



**Stephens County School System**

*Schools Committed to Student Success*

# **Employee Handbook**

*2022-2023*



# Handbook Overview

The Stephens County School System (SCSS) handbook has been prepared to help you understand the employment practices at our organization. The handbook will give you information and resources to find answers to common employment questions. We will discuss the organization, our jobs, and the many benefits and privileges you enjoy as an employee. However, this handbook is only an introduction and guide. The handbook is not a complete description of all policies and procedures.

Neither this handbook nor references to other documents are meant to establish an employment contract or agreement. Nothing in this handbook is intended to imply that there is permanent or guaranteed employment for anyone.

Because things change, we will amend this handbook over time. As this handbook is changed, we will attempt to provide you with a revised copy. Revisions will supersede all prior editions of this handbook, and the most current edition is posted on the Human Resources website.

Please take a few minutes now to read this handbook. You will acknowledge that you have received the handbook and are responsible for reading its contents through our handbook acknowledgement form (see Appendix A).

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## **WORK ENVIRONMENT**

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Stephens County School System is to empower all students to become self-motivated learners who think critically to achieve academic and personal success which contributes to the team.

#### **We believe...**

- students are the focus of all decisions.
- all individuals are valued and treated with dignity, courtesy, and respect.
- in empowering students, parents, staff, and community through communication and collaboration.
- a commitment to excellence is expected of all students, parents, staff, and community members.
- in providing educational opportunities, PK-12, that prepare students for life beyond the classroom.

### **Vision Statement**

SCSS envisions a culture where students value exploration, discovery, creativity, and innovation in a safe environment. Our vision includes families, faculty, staff, and community members providing unwavering support aimed at inspiring students to achieve their personal best. Unity in this vision will result in our students pursuing their goals in an ever-changing world.

## SYSTEM ADMINISTRATION

Superintendent..... Dr. Connie Franklin  
Assistant Superintendent.....Mr. John Stith  
Director of CTAE..... Mrs. Pam Hill  
Director of Curriculum & Instruction..... Mrs. Brent Tuck  
Director of Exceptional Children .....Mrs. Brandy Stacy  
Director of Maintenance..... Mr. Tim Wilbanks  
Director of MTSS and Assessment .....Dr. Joel Strickland  
Director of School Nutrition.....Mrs. Kim Caudell  
Director of Technology.....Mr. Brett Irvin  
Director of Transportation .....Mr. Dale Meeks

## SCHOOLS AND ADMINISTRATORS

### ***Big A Elementary (Pre-K and K)***

289 Sorrells Road  
Eastanollee, GA 30538  
706-886-2987 Fax: 706-282-4698  
Principal: Mrs. Regina Bayles  
Assistant Principal: Mrs. Kalee Adams

### ***Liberty Elementary (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>)***

222 Old Liberty Hill Road  
Toccoa, GA 30577  
706-886-3934 Fax: 706-886-9983  
Principal: Dr. Connie Yearwood  
Assistant Principal: Mrs. Carla Smith

### ***Toccoa Elementary (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>)***

304 North Pond Street  
Toccoa, GA 30577  
706-886-3194 Fax: 706-282-0559  
Principal: Mrs. Sheila Pressley  
Assistant Principal: Mrs. Angela Whitfield

### ***Fifth Grade Academy***

1315 Rose Lane  
Toccoa, GA 30577  
706-886-2880 Fax: 706-886-2882  
Principal: Mrs. Joni Whitfield



### ***Stephens County Middle School (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>)***



1315 Rose lane  
Toccoa, GA 30577  
706-886-2880 Fax: 706-886-2882  
Principal: Mr. Paul DeFoor  
Assistant Principal: Dr. Jennifer Austin  
Assistant Principal: Mr. Paul Batchelor

### ***Stephens County High School (9<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>)***

323 Indian Trail  
Toccoa, GA 30577  
706-886-6825 Fax: 706-886-8765  
Principal: Mr. Michael Keown  
Assistant Principal: Mrs. Jessica Simmons  
Assistant Principal: Mrs. Shelley Langston  
Assistant Principal: Mr. Chuck King  
CTAE Director: Mrs. Pam Hill

July 2022							Stephens County Schools 2022-2023 Calendar							August 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S								S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2	180 Student Days								1	2	3	4	5	6
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	July / August							7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	25	New Teacher Orientation						14	15	16	17	18	19	20
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	26-1	Pre-Planning						21	22	23	24	25	26	27
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	2	First Day of School						28	29	30	31			
31																				
September 2022							September							October 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	5	Labor Day						S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3														1
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	October							2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	10	Teacher Work Day						9	10	11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	11-14	Teacher/Student Holiday (Fall Break)						16	17	18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29	30									23	24	25	26	27	28	29
														30	31					
November 2022							November							December 2022						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	21-25	Thanksgiving Holidays						S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5												1	2	3
6	7	8	9	10	11	12	December							4	5	6	7	8	9	10
13	14	15	16	17	18	19	16	Early Release						11	12	13	14	15	16	17
20	21	22	23	24	25	26	19-30	Winter Holidays						18	19	20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30											25	26	27	28	29	30	31
							January													
January 2023							2	Winter Holidays						February 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	3	Teacher Work Day						S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	4	First Day of 2nd Semester									1	2	3	4
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	16	MLK Birthday - Holiday						5	6	7	8	9	10	11
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	February							12	13	14	15	16	17	18
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	17	Holiday						19	20	21	22	23	24	25
29	30	31					20	Presidents' Day - Holiday						26	27	28				
March 2023							March							April 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	17	Teacher Work Day						S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4														1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	April							2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	3-7	Spring Break						9	10	11	12	13	14	15
19	20	21	22	23	24	25								16	17	18	19	20	21	22
26	27	28	29	30	31									23	24	25	26	27	28	29
														30						
May 2023							May							June 2023						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	24	Last Day of School/Early Release						S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6	26	Graduation										1	2	3
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	25-26	Teacher Work Days - Post-Planning						4	5	6	7	8	9	10
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	29	Memorial Day						11	12	13	14	15	16	17
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	June							18	19	20	21	22	23	24
28	29	30	31											25	26	27	28	29	30	

 Holiday  
 Teacher Work Day

 1st Day of Semester  
 Early Release Day

## **Equal Employment Opportunity**

Stephens County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, sex, or genetic information 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 all 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 in Stephens County Board of Education Policy GAAA (see Appendix B).

## **Anti-Harassment and Anti-Discrimination**

SCSS addresses harassment in policy GAEB. It is the policy of this school district to prohibit any act of harassment of employees by other employees based upon race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, and 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 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 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 employee or applicant for employment who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination by other employees of the school district as prohibited by this policy should promptly report the same to their direct supervisor (principal or director) unless the harassment or discrimination complaint is related to their direct supervisor. In that case, the employee should make their report to the district's human resource administrator. The person receiving the complaint will implement the Board's discriminatory complaints procedures as specified in SCSS policy GAAA (see Appendix B). Employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination.

It is the duty of all employees to promptly report harassment forbidden by this policy. All supervisors will instruct their subordinates as to the content of this policy and, through appropriate professional learning activities, enlighten employees as to the varied forms or expressions of prohibited harassment. All employees will annually complete the required Sexual Harassment Compliance Director Module.



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

It is SCSS policy to comply with all relevant and applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) and related state and local laws. SCSS will not discriminate against any qualified employee or job applicant with respect to any terms, privileges, or conditions of employment because of physical or mental disability. In addition, SCSS will make reasonable accommodations for employees or applicants with disabilities, provided that the individual is otherwise qualified to safely perform the essential functions of the job, with or without accommodation, and provided that any accommodations made do not impose an undue hardship on SCSS. Any employee who feels that an accommodation is necessary to be able to perform the essential functions of his or her job should contact the district administrator responsible for human resources functions.

In connection with an accommodation request, an employee may be asked to provide a medical release that authorizes SCSS to contact his or her treating physician(s), as well as to obtain copies of medical records. An employee may also be asked to undergo one or more examinations by a physician chosen by SCSS. If an employee is asked to undergo a physical, SCSS will pay the costs associated with the examination(s).

In accordance with the ADA, any medical records for an employee will be kept in a confidential file and destroyed as soon as possible or returned to the employee after termination of employment in accordance with the provisions of the privacy sections of the HIPAA regulations. In addition, the existence of an employee's disability, and any associated records, reports, and other knowledge gained by SCSS will be kept confidential.

## **Standards of Conduct**

SCSS expects all employees to follow the Georgia Professional Standards Commission's Code of Ethics for Educators, the Stephens County Board of Education policies, school/department based procedures, and other applicable laws. These resources aid in defining acceptable and unacceptable conduct, as well as setting a general standard of conduct including, but not limited to, the specific items defined by these resources. As employees that work in an industry with great responsibility for the safety and development of children, and as employees of an organization funded by tax revenue, employees should be mindful that the community holds them to a high level of responsibility. Their actions should maintain this confidence.

Violations of the GAPSC's Code of Ethics, SCSS board of education policies, district procedures, and other applicable laws are prohibited and may result in discipline up to and including dismissal. This list is not inclusive of all actions that may warrant discipline or discharge. When and where applicable, law enforcement agencies and the Professional Standards Commission may be involved.

## **Child Abuse or Neglect Reporting**

Board of Education Policy: JGI – Child Abuse or Neglect

In accordance with Georgia law and the protocol for handling child abuse cases for Stephens County, Georgia, all Stephens County School System employees, as well as persons who attend to a child pursuant to their duties as a volunteer for the school system, who have reason or cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred shall report such abuse immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred. Please see Board policy JGI for additional information.

## **New Teacher Orientation**

Teachers newly hired to the Stephens County School System will be required to attend a New Teacher Orientation as communicated to all prior to Pre-Planning for all employees.

## **Annual Compliance Director Modules**

SCSS provides training on many compliance-related issues annually, or upon employment. The purpose of the modules is to give employees valuable information that is needed to perform job duties in compliance with a variety of local, state, and federal requirements. Each employee is responsible for satisfactorily completing each required module and being knowledgeable of the contents. Completion of the modules will be documented by the employee entering their specific information upon the completion of each module. Employees are not to ask others on their behalf to complete modules or to enter their specific information to document their completion. A list of required modules and the deadline for completion of the modules will be provided annually. Failure to complete the required modules or allowing another person to enter the employee's specific information to document completion is not acceptable.

## **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 workforce must be absolutely free of any person who would knowingly manufacture, distribute, sell or possess a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug in an unlawful manner. This prohibition specifically includes, but is not limited to, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance or alcohol in the employee's workplace. This prohibition also includes, but is not limited to, an employee being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances while on duty. Employees are responsible for following SCSS policy GAMA as it relates to a drug-free workplace (see Appendix C). The board of education also requires

testing for alcohol and controlled substances by employees who operate a school bus or other vehicle that requires a Commercial Driver's License (CDL) and is considered a safety-sensitive function. Employees in these safety-sensitive roles are responsible for following SCSS GCRA(1) (see Appendix D).

In addition to the SCSS board of education policy all employees are to follow the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators as it relates to alcohol and drugs. Each employee is required to annually complete a Code of Ethics Compliance Director module.

### **Tobacco Usage**

All SCSS school campuses and school busses are tobacco-free areas. All employees are prohibited from the use of tobacco products while performing their duties as an employee of the Stephens County Board of Education.

### **Cell Phone Usage**

Supervision and safety of students is a priority. All employees are to refrain from cell phone usage while performing their duties as an employee of the Stephens County Board of Education. Employees are encouraged to turn off their phones during times that they are directly responsible for students. Employees are to follow the guidelines established by the District to ensure that cell phone access by an employee doesn't violate protocols for state-mandated testing. Bus drivers are prohibited from touching their cell phone while their bus is in motion.

### **Employee Medication**

Employees are prohibited from working, being on District property, operating District equipment or vehicles, or operating any other equipment or vehicles on District business while impaired due to any legally prescribed or over the counter obtained drug that renders the employee unfit for duty. An employee is "unfit for duty" if, in the District's opinion, the employee's use of legally obtained drugs jeopardizes the employee's ability to work safely or efficiently. An employee who is using legally obtained drugs must notify the employee's immediate supervisor of any and all side effects that may render the employee unfit for duty. If an employee's medically required use of legally obtained drugs renders the employee unfit for duty and, in the opinion of the District, a temporary alternative job assignment is not available, the employee may be considered as an employee unfit for duty due to illness and may be placed on sick leave or leave without pay, in compliance with the Family & Medical Leave Act (FMLA), if applicable.

Employees using prescription medication while on the job shall do so in strict accordance with medical directions. It is the employee's responsibility to notify the prescribing physician of the duties required by the employee's position and to insure the physician approves the use of the prescription medication while the employee is performing the employee's duties. All medications should be kept in a locked drawer, cabinet, or other lockable storage device if required to take during work hours. If a locked space is not available in the classroom, it should be kept by the school nurse or in a locked vehicle. All prescription medication must be kept in its original container. Prescription medication should not be shared with any employee or student.

The abuse or inappropriate use of legally prescribed drugs during assigned work hours is prohibited. Job performance or attendance deficiencies resulting from abuse or inappropriate use shall be cause for disciplinary action. If an employee's behavior or job performance gives rise to a reasonable suspicion that the employee is abusing or inappropriately using prescription medication, the employee is required to submit to drug testing and to take any accrued sick or annual leave or leave without pay until such time as the employee is cleared to return to work by the employee's physician and the Superintendent, if and to the extent permitted under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the FMLA.

## **False Reports**

Employees may be disciplined for filing false reports or statements including but not limited to the following: accident reports, attendance reports, insurance reports, physician's statements, pre-employment statements, sick leave requests, student records, tax withholding forms, and work reports.

## **Workers' Compensation**

Our utmost desire is that our employees will be safe at work and not experience injury and the impact that the loss of wages can bring to a family's budget. The District will conduct periodic walkthrough inspections to identify and remedy possible risks. We also ask that employees have a constant dedication to safe practices. Together we can reduce injury to our employees and expense to the District. We recognize that the responsibilities for safety and health are shared:

- The employer accepts responsibility for leadership of the safety and health program, for its effectiveness and improvement, and for providing the safeguards required to ensure safe conditions.
- Supervisors are responsible for developing the proper attitudes toward safety and health in themselves and in those they supervise, and for ensuring that all operations are performed with the utmost regard for the safety and health of all personnel involved, including themselves.
- Employees are responsible for compliance with all rules and regulations and for continuously practicing safety while performing their duties. Each employee should report safety concerns to their supervisor so that any needed corrections can be made.

Stephens County School System operates under the Georgia Workers' Compensation Law. Workers' compensation is an accident insurance program paid for by the school system. The District uses a third-party administrator to process all workers' compensation claims. Each work location will post a notice that includes the approved panel of physicians and the employee's bill of rights. Should an employee choose to go to a physician that is not on the posted panel of physicians, this may be considered unauthorized treatment, and

charges may not be covered. In a true emergency situation, the employee should seek temporary medical care from the nearest emergency location available. Once the emergency is over, the injured employee must return to a physician from the posted panel of physicians for continued treatment.

Employees must report all accidents immediately to their supervising administrator. Failure to report an accident within 24 hours of its occurrence will be considered a violation of district procedures and may result in disciplinary action, including termination. The employee may lose the right to receive compensation if an accident is not reported to their supervising administrator within 30 days.

The employee shall use the form provided by the District to submit a complete written report of the accident. If the employee is unable to make the report due to the accident, then the director or principal will complete the initial report, and the employee statement will be gathered as soon as physically possible. Any witnesses to the accident will be identified and asked to submit, directly to the supervising administrator, their statement regarding their first-hand observation of the accident. The supervising administrator will investigate the accident to determine when, where, and how an injury occurred and to find ways to prevent similar injuries from happening again. District administrators may also conduct post-accident interviews. The supervising administrator will report any accident or injury to the designated District office personnel so that a Form WC-1 can be filed with the district's third-party claims administrator for processing.

The employee must follow all district leave procedures for any time lost on the job due to a workers' compensation injury. This includes keeping the supervising administrator informed of the work status that is determined by the attending physician. Failure to immediately notify the supervising administrator of the physician's release to return to full or light duty is a violation of district procedures and may result in disciplinary action. The District will make every effort to provide assistance in the employee's safe return to work.

## **Technology Usage**

As a school system employee, you may use Stephens County School System's electronic information resources. Electronic information resources such as the Internet, World Wide Web, electronic mail (email), Local Area Networks (LAN), Wide Area Networks (WAN), network services, and computers are provided to help achieve the instructional goals of the Stephens County School System. Any activities involving the use of these resources that do not support these instructional goals are forbidden and should be avoided. SCSS uses technology protection measures that block or filter Internet access to inappropriate material. An employee should not consider their use of District's technology resources to be private. SCSS board policy IFBG addresses staff expectations for using electronic information resources.

- Use of these resources to lobby for votes is forbidden
- Use of these resources for commercial advertising is forbidden.
- All copyright laws will be observed at all times.

- Use of these resources for sending and receiving large numbers of personal messages is prohibited.
- All users should recognize that email and Internet use is not private.
- Wasteful use of these resources is forbidden.
- Staff shall not use these resources to access material that is obscene, pornographic, or is child pornography.
- Staff shall not use school resources to engage in hacking or attempts to otherwise compromise system security.
- Staff shall not allow others the use of their passwords or other credentials except when necessary for the purpose of maintaining or servicing these resources.
- Staff will provide for students age-appropriate instruction regarding safe and appropriate behavior on social networking sites, chat rooms, and other Internet services, behaviors that may constitute cyberbullying, and how to respond when subjected to cyberbullying.

School system employees are given email accounts registered to the school district's domain. These email accounts are for the purpose of school-related business. Employees should recognize that any email sent using this school account is subject to Open Records Request. Employees should limit any personal use of this address. Employees must also use extreme caution when opening email attachments received from unknown senders to prevent malicious programs from accessing SCSS networks. Employees should also be cautious about emails from trusted sources that appear out of character for the sender. If you have any doubts about the validity of an email, consult your technology specialist before you open an attachment or link.

## **Social Media Guidelines**

The world is changing fast, and how we communicate is changing even faster. The use of social media is a growing phenomenon embraced by all generations. There are great benefits to today's technology and its widespread use, but along with benefits come risks.

Social media is organic in nature. It changes every day. Policies are not likely to be effective since change occurs so rapidly with technology. Instead, we want to develop a culture of innovation, idea-sharing, problem-solving, and creativity. Stephens County Schools acknowledges the social media cultural values of transparency, connectivity, and promptness.

It is the District's desire to create thoughtful, respectful guidelines that will help safeguard our District and educators' reputation while encouraging everyone to share responsibly via social media, emails, and text. As educational professionals and employees of the District, we have a responsibility to uphold how we conduct ourselves at all times, including online activities, even when not at work. Standard 10 of the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators clearly states that an educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the teaching profession.



As reported in the media, there have been several instances of educators demonstrating what has been determined as professional misconduct while engaging in inappropriate dialogue about their schools and/or students or posting pictures and videos of themselves while engaging in what is considered inappropriate activities.

The following guidelines are provided to help the District's employees to use these forums effectively, protect personal and professional reputations, and follow national, state and/or district laws, rules and policies. The guidelines are intended to provide direction for acceptable use of personal and or professional sites. It is important to remember to conduct oneself in an appropriate manner to avoid any unintended situations that could adversely affect the employee's professional standing. These guidelines are not intended to restrict participation, but to provide protection for those engaging in online social media, nor are they inclusive of all inappropriate behaviors.

### Professional Use

It is vital that when participating in social media in a professional capacity that employees are thoughtful before posting, and that they respect the community in which they are posting. Any information shared via social media sites regarding the District is considered public record regardless of ownership of the equipment used to post. If social media is to be used as a form of communication with students and parents, parents should be notified. All ethical expectations for appropriate employee/student relationships must be followed.

All electronic communication between staff, students, and parents should be transparent.

All electronic communication between staff, students, and parents is a matter of public record and/or may be accessible by others. All electronic communication must be done in a positive, respectful manner.

This includes word choices, tone, grammar, and subject matter that model the standards and integrity of a district professional.

Always choose words that are courteous, conscientious, and generally businesslike in manner. Please thoroughly proof the content before posting.

Citizens expect that education employees set a good example when they write and speak in public.

Always remember confidentiality. Do not discuss students or coworkers.

Always think before posting. If an employee is angry or passionate about a subject, it may not be the time to share thoughts in a post. Individuals should delay posting until they are calm and clear-headed. Posting negative comments while angry may put the employee's effectiveness as an educator at risk.

Employees should not use their personal devices to display instructional content. It is difficult

to avoid accidental exposure to inappropriate material or photographs.

Employees should be aware of all copyright laws when posting instructional content.

If social media is used as a form of communication with parents and students, please be mindful that it should be secondary and not the primary form of communication.

Creation and management of social media accounts linked to SCSS require principal or director permission.

### Personal Use

In online social media, the lines between public and private, personal and professional are blurred. Just by identifying yourself as a District employee, you are creating perceptions about your expertise and about the District by the general public and perception about the employee and colleagues; perception is reality. The inappropriate use of social media can place your professional career at risk. Employees of the District are subject to the PSC Educator Code of Ethics.

Employees should not post on their personal social media accounts during official work hours.

Employees should create a divide between personal and instructional sites.

Employees should not post defamatory remarks, obscene language, sexually provocative photographs, or anything emphasizing/supporting alcohol or drug use.

Posting activities or conduct not consistent with the PSC Code of Ethics should be avoided.

Employees should refrain from developing online connections and relationships with students. All ethical expectations for appropriate employee/student relationships must be followed.

Employees do not have control of what others may post on social media sites; therefore, it is important to be aware that conduct in private life may affect your professional life. Employees should be vigilant about what others post about them. If necessary, employees should take steps to remove comments or pictures that may pose a risk.

Employees should ensure that the settings on their social media accounts are as private as possible. Social media is NOT completely private. Internet search engines can find information years after it was originally posted. Comments can be forwarded or copied, and archival systems save information even if the material is deleted.

Remember, district employees are ambassadors for Stephens County Schools. Thus, employees must be mindful in their usage of social media and social networking that their actions may have personal, professional, ethical, and legal consequences not only for the employee but for colleagues, the District, and the community at-large.



## **Fraud, Waste, and Abuse**

SCSS does not tolerate fraud of any kind. Fraud is defined as a false representation of a matter of fact, whether by words or by conduct, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed, that is used for the purpose of misappropriating property and/or monetary funds from federal, state, or local grants and funds.

Employees who suspect fraud, whether it pertains to federal, state, or local programs, should report their concerns to the Superintendent or his/her designee. If fraud is suspected by the Superintendent, such allegations should be reported to the Chair of the Board of Education.

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

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

## **EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES**

### **Classified and Certified Terms of Employment**

Employment for classified employees is at-will for an indefinite period of time, unless terminated by either SCSS or the employee. Either the classified employee or SCSS may terminate employment at any time.

Employment for certified employees is based upon an annual contract. As a charter school system, employment contracts are issued annually, and no action of our organization is intended to create an expectation for automatic contract renewal. The employee and the school district agree to the terms of the contract, and employment is offered only for the terms of the contract. When a certified new hire is approved by the board and acceptable fingerprint results are received, an electronic contract is issued to the new hire's TalentEd Records account. After new hire approval, the contract is routed to the Superintendent then back to HR to be finalized and filed.

Jobs that are being filled by an employee requesting an internal transfer are not posted as vacancies. Job vacancies that are not being filled by an internal transfer will be posted in the online application program and are available to be viewed through the Stephens County Schools webpage. Certified positions are also posted on the TeachGeorgia website. Job vacancies are posted on the bulletin board in the SCSS board meeting room.

Applicants will complete the online application packet in order to be considered for vacancies. Applicants with incomplete applications decrease the likelihood that their application will be reviewed by a supervisor. Applicants should provide honest and complete information on their application. Omissions or false information on the application will disqualify an applicant from being offered employment. Employees that are found, after having accepted an employment offer, to have provided false information on their application could face termination from the position. Applicants should complete their own application and give careful reflection to each question. Applicants should monitor posted job openings through the applicant software and attach their application to any position for which they have an interest and meet the qualifications. If an application is not attached to a posted job, the hiring supervisor will not be aware of the application when selecting candidates to interview.

Not all applicants are selected for interviews. The supervisor will review applications attached to the job posting, and if candidates that demonstrate a good fit for the job have applied, the supervisor will invite candidates for an interview.

Direct supervisors make all recommendations regarding employment (hiring, terminating, disciplinary actions) to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will bring hiring recommendations before the board of education for consideration. The board will take official action on the Superintendent's recommendations. Only the board of education, acting on a recommendation from the Superintendent, can hire employees.

Employees are employed by the school system and may be assigned to any location as determined by district needs.

## **Professional Qualifications (PQ)**

SCSS is recognized by the Georgia Department of Education as a charter school system. The district waives certification under Georgia charter law.

Stephens County Schools waives certification for all teachers in all grade bands and in all content areas. Special Education teachers are not allowed by GADOE to waive certification. Paraprofessionals are required to hold GAPSC licenses. Clearance certificates are required according to PSC rules.

### **PQ Minimum Qualifications**

For all non-certified teachers that teach in an academic content area or CTAE area that does require a degree for certification (i.e., all content areas, art, music, PE, business, agriculture, etc.)

- Hold a clearance certificate, and
- At a minimum has obtained a bachelor's degree

For all non-certified teachers that teach in a CTAE area that does not require a degree (i.e., construction, metals, automotive)

- Hold a clearance certificate, and
- At a minimum has completed a certificate program from a technical institute, or
- Has at least 2 years of job experience in a position related to the content area

Staff that is not GAPSC certified will be placed on the state salary schedule at the appropriate provisional level until certification is obtained.

## **Job Descriptions**

SCSS has job descriptions for each position. Employees should be aware of the duties and responsibilities outlined in the job description.

## **Personnel File**

SCSS maintains a personnel file for each employee, portions of which are confidential and not subject to public disclosure. The purpose of the file is to maintain an official copy of important documents. Although certain portions of personnel files are open records, some of the information contained in them may not be subject to disclosure: home address, home telephone number, day and month of birth, social security number, insurance or medical

information, mother's birth name, bank account information, account number, utility account number, financial data or information other than compensation by the county, identity of immediate family members or dependents, annual teacher evaluations, information of an ongoing investigation or within 10 days of a completed investigation.

Employees may review their personnel file by making an appointment with the director of human resources.

### **Legal Authorization to Work**

SCSS verifies that employees are legally authorized to work in the United States through the federal Employment Eligibility Verification system (E-Verify). New hires must complete an Employment Eligibility Verification (I-9).

### **Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act**

SCSS is required to report all newly hired and re-hired employees to a state directory within 10 days of their hire date. SCSS reports to the Georgia New Hire Reporting Program.

### **Resignations and Terminations**

Classified employees can resign at will. Classified employees should submit a letter of resignation to their direct supervisor stating the last day of work and the reason for their resignation. The district requests that classified employees plan to work a 2-week notice so that a suitable replacement or substitute may be found.

Certified employees are assigned a contract. Under certain circumstances, certified employees may request that the board of education will release them from their employment contract prior to the end of the contract. The board has the right to release the employee, require service from the employee until a suitable replacement is found, or deny the request. The Code of Ethics for Educators addresses requirements for educators related to fulfilling the terms and obligations detailed in the employment contract.

All letters of resignation should be sent to the director of human resources and a copy provided to the direct supervisor.

### **Retirement**

Employees that are planning to retire should submit a letter of resignation that states their intent to retire and the last day they intend to work.

## **Transfers**

Employees may request transfers to positions in the district for which they are qualified. Employees should submit a letter of interest to the director or administrator responsible for interviewing for the position and the human resources department. It is not necessary for an employee to complete another application. Employees requesting a transfer will be considered as all other applicants. The request does not guarantee that the employee will be selected for an interview or given the position.

The superintendent may recommend to the board the transfer or reassignment of personnel into positions that best meet the needs of the school system.

## **Job Abandonment**

Board of Education Policy: GARH – Employee Leaves and Absences

Absences for reasons that are not approved by the Stephens County Board of Education may be considered job abandonment. Employee absences without approval for three or more days may be considered voluntary resignations.

## **False or Misleading Statements**

Any false information contained in either form or application may be grounds for the immediate rejection of the applicant or immediate dismissal of current employee.

## **Employee Leave – SCSS Policy GARH**

The board of education annually approves the school year calendar. All employees are required to follow the work calendar established by the board and may take leave according to GARH policy. Employees are responsible for reviewing this policy and following the requirements outlined in this policy. A copy of the policy is included in this handbook (see Appendix E). Supervisors are responsible for establishing specific work hours based on the needs of the department. Employees are required to follow the schedule set by their supervisor, including the time that they are to report to work.

Employees are accountable for accurately and honestly reporting leave to their supervisor. The code of ethics requires that all employees use honesty in all reports, including use of leave. All employee leave should be requested on the district leave request form or the appropriate Family and Medical Leave Act forms.

Supervisors are also responsible for approving all leave requests made by employees assigned to their department. Employees are to submit leave forms prior to an absence in every instance possible. When an employee has an unexpected absence and is not able to report to work, they are to contact their supervisor directly. Reports made to a fellow employee are not appropriate and do not qualify the leave as being approved by the supervisor.

All employees earn sick leave at the rate of 1.25 days of leave per month worked. A 10-month employee will year 12.5 days of leave annually. A 12-month employee will earn 15 days of leave annually. Employees may use 3 days of this annual total sick leave for personal reasons if approved by their supervisor. These 3 personal days are part of the total sick leave earned, not additional days. For example, a 10-month employee has taken 3 days of sick leave during the year and 2 days of personal leave. This is a total of 5 leave days, and the balance of leave days for the year will be 7.5 days (12.5 - 5).

A maximum of 90 days of unused sick leave can be carried over to the next year for all employees. Certified employees and bus drivers that transfer to another system in Georgia can take a maximum of 45 days of unused sick leave with them to their new system.

Teacher Retirement System (TRS) gives eligible employees years of experience credit for unused sick days over their entire career when calculating retirement income. A retiree must have at least 60 days of unused leave to receive credit. TRS is responsible for this calculation based on the certification forms that are submitted when the employee retires. More information on this calculation and the rules governing the calculation can be found on the TRS website referenced later in this handbook. Employees should carefully review the TRS table and realize that over a 30 year career a 10 month employee could have a maximum credit of 375 unused days if they did not use any sick leave. This is a great incentive for TRS eligible employees to limit their use of sick and personal leave taken.

Sick leave can be used only after it is earned. For example a new employee that works 3 months has earned 3.75 days of paid sick leave. If that employee is absent during that time for 5 days, then 1.25 days of leave will be taken without pay. The pay deducted from the paycheck is the actual daily rate of pay as described in the following section Annual Pay, Monthly Pay, and Daily Rate of Pay.

Per the Georgia Paid Parental Leave Law -15 days of Parental leave is now available for both parents of a child. Leave must be taken concurrently with FMLA leave. The leave must be taken within 1 year of the qualifying event. Paperwork for this event can be found on the HR website.

## **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) – SCSS Policy GBRIG**

SCSS complies with the requirements of FMLA. SCSS board Policy GBRIG gives a summary of the provisions of FMLA and its implementing regulations (see Appendix F). All employees should refer to the Policy for full information regarding FMLA.

## **Sick Leave Bank**

Employees may choose to participate in the district's sick leave bank. Membership in the sick leave bank is voluntary. Any employee who has been employed 120 consecutive days may become a member of the bank by donating one day of his/her accumulated sick leave. The district conducts an annual 30-day enrollment period. Members can only enroll during

this period. Each school and the transportation department will have a building representative on the sick leave bank committee. This committee member will make employees aware of the open enrollment period. Membership in the sick leave bank is valid for five years. Donations of sick leave to the bank are not refundable.

The sick leave bank committee will make all decisions regarding the awarding of days from the sick leave bank. A member may request up to 30 days of leave once annually. The committee will review the request using the following criteria: medical documentation of illness/injury, use of all accumulated sick leave, appropriate use of previous sick leave, available days in the sick leave bank, and qualifying illness/injury. Requests may be awarded in full, in part, or denied. The decision of the sick leave bank committee is final and not subject to appeal.

Employees interested in the sick leave bank should refer to the Sick Leave Bank Guidelines (see Appendix G).

## **Employee Self-Service**

SCSS uses Employee Self-Service as an online electronic documents management system. Employee Self-Service accounts are created by employees at the time of hire after HR notifies them of their Employee ID number and provides set-up instructions. The Employee Self-Service portal can be accessed from the Faculty and Staff Resources page at [stephenscountyschools.org](http://stephenscountyschools.org).

Through this portal, employees can complete some of the onboarding paperwork and view a variety of documents such as: contracts, check stubs, W2's, and 1095C documents. Employees can also request a change to their address, phone number, tax withholding information, and direct deposits.

### *New Hires –*

Employee Self-Service contains the following documents that are required for new hires to complete within three business days of their start date. Additional documents (VOE, I-9, and Multiple Policy Agreement, etc.) are completed via TalentEd Records.

Direct Deposit Enrollment	Complete this form to enroll in direct deposit. Attach a voided check or form from your financial institution.
G-4	You must complete #1, #2, #3 (A, B, C, D, or E) and sign. You may also complete any other sections that apply to you.
W-4	You must complete Steps 1 and 5. You may also complete Steps 2, 3 or 4 if desired.

## **PAYROLL PRACTICES**

### **Pay Period 10-month and 12-month Employees**

The annual pay for 12-Month employees is compensated in monthly paychecks from July through June.

The annual pay for 10-Month employees is compensated in monthly paychecks from September through August.

When a 10-month employee is new to the district and has no previous experience in a Georgia school system, their checks for the first year will be divided into 13 pay periods that will run from August until August. This is done by the district to provide a paycheck to the employee before almost two months of work has passed.

### **Years of Experience**

SCSS requires documentation to verify accepted prior years of employment experience before those years can be counted as part of the employee's prior years of service for payroll purposes. The human resources coordinator will provide the employee with the appropriate forms to document experience. Years of experience must be submitted by the employee at the time of hire.

### **Certified Employees**

SCSS places certified employees on the State Salary Schedule according to State Board rule 160-5-2-.05. Employees that do not hold a GAPSC certificate but who are hired to fill a position that is normally filled with a certified candidate are placed on the State Salary Schedule at the provisional certification level with 0 years of experience and remain at that level until a state certificate is obtained.

### **Classified Employees**

SCSS grants classified employees one year of experience for each two years of related work experience outside of the school system. Classified employees may be given a maximum credit of 10 years of prior experience.

### **Annual Pay, Monthly Pay and Daily Rate of Pay**

All employees are placed on a salary schedule for the job which they perform. The district uses the state salary schedule for all certified personnel, as outlined in the Years of Experience section above. Classified employees are placed on a specific salary schedule that has been approved by the SCBOE. All employees are expected to understand how to



calculate their paychecks and what deductions should be taken from each paycheck. If errors cause an overpayment to an employee, then the employee will be responsible for repayment of any amount overpaid. Likewise, if an employee feels that an error has resulted in an underpayment, they should contact payroll immediately to state their concern so that the appropriate correction can be made and the correct compensation made to the employee.

#### *Annual Pay –*

Information from the appropriate salary schedule is used to determine the annual pay for the job. Any supplements for which an employee is eligible are added to this base annual pay. This calculation results in the gross annual pay.

#### *Monthly Pay –*

The annual salary is divided by the number of paychecks that the employee will receive during the year (12 or 13 as described in the section Pay Period 10-month or 12-month employee). This calculation results in the gross monthly pay.

#### *Daily Rate of Pay –*

The annual salary is divided by the number of days that the employee is assigned to work during the year (180, 182, 184, 190, 228, 235, etc.). This calculation results in the daily rate of pay.

Employees should be aware that if they take leave without pay then the daily rate will be subtracted from their paycheck for the number of days that leave without pay is taken and that total will be subtracted from the paycheck for the pay period in which this leave is taken. For example, if an employee's daily rate of pay is \$87.68 and they have 2 days of leave without pay during one pay period, then \$175.36 will be deducted from their gross pay for that month. Leave without pay has a big impact on an employee's paycheck, and employees should be aware that they can quickly be left with too little pay to cover their elected benefits. In these situations, the employee will have to submit some form of payment to the district to cover the balance. Employees that are going on a planned long term leave are encouraged to review prior to their actual leave any anticipated amount of leave without pay and plan accordingly. If employees have questions about how to calculate this, they should make an appointment with the district payroll coordinator to discuss their questions.

### **Pay Day**

The board of education approves a calendar of pay dates annually. Typically employees will receive paychecks on the last working day of the month. Employees should review the approved schedule of pay dates for variations that may occur during special times of the year, such as Thanksgiving and Christmas.

SCSS offers direct deposit and strongly encourages employees to participate in this option. Employees using direct deposit have funds readily available in their designated accounts

and are not dependent on picking up a check during specified office hours during breaks and holidays. Employees have access to their payroll detail through Employee Self-Service.

Employees that do not participate in direct deposit will receive a paper check. Payroll checks will be available for pick up at the employee's assigned work location during designated hours. Payroll checks that are not picked up during designated hours will be placed in the mail at the end of the day. Employees are responsible for maintaining a correct mailing address on file with the district office. Checks will be mailed to the current address on file.

### **Employee Classifications – Non-exempt vs. Exempt**

Stephens County School System complies with the salary basis requirements of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). This federal law requires that most employees in the United States be paid at least the federal minimum wage for all hours worked and overtime pay at time and one-half the regular rate of pay for all hours worked over 40 hours in a workweek. The district defines a workweek as 7 consecutive days beginning Monday and ending Sunday. Non-exempt employees (employees earning overtime) include custodians, food service employees, bus drivers, paraprofessionals, clerical, nurses, etc.)

The FLSA provides an exemption from both minimum wage and overtime for employees employed as executive, administrative, professional, and outside sales employees. Exempt employees include teachers, media specialists, counselors, social workers, administrators, directors, the head nurse, etc.

Employees that need clarification on their classification should contact their immediate supervisor or human resources.

### **Timesheets**

All non-exempt employees will submit a timesheet monthly to their supervisor by the designated deadline. Timesheets should document the actual time worked. Employees will sign their timesheet to attest to the accuracy of the information submitted. Time recorded for the pay period will begin on the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month and end of the 15<sup>th</sup> of the following month. All absences, unpaid breaks, overtime, and time actually worked should be noted on the timesheet. Timesheets will be approved by the supervisor. Any variation that would cause an addition or reduction in pay should be submitted by the supervisor to the payroll department to be paid during that pay period. An example would be an employee that has earned pay for 3 hours of overtime or an employee that has exhausted available sick leave and is absent from work due to an illness. Employees on leave should submit their signed timesheet according to the designated deadline. These employees can mail or email their signed timesheet to their supervisor.

## **Hours of Work and Overtime – SCSS Policy GCRD**

The Board of Education authorizes overtime in accordance with administrative regulations set forth by the Superintendent. Overtime is defined as time worked beyond the normal 40-hour workweek (Monday through Sunday), including emergency or planned overtime. The forty (40) hours are defined as actual hours worked and do not include hours or days for which the employee was paid for leave time such as sick leave, personal leave, and annual leave. All employees who are considered “non-exempt” under the FLSA are legally entitled to compensation for overtime work.

Employees are not to perform overtime work or direct that overtime work be performed without the determination of the supervisor of the employee that there is no other viable alternative. Cases involving approval for overtime compensation shall be the result of emergency situations, limited timelines, or when additional responsibilities are assigned individuals on a temporary basis. No supervisor should authorize any overtime for any classified employee unless the specific amount to be authorized is first approved by the Superintendent or his designee. Violation of SCSS policy GCRD concerning prior approval for overtime work may result in disciplinary action against the employee, up to and including termination.

Compensation will be reimbursed at one and one-half the employee's regular rate of pay or compensatory leave (comp time) at the same rate. Any “comp time” should be used during the same week in which the overtime is earned. If comp time is earned on the last day of the workweek or weekend, then comp time should be taken during the next work week. Employees are responsible for documenting time actually worked and ensuring the accuracy of this report. Timesheets that reflect overtime that is to be paid are to be submitted to payroll for processing. All overtime payments will be made in the regular monthly payroll check.

Employees that are employed in two roles with different pay rates (for example, a bus driver and food service employee) will be paid overtime at an hourly overtime blended rate. Overtime may be computed based on the regular rate of pay, determined by the average of the two rates. This calculation method is derived from the U.S. Department of Labor.

The blended rate is calculated using the following formula.

$$(\text{Job 1 Reg. Hrly Rate} \times \# \text{ of hrs worked}) + (\text{Job 2 Reg. Hrly Rate} \times \# \text{ of hrs worked}) / \text{Total Physical Hours Worked} = \text{Overtime Hrly Rate}$$

Dual job employees should understand how their pay is calculated. They should contact their direct supervisor with any questions about the calculation. Payroll personnel are available to answer any questions about the calculation of overtime if the direct supervisor is not able to provide the employee with the information needed.

## **Garnishments**

Wage garnishment is the process of requiring an employer to deduct money from an employee's pay as the result of a court order or action by an authorized agency. Some

common types of required garnishments are: child support, taxes, unpaid court fines, creditor garnishments, bankruptcy orders, or guaranteed student loan repayments. When the school system receives an order to withhold an amount from an employee's wages, the system cannot refuse to make such deductions. Employees cannot be terminated on the basis of a single garnishment. Current employees are also protected from discrimination due to bankruptcy filing or bad debts prior to the filing of bankruptcy.

### **Voluntary Payroll Deductions**

SCSS allows employees to voluntarily authorize payroll deductions. These payroll deductions may be used to make charitable contributions, pay memberships, contribute to optional savings/retirement/insurance plans, etc. The employee should complete the authorization process for the organization that will receive the funds from the deduction. That organization will contact the payroll department and request the authorized deduction.

Some of the most common organizations for which employees provide authorizations for deductions are: Professional Association of Georgia Educators, Georgia Association of Educators, Educators First, Christian Educators Association International, United Way, Food 2 Kids, and Partners for Success Read at Home.

## **EMPLOYEE EVALUATIONS**

### **Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES)**

The Teacher Keys Effectiveness System is designed for use with all teachers of record, grades Pre-K through 12, who are full-time or part-time. For this purpose, teachers of record are educators who are responsible for a specified portion of a student's learning within a course aligned to performance measures. SCSS implements the TKES process as outlined in the GADOE TKES documents. The TKES handbook can be viewed at <https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Pages/Teacher-Keys-Effectiveness-System.aspx>.

### **Contributing Professionals**

TKES is not designed to be used with personnel in positions identified as Contributing Professionals unless they are required by the LEA to provide direct instruction to students. Examples of Contributing Professionals include media specialists, occupational therapists, school counselors, speech-language pathologists, school psychologists, etc. Contributing professionals will be evaluated by a local instrument.

### **Professional Learning Requirements for GAPSC Certificate Renewal**

The following educators are required to develop a written professional learning plan (PLPs): educators in positions requiring them to hold non-renewable certificates; educators in service or leadership field with fewer than three (3) years satisfactory experience; educators who were not employed by a Georgia LUA at the time of their most recent certification; educators who have less than one (1) year experience in Georgia; educators who received any unremediated annual summative evaluation ratings of needs development, unsatisfactory, or ineffective during the previous validity period.

All educators who do not develop a formal written professional learning plan are required to develop written professional learning goals (PLGs). All paraprofessionals are also required to develop PLGs. PLGs are based on student learning data, performance evaluation data, and school improvement goals. The purpose of the PLGs is to drive job-embedded learning for the educator and paraprofessional.

All PLGs and PLPs are recorded by the employee in the TKES SLDS platform. Supervisors monitor and evaluate annual progress toward the goal in the platform as well. Employees that do not meet the requirement of the professional learning goal or plan are not eligible for certificate renewal.

## **Leader Keys Effectiveness System (LKES)**

The Leader Keys Effectiveness System is designed for the evaluation of principals and assistant principals. SCSS uses LKES to evaluate principals and assistant principals. The district implements LKES according to guidance from the GADOE. The LKES handbook can be viewed at <https://www.gadoe.org/School-Improvement/Teacher-and-Leader-Effectiveness/Documents/TKES%20LKES%20Documents/2019-2020%20Documents%20TKES%20and%20LKES/LKESHandbook2019.2020.pdf>

## **Classified Employee Evaluations**

Classified employees will be evaluated with a local instrument. This local instrument has been developed according to the employee job description. Each supervisor will complete an annual evaluation instrument for each employee under his/her direction.

## **Unsatisfactory Annual Performance Evaluations**

An educator who has received any combination of two (2) Unsatisfactory, Ineffective or Needs Development annual performance evaluations during the previous five (5)-year validity cycle that has not been satisfactorily remediated by the employing Georgia LUA shall not be entitled to any certificate except for a Waiver in any field (See GaPSC Rule 505-2-.43 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE EVALUATION). Waiver certificates must be requested by an employing Georgia LUA and are issued at the discretion of the GaPSC (See GaPSC Rule 505-2-.13 WAIVER CERTIFICATE). Employees should consult with GAPSC for questions regarding their certification.

Additionally, a teacher shall not receive credit for any year of experience for salary purposes in which the teacher received an unsatisfactory or ineffective annual summative performance evaluation or for the second year in which a teacher receives two consecutive annual summative needs development ratings pursuant to Code Section 20-2-210.

Any classified employee that receives an unsatisfactory overall evaluation may receive consequences ranging from a verbal directive to termination.

## BENEFITS

SCSS offers its employees a variety of optional benefits. Employees may select from these benefit options based on their personal needs and resources. Employees should research each plan and be very familiar with the costs and plan policies governing changes in coverage for any plans that they select.

Two annual Open Enrollments are held each year. State Health Open Enrollment is held in the Fall, and the plan year runs from January - December. A second Open Enrollment is held in the Spring for all other benefits, and that plan year runs from July 1st through June 30th. Your elections for both are good for that plan year, and changes can only be made when the employee experiences a qualifying event.

Employee health care and other optional insurance premiums will be deducted from the employee's monthly paycheck. Employees should be aware that when they are absent from work beyond their allowed sick leave days that their paycheck will be adjusted to reflect time without pay and in that situation the employee will need to pay the district for any balance of their benefit premiums that are not able to be covered by their paycheck.

### State Health Benefit Plan (SHBP)

<https://shbp.georgia.gov/>

All permanent, full-time SCSS eligible employees are offered health insurance through SHBP. SHBP is Georgia's health insurance plan that is offered to eligible teachers, state employees, public school employees, and retirees. Plan information is available at [shbp.georgia.gov](https://shbp.georgia.gov/). Employees should review all plan documents and direct their questions regarding SHBP plans, eligibility, premiums, and claims to SHBP Member Services.

#### *Enrollment –*

New employees enrolling in SHBP for the 1st time or a former member with a gap in SHBP coverage of 31 days or more must select coverage within 31 days of their hire date or wait until the next annual Open Enrollment period or a Qualifying Event to enroll in SHBP coverage.

New employees selecting coverage will have an effective coverage date of the 1st day of the month following 30 days of employment. For example, an employee that begins work on July 25th and who enrolls in an SHBP plan during the 31 day period following their hire date will have coverage effective September 1st.

All eligible employees will be given the opportunity to enroll or change coverage during the annual Open Enrollment period. SHBP will provide plan comparisons, rate information, and instructions for participating in Open Enrollment.



Each eligible employee is required to document that they have received an offer of health care coverage by completing the Open Enrollment process and providing his/her supervisor a printed copy of their selection or their waiver of coverage from the enrollment portal or by completing a district waiver form.

#### *Changes in Coverage –*

Elections are good for one year. Changes can only be made during that year when an employee experiences a qualifying event. The employee is responsible for notifying the payroll department of their change in coverage. This will help ensure that the correct payroll deduction is made.

### **Campus Benefits**

<https://www.stephenscountybenefits.com/>

SCSS has selected Campus Benefits to administer supplemental insurance coverage including: vision, dental, life, disability, critical illness, hospital indemnity, accident, MedCare Complete, MetLaw, Employee Assistance Program, and flexible spending account. The Campus Benefits employee portal can be accessed from the SCSS faculty and staff resources page at [stephenscountyschools.org](http://stephenscountyschools.org). The benefit guide, as well as the service hub links included in this portal, provide contact information for Campus Benefits. Employees should direct all questions regarding plans and eligibility directly to Campus Benefits. Campus Benefits is not associated with SHBP, but for the convenience of employees, they maintain a link to SHBP information on the employee portal.

#### *Eligibility-*

All full-time employees working 20 or more hours per week are eligible to enroll in the benefits described in the Campus Benefits plan guide. Each plan has specific eligibility criteria that are listed on the top of each page. Employees should use the plan guide to make selections.

Enrollment is time-sensitive:

New hire: enroll within 30 days of your date of hire

Current employees: during the annual open enrollment window (April - May)

#### *Changes in Coverage –*

Elections are good for one year, and changes can only be made when an employee experiences a qualifying event and insurance coverage changes, then the employee is responsible for notifying the payroll department of their change in coverage. This will help ensure that the correct payroll deduction is made.



## **Employee Assistance Program**

SCSS contracts with Campus Benefits to administer an employee assistance program. The program is provided at no charge to the employee and their dependents. The program provides support, resources, and information for personal and work-life issues. More information about the EAP can be found on the Campus Benefits portal in the Service Hub tab. On this tab, select the Benefits dropdown and then the Employee Assistance Program.

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

<https://www.trsga.com/>

TRS - Teachers Retirement System of Georgia is a pension plan for the state of Georgia that covers all clerical, paraprofessional, teaching, administrative, and other professional personnel. TRS-eligible employees are mandated to contribute 6% of their monthly gross salary to TRS through payroll deduction. The district is also mandated to make a monthly employer contribution for each TRS-eligible employee.

Individual employees are responsible for updating TRS accounts and planning for retirement. All questions that employees have about their eligibility to retire, pension estimates, and health insurance after retirement should be directed to a TRS counselor and not to district personnel. Employees considering retirement should attend TRS sponsored retirement planning sessions, visit the TRS office in Atlanta or phone a TRS counselor to be sure that they understand the process, timelines, and required forms. Employees are encouraged by TRS to complete their retirement application in March in order to be prepared to receive their first retirement check in June.

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

<https://www.ers.ga.gov/public-school-employees-retirement-system>

The Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) covers all non-TRS employees, including bus drivers, food service, maintenance, and custodial employees. PSERS-eligible employees hired before 07/01/2012 contribute \$4.00 per month from September through May during each fiscal year. Those hired after 07/01/2012 contribute \$10.00 per month from September through May during each fiscal year.

The Stephens County Board of Education has established a voluntary supplemental retirement plan for permanent PSERS employees that have been employed for more than one year. The board will match employee contributions up to \$25 per month if the employee chooses to participate in these selected 403B or 457 plans. Interested employees can contact Mack Poss & Associates, Inc. for more information regarding the available plans.

Mack Poss/Byron Young & Associates, Inc.  
1744 Shady Lane  
Toccoa, GA 30577  
800-862-5392

## **Basic Life Insurance**

SCSS provides basic life insurance through One America for all full-time employees at no cost to the employee. Employees must accept this coverage within 30 days of their hire date in order to be eligible for coverage. This is a guaranteed issue life insurance policy in the amount of \$20,000. Information about this policy can be found in the Campus Benefits plan guide.

## **Life Insurance/Long Term Care Combination**

SCSS offers employees an optional life insurance/long term care combination product through Transamerica Universal Life. This option is offered through payroll deduction by Mack Poss/Byron Young and Associates. Employees may enroll at their time of hire or during the supplemental insurance open enrollment window. Interested employees should contact them at 1-800-862-5392 or email them at [byron.young@me.com](mailto:byron.young@me.com)

## **Employer Premium Cost Share**

SCSS pays an employer share each year for covered employees. These costs are often unseen to the employee, but each employee should recognize these costs as an additional benefit provided by the employer on their behalf. State Health and TRS rates are set each fiscal year and are subject to change.

The district also matches up to \$25 per month for each PSERS eligible employee that participates in the 403B or 457 VOYA optional retirement plans match.

## **Universal Availability Notice**

In compliance with Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Universal Availability, Stephens County Board of Education hereby provides notice to employees of the right to make elective deferrals to tax-sheltered annuities.

Benefits-eligible employees may participate in 403(b), 457(b), and ROTH accounts. Participation in tax-sheltered annuity plans is voluntary and is open to all benefits-eligible employees defined as those employees who work 20 or more hours per week. Participants may make changes to their voluntary plan(s) at their discretion, subject to Internal Revenue Service (IRS) regulations, by contacting the specific plan representative or home office and submitting written authorization to the Stephens County Board of Education Payroll Department.

Employees participating in voluntary tax-sheltered annuities must understand that the Stephens County Board of Education is not an investment advisor and agree to hold the Stephens County Board of Education harmless with regard to these plans.

To learn more about 403(b) plans, please visit <http://www.irs.gov> and search for Publication 571. If you have questions about how the plan works or your rights and obligations under the plan, please contact your plan administrator.

VOYA and RELIASTAR  
Mack Poss/Byron Young & Associates  
800-862-5392  
Email: [byron.young@me.com](mailto:byron.young@me.com)

VALIC  
Troy Webb  
706-206-4032  
[troy.webb@valic.com](mailto:troy.webb@valic.com)

Franklin Templeton  
Edward Jones  
Aaron Plaisted  
706-886-0411

### **The Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA)**

COBRA established group health plans for many employees who lose their health benefits. COBRA gives employees and their families who lose their health benefits the right to continue group health benefits provided by their group health plan for a limited period of time under certain circumstances such as voluntary or involuntary job loss, reduction in the hours worked, transition between jobs, death, divorce, and other life events. COBRA specifies how employees and their family members may elect continuation of coverage. Qualified individuals may be required to pay the entire premium for coverage (including the employer-paid premium) up to 102 percent of the cost to the plan.

The group health plan will provide members with information regarding their COBRA rights. These rights are described in the plan's summary plan description. Additionally, employees should contact their plan administrator with any questions related to COBRA eligibility and rates.

## Appendix A

### Employee Handbook Acknowledgement

The Stephens County School System (SCSS) handbook has been prepared to help you understand the employment practices at our organization. The handbook will give you information and resources to find answers to common employment questions. We will discuss the organization, our jobs, and the many benefits and privileges you enjoy as an employee. It is your responsibility to take time to read this handbook and become familiar with the contents.

The handbook is not a complete description of all policies and procedures. It is only a guide. Because things change, we will amend this handbook over time. As this handbook is changed, we will attempt to provide you with a revised copy. Revisions will supersede all prior editions of this handbook.

Neither this handbook nor references to other documents are meant to establish an employment contract or agreement. Nothing in this handbook is intended to imply that there is permanent or guaranteed employment for anyone.

I acknowledge receipt of the employee handbook, and that I have been given instructions to read and become familiar with its contents.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

***(To be signed and returned to the employee's supervisor.)***

## **Appendix B**

### **Stephens County Board of Education Policy GAAA: Equal Opportunity Employment**

The School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or sex 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 all 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.

#### **COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE**

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 (except as stated below) 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, excluding sexual harassment described in Section 2, 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 report or 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. Any person with a complaint or report alleging sexual harassment as defined in Policy GAEB (whether or not the person reporting is the person alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment), may report, in person, by mail, by telephone, or by electronic mail, using the contact information for the Title IX Coordinator on the District's website, or by any other means that results in the Title IX Coordinator receiving the person's verbal or written report. Such a report may be made at any time (including during non-business hours) by using the telephone number or electronic mail address, or by mail to the office address, listed for the Title IX Coordinator. Such reports will be handled in accordance with the procedures and grievance process specified in Policy GAEB.
3. If the alleged offending individual is the coordinator designated by the Board of Education or the school principal, 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. If the alleged offending individual is the Superintendent, the complaint shall be made to the designated

coordinator, who shall, without further investigation, report the complaint to the Board Chairperson.

4. The coordinator or his or her designee shall have fifteen school 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.
5. 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 school days of receiving a copy of the written response, to have the complaint referred to the Superintendent. If the alleged offending individual is the Superintendent, the Complainant may have the complaint referred to the Board of Education, rather than the Superintendent.
6. The Superintendent shall have fifteen 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. The decision of the Superintendent shall be final.
7. 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 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 the right to contact the Office of Civil Rights, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or any other appropriate state or federal agency with regard to any allegations that the School District has violated the statutes described above.
8. The District shall be responsible for distributing and disseminating information relevant to this policy and procedure to students, parents, and employees through appropriate procedures.
9. No reprisal shall occur as a result of reporting unlawful discrimination or harassment under this policy, and any attempt to retaliate against a complainant shall be disciplined as is appropriate.
10. The confidentiality of any individual making a complaint or report in accordance with this policy, to the extent it is reasonably possible and complies with the law, shall be protected, although the discovery of the truth and the elimination of unlawful harassment shall be the overriding consideration.

Contact information for the following coordinators is available on the District's website: Title IX, Title VI, Section 504, and ADA.

## **Appendix C**

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

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

If, prior to an arrest for an offense involving a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug, an employee notifies the Superintendent or the Superintendent's designee that the employee illegally uses a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug and is receiving or agrees to receive treatment under a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the Board, the employee shall be entitled to maintain his or her employment for up to one year as long as the employee follows the treatment plan. During this period, the employee shall not be separated from employment solely on the basis of the employee's drug dependence, but the employee's work activities may be restructured if practicable to protect persons or property. No statement made by an employee to the Superintendent or the



Superintendent's designee in order to comply with this code section shall be admissible in any civil, administrative or criminal proceeding as evidence against the public employee. The rights granted by this policy shall be available to an employee only once during a five year period and are intended to be and shall be interpreted as being the same as those minimum rights granted pursuant to the Georgia Drug-Free 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.



## **Appendix D**

### **SCSS Board of Education Policy GCRA(1): Drug Screening of Bus Drivers**

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Appendix E

### SCSS Board of Education Policy GARH: Employee Leaves and Absences

This policy shall apply to all employees of the Board of Education. All employees are required to follow the work calendar established by the Board of Education and may take leave from work only in accordance with this policy or other leave policies enacted by the Board of Education. Unless otherwise provided by the Board of Education, principals and other supervisors are not authorized to rearrange the work calendars of employees.

#### ACCRUAL OF SICK LEAVE AND ABSENCE FOR MEDICAL AND RELATED REASONS

Each employee in the Stephens County School System will earn one and one-fourth days of sick leave per month employed. An employee earns 1 ¼ days in a 9-month working period, 1 ½ days in a 10-month working period, 1 ¾ days in an 11-month working period, and 15 days in a 12-month working period. All employees may accumulate a maximum of 90 days of leave. Employees with excessive absences will be subject to disciplinary action.

#### SICK LEAVE

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

1. Personal illness or injury.
2. Absence necessitated by exposure to contagious disease.
3. Absence due to illness or death in the employee's immediate family. "Immediate family" is defined as spouse, child, mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, grandchild, mother-in-law, father-in-law, or a relative living in the residence of the employee.
4. Personal reasons as defined under Personal Leave (not to exceed 3 days).

The Superintendent or designee may require a doctor's statement verifying the disability or ability of the employee. If the Superintendent or designee disagrees with any doctor's statement of disability, or ability, he/she may appoint a physician of the same medical specialty as the employee's physician, for the purpose of receiving independent medical judgment.

#### Transfer

Teachers and other professional employees will be allowed sick leave transfer benefits according to state law.

## Deductions

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

## Sick Leave Bank

The Stephens County Board of Education hereby authorizes the operation of a Sick Leave Bank, which may be established and maintained from participating employees' voluntary contributions of accumulated sick leave. Any sick leave bank must be developed consistent with the requirements of state law and pursuant to guidelines and procedures developed by the Superintendent or designee and modified from time to time by a sick leave bank committee, as approved by the Superintendent or designee. All participating employees shall make equal contributions to the sick leave bank. All decisions of the Sick Leave Bank Committee shall be final and not subject to appeal to the Stephens County Board of Education.

When enrolling in the Sick Leave Bank, members must sign a statement agreeing to relieve the school district and the Sick Leave Bank Committee of any liability as a result of action taken by the committee. Employees who elect to participate shall contribute one sick leave day initially and thereafter as requested from their accumulated short-term leave account. Employees may withdraw sick leave days only within the guidelines established by the Sick Leave Bank Committee, local board of education policy, and state laws or regulations. Employees may donate up to 10 days of their own sick leave to their spouse.

## PERSONAL LEAVE

Each employee is entitled to three (3) personal leave days per school year. Employees may request personal leave to participate in civic responsibilities, as described in Stephens County Board of Education Policy GAHB (Staff Political Activities). Personal leave will be charged against accumulated sick leave days. Employees shall request personal leave from their supervisors at least two (2) days prior to their absence on the proper request form if the absence is to occur on Tuesday through Thursday of a normal week. Employees requesting personal leave on a Monday or Friday or on a day immediately preceding or following holidays shall request personal leave from their supervisors at least one week in advance on the proper request form.

Personal leave will be granted to employees only if the employee has accumulated sufficient sick leave to cover the personal leave, and approval of such leave may not be

conditioned on the reason. Personal leave may be denied on critical days for the school system including, but not limited to, the last week of school, before and after holidays, and if 10% of the staff is absent. Critical days will be identified in accordance with requirements of the laws of the State of Georgia for effective school operation. A hardship committee may review requests that are deemed to have extenuating circumstances.

## PROFESSIONAL LEAVE

Personnel may formally request on an approved form professional leave at full pay to attend specific activities or receive advanced training. Examples of reasons for which professional leave may be granted include, but are not limited to, in-service training and for purposes of attending meetings of professional associations.

The formal request must be approved by the Superintendent two weeks prior to the requested absence. Approval of the request does not commit the school system to payment of any expenses. The applying staff member must submit a separate request in detail if desiring financial assistance.

The request for professional leave must first be submitted to the principal or other designated official before being considered by 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.

## JURY DUTY OR SUBPOENA

Time spent serving on a jury or when subpoenaed to testify in a case arising out of school system duties will not be subtracted from leave. No deductions will be made from salaries for time spent serving on a jury or as a witness as a school system employee. Employees may keep their juror or witness remittance.

## MILITARY LEAVE

All employees of the Board of Education are entitled to paid leave not to exceed eighteen days in any one 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 Superintendent or designee 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

### Death in Immediate Family

In the event of a death in the immediate family of an employee, leave will be granted to a maximum of five days in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Board and such leave will be charged against sick leave. One day of leave may also be used for the purpose of attending the funeral of other family members not included in the definition of "Immediate Family" and such leave will be charged against sick leave.

## FAMILY & MEDICAL LEAVE ACT

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

## Appendix F

### SCSS Board of Education Policy GBRIG: Federal Family and Medical Leave Act

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

#### A. ELIGIBLE EMPLOYEES

Employees of the Board who have been employed by the Board for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1,250 hours during the 12 month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave are eligible to take unpaid leave under the FMLA.

#### B. DEFINITIONS

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

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

"Covered Servicemember" (for military caregiver leave) means the employee's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin who is (1) a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness; or (2) a veteran who was a member of the Armed Forces at any time during the five years preceding the date on which the veteran undergoes such medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy.

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

"Next of Kin" of a covered servicemember means the nearest blood relative other than the covered servicemember's spouse, parent, son or daughter, in the following order of priority: blood relatives granted legal custody, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and first cousins, unless the covered servicemember has specifically designated in writing another blood relative for purposes of FMLA caregiver leave.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### A. AMOUNT AND TYPE OF LEAVE TAKEN

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

1. Birth of a son or daughter and to care for the newborn child;
2. Adoption or foster placement with the employee of a son or daughter and to care for the newly placed child;
3. To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent, if that person has a serious health condition;



4. Serious health condition of the employee that prevents the employee from performing his/her job functions;
5. Any qualifying exigency arising from the fact that the employee's family member (the covered servicemember) is on covered active duty. Qualifying exigencies are defined as short-notice deployment (seven or fewer calendar days); military events and related activities; childcare and school activities; financial and legal arrangements; counseling; rest and recuperation (up to five days per instance); post-deployment activities; additional activities where the employer and employee agree that the leave is an exigency and agree to both timing and duration of the leave; and
6. Military caregiver leave to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the servicemember.

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

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

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

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

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

The District will require that any accrued paid leave (sick, personal, vacation, or any other paid leave) be substituted for all or a part of the otherwise unpaid FMLA leave under the terms and conditions of the District's normal leave policies. Because leave pursuant to an employee's disability benefit plan or workers'

compensation absence is not unpaid, the provision for required substitution of accrued paid leave is not applicable in such cases.

### C. INTERMITTENT OR REDUCED LEAVE

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

### E. NOTIFICATION OF LEAVE

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

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

### F. BENEFITS AND RETURN TO WORK

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

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

employee or family member, or the covered servicemember's serious injury or illness, prevented the employee from returning to work.

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

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

#### G. REQUIRED CERTIFICATION AND REPORTING

The District requires that a request for leave due to a serious health condition of an employee or an employee's family member or a serious injury or illness of a covered servicemember be supported by certification by the appropriate health care provider of the eligible employee or family member on a form to be provided by the District. This certification for a serious health condition must include (1) the name, address, telephone and fax numbers of the healthcare provider and type of practice/specialization; (2) the approximate date on which the serious health condition commenced, and its probable duration; (3) a statement or description of appropriate medical facts regarding the patient's health condition for which FMLA leave is requested; (4) if the purpose of the leave is to care for a family member, a statement that the employee is needed to care for the family member and an estimate of the frequency and duration of the leave required for such care; (5) if the leave is due to the employee's own serious health condition, a statement that the employee is unable to perform his/her essential job functions, the nature of other work restrictions, and the likely duration of such inability; and (6) if intermittent or reduced schedule leave is requested, information sufficient to establish the medical necessity for the same and an estimate of the dates and duration of treatments and any periods of recovery. The employer may require that the eligible employee obtain subsequent recertification on a reasonable basis as requested by the District in accordance with the FMLA regulations.

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

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

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

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

#### H. SPECIAL PROVISIONS

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

If an instructional employee begins leave more than five weeks before the end of a semester, the District may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if

1. the leave will last at least three weeks; and
2. the employee would return to work during the three-week period before the end of the term.

If an instructional employee begins leave for a purpose other than the employee's own serious health condition during the five-week period before the end of the semester, the District may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if

1. the leave will last more than two weeks; and
2. the employee would return to work during the two-week period before the end of the term.

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

## **Appendix G**

### **Sick Leave Bank Guidelines**

1. The Sick Leave Bank shall be administered by a committee of nine members. One representative will be elected by each school. One representative will be elected by the Transportation Department. One representative will be elected by the Central Office. The Human Resources Director serves as an ex-officio member. Members will serve for a minimum of two years. Vacancies will be filled by election or selection by administration.
2. The committee shall have the responsibility of receiving, verifying, approving or denying requests for bank withdrawals. The committee shall annually elect a chairperson. The committee will establish guidelines for administering the Sick Leave Bank.
3. The committee shall render a decision on all applications received at its next called meeting.
4. A majority of committee members must be present to conduct the official business of the Sick Leave Bank Committee. The ex-officio member must be present.
5. The decision must reflect a majority of the committee members who are present. The decision shall be final and binding and not subject to appeal.
6. The committee members shall use the following criteria in administering the bank and in rendering their decisions:
  - a. Medical documentation of illness/injury.
  - b. Use of all accumulated sick leave.
  - c. Appropriate use of previous sick leave.
  - d. Available days in the Sick Leave Bank.
  - e. Qualifying illness/injury.
7. All records of the Sick Leave Bank shall be maintained by the Human Resources Department.

#### **Membership**

1. Membership in the Sick Leave Bank is voluntary.
2. Any employee entitled to accumulate sick leave days and who has been employed 120 consecutive days may become a member of the bank by donating one day of his/her accumulated sick leave.

3. An employee wishing to become a member must sign a participation form in the annual 30-day enrollment period. (New employees would be eligible for participation in the second year of employment.)
4. Membership in the Sick Leave Bank is valid for five years and must be renewed or waived during the open enrollment following the fifth year of membership. Donations of sick leave to the Sick Leave Bank are not refundable and not transferable.
5. Each member shall sign an authorization form stating that he/she is aware of the provisions of the Sick Leave Bank and also that he/she relieves the Committee and the Stephens County School District from any liability as a result of action by the Sick Leave Bank Committee.

#### PROCEDURES FOR APPLICATION FOR SICK LEAVE BANK WITHDRAWALS

- A. A member of the Sick Leave Bank shall be eligible to make application to the Bank provided that he/she has exhausted his/her own accumulated leave and is not receiving nor will qualify to receive Workers' Compensation.
- B. In the event that a member is physically or mentally unable to make a request to the Bank, a family member or agent may file the request on the member's behalf.
- C. All requests to withdraw days from the Bank shall be filed with the Committee on the Withdrawal Form.
- D. The Withdrawal Form shall be accompanied by a physician's statement verifying illness/ injury and attesting to the individual's incapacity to perform assigned duties. A qualifying personal illness/injury is defined as a permanent and continuous condition caused by disease, illness, or injury. A physician shall certify in writing after personally examining the individual, that the medical condition found during the course of the examination is such that there is no reasonable expectation the individual may be able to return to work within the following two months, or death of the individual from this condition would likely occur as a result of the disease, illness, or injury within one year without the application of life-sustaining procedure.
- E. An applicant may be requested to undergo, at his/her own expense, a medical review by a physician approved by the Committee.
- F. Leave days granted by the Committee may be used only for the personal illness/injury of the employee, employee's spouse or, employee's children.
- G. Withdrawals from the Bank will be considered in units of thirty days maximum per request, with a maximum of one request per school year. Requests may be granted in full, in part, or denied.

- H. All leave granted but not used by the employee must be returned to the Sick Leave Bank.
- I. Leave granted to an employee by the Committee does not have to be repaid except as all members are uniformly assessed.

Written by Sick Leave Bank Committee  
October 15, 1997  
(Revised April 26, 2016)