their assignments

**Effective January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023**

**505-6-.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS**

**505- 6 -.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS**

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

(a) (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). 505-6-.01

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

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

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

1. misusing public or school-related funds;

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

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

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

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

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

(h) Standard 8: **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 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
2. disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
3. order from a court of competent jurisdiction or a request from the Department of Human Resources that the certificate should be suspended or the application for certification should be denied for non-payment of child support (O.C.G.A. §19-6-28.1 and §19-11-9.3);
4. notification from the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan guaranteed by the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation (O.C.G.A. §20-3-295);
5. suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate;
6. violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession; and
7. any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.

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