

# Douglas County School System

## Employee Handbook



*The Standard of Excellence*

## *Superintendent's Welcome*

Dear Staff,

Employees of the Douglas County School System provide a supportive educational environment throughout the district. Through your dedication and professionalism we are able to impact the future success of the children and families we serve as well as our community. Your continuing commitment to teaching and learning for our students and staff can be observed daily.

I believe that our staff is committed and motivated to see children learn and succeed. The love of teaching and learning is evident in classrooms and schools across the county. The connection between students and parents to teachers, administrators, and support staff is critically important to student success. Every employee's work is vital to fulfilling our mission and we are all part of the same team as we provide a quality education for all students in a safe, supportive environment. No employee should feel that their work is in isolation from others.

Our vision is to build a community of lifelong learners that become responsible individuals, independent thinkers, and productive citizens. We are fortunate to have strong community supporters who value, support and appreciate our school district's students and staff and work cooperatively with us to fulfill our mission and vision. Local residents, businesses and organizations dedicate their time, talent, monetary support and other resources to the positive encouragement that is so essential to a quality school system.

The culture of mutual trust in the Douglas County School System is the critical piece that binds our staff together to form a successful school district. I appreciate each employee and the integral part that you play in the district's success.

Warmest regards,

Trent North  
Superintendent

## **Douglas County School System Mission**

Our mission is to provide a quality education for all students in a safe, supportive environment.

## **Douglas County School System Vision**

Our vision is to build a community of lifelong learners that become responsible individuals, independent thinkers, and productive citizens.

## **Douglas County School System Goals**

- To provide a challenging, comprehensive instructional and curricular program for all learners.
- To provide a school environment that is safe and supportive and enhances the learning process.
- To improve communication throughout the school community.

### ***Disclaimer***

*This handbook has been prepared to help familiarize you with some of our administrative rules and forms and to present the information in a form that will be readily available for reference. Although the contents of the handbook are based on the administrative rules and forms of the Douglas County Board of Education, the actual administrative rules and forms, which are far more lengthy and detailed, have been summarized to make the handbook more readable. There are additional administrative rules and forms not discussed in the handbook. In the event of a conflict between the handbook and an administrative rule or form, the administrative rules or forms shall control. Nothing in this handbook or in the administrative rules and forms is intended to create a contract of employment or an entitlement to any particular benefits or terms and conditions of work. The Board of Education has the right to change or modify any of its administrative rules or forms at any time. For additional, more detailed information or if you have questions, please refer to the Board of Education Policy Manual, Section G - Personnel, which can be found at the District's web site ([www.Douglas.k12.ga.us](http://www.Douglas.k12.ga.us))*

## The Douglas County School System

Central Administrative Offices  
9030 Highway 5  
Douglasville, GA 30134  
770.651.2000

Douglas County is located 20 miles west of downtown Atlanta and encompasses 200 square miles of gently rolling foothills of the Appalachian Piedmont. The county population was estimated at 129,703 in 2009. It is bordered on the south by the Chattahoochee River, east by Cobb and Fulton Counties, north by Paulding County, and west by Carroll County. Douglas County's strategic location as the western gateway to Atlanta, and its proximity and ease of access to Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport, make it the enviable place to live, work and play. Douglas County is a special place that blends natural beauty with urban convenience and amenities.

Student enrollment in the school district is approximately 24,250 students. There are 20 elementary schools (kindergarten through fifth grade), 8 middle schools (grades six through eight) and five high schools (grades nine through twelve). Our newest elementary school is under construction and will open for the 2012-2013 school year.

The District's Central Administrative Office is located at 9030 Highway 5, Douglasville, GA 30135, about one mile north of Interstate 20. New student registration is located at the Central Office Annex located at 4841 Highway 5, six miles south of Interstate 20 in the former Bill Arp Elementary School gym.

With over 3,550 employees, the Douglas County School System is the county's largest employer. The school system's mission is to provide a quality education for all students in a safe, supportive environment. Our vision is to build a community of lifelong learners that become responsible individuals, independent thinkers, and productive citizens. We are "Leading and learning."

Our goals are to provide a challenging, comprehensive instructional and curricular program for all learners; to provide a school environment that is safe and supportive and enhances the learning process; and to improve communication throughout the school community.

The formula for academic success involves the students, parents, teachers, staff, and the community working together. The Douglas County School System's excellent teachers are enthusiastic professionals who strive to maximize each student's achievement.

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*A complete copy of each Board Policy rule and supporting form, if any, can be found on the DCSS Web site at <https://eboard.eboardsolutions.com/ePolicy/PolicyOverview.aspx?S=4058&Sch=4058>.*

## **Guidelines: Workplace/On-the-Job**

### **Accidents and Emergencies**

All employees are responsible for maintaining a safe working environment, and should report safety concerns to their supervisor so that corrective action can be taken. In the event of an injury sustained in the performance of job duties, employees should report the injury to their supervisor as soon as possible and complete a General Incident Report. If medical attention is required, refer to the Workers' Compensation Panel of Physicians.

### **Accreditation**

All schools in the Douglas County School System are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS).

### **Alcohol and Controlled Substances Testing**

The health and well-being of students and employees depend on the judgment, physical dexterity, reflex actions and unimpaired hearing and sight of employees engaged in safety-sensitive functions. The Douglas County Board of Education will not tolerate and specifically prohibits the unauthorized use, abuse, possession or sale of alcohol or controlled substances, as well as a measurable presence of alcohol in any employee. Employees engaged in safety-sensitive functions participate in an alcohol and controlled substance testing program. See Board Policy:

[GAMA](#)

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

The Douglas County School System will not discriminate against any qualified employee because of a disability, as long as the employee can perform the essential functions of the job. Reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with a disability will be provided, following the ADA guidelines.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is a part of performance, and employees are required to be at work, on time. Employees who will be late to work or absent should personally notify their supervisor in advance or as quickly as possible so that their responsibilities can be covered appropriately. Absences for reasons that are not approved by the Douglas County Board of Education may be considered job abandonment. School employees must report absences to school administrators in accordance with local school procedures.

See Board Policy: [GARH](#)

### **Confidential Nature of Work**

Student and employee files, records, documentation and other information are private and confidential. Disclosure of such information is limited by applicable federal and state laws.

### **Conflict of Interest/Dual Pay**

All employees are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards of conduct at all times. While the Douglas County School System recognizes the right of employees to engage in private activities outside their employment with the school district, business dealings that create a conflict with the interests of the Douglas County School System are not acceptable. Employees should disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including those where the employee's influence could result in personal gain for the employee or an immediate family member. See Board Policy: [GAG](#)

### **Dress Code**

Employees should maintain an appropriate level of personal hygiene, and dress appropriately for the school or workplace situation and level of formality. Employees should follow safety regulations concerning equipment. See Board Policy: [GRBL-R\(1\)](#)

### **Drug-Free Workplace and Workforce**

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

See Board Policy: [GAMA](#)

### **Fund-raising Activities**

All solicitations within a school and/or the school system must have prior approval of the Superintendent and/or principal of the school. No fund-raising organizations shall be permitted to solicit funds from students or employees without prior approval from the Superintendent or designee. Charitable organizations solicitations must be approved annually. Door-to-door collection shall be prohibited for students in grades K-8.

See Board Policy: [JK-R\(1\)](#) and [GAI](#)

### **Employees with Communicable Diseases**

The Douglas County School System recognizes the importance of protecting the health and welfare of students, teachers and other employees of the educational system from the spread of communicable disease, including Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). The Board, the Douglas County Health Department, and/or the Georgia Department of Community Health has the authority to require immunizations or other preventive measures including quarantine, isolation and segregation of persons with communicable disease or conditions likely to endanger the health of others. These agencies may require quarantine or surveillance of carriers of disease and persons exposed to or suspected of being infected with infectious disease during such period until they are found free of the infectious agent or disease.

See Board Policy: [GANA](#)

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)**

Federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, race, color or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and the Perkins Act of 1998); or disability (Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990) in educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.

Employees, applicants for employment, students, parents and the general public are hereby notified that the Douglas County Board of Education does not discriminate in any educational programs or activities or in employment policies.

The following individuals have been designated as the employees responsible for coordinating the Board's efforts to implement this nondiscriminatory policy:

Title VI Coordinator: Associate Superintendent/Student Achievement & Leadership

Title IX Coordinator: Associate Superintendent/Student Support & Services

ADA Coordinator: Chief Operations Officer

Section 504 Coordinator: Coordinator of Special Education

Inquiries concerning the application of Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 or ADA of the policies and practices of the Douglas County Board of Education may be addressed to the person listed above at the Douglas County Board of Education, P. O. Box 1077, Douglasville, Georgia 30133, (770) 651-2000; to the Regional Office for Civil Rights, Atlanta, Georgia 30323; or to the Director, Office for Civil Rights, Education Department, Washington, D.C. 20201.

See Board Policy: [GAAA](#)

### **Ethics**

All employees must adhere to the high standards and expectations determined by the Douglas County Board of Education and those described in the Professional Standards Commission Code of Ethics. As public employees expected to uphold the public trust, employees should not use their positions or professional relationships for personal gain. All employees of the District are required to notify their immediate supervisor and the Director of Human Resources by the end of the next business day following any arrest. Any misstatement or omission of required information may be reason for dismissal or non-employment.

### **Identification Badges**

All employees must clearly display their Douglas County School System -issued ID badge whenever they are on Douglas County School System property or engaged in Douglas County School System-related activities. Lost or stolen badges must be reported to the employee's supervisor or school office manager for a request to replace the badge.

### **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy**

It is the policy of this school district to prohibit any act of harassment of students or employees by other students or employees based upon race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age or disability at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity. Any such act by a student or employee shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment or suspension or expulsion of the student.

See Board Policy: [GAEB](#)

### **Outside Employment**

Outside employment is permitted as long as it does not interfere with the employee's ability to perform his/her job with Douglas County School System; the work does not involve organizations that do or want to do business with the school district; or it does not violate laws or Douglas County School System policies and regulations.

An administrative employee shall not seek other employment which conflicts with those duties established by the Board of Education, neither shall the employee seek other employment which conflicts with those ethics set up by the Professional Standards Commission.

See Board Policy: [CGPE](#)

### **School Assignment for Children of Employees**

Any full time benefits eligible employee may request a Permissive Transfer for their children. A Permissive Student Transfer Form must be completed and submitted to Associate Superintendent of Student Support and Services. Permissive transfers are evaluated on a case by case basis.

### **Smoking/ Use of Tobacco Products**

Tobacco use has been determined by the Surgeon General as a health hazard. Furthermore the Douglas County Board of Education has determined that tobacco use is inconsistent with the concepts and principles taught through the curriculum of the school district. Therefore, the possession or use of all tobacco products by students and the use of all tobacco products by employees, or non-employees assisting in school activities shall be prohibited. This action applies to tobacco use in school district owned buildings, offices, motor vehicles, on school district owned property and at all off campus school sponsored activities 24 hours a day. The same tobacco prohibition shall apply to visitors on all school district owned property. School staff members shall be responsible for enforcing Georgia Law and Douglas County School System policies and regulations concerning use of all tobacco products. See Board Policy: [GAN](#)

### **Social Networking**

The Douglas County School System recognizes that today's students and parents engage in electronic forms of communication for their daily interactions with friends, family, and their larger social networks. DCSS has also, or will be, utilizing e-mail, websites, blogs, text messaging, and use of public social media networks such as Twitter, Facebook, and others to communicate with similar groups. Whereas these forms of communications are dynamic, mobile, and quickly reach their audience through technologies that have become an integral part of our online lives, they may, in some circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating with students and parents.

Staff members presently using social media sites, such as Facebook, to communicate with friends, family and their personal networks should ensure that their privacy settings are set to "Only Friends." If the "Friends of Friends" or "Networks and Friends" settings are used, staff members open their content to a much larger group of people, including students and parents. Employees should not use their District email address or phone number for communications on social media networks for personal accounts. The wall between the role of a public educator and personal friendships with students should always be visible and strongly communicated.

See Board Policy: [IFBG](#) and [IFBG-R1](#)

As educators we have a professional image to uphold and how we conduct ourselves online helps determine this image. As reported by the media, there have been instances of educators demonstrating professional misconduct while engaging in inappropriate dialogue about their schools and/or students or posting pictures and videos of themselves engaged in inappropriate activity. Some educators feel that being online shields them from having their personal lives examined. But increasingly, educators' online identities are too often public and can cause serious repercussions.

One of the hallmarks of social networks is the ability to –"friend" others – creating a group of others that share interests and personal news. The district strongly discourages teachers from accepting invitations to **friend** students within these social networking sites. When students gain access into a teacher's network of friends and acquaintances and are able to view personal photos, the student-teacher dynamic is altered. Friending students

provides more information than one should share in an educational setting. It is important to maintain a professional relationship with students to avoid relationships that could cause bias in the classroom.

For the protection of your professional reputation, the Douglas County School System recommends the following practices:

#### Friends and Friending

- Do not accept students as friends on personal social networking sites (decline any student-initiated friend requests).
- Do not initiate friendships with students
- Remember that people classified as “friends” have the ability to download and share your information with others.

#### Content

- Do not use commentary deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, or libelous. Exercise caution with regard to exaggeration, colorful language, guesswork, obscenity, copyrighted materials, legal conclusions and derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Weigh whether a particular posting puts your effectiveness as a teacher at risk.
- Post only what you want the world to see. Imagine your students, their parents, your administrator, visiting the site.
- Do not discuss students or coworkers or publicly criticize policies or personnel.
- Do not post images that include students
- Do not reference your students.

#### **Social Security Number**

The Douglas County School System reserves the right to use an employee’s social security number in employment-related practices. All employees who handle documents containing employee identification data such as social security numbers should use reasonable precaution to preclude compromise or identity theft.

#### **Solicitation by Staff Members**

All solicitations within a school and/or the school system must have prior approval of the Superintendent and/or principal of the school. No fund-raising organizations shall be permitted to solicit funds from students or employees without prior approval from the Superintendent or designee. Charitable organizations solicitations must be approved annually. The Board maintains that employees have the right to privacy and shall have the freedom to perform professional duties in an environment uninterrupted by solicitations from colleagues or from outside agencies without approval of the Superintendent. The soliciting of sales or services, the advertisement of products, or the endorsement of one product over another by school personnel in their relations with students, parents or employees is prohibited by the Douglas County Board of Education.

See Board Policy: [GA1](#)

#### **Staff Complaints and Grievances**

- a. It is the purpose of this policy to implement the provisions of the Act of the General Assembly of 1992, O.C.G.A. 20-2-989.5 et seq. In accordance with the foregoing, it is the policy of the Board of Education that certified personnel shall have the right to present and resolve complaints relating to certain matters affecting the employment relationship at the lowest organizational level possible. The Board of Education encourages all employees to resolve their complaints informally in a spirit of collegiality where possible.

This policy and procedure is available where such efforts do not succeed, or where, for any other reason, the certificated employee desires to pursue this procedure. This complaint and grievance procedure is applicable to any claim by any professional employee certificated by the Professional Standards Commission who is affected in his or her employment relationship by an alleged violation, misinterpretation, or misapplication of statutes, policies rules, regulations, or written agreements of this school district or with which the district is required to comply.

Exclusions. This procedure shall not apply to:

1. Performance ratings contained in personnel evaluation and professional development plans pursuant to Code Section 20-2-210;
2. Job performance;
3. Termination, non-renewal, demotion, suspension, or reprimand of any employee, as set forth in Code Section 20-2-940;
4. The revocation, suspension, or denial of certificates of any employee, as set forth in Code Section 20-2-984.5.

See Board Policy: [GAE](#)

### **Staff Meetings**

Regular staff meetings are a necessary part of the district operations. Each school shall have a schedule for staff meetings on a regular basis. The principal shall call special staff meetings for professional learning, accreditation, training for test administration and/or workshops as deemed necessary. All certified staff members are required as part of their teaching/employment responsibilities to attend any or all such meetings as designated by the principal.

### **Use of Equipment and Resources**

Employees entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy and responsibility. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, misusing school-related funds or property; failing to account for funds collected from students or parents; and submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses.

### **Computers**

Douglas County School System computer hardware, software and data should be used for assigned responsibilities only, and should be protected from damage, destruction, viruses, theft and unauthorized access and use. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using Douglas County School System electronic resources.

See Board Policy: [IFBG](#)

### **Internet**

Electronic resources should be used to support assigned responsibilities. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using electronic systems, and should minimize use of the Internet for personal reasons during working hours.

See Board Policy: [IFBG](#)

### **Telephone**

Personal use of telephones should be kept to a minimum during working hours. Personal long-distance calls should not be charged to Douglas County School System telephones or accounts.

### **Violence in the Workplace**

The Douglas County School System strongly believes that all employees should be treated with dignity and respect. Acts of violence will not be tolerated. Any instances of violence must be reported to the employee's supervisor and/or Human Resources. All complaints will be fully investigated. The Douglas County School System will promptly respond to any incident or suggestion of violence.

### **Work Day/Work Week**

Depending on the position, full time classified employees are expected to work their scheduled number of hours per day not to exceed 40 hours per week. Employees should check with their supervisor for their particular schedule.

The minimum work day for teachers and other certified instructional staff is eight hours, and the minimum work week is 40 hours. Teachers work a minimum of seven and one-half hours each day, and spend another 30 minutes a day (or two and one-half hours a week in parent conferences, planning conferences, teacher preparation, related school activities, extracurricular activities and staff meetings).

## **Guidelines: Employment**

### **Annual Performance Evaluation**

All employees are evaluated by their immediate supervisor, using approved evaluation plans and procedures. All employees should receive a copy of their annual evaluation.

All certified employees are evaluated before April 1. Classified employees are evaluated before June 30.

### **Assignment**

Employees are assigned to positions based on the needs of the Douglas County School System as well as the employee's training, certification and other factors. Staff assignments shall be made by the Board upon the recommendations of the Superintendent. The basic consideration in the assignment of professional personnel is the well-being of the program of instruction.

See Board Policy: [GBE](#)

### **At-Will Employment**

Georgia recognizes At-Will Employment; that is, an employee is hired at-will and employment can be terminated at the will of either party, for any reason or no reason at all. Employees who are issued Board-approved contracts do not have At-Will Employment.

### **Background Check**

All personnel, certificated as well as non-certificated, employed by the Board shall be fingerprinted and have a criminal record check. All certificated personnel employed in this school district, shall have a criminal record check made as required by law upon any certificate renewal application to the Professional Standards Commission. In addition to the criminal record check, fingerprinting is also required for all certificated personnel if they were not previously fingerprinted by the school system. Criminal record checks of non-certificated personnel continued in

employment in the school district shall occur each fifth (5<sup>th</sup>) year such person is re-employed. In addition to the criminal record check, fingerprinting is also required for all non-certificated employees, if they were not previously fingerprinted by the school system. The cost of the criminal record checks for all certificated and non-certificated personnel shall be borne by the employee. See Board Policy: [GAK](#)

### **Certification Qualifications and Duties**

Certified employees must be eligible for certification before being employed and must maintain certification during employment. All coursework must be approved by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC - <http://www.gapsc.com/home.asp>).

### **Employee Discipline**

Discipline is necessary and will be implemented when there is unsatisfactory and/or unacceptable employee performance of any type. Depending on the nature or severity of the offense, Douglas County School System may provide employees with an opportunity to bring their performance up to standard through the use of the following: (1) immediate feedback regarding unsatisfactory performance, (2) factual documentation of performance, (3) employee input and commitment to improving performance, and (4) final resolution of the performance issue(s).

The Douglas County School System utilizes progressive discipline in which disciplinary actions normally follow a gradually escalating path. However, depending on the seriousness of the offense, more than one Progressive Discipline Action may occur simultaneously or it may be determined that progressive discipline is not appropriate and any disciplinary action may be imposed. The action taken should be consistent with precedent in similar situations, appropriate to the offense, and documented. An employee who holds a certificate with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission may be reported at any time for a violation of the Code of Ethics for Educators

### **Hiring**

Individuals are employed by the Douglas County Board of Education on the recommendation of the Superintendent. Human Resources will make the offer of employment on behalf of the Superintendent after the individual has successfully completed the required employment and screening process, although some post-employment screening or testing may be necessary.

### **Interviewing**

Human Resources and/or the Supervisor will interview the most qualified applicants for positions. Hiring decisions are made by the Board of Education; Human Resources will extend the offer of employment.

### **Job Descriptions**

Each position has a valid job description maintained by Human Resources. Job descriptions should be updated and maintained on a regular basis. Employees should see their supervisor regarding their job descriptions.

### **Job Posting**

Announcements of job vacancies will be posted electronically throughout the Douglas County School System. Job Vacancies for positions requiring Georgia Professional Standards Commission (PSC) certification will be posted on the TeachGeorgia website Classified positions will be posted on the DCSS website through Applitrack.

### **Nepotism**

Employees cannot supervise or evaluate members of their immediate family.

See Board Policy: [GBE](#)

### **Personnel Records**

Information contained in an employee's personnel file is not made public unless required by law or requested by the employee in writing. **It is the employee's responsibility to notify the District of any changes of personal information.** Employees must notify their Supervisor and Human Resources when their name and/or home address and/or contact numbers change. Forms are available from Human Resources.

### **Pre-Employment Physical Examinations**

Prior to employment, employees may be asked to take physical examinations that demonstrate their competence and ability to perform job-related functions. The Douglas County School System will pay for the required examinations, but is not responsible for the cost of treatment. Employees in some job classifications (for example, those who operate vehicles that transport students) may be required by law to pass an annual physical or to acquire special permits.

### **Professional Learning**

Employees have the opportunity to participate in professional learning activities that will enhance their professional capabilities. The Professional Learning department submits an annual comprehensive plan. The comprehensive plan for professional learning shall be included as part of the Douglas County School System improvement plan. See Board Policy: [GAD](#)

### **Reassignment**

Employees may be reassigned at any time by the Douglas County School System. Some of the reasons for reassignments are reorganizations, changes in attendance zones, changes in approved programs, changes in student enrollment, and the opening or closing of schools. This list of reasons is not all inclusive.

See Board Policy: [GBE](#)

### **Recruitment**

The Douglas County School System active recruitment process is designed to attract and retain competent and qualified personnel to work in the District. Certified job vacancies are posted on the TeachGeorgia website and placed on the DCSS website. Classified vacancies are posted on the DCSS website and sent to all schools and departments for posting.

### **Reduction in Force (RIF)**

The most important functions of the Board of Education are to employ personnel and manage resources within the limitations defined by the funding sources of the school system. Consequently, it shall be the prerogative of the Douglas County Board of Education (hereinafter the "Board") to abolish job positions, to reduce the length of the work year and salary of certificated personnel (hereinafter "to downgrade") and/or to reduce the number of employees when seeking to cope effectively with program changes, financial exigency or loss of funding.

The Board shall consider a reduction in the professional work force to include the abolition of job positions, the downgrading of an employee's position, and/or the reduction of the number of employees, as a response to the following:

1. A decrease in student enrollment in the School District which would necessitate a decrease in personnel or a discontinuation of programs;

2. A change in state or local curriculum, personnel, or financial practices which would necessitate a change in or elimination of program or services provided by the School District;
3. A loss of funds due to a reduction in state funds, reduction in local funds or other funds that make necessary a reduction in spending;
4. A lack of funding for programs, personnel, or services provided by the School District;
5. Any reasonable reorganization plan to achieve a more efficient school district.

See Board policy [GBKA-R\(1\)](#)

### **Reference Checks**

Personal and professional references are checked for each prospective employee.

### **Resignations**

Certified employees who want to terminate their contracts for the new contract year must submit written notification to their immediate supervisor and to Human Resources before May 1<sup>st</sup> of the current school year. Certified employees who want to resign during the contract period because of emergency situations should submit a statement of resignation at the earliest possible date but must realize that the contract cannot be terminated by the employee without the written consent of the Douglas County Board of Education. Classified employees are asked to submit a letter of resignation at least two weeks prior to leaving the Douglas County School.

### **Retirement Membership**

Teachers, Supervisors, Paraprofessionals, Administrators, Clerical Staff, School Nurses and some specified managerial positions who are employed more than half-time are eligible and required to participate in the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia (TRS). Bus Drivers, Bus Monitors, Food Service Assistants, Custodians, and Maintenance Workers who work at least 60 percent of their normal work week, must establish membership in the Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS). Retirement contributions are payroll-deducted.

### **Substitute Teachers**

Principals or their designees are responsible for securing a Substitute Teacher from the list of Substitute Teachers approved by Human Resources. A substitute can be used for up to 10 days in the same classroom. A vacancy that lasts between 11 days and 60 days may be filled with an approved long-term substitute teacher. Substitute Teachers must attend in-service training and meet other requirements. Long-term substitute teachers in assignments longer than 20 consecutive days must meet requirements for Highly Qualified status.

### **Transfers**

Employees may apply for a voluntary transfer to another school or department if they meet transfer requirements. To be eligible for a transfer, a certified teacher must have two (2) years teaching experience in the same school and must have received a satisfactory annual evaluation. Teachers who have been placed on a Professional Development Plan (PDP) during the school year are not eligible to apply for a voluntary transfer. Teachers who were involuntarily transferred to their current school location are exempt from the requirement to remain at their current school for two years.

Certified and classified employees must submit applications for transfer between schools during the designated transfer period as communicated through the Human Resources Department and become effective with the new contract year.

## **Guidelines: Compensation**

### **Contracts**

Certified employees receive written employment contracts that are signed by the employee and the Superintendent. Contracts are terminated if an employee cannot be properly certified. The Douglas County Board of Education offers new contracts for the coming year to all Certified employees on the payroll at the beginning of the current year, except those who have resigned, been terminated or notified in writing that their contract will not be renewed.

### **Deductions**

Payroll deductions include, but are not limited to, federal and state taxes required by law; retirement systems contributions; Social Security; and medical, dental and other deductions authorized by the employee.

### **Direct Deposit**

All employees are encouraged to participate in Direct Deposit for payroll checks.

### **Extended Day/Year**

Supplemental pay may be provided to employees who work an extended school day or school year to meet program responsibilities or student needs.

### **Overtime**

Overtime is defined as those hours worked by a public employee who qualifies for time-and-one-half overtime pay or time-and-one-half compensatory time as required by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Overtime for Douglas County School System non-exempt employees refers to those hours or major fractions of hours beyond 40 hours within a work week. The work week begins at 12:01a.m. on Monday and ends at 12 midnight on Sunday.

Employees classified under The Fair Labor Standards Act as non-exempt are compensated at a rate of one and one-half times their hourly rate after 40 hours within a work week and/or one-and-one half hours of compensatory time off for each hour over 40 hours within a workweek. Overtime for non-exempt employees must be approved in advance by their supervisor (except in emergency situations). Unauthorized (unapproved) overtime worked may subject the employee to disciplinary action. Non-exempt employees cannot waive their rights to overtime pay or volunteer to perform normal job functions outside normal work hours.

Employees classified under the Fair Labor Standards Act as exempt are paid a fixed rate and are not eligible for overtime pay. See Board Policy: [GCRD](#)

### **Pay Schedule**

Certified employees are paid monthly. Classified employees are paid monthly or bi-weekly, based on their job assignment. Specific salary schedules may be view on the DCSS website.

### **Salary**

Salaries for Certified employees are determined by the Georgia teaching certificate they hold and the years of experience approved by the Douglas County Board of Education and following the Department of Education Experience for Salary Placement rule. Classified employees are paid based on years of direct experience related to their current classification and education level.

### **Step Increases**

Certified employees who receive an unsatisfactory annual evaluation will not receive salary credit for the year the unsatisfactory was received. The employee should receive verbal and written documentation during the year indicating that performance has not met expectations.

### **Teaching Experience**

Certified employees new to District effective will be placed at the appropriate salary level and step based on verified experience and a valid in-field certificate. Teaching experience outside Douglas County is credited at one year for each year.

### **Travel Reimbursement**

Personal expenses associated with Douglas County School System -approved travel will be reimbursed at the approved District travel rates. Receipts of expenses must accompany reimbursement requests.

## **Rules and Guidelines: Benefits**

Benefits are designed to meet the important needs of employees and their families. Available benefits include: medical, dental, vision, cancer, basic and optional life, dependent life insurance, short and long-term disability, flexible spending, cancer insurance, credit union, and retirement plans. Douglas County School System shares in the cost of some benefits.

### **Benefit Eligibility**

Health, dental, vision, cancer, life, optional life, dependent life, and short and long-term disability insurance coverage becomes effective on the first day of the month after the employee has completed one full State of GA calendar month of employment, assuming the proper premiums have been deducted. Employees can enroll in benefits when they are initially hired or during the annual open enrollment period. During this period, employees have the opportunity to change their elections. Some plans require late entries to complete a Personal Health Application to determine if the insurance will be awarded. Open enrollment occurs in the fall of each year, and coverage requested at that time takes effect on January 1. Mid-year changes are allowed with specific family status events. Visit [www.dcss.org](http://www.dcss.org) for additional information.

### **Benefit Deductions**

Employees will have deductions taken from their payroll to pay premiums, and the core insurance premiums can be paid for with pre-tax dollars. Employees on leave without pay are required to pay all insurance premiums directly to the Benefits Specialist in the Human Resources Department. The employee is responsible for requesting information about the direct payment of insurance premiums from the Benefits Specialist in the Human Resources Department.

### **Douglas County School System Benefits**

Health Insurance	Medical Flexible Spending Account
Dental Insurance	Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account
Vision Insurance	403b and 457b Saving Plans
Cancer Insurance	Credit Union
Basic and Optional Life Insurance	Sick Leave Bank

Dependent Life Insurance  
Short-Term Disability Insurance

Retirement Plans  
Critical Care Insurance

Long-Term Disability Insurance

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

All employees who are employed one-half time or more in covered positions of the State's public school systems are required to be members of the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia as a condition of employment. Covered positions include Teachers, Supervisors, Paraprofessionals, Administrators, Nurses, and Clerical Staff. Refer to the TRS guidelines.

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

Regular, non-temporary employees of public school who are not eligible for membership in the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRS) must establish membership in the Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS) as a condition of employment. Covered positions include: Maintenance and Custodial employees, Bus drivers, Bus Monitors and Food Service Assistants. Refer to the PSERS guidelines.

### **DCSS Matching Retirement Program for PSERS Employees**

Employees who are not eligible for TRS retirement may elect to participate in the voluntary 403b matching plan. The Douglas County School System matches up to 1% of the employee contribution.

### **Tax Deferred Savings Plans**

Douglas County School System offers 403b and 457b saving plans to all employees. A list of vendors offering these products can be found in the benefits section of our website.

### **Benefits Disclaimer**

*There are additional requirements and conditions for benefit plans not discussed in this handbook. In the event of a conflict between the handbook and a requirement and condition, the Plan Description will prevail. Nothing in this section of the handbook creates a contract or an entitlement to any particular benefits. Benefits are subject to change at any time.*

### **Guidelines: Time Off and Leave of Absence**

#### **Sick Leave Bank**

The Board of Education provides a Sick Leave Bank for all employees who wish to join. The Sick Leave Bank shall be maintained on a continuing basis provided there is a minimum participation of one hundred (100) employees. Employees who elect to participate shall contribute one (1) 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 and in accordance with Board Policy and Regulations. An employee of the local board of education may donate up to ten sick leave days to his or her spouse if such spouse is also an employee.

See Board Policy: [GBRIB](#) and [GARH](#)

### **Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

Employees of the Douglas County School System who have been employed by the Board for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1250 hours during the 12 month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave are eligible to take unpaid leave under the FMLA. 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 service member) is on covered active duty.
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.

Qualifying exigencies are defined as short-notice deployment (seven or less 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 Douglas County School System 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 24-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.

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 scheduled leave.

If the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, an employee requesting leave must provide at least 30 days advance notice to their immediate supervisor and Human Resources.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the District to reasonable 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 provided FMLA leave, the employee must specifically reference either the previous qualifying reason for leave or the need for FMLA leave.

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 healthcare provider of the eligible employee or family member on a form to be provided by the District.

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.

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.

See Board Policy: [GBRIG](#)

### **Inclement Weather**

When Douglas County System and/or schools are closed due to inclement weather, employees should not report to work, unless specifically required to do so. Unsafe driving or facility conditions make attempts to report to work inappropriate and unadvisable. With the exception of twelve-month employees and certain non-exempt employees specifically contacted by their supervisor and directed to report to perform emergency repairs or other duties, all other District employees should not report to work, unless directed to do so through either contact by their supervisor or by public announcement.

See Board Policy: [AFC](#)

### **Jury and Witness Duty**

Employees who are called to jury duty serve with no loss of pay. Employees who are subpoenaed as witnesses in cases are allowed the absence with no loss of pay. Absences due to jury duty are not charged against the employee's accumulated leave.

See Board Policy: [GARH](#)

### **Adoption/ Foster Child Placement**

An employee may be granted an adoption leave of absence in accordance with the guidelines established in Leaves and Absences Policy and the Family Medical Leave Policy.

See Board Policy: [GARH](#) and [GBRIG](#)

### **Military**

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

Request for such leave shall be made in writing (Leave Form) to the employee's immediate supervisor or designee. A copy of the military orders should be attached to the request for leave.

See Board Policy: [GARH](#)

### **Personal Leave**

Personal leave will be limited to three (3) days per school year and will be deducted from the employee's accumulated sick leave. Personal leave will be granted dependent on assurance that the employee's responsibilities will be covered. Request for such leave shall be made in writing (Leave Form) to the employee's immediate supervisor or designee.

Personal leave cannot be taken at the beginning of the school year, on teacher work days, parent conference days, in-service days, on the day before or after a holiday except in extreme emergencies and with special approval of the Superintendent or designee. No carry-over of personal days will be allowed from one year to the next. Unused personal leave will be carried over as accumulated sick leave.

See Board Policy: [GARH](#)

### **Bereavement**

In the event of a death in the immediate family of a benefits-eligible employee, a leave-of-absence of no more than three sick leave days will be granted for the death of an immediate family member in state and up to five days for the death of an immediate family member out of state. Any absence due to the death of a person other than on the list below must be taken from personal leave.

For the purpose of this policy provision, immediate family members are defined as: husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, granddaughter, grandson, grandfather, grandmother, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew, and any relatives living in the immediate household of the employee.

See Board Policy: [GARH](#)

### **Personal or Family Illness**

All benefits-eligible personnel employed by the School System shall be eligible for sick leave earned at the rate of one and one-fourth days for each school month worked, provided salary is earned for at least half of the work days in the month. Sick leave is not earned while the employee is on leave without pay or when an employee is on leave using days awarded by the Sick Leave Bank. Any unused sick leave may be carried forward from one fiscal year to the next. A credit of no more than the maximum amount of sick leave to be earned during the school year is credited in advance to each employee paid on a monthly basis at the beginning of their contract year. In the event of separation of service, deductions in amounts sufficient to cover the sick leave not earned by said employee shall be made from said employee's regular salary which may be due. If there are insufficient funds in the employee's remaining pay, the employee will be responsible for reimbursing the Board of Education.

Eligibility for sick leave shall be based on the following:

1. Personal illness;
2. Incapacity because of bodily injury;
3. Exposure to contagious disease by which the health of the pupils would be endangered by attendance on duty;
4. Illness in immediate family which necessitates continuing supervision and care of employee. Immediate family shall include husband, wife, father, mother, brother, sister, son, daughter, or a person standing in loco parentis. Any days missed because of illness of any person other than on the list above must be taken from personal leave;
5. Sick leave may be utilized for absence due to physical disability related to pregnancy or childbirth. However, if the local School Board disagrees with any doctor's statement of disability or ability, it may appoint a physician of the same medical specialty as the employee's physician for the purpose of receiving independent medical judgment. If not eligible for Family Medical Leave, only one employee in a family shall be granted a pregnancy or childbirth leave of absence.
6. Bereavement (Death)
7. Adoption/Foster Child Placement
8. Personal Leave

A doctor's certificate may be required by the Superintendent or designee at any time deemed necessary, but shall be required for any illness longer than three (3) consecutive days

See Board Policy: [GARH](#)

### **Vacation Leave**

Annual leave is designated for all 12-month employees, excluding teachers, using the following scale and regulations for assignment and use:

15 Days Vacation for 1 - 10 years experience (1 1/4 days per month)

18 Days Vacation for 11 - 15 years experience (1 1/2 days per month)

20 Days Vacation for 16 or more years experience (1 2/3 days per month)

An employee must earn vacation prior to taking any vacation days and must have pre-approval of his/her supervisor or designee. Vacation days are earned at the rate indicated above for each month worked, provided salary is

earned for at least half of the work days in the month. Vacation days are not earned while the employee is on leave without pay or when an employee is on leave using days awarded by the Sick Leave Bank or while on unpaid Family Medical Leave.

A maximum of 30 days may be carried forward from one fiscal year to the next. Employees may receive compensation for accumulated annual leave up to 30 days upon retirement or resignation.

See Board Policy: [GARK](#)

### **Voting**

There is no federal law which requires employers to give employees paid time off to vote. Under Georgia law, if the polls are not open at least two hours before or after the normal work period/shift, employees are entitled to take up to two hours off to vote in any local, state, or federal election or primary. The law does not require the employers to pay the employees for this time (OCGA 21-2-404). Since Georgia polls are usually open from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, employees should consult their supervisor to arrange time for voting before or after normal work hours.

## **APPENDIX 1: Key Terms and Definitions**

**Annual:** Employment year or schedule.

**Benefits Eligible Employee:** Any certified employee who works 50% or more of the full time hours per week is eligible for benefits. Any classified employee who works 60% or more of the full time hours per week is eligible for benefits.

**Break in Service:** An interruption in continuous service in a full-time position. Examples of a break in service include resignation, retirement, failure to return from approved long-term leave of absence and termination. A break in service also interrupts an employee's school system seniority. School system seniority begins to accrue again on the date the employee begins the current continuous service period in a full-time position.

**Certified:** Employees who must hold a teaching, educational leadership or service certificate, issued by the Professional Standards Commission. Certified employees include Principals, Associate Principals, Assistant Principals, Assistant Administrators, Teachers, Guidance Counselors, Media Specialists, Curriculum Supervisors and Teachers-on-Special-Assignment.

**Classified:** Employees who are not required to hold a teaching, educational leadership or service state certificate. Classified employees include Central Office Administrators, Technical and Professional employees, Clerical employees, Paraprofessionals, Food Service Workers, Public Health Nurses, Custodial and Maintenance Workers and Transportation Employees.

**Contract:** The Douglas County Board of Education issues a contract for all Certified employees and other Board-approved personnel. Contracts should be in writing and signed by the employee and the Superintendent. New Certified employees are issued a temporary contract, pending results from the criminal background check. All employees are evaluated at least annually. Continued employment depends on satisfactory work performance, maintaining qualifications and established need for the position.

**Covered Positions:** Teachers, administrators, supervisors, clerks, teacher aides, secretaries, paraprofessionals, and public school nurses are considered covered positions by the Teachers Retirement System of Georgia (TRSGA).

**Critical Days:** Employees are not able to take personal/professional leave on certain days during the school year.

**Exempt Employee:** Employees classified under The Fair Labor Standards Act as exempt are paid a fixed salary regardless of the time required to complete duties. Exempt employees are not eligible for overtime pay.

**Hourly Employee:** An employee who is paid an hourly rate for services rendered.

**Itinerant Teacher:** Teachers who have responsibilities at more than one school.

**Limited Contract:** Contract offered to a Certified Teacher whose first day of work is after the first day of pre-planning. Teachers on a Limited Contract are not afforded due process under the Fair Dismissal Act.

**New Hire:** A new, first-time employee in a full-time position.

**Non-Exempt Employee:** Employees classified under The Fair Labor Standards Act as non-exempt are compensated overtime pay or compensatory time off for all hours worked that exceed 40 hours within a work week. All non-exempt employees who work more than 40 hours a week will be compensated for overtime work at one and one-half times their regular hourly rate.

Work that extends outside an employee's regular schedule must be approved in advance by his/her supervisor (except in emergency situations); non-exempt employees cannot waive their rights to overtime pay or volunteer to perform normal job functions outside normal work hours.

**Non-Renewal:** When an employee, holding a position that is covered by a contract, is not offered a contract for the next school year period.

**Paraprofessionals:** Paraprofessionals work with individuals or groups of students under the direction of classroom Teachers or other certified employees. Paraprofessionals must meet initial and ongoing requirements for in-service training for continued employment.

**Re-Hire:** A former employee who was separated from Douglas County School System and has reentered the Douglas County School System workforce.

**Regular Contract:** Contract offered to a Certified Teacher whose first day of work is on or before the first day of school for students.

**Seniority (System):** Term used to define the length of full-time employment; determines the priority of employees during personnel activities such as transfers, reassignments, Reduction in Force (RIF). In practice, the last employee hired has the least seniority.

**Temporary Employee:** Temporary employees may work up to 40 hours per week on a fixed or non-fixed schedule for a finite period of time (typically 90 days or less). Temporary employees are generally not eligible for benefits.

**Transfer:** Any employee who voluntarily moves from one work site to another in the same or a comparable position. The employee must request the movement and be accepted by the Principal, Supervisor or Administrator.