



Personnel Handbook

2012 - 2013

Thomas County Schools

200 North Pinetree Boulevard

Thomasville, GA 31792

(229) 225-4380 Fax (229) 225-5012

www.thomas.k12.ga.us

Updated 7/12

This handbook will not answer all questions dealing with personnel issues, but it should provide employees with general information. For additional information or complete board policies, employees should refer to the Thomas County School Board Policy Manual or contact the Personnel Director.

PERSONNEL HANDBOOK

Vision Statement

Board of Education/Administration

- Board Members and Meetings
- Board of Education - Administration

School Information

Code of Ethics for Educators

Employment Issues

- Annual Performance Evaluation
- Compensation
- Contracts
- Employee Workload
- Fingerprinting/Criminal Records Check
- Extra Duties
- Overtime
- Progressive Discipline Plan
- Reduction in Force
- Salary Adjustments
- Termination
- Transfer
- Voluntary Resignation

Employee Benefits

- Annual Attendance Recognition
- AFLAC
- Credit Union
- Dental Insurance
- Direct Deposit
- Disability Insurance
- Flexible Benefit Plan (Cafeteria Plan)
- Flexible Spending Account
- Georgia Higher Education Savings Plan
- Life Insurance
- Long Term Care Insurance
- Public Employees Retirement System
- Sick Leave
- Social Security
- State Health Benefit Plan
- Teacher Retirement System of Georgia
- Voluntary Retirement Plan
- Worker's Compensation Insurance
- YMCA Membership

Leave

- Sick Leave
- Personal Leave
- Professional Leave
- Professional Leave for Employee Representatives
- Association Leave
- Observance of Religious Holidays
- Extended Medical Leave
- Jury Duty
- Military Leave
- Bereavement Leave
- Family and Medical Leave
- Vacation Leave
- Maternity Leave
- Notification of Absences

Certification

- Certification
- Teacher / Paraprofessional Certification Tests
- Certificate In-Field Status
- Certificate Renewal
- Upgrading a Certificate
- Adding a Field, Service Certificate or Leadership
- Technology Requirement
- Highly Qualified

Professional Learning

Drug-Free Workplace- Substance Abuse

Complaints and Grievances

General Information

- AIDS Information
- Cell Phones
- Child Abuse and Reporting
- Copyright
- Crisis Intervention Plan
- Dress
- Equal Employment Opportunity Statement
- Sexual Harassment
- Tobacco Use

Additional Resources

Vision Statement

Teaching children, ensuring success by:



promoting academic excellence in a safe and supportive learning environment.



understanding the individual emotional, intellectual, physical, and social needs of all children.



demonstrating a unified commitment to preparing students with skills and strategies needed to successfully adapt in a diverse and ever-changing society.



remaining sensitive to cultural differences.



providing state of the art facilities.



utilizing research-based instruction.



meeting the professional needs of all staff members.

Board of Education

➤ Board of Education Members

Dr. George (Dusty) Kornegay	Superintendent		
Mrs. Nancy Hiers	District 1	226-5454	8125 Boston- Monticello Road, Boston 31626
Mr. Mark Nesmith	District 2	498-1975	59 Rodina Lane, Boston 31626
Mr. Charles Evans	District 3	226-8249	175 S. Melrose Lane, Thomasville 31757
Mr. Frank Warr	District 4	683-3473	3372 Lee White Road, Ochlocknee 31773
Mr. Johnny Bannister	District 5	226-7672	P.O. Box 1921, Thomasville 31799
Mr. Scott Morgan	District 6	225-9034	261 Avalon Way, Thomasville 31792
Mrs. Kay Streets	District 7	228-6755	20113 Highway 319, Coolidge 31738

➤ Board of Education Meetings

Regular monthly meetings of the Thomas County Board of Education are held at the Thomas County Board Office (200 North Pinetree Boulevard) on the second Tuesday of each month.

Administration --Thomas County Board Office

Superintendent	Dr. Dusty Kornegay
Assistant Superintendent – Instruction	Melanie Chavaux
Assistant Superintendent – Operations	Lee Bailey
Assistant Superintendent – Administrative Services	Dr. Debra Knight
Director – Exceptional Students	Dr. Bonnie Seery
Director – Finance	Joey Holland
Director – Facilities	John Hebron
Director – Human Resources	Dr. Laine Reichert
Director – Research /Accountability/Title Programs	Dr. Bob Dechman
Director – School Nutrition	Karen Green
Director Intern – School Nutrition	Katie Eidson
Director – Instructional Technology	Danna Golden
Director – Student Services	Lisa Williams
Director – MERIT/Gifted	Dr. Jim Rehberg

School Information

Hand-In-Hand Primary

4687 Highway 84 By-Pass
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-3908 Fax (229) 225-3982
Principal – Jeanna Mayhall
Grades PreK-K

Garrison Pilcher Elementary School

277 Hall Road
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 225-4387 Fax (229) 227-2428
Principal – Sharonda Wilson
Grades 1-2

Cross Creek Elementary School

324 Clark Road
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 225-3900 Fax (229) 225-3904
Principal – Clay Stanaland
Grades 3-4

Thomas County Middle School

4681 Highway 84 By-Pass
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-4394 Fax (229) 225-4378
Principal – Dr. Kathy Keown
Grades 5-8

Thomas County Central High School

4686 U. S. 84 By-Pass
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-5050 Fax (229) 227-2422
Principal – Ken Harper
Grades 9-12

CrossRoads Alternative School

200 N. Pinetree Boulevard
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-3222 Fax (229) 225-5283
Director – Sharon Monroe
Grades 6 -12

Bishop Hall (Charter School)

1815 East Clay Street
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 227-1397 Fax (229) 558-9420
Director – Rich Johnson
Grades 9 – 12

Pathways

200 N. Pinetree Boulevard
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-3910 Fax (229) 225-5283
Director – Jeanene Wier
Grades K - 12

Code of Ethics for Educators and Staff

All employees in the Thomas County School System are required to observe the Code of Ethics for Educators – a code that protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and staff, and endures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the school system.

The following changes to the Professional Standards' Code of Ethics will be effective in the Thomas County School System:

- a) **Definitions:** An educator will include any employee of our school system.
- b) **Standard 8:** Although non-certificated personnel do not receive contracts, all employees are expected to fulfill the terms and obligations of their jobs.
- c) **Disciplinary Action:** The system will not report violations of non-certificated personnel to the Georgia Professional Standards but will take disciplinary action as authorized by law and Board policy.

Effective June 15, 2009

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

(b) "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.

(c) "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 and Standards of Professional Conduct for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the year of graduation.

(d) "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.

(e) "Revocation" is the invalidation of any certificate held by the educator.

(f) "Denial" is the refusal to grant initial certification to an applicant for a certificate.

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

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

(i) "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.

(j) "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.

(k) "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;
5. Soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student; and
6. Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student under the educator's supervision or control (including but not limited to the educator's residence) to consume alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

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

(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 requests for compensation based on fraudulent, purchased or plagiarized degrees, documents, or coursework);
4. Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts;
5. Using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
6. Using school system property for personal gain.

(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 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: **Abandonment of Contract** - An educator shall fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or education agency for the duration of the contract. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

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

(i) Standard 9: **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.

(j) **Standard 10: Professional Conduct** - An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the teaching profession. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position, or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students.

(k) **Standard 11: Testing** - An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. Committing any act that breaches Test Security; and
2. Compromising the integrity of the assessment.

(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 local policies and procedures and/or the chain of command for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the Professional Standards Commission must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, personnel director, superintendent, etc.).

(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 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 1-10 (PSC 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 1-10 (PSC 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

superintendent's designee for certification shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the superintendent and the superintendent's designee must hold GAPSC certification.

Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200; 20-2-981 through 20-2-984.5

Employment Issues

➤ Annual Performance Evaluation

Georgia law requires that all staff be evaluated annually. Teachers will be evaluated according to regulations and procedures of the instrument – Class Keys. Teachers should have thorough knowledge and understanding of the evaluation process. Questions regarding the Class Keys program should be directed to the Principal or assigned administrator. In positions where the Class Keys is not an appropriate instrument for evaluation, staff will be evaluated using either the Georgia Teacher Evaluation Program (GTEP) instrument or an instrument developed by the system.

Unsatisfactory Evaluations

PSC rule 505-2-.13 states, "For certificates that expire June 30, 2005, or after, an educator with two unsatisfactory annual performance evaluations during the previous five-year validity cycle that have not been satisfactorily addressed shall not be entitled to a renewable certificate in any field."

➤ Compensation

Salaries for certified employees are determined by three factors: (1) the number of days worked, (2) the employee's Georgia Educator's Certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission, and (3) accepted and verified experience as defined by the Georgia Department of Education. Lack of proper certification within thirty days of employment may result in termination from the Thomas County School System. Salaries for non-certified employees are determined by three factors: (1) the number of days worked, (2) the employee's hourly or monthly rate, and (3) accepted and verified experience.

➤ Contracts

Contracts are issued to certified personnel upon approval by the Thomas County Board of Education. The signed contract must be returned to the Superintendent within ten days from the issuance date on the contract. If the signed contract is not received by the eleventh day, the position for which the contract was issued will be declared vacant.

The Thomas County Board of Education has the sole authority to terminate, before its expiration date, any contract of employment within the school system. The Board of Education will consider releasing an employee from a signed contract only in extreme cases. Refer to Board Policy GBA for more information.

➤ Employee Workday

The minimum workday for teachers is defined as eight hours and the minimum workweek is defined as forty hours. Duties for which the base salary is paid include, but is not limited to, teaching and preparation, staff meetings, parent and student conferences, and other assigned duties. The workday for teachers is from 7:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.; however, teachers are expected to be available beyond the school day, if needed.

➤ Fingerprinting/Criminal Records Check

Effective July 1, 2000, all personnel employed by the Thomas County School Board shall be fingerprinted and have a criminal record check. Certified personnel and paraprofessionals, whose employment is renewed in the school system after July 1, 2000, shall have a criminal record check upon any certificate renewal application to the Professional Standards Commission. All other employees must have a criminal record check every five years.

➤ **Extra Duties**

School personnel may at times be required to perform non-classroom duties which may be administrative, supervisory, or clerical in nature. Requested records and reports are to be submitted to appropriate personnel at specified times.

➤ **Overtime**

Non-certified employees **may not** work overtime without receiving **prior** written permission from their immediate supervisor. Those who work overtime without receiving written permission will be considered displaying discipline-worthy conduct. Non-certified employees who receive written permission to work overtime must keep accurate records and turn these records in to their supervisor each month and/or when requested.

➤ **Progressive Discipline Plan**

Progressive discipline is a series of steps that enables the supervisor and/or employer to document, communicate and correct employee problems before they escalate. If the employee fails to meet performance expectations or fails to change inappropriate behavior, the following course of action may be taken:

1. Verbal warning
2. Written warning
3. Final written warning

- [The next step may be either one of the following.]*
4. Written letter and suspension
 5. Termination

➤ **Reduction in Force**

The Thomas County Board of Education will avoid, whenever possible, the necessity for reduction in force procedures. However, the Board recognizes that reduction in force actions may be necessary when overstaffing and/or budget issues occur. Reduction in force will be accomplished by using fair, efficient, and consistent procedures while constantly providing for the optimal welfare of the students in the system. Factors to be considered shall include, first and foremost, the professional expertise, effectiveness, and overall job performance of individual employees. Refer to Board Policy GAKA for more information.

➤ **Salary Adjustments**

Leave will be adjusted in the month for which the leave is taken. For example, if an employee has overused one sick leave day, the entire amount of that day will be deducted from the employee's check for that month.

➤ **Termination**

The contract of employment of a teacher, principal, or other professional employee certificated by the Professional Standards Commission, or any other school board employee having a contract for a definite term may be terminated by the Superintendent upon written notice for any of the following reasons:

1. Incompetency;
2. Willful neglect of duties;
3. Immorality, acts which are contrary to good morals, inconsistent with the rules and principles of morality and which are inimical to public welfare according to the standards of a given community;
4. Inciting, encouraging or counseling students to violate any valid state law, municipal ordinance, or policy or rule of the Board of Education;
5. Conviction of any crime involving moral turpitude;
6. Violation of any rule or regulation of the Board of Education;
7. Failure or refusal to comply with all reasonable orders, requests or directions of the Superintendent or other superior official;
8. Persistent failure or refusal to maintain orderly discipline of students;
9. Revocation by competent state authority of the certificate of the employee;
10. For failure to secure and maintain required educational training;
11. For reduction in staff due to loss of students or cancellation of programs;
12. For any other good and sufficient cause.

➤ **Transfers**

Personnel may be assigned or reassigned on the basis of the needs of the system, seniority, qualifications and certification, and/or expressed desires. Refer to Board Policy GBM for more information.

➤ **Voluntary Resignation**

A contract of employment with the Thomas County Board of Education is binding upon both parties — the certified employee and the school system. Neither party may terminate the contract before its expiration, except as provided by law. A certified employee who is under contract may not "resign." If, for any reason, the educator wishes to terminate the contract before the expiration, he/she must submit a written request to the Board of Education desiring to be released from the contract. If an educator should fail to complete his/her contractual obligations without having been granted such release, the educator will be reported to the Georgia Professional Standards Commission for possible disciplinary action.

Employee Benefits

Benefits are subject to change by the Board of Education at any time. Full-time employees are eligible for the benefits described below.

➤ **Annual Attendance Recognition**

Employees who have perfect attendance during the school year will receive \$200.



Cancer, Accident, and Intensive Care coverage is provided through AFLAC. Participating employees pay the total premium cost. Contact agent Dean Donathan at 229-224-6055 for more information.

➤ **Credit Union**

Membership is available with the Rose City Federal Credit Union through payroll deduction. The credit union is a nonprofit organization chartered and supervised by the federal government. It is owned and operated by its members and serves only its members. It offers checking accounts, savings accounts, certificates of deposit, Christmas and Vacation Club accounts, IRA accounts, and all types of loans. The contact person: Lee Bryant at 229-584-1082.

➤ **Dental Insurance**

Delta Dental insurance is available to Thomas County employees. The employee may choose one of two options – High Option or Low Option. The plan offers dental and orthodontia benefits

➤ **Direct Deposit**

An employee may enroll in the direct deposit plan at any time during the year. Through this benefit, an employee's paycheck can be deposited in any bank in the United States that participates in electronic deposit.

➤ **Disability Insurance**

Short-term and long-term disability insurance is available at employee expense. Employees may purchase benefits of up to 60% of their monthly salary.

➤ **Flexible Spending Account**

This program is provided by MedCom and allows employees to shelter taxes for additional health and childcare expenses. The employee decides the amount to be deducted from his/her check each month. The money is not taxed and must be spent on allowable expenses.

➤ **Georgia Higher Education Savings Plan (GHESP)**

GHESP compliments HOPE by providing the employee the opportunity to save for his/her child's higher education or his/her own post-graduate education. The money is free from federal and state income taxes and must be spent on allowable expenses.

➤ **Life Insurance**

Universal and Term Life insurance are available through **Standard** Life Insurance Company. Employees pay the total premium cost.

➤ **Long Term Care Insurance**

Employees may participate in UNUM, a long term care plan. A variety of plans are available with benefits paying part or all of the cost of assisted living, nursing home, or at-home care for disabled persons who qualify. The employee pays the full cost of this insurance. Contact agent Tommy Groover at 229-228-6980 for more information.

➤ **Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS)**

Bus drivers, mechanics, maintenance, and school nutrition workers are required to participate in the Public Employees Retirement System. Managers or supervisors have the option of enrolling in the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) plan or PSERS. The contact number for PSERS is 1-800-805-4609.

➤ **Sick Leave**

Employees earn 1¼ days per month of work to use for sick leave purposes as defined by the Board of Education policy GBRIB. Three earned sick leave days may be used annually for personal leave. The Board policy also allows employees to accrue up to 60 days of earned sick leave. Sick leave history is maintained for each employee. For members of the Georgia Teachers Retirement System (TRS), all days earned but not taken during an employee's career, including days accumulated in excess of the 60 day limit, is credited toward retirement benefits under the Teachers Retirement System (TRS). The employee must have at least 60 days of unused leave at the date of retirement to benefit from the accrued sick leave.

➤ **Social Security**

The school system participates in Social Security. Both the employee and Board of Education contribute equal amounts to the cost of Social Security.

➤ **State Health Benefit Plan**

Full-time employees are eligible to participate in the State of Georgia Health Benefit Plan. The employee may choose one of the four tiers: employee; employee and children; employee and spouse; or employee, spouse, and children. Employees pay the entire cost for coverage. Several plans of coverage are offered. More information is available on the web at www.dch.state.ga.us

➤ **Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS)**

Full-time personnel, except bus drivers, mechanics, maintenance, and school nutrition workers, are required to enroll in the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia. TRS requires that the employee and employer contribute to the plan. TRS information can be obtained at www.trsga.com or by calling 1-800-352-0650.

➤ **Voluntary Retirement System - LINCOLN**

Employees have the option of participating in a tax sheltered annuity provided by Lincoln Financial Group and managed by TNB Financial Services located in Thomasville. Lincoln offers employees a chance to participate in a supplemental pension program with one of the leading investment companies, specializing in educator retirement plans. The contact person is Sunny Gay at 229-227-0600.

➤ **Workers' Compensation Insurance**

Employees are insured by Workers' Compensation for coverage of injuries sustained on the job. The Thomas County School System pays the cost of this insurance. If an employee is hurt on the job, he/she must inform the principal or supervisor immediately. The principal or supervisor may authorize an injured employee who needs medical treatment to go to a health provider on the Workers' Compensation panel card which can be found in several locations in each school or worksite. In addition, the employee must submit to a drug test at the Urgent Care Center or other approved site/laboratory. After treatment, the employee must return the treatment authorization form from the health provider to the principal or supervisor.

➤ **YMCA Membership**

The Thomasville YMCA has a corporate membership plan that entitles employees of the Thomas County Schools to receive a 15% discount on memberships. Membership may be paid through payroll deduction.

➤ **Factor X Fitness**

This 24-hour per day, 365-days per year fitness facility offers gym memberships for employees of the Thomas County School System and their families. Services available include fitness, personal training, tanning, and exercise. Membership may be paid through payroll deduction.

Other payroll deductions, such as United Way, are available to employees. For forms and additional information regarding the benefits programs, contact Laine Reichert, Director of Human Resources.

Leave

➤ **SICK LEAVE**

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 1/4) working days for each completed month of service. Exceptions are noted in the chart below.

**THOMAS COUNTY SCHOOLS
SICK LEAVE CHART**

PERSONNEL	ALLOTTED SICK LEAVE DAYS	MAX. DAYS TO TRANS.	MAX. DAYS to ACCUM
<u>CERTIFIED STAFF</u>			
10 mo. Contract (188 days)	12 ½	45	60
10 mo. Contract (195 days)	13	45	60
11 mo. Contract (205 days)	13 ¾	45	60
11 ½ mo. Contract (214 days)	14 ½	45	60
12 mo. Contract (224 days)	15	45	60
<u>PARAPROFESSIONALS</u>			
10 mo. (180 days)	12		60
10 mo. (186 days)	12 ½		60
<u>CLERICAL</u>			
10 mo (176 days)	12 ½		60
11 mo (205 days)	13 ¾		60
12 mo (224 days)	15		60
<u>BUS DRIVERS</u>			
9 mo. (178 days)	11 ¼		45

<u>BUS MECHANIC/MAINTEN</u>			
12 MO. (224 days)	15		60
<u>NUTRITION</u>			
Managers (186 days)	12 ½		45
Workers (182 days)	5		20

Sick leave may be taken for absence due to illness, injury, or other temporary disability; or necessitated by exposure to contagious disease in which the health of others would be endangered by such attendance; or for illness or death in the employee's family. Family includes spouse, child, brother, sister, mother, father, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, mother-in-law, father-in-law, grandmother, grandfather, grandson, and granddaughter. Also included are blood or legal relatives who are members of the same household as the employee.

Employees will not receive pay for days they are absent and for which there is no leave provided under this policy. Example: If an employee under a 190 day contract is absent and the absence is not covered by the leave policy (because of the nature of the absence or because the leave time has been exhausted), 1/190th of the employee's salary will be deducted for each day of such absence.

Any accumulated unused sick and personal leave credited to an employee shall be forfeited if the employee withdraws from service for a period of 12 or more consecutive months, unless the withdrawal from service is for educational leave to seek a higher level or different field of certification and provided that the withdrawal from service for this purpose is for no longer than 24 consecutive months. An employee who forfeits such accumulated sick and personal leave shall be entitled to regain the accumulated sick and personal leave after they have returned to service for a period of two consecutive years.

The principal or supervisor may require a doctor's statement confirming illness, disability, or an employee's inability to be present at work.

No employee may pay a substitute directly or through payment to the Board of Education for substitute work performed at any time for any reason. The Board of Education is solely responsible for paying substitutes.

➤ **PERSONAL LEAVE**

All employees except nutrition workers may earn three of their sick leave days annually for personal leave. Nutrition workers may use one of their sick leave days annually for personal leave.

Except in cases of emergency, requests for personal leave are to be submitted via PDEExpress for approval and submission to the Superintendent or designee no later than ten working days before the date of the requested leave. The employee should make sure that all levels of approval have been obtained **before** taking leave. Personal leave may not be taken on any of the teacher work days, Early Release days, Professional Learning days, or on a day immediately preceding or immediately following a holiday, except in cases where circumstances beyond the control of the employee make it impossible for him/her to be present for work on one or more of these days. Personal leave may not be carried over from one fiscal year to the next. When an employee is absent for personal reasons and there

is no leave provided under this provision, the employee's annual salary will be deducted for each day of such absence.

➤ **PROFESSIONAL LEAVE AND ABSENCES**

Leave to attend conferences, workshops, etc., must be submitted on the Request for Approval of Official Travel form at least ten days prior to the date of leave. This leave is subject to approval by the Principal, Director, and Superintendent.

➤ **PROFESSIONAL LEAVE REQUIREMENTS FOR EMPLOYEE REPRESENTATIVES**

The Board recognizes the importance of employees serving as representatives on professional job-related organizations, boards and advisory committees. However, the Board subscribes to the principle that employee participation in these organizations, boards and/or advisory committees should not diminish or jeopardize the quality of instruction for students due to excessive staff absences. Therefore, official requests for employees to serve in the capacity of an officer of a professional organization, a member of a board, or a member of an advisory committee must be submitted to the employee's supervisor and Superintendent before acceptance of such position. Further, official requests for employees to be excused from their job responsibilities to participate in these activities must adhere to the following guidelines:

1. All requests for employees to be excused from work to serve in the official capacities must receive prior approval from their supervisor and Superintendent.
2. The maximum number of days that an employee representative may be excused from work during a twelve-month period is four days. Only the Superintendent can grant exceptions to this revision.

➤ **ASSOCIATION LEAVE**

Official delegates of the Georgia Association of Educators (GAE) or Professional Association of Georgia Educators (PAGE) will be excused without a deduction in pay if a written request containing a list of all delegates is submitted by the President of the local association to the Superintendent.

➤ **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.

➤ **EXTENDED MEDICAL LEAVE**

1. If an employee is absent for medical reasons beyond the period covered by accumulated sick leave, the employee's position shall be held open according to FMLA guidelines.
2. The extended medical leave shall continue until such time as the employee is able to return to work or until the end of the school year, whichever occurs first provided that the leave is in accordance with FMLA guidelines.
3. The initial period of extended medical leave may be extended for a period not to exceed one school year, provided the employee delivers to the Superintendent a written request for such extension no later than one calendar month before the expiration date of the initial leave period.
4. At the conclusion of extended leave, paid or unpaid, or at any time during the leave that the employee is able to return to work, the employee must provide a statement from the attending physician attesting to the employee's ability to perform his or her job functions. When an employee becomes able to return to work, and is so certified by a written statement from his/her physician, he/she will be offered the first position which becomes open and for which the employee is qualified. If the employee refuses this position, his/her leave status is terminated and the Thomas County Board of Education has no further obligations to the employee except to consider his/her future application for employment on an equal basis with those of other applicants. Should an employee not have proper medical certification to return to employment after a leave of absence period expires, the School District is under no obligation or duty to offer re-employment.

5. Extended medical leave will allow the employee to maintain participation at his/her own expense in the system's group insurance programs as provided in state and local policies and policies of the insuring agents.

➤ **JURY AND WITNESS LEAVE**

Employees who serve on jury duty shall be permitted to retain remuneration received for these services. Such absences shall not be deducted from the employee's sick or personal leave. Employees must provide a copy of the jury summons to their immediate supervisor as soon as possible after receiving such summons.

Subpoenas

Employees will not have leave deducted in cases where:

- 1) The employee is subpoenaed as a witness in a case not involving financial or personal interest on the part of the employee.
- 2) The employee is subpoenaed by a court as a result of incidents occurring which are related to employment with the Thomas County Board of Education.
- 3) The employee is subpoenaed by a court to provide official records of the Thomas County School System for review.
- 4) The employee is subpoenaed in line of duty as a witness on behalf of the Board.

In no case will leave with pay be granted for court attendance as a witness where an employee is engaged in personal litigation; however, employees who have accrued personal leave or vacation leave may apply for approval to use this leave for this purpose.

Employees must provide a copy of the subpoena to their immediate supervisor as soon as possible after receiving such subpoena.

➤ **MILITARY LEAVE**

See complete policy for information about military leave.

➤ **BEREAVEMENT LEAVE**

Sick leave will be granted for absences due to the death of a family member. Family includes those mentioned under the sick leave provision of this policy.

➤ **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 there under, or any other federal law, the provision of the FMLA, its regulations or other law, as the case may be, in control. Refer to GBRIB for complete FMLA policy.

➤ **VACATION LEAVE**

Twelve-month employees will be allowed two weeks (10 days) of vacation annually. Vacation days will be accrued at one day per month with a cap of 10 days per year provided that the employee works at least one half of the working days per month. Eleven and one-half month employees will be allowed one week (5 days) of vacation annually.

Vacation days earned in any fiscal year must be taken prior to the first teacher planning day of the next fiscal year unless a written exception is approved by the Superintendent by August 1. Any employee on a twelve month contract who is a classroom teacher and responsible for student instruction may not take vacation days during any of the school days in which students are present.

An employee may elect to carry over from any fiscal year up to one week (five days) of vacation time. The amount of time which may be accumulated under this provision is limited to twenty working days, not including those days earned during the current fiscal year.

Vacation time may not be "borrowed" from future years or taken before it is earned.

When an employee resigns, the employee has the option of early release or extra pay for accumulated vacation time.

When an employee is involuntarily terminated, the Superintendent has the option of providing early release or extra pay for accumulated vacation time.

An employee should submit vacation leave requests in writing to his/her supervisor at least ten days prior to the leave.

➤ **Maternity Leave**

Maternity leave shall be granted employees in accordance with the following guidelines:

1. Notice: Physician's Statement. The employee shall notify the Superintendent in writing, as soon as practicable, of her desire to take such leave but in any event (except in case of emergency), at least sixty calendar days prior to the date upon which such leave is to begin. The notice shall be accompanied by a doctor's statement of anticipated date of physical disability.
2. Determination of Commencement. The maternity leave shall begin at the time to be determined by the employee, the physician, and the Superintendent. The employee may continue in active employment as late into her pregnancy as she desires provided that she is able to properly perform the required functions of her job.
3. Sick Leave Benefits. The employee shall be entitled to utilize all of her accumulated sick leave that has been credited to her, not to exceed the doctor's estimated length of physical disability or the length finally determined by the Board, as the case may be. An employee desiring to discontinue work prior to date of physical disability shall be governed by the same sick leave provisions as apply to employees on leave for other reasons.
4. Duration: Return to Work. An employee who has been granted sick leave for the period of physical disability only, determined as provided above, shall be entitled to return to active employment upon presentation of a physician's statement certifying that she is able to perform the required functions of the job.
5. School System's Responsibilities to Employee. Each employee wishing to apply for maternity leave will be given a copy of this policy.

An employee who does not return to work in accordance with the provisions of #4 above when her grant of maternity leave says she will return to work shall forfeit all further rights under this policy unless she requests and receives a change in her maternity leave status from the Superintendent.

Refer to Board Policy GBRIC for the complete policy.

➤ **Notification of Absences**

All employees should notify the person designated to handle absences at the school/site when they are to be absent. If possible, this notification should be done the day before the absence or earlier. While it is recognized that sick leave is hard to anticipate, employees should make every effort to call the Principal or supervisor as soon as possible.

Certification

➤ Certification

It is the responsibility of each certified employee and paraprofessional to have on file in the Personnel Office a valid Georgia certificate and to renew and upgrade the certificate as required by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission. The Personnel Director is available to provide information regarding certification; however, the securing and maintaining of certification is the sole responsibility of the employee.

A certified employee must have a valid certificate on file in the Personnel Office no later than thirty days following the effective date of employment. In the event that an employee has not completed the certification application or provided the required documentation (such as official transcripts, tests scores, etc.) for initial certification or renewal, the employee may be paid on the basis of a substitute teacher until the Personnel Office receives the valid, in-field Georgia certificate.

➤ Georgia Teacher or Paraprofessional Certification Test

Educators who are required to take standardized tests such as the GACE, may obtain registration information from the Personnel Director or by visiting the Professional Standards website (www.gapsc.com). Fees for the exams are the responsibility of the employee unless other arrangements have been agreed upon in advance of taking the test(s).

➤ Certificate In-Field Status

Certified personnel are required to teach and/or work in the area(s) in which they hold a valid, in-field Georgia certificate. Certified personnel are considered in-field if they hold a valid certificate or permit and are assigned at the grade level(s) and in the field(s) for which they are certified.

➤ Certificate Renewal

To renew certificates, the employee must provide the following to the Director of Human Resources:

- ◆ Background check
- Completed and signed application for certification

No Fee is required for certificate renewal for teachers and paraprofessionals employed in the school system. Teachers and paraprofessionals may not submit their own request for renewal.

➤ Upgrading a Certificate

To request an upgrade in a certificate (example: a teacher who has received his/her Masters degree), the teacher must provide the following to the Personnel Director:

- ◆ Official Transcript - showing the date of graduation
- ◆ Completed three-page Professional Standards application form

No fee is required for this transaction.

➤ Adding a Field

To add any TEACHING field to a professional certificate for which some other TEACHING field has already been established, an applicant must:

◆ Pass the appropriate content assessment (s) in the new field AND satisfy any specific Special Georgia Requirement. If no content assessment exists for the field, the applicant must complete a state-approved program.
OR

◆ Compete a state-approved program in the new field and be recommended by the program provider AND complete all applicable Special Georgia Requirements.

Applicants without teaching fields already established on a certificate may NOT add a teaching field using this test option.

➤ **Adding a Service Certificate**

To add a Service area to an established professional certificate, an applicant must:

- ◆ Complete a state-approved program in the new field, be recommended by the program provider, and complete all applicable Special Georgia Requirements; OR
- ◆ For some specified fields, provide a copy of a valid State of Georgia License issued by the Examining Boards Division of the Office of the Secretary of State OR a valid license issued by specified professional organization.

➤ **Adding Leadership**

Contact the Director of Human Resources for more information. Note: Recent legislation (HB 455 -2009) stipulates that educators who earn leadership degrees after July 1, 2010 will not be placed on the state salary schedule based on the leadership degree unless such an educator works in administration. HB 455 grandfathers in educators who possess leadership degrees before July 1, 2010, and allows such educators to receive additional pay, regardless of whether they work in administration.

➤ **Highly Qualified**

The NCLB requirement that teachers be highly qualified applies to public elementary, middle, and secondary school teachers who teach a core academic subject. The term “core academic subjects” refers to English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, arts (visual arts, music, band and chorus), history, and geography.

Professional Learning

The Thomas County Board of Education supports a planned, comprehensive professional learning program to enhance the knowledge and skills of school system personnel. Employees are offered opportunities to participate in professional learning programs and activities appropriate to their assigned responsibilities.

Each year, the system develops an annual comprehensive professional learning plan that is approved by the Thomas County Board of Education. This plan:

- 1) provides programs designed to meet the needs of personnel seeking an initial renewable certificate in areas of deficiencies as a result of required testing and on the job performance assessments;
- 2) addresses needs and deficiencies of school and system personnel as identified through the annual personnel evaluation process;
- 3) meets the needs that are identified as a result of evaluations of the effectiveness of school and system instructional programs; and
- 4) meets other needs identified by school system personnel or by the Georgia Board of Education.

The Thomas County School System is committed to the concept of professional learning as an integral part of the total educational plan.

Personnel employed by the Thomas County Board of Education will engage in professional learning activities each year. Those who successfully complete training requirements which meet the criteria and specifications within the comprehensive professional learning plan will be recommended for professional learning units of credit to the State Department of Education.

Professional learning encompasses pre-service, in-service, and post graduate work and should be a continuous series of experiences focusing on knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed by educational personnel.

Drug-free Workplace

Substance Abuse Policy

The Thomas County Board of Education is committed to providing a safe work environment and to fostering the well-being and health of its employees. That commitment is jeopardized when any Thomas County Board of Education employee illegally uses drugs on or off the job, comes to work under their influence, possesses, distributes or sells drugs in the workplace, or abuses alcohol on the job. Therefore, Thomas County Board of Education has established the following policy:

1. It is a violation of Thomas County Board of Education policy for any employee to use, possess, sell, trade, offer for sale, or offer to buy illegal drugs or otherwise engage in the illegal use of drugs on or off the job.
2. It is a violation of Thomas County Board of Education policy for any employee to report to work under the influence of or while possessing in his or her body, blood, or urine illegal drugs in any detectable amount.
3. It is a violation of Thomas County Board of Education policy for any employee to report to work under the influence of or impaired by alcohol.
4. It is a violation of the Thomas County Board of Education policy for any employee to use prescription drugs illegally, i.e., to use prescription drugs that have not been legally obtained or in a manner or for a purpose other than as prescribed. (However, nothing in this policy precludes the appropriate use of legally prescribed medications.)
5. Violations of this policy are subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

The possession, use, distribution, or being under the influence of illicit drugs or alcohol on the property of the Thomas County Board of Education or at any school activity, whether on or off school property, is prohibited.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE

The Thomas County Schools offers resource information on various means of employee assistance in our community, including but not limited to drug and alcohol abuse programs. Employees are encouraged to use this resource list, which is located at each school.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

An employee reporting to work visibly impaired will be deemed unable to properly perform required duties and will not be allowed to work. If possible, the employee's supervisor will first seek another supervisor's opinion to confirm the employee's status. Next the supervisor will consult privately with the employee to determine the cause of the observation, including whether substance abuse has occurred. If, in the opinion of the supervisor, the employee is considered impaired, the employee will be sent home or to a medical facility - depending on the determination of the observed impairment - and accompanied by the supervisor or another employee if necessary. A drug test may be in order. An impaired employee will not be allowed to drive.

OPPORTUNITY TO CONTEST OR EXPLAIN TEST RESULTS

Employees and job applicants who have a positive confirmed test result may explain or contest the result to the designee of the school system within five (5) working days after the school system contacts the employee or job applicant and shows him/her the positive test result as it was received from the laboratory in writing.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The confidentiality of any information received by the employer through a substance abuse testing program shall be maintained, except as otherwise provided by law.

EMPLOYEE TESTING

Thomas County Board of Education has adopted testing practices to identify employees who use illegal drugs on or off the job or who abuse alcohol on the job. It shall be a condition of employment for all employees to submit to substance abuse testing under the following circumstances:

- A. When there is reasonable suspicion to believe that an employee is using illegal drugs or abusing alcohol. "Reasonable suspicion" is based on a belief that an employee is using or has used drugs or alcohol in violation of the employer's policy drawn from specific objective and articulable facts and reasonable inferences drawn from those facts in light of experience. Among other things, such facts and inferences may be based upon, but not limited to, the following:
- Observable phenomena while at work such as direct observation of substance abuse or of the physical symptoms or manifestations of being impaired due to substance abuse;
 - Abnormal conduct or erratic behavior while at work or a significant deterioration in work performance;
 - A report of substance abuse provided by a reliable and credible source;
 - Evidence that an individual has tampered with any substance abuse test during his or her employment with the current employer;
 - Information that an employee has caused or contributed to an accident while at work; or
 - Evidence that an employee has used, possessed, sold, solicited, or transferred drugs while working or while on the employer's premises or while operating the employer's vehicle, machinery, or equipment.
- B. When employees have caused or contributed to an on-the-job injury that resulted in a loss of work time, which means any period of time during which an employee stops performing the normal duties of employment and/or leaves the place of employment to seek care from a licensed medical provider. The Thomas County Board of Education may also send employees for a substance abuse test if they are involved in on-the-job accidents where personal injury or damage to company property occurs.
- C. As part of a follow-up program to treatment for drug abuse when an employee has involuntarily entered a rehabilitation program because of a positive confirmed test result. The frequency of such testing shall be a minimum of at least once a year for a two-year period after completion of the rehabilitation program. Advance notice of testing shall not be given to the employee.
- D. When a substance abuse test is conducted as part of a routinely scheduled employee fitness-for-duty medical examination that is part of the employer's established policy or that is scheduled routinely for all members of an employment classification or group (i.e., CDL license holder's).
- E. Random testing is conducted without individualized suspicion of a violation of the Thomas County Board of Education's substance abuse policy. Selection is made by neutral criteria so that all employees eligible for testing have an equal opportunity of being tested.

Employees with a confirmed positive test result may, at their option and expense, have a second confirmation test made on the same specimen. An employee will not be allowed to submit another specimen for testing. If the physician, official, or lab personnel have reasonable suspicion to believe that the employee has tampered with the specimen, the employee is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

ALCOHOL ABUSE

An employee who is under the influence of alcoholic beverages at any time while on Thomas County Board of Education property or at any time during the hours between the beginning and ending of the employee's work day, whether on duty or not and whether on Thomas County Board of Education property or not, shall be guilty of misconduct and is subject to discipline up to and including termination.

An employee shall be determined to be under the influence of alcohol if the employee's normal faculties are impaired due to the consumption of alcohol, or if the employee has a blood alcohol level of positive or higher. Failure to submit to a substance abuse test also is misconduct and also shall be subject to discipline up to and including termination.

SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITY

It is the responsibility of the Thomas County Board of Education's supervisors to counsel employees whenever they see changes in performance or behavior that suggest an employee has a drug or alcohol problem. Although it is not the supervisor's job to diagnose personal problems, the supervisor should encourage such employees to seek help and advise them about available resources for getting help. Everyone shares responsibility for maintaining a safe work environment, and co-workers should encourage anyone who has a drug problem to seek help.

The goal of this policy is to balance our respect for individuals with the need to maintain a safe, productive, and drug-free environment. The intent of this policy is to offer a helping hand to those who need it, while sending a clear message that the illegal use of drugs, and the abuse of alcohol are incompatible with employment at Thomas County Board of Education.

Complaints and Grievances

Certified personnel shall have the right to present and resolve complaints relating to certain matters affecting the employment relationship at the lowest organizational level possible. The Thomas County Board of Education encourages all employees to resolve their complaints informally in a spirit of collegiality where possible. Board policy GAE is available when such efforts do not succeed or, when for any other reason, the certified employee desires to pursue this procedure.

General Information

➤ **AIDS Information**

The Thomas County Board of Education recognizes the importance of protecting the health and welfare of students, teachers, and other employees of the system from infection with Acquired Immounodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). For the complete policy that includes definitions, testing, reporting, confidentiality, education and procedures for handling body fluids, refer to Board Policy GANA, "Communicable Diseases."

➤ **Cell Phones**

Bringing cell phones and/or other electronic devices to school by employees is discouraged. The use of these devices during the school hours, particularly during class time, is prohibited for students and strongly discouraged for staff members. Staff members with an unusual reason to use these types of devises during the school day, such as for health conditions, must receive prior approval from the Principal or supervisor. A statement from a licensed physician certifying that such a device is necessary for the health of the individual may be required.

➤ **Child Abuse and Neglect Reporting**

Georgia law mandates procedures for reporting suspected child abuse and neglect to the appropriate officials. Any school system personnel who has reasonable cause to believe that any student under 18 years of age has been abused shall report the suspected abuse to the school Principal or designee. The principal or designee who receives the report shall immediately report to the Department of Family and Children Services of the county in which the student lives and shall notify the Superintendent, or his/her designee of the referral(s).

➤ **Copyright**

Requests to duplicate copyrighted materials must be made to the media specialist at the school. An individual's lack of knowledge regarding copyright law is not an excuse when the intent of the school system to comply with the law has been established and the source of the copyright information is available.

➤ **Crisis Intervention Plan**

Employees must become knowledgeable of the Thomas County School System’s “Emergency Response Procedures.” In the event of a crisis situation, the system’s crisis intervention plan is to be followed.

➤ **Dress**

Employees should dress in a professional manner conducive to the work environment. Spirit days, special activity days, and fieldtrip days are a part of the school’s normal routines, and the dress for those days should reflect the activities taking place. The Principal may make exceptions to the dress code.

➤ **Equal Employment Opportunity Statement**

The Thomas County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and the Perkins Act of 1998); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) in educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.

Students, parents, employees and the general public are hereby notified that the Thomas County Board of Education does not discriminate in any educational programs or activities or in employment policies.

The following individuals are responsible for coordinating the system’s effort to implement this nondiscriminatory policy.

Title IX Coordinator:	Mike Singletary	229-225-5050
Section 504 Coordinator:	Dr. Bonnie Seery	229-225-4380
Title VI Coordinator:	Dr. Laine Reichert	229-225-4380

➤ **Safety**

All employees:

- Shall accept their share of responsibility to maintain a safe working environment within the Thomas County School System by following safe practices, to use personal protective equipment (PPE) as required, to provide all possible aid to safe operations, and to immediately report all unsafe conditions to their supervisor. Supervisors should then correct the situation or report the deficiency to the proper department for corrective action.
- Shall immediately report ALL on-the-job accidents to their supervisor and the on-site Workers’ Compensation contact and follow the established Workers’ Compensation procedures if medical treatment is necessary.
- Shall not engage in any acts that can influence the safety of themselves or other employees, i.e., reporting to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol, engaging in horseplay, or substituting other items for required tools such as hammers and ladders.
- Shall not use chairs, tables, and other like items, in place of ladders when conducting activities above shoulder level, i.e., hanging items on wall, reaching in/retrieving from shelves. Assistance should be requested.
- Shall follow proper lifting practices such as lift with the legs, carry the load straight in front, without twisting; and get help with heavy or bulky loads.
- Shall not operate tools, equipment, and machinery unless trained and authorized.
- Shall not remove or disable any safety device keeping guards in place at all times on operating machinery and immediately report all machinery deficiencies.

- Shall wear proper clothing and footwear, minimal jewelry, and keep long hair confined when working around machinery or in other situations that could promote injury. Example: non-skid shoes on newly waxed floors, kitchen areas, tiled areas and raised level areas.
- Shall handle chemicals and chemical storage according to OSHA standards and learn where the site's Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are located. Extreme caution should be used in mixing chemicals due to dangerous gases that can be harmful or even fatal. Always follow the manufacturer's directions.
- Shall maintain and follow good housekeeping procedures at all times.

➤ **Sexual Harassment**

The Thomas County School System prohibits sexual harassment of employees or students by supervisors, other workers, other students, outside vendors' employees, and all other persons.

Sexual harassment is an unwelcome advance, request, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that results in submission or rejection as a basis for a hiring decision; submission that is expressed or implied as a term or condition of employment; or conduct that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Complaints of sexual harassment should be directed to the immediate supervisor, the Principal, or the Superintendent. If the matter is not resolved, the employee may contact the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Employees guilty of engaging in sexual harassment of other employees will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

➤ **Tobacco Use**

The use of all tobacco products is prohibited inside all buildings and vehicles of the Thomas County School System at all times. The use of tobacco products is prohibited outside the buildings on school board property during normal working hours. The prohibition of the use of tobacco products by employees shall extend beyond school hours and beyond campuses where employees are directly instructing or supervising students or where students are being transported to and from school activities.

TRAINING OF SCHOOL EMPLOYEES IN THE CARE NEEDED FOR STUDENTS WITH DIABETES

Georgia law, specifically O.C.G.A. § 20-2-779, requires schools to train at least two school employees in the care needed for students with diabetes. A school employee shall not be subject to any penalty or disciplinary action for refusing to serve as trained diabetes personnel. Training shall be conducted by a school nurse or other health care professional with expertise in diabetes and shall take place prior to the commencement of each school year, or as needed when a student with diabetes enrolls at a school, or when a student is newly diagnosed with diabetes.

Training shall include at a minimum:

1. Recognition and treatment of hypoglycemia and hyperglycemia;
2. Understanding the appropriate actions to take when blood glucose levels are outside of the target ranges indicated by a student's diabetes medical management plan;
3. Understanding physician instructions concerning diabetes medication dosage, frequency, and the manner of administration;
4. Performance of finger-stick blood glucose checking, ketone checking, and recording the results;
5. Administration of insulin and glucagon, an injectable used to raise blood glucose levels immediately for severe hypoglycemia, and the recording of results;
6. Performance of basic insulin pump functions;

7. Recognizing complications that require emergency assistance;
8. Recommended schedules and food intake for meals and snacks, the effect of physical activity upon blood glucose levels, and actions to be implemented in the case of schedule disruption; and
9. The requirements of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-779 and State Board of Education Rule 160-4-8-.18 *Diabetes Medical Management Plans*.

No physician, nurse, school employee, local school system, or state chartered special school shall be liable for civil damages or subject to disciplinary action under professional licensing regulations or school disciplinary policies as a result of the activities authorized or required by O.C.G.A. § 20-2-779 when such acts are committed as an ordinarily reasonably prudent physician, nurse, school employee, local school system, or state chartered special school would have acted under the same or similar circumstances.

The Georgia Department of Education recommends that all trained diabetes personnel and other school personnel be familiar with the National Diabetes Education Program's publication [Helping the Student with Diabetes Succeed: A Guide for School Personnel](#). This resource was developed by the National Institute of Health, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and other organizations and is available here:

<http://ndep.nih.gov/publications/PublicationDetail.aspx?PubId=97#main>

School staff should:

1. Observe students with diabetes for signs and symptoms of diabetes stress and should notify the school nurse or trained diabetes personnel of negative signs and symptoms;
2. Be aware of the nutritional needs of students with diabetes;
3. Promote good hygiene to help prevent infection in students with diabetes;
4. Report any blood or other bodily fluid contamination to the school nurse or trained diabetes personnel for cleaning and handling in accordance with Universal Precautions.
5. Encourage independence in students utilizing self-care to maximize the student's abilities and interaction with peers; and
6. Offer emotional support to students with diabetes and refer students to the school nurse, trained diabetes personnel, or other resources when appropriate.

Resources

Certification Testing

www.gace.nesinc.com

Georgia Department of Community Health

<http://dch.georgia.gov>

Georgia Department of Education

<http://www.doe.k12.ga.us>

Georgia Student Finance Commission (HOPE Scholarship)

www.gsfc.org

Georgia Professional Standards Commission

<http://www.gapsc.com>

Teacher Retirement System of Georgia

www.trsga.com

Thomas County Home Page (includes link to Board Policies)

www.thomas.k12.ga.us

Thomas County On-line Application

www.thomascountyschools.org

United States Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov>

United States Department of Education: No Child Left Behind Web Site

<http://www.nochildleftbehind.gov/>