HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT

High Achievement for All

2026-2027
Middle School Handbook

Dr. Richard Rogers
Superintendent

Houston County School District
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HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS
MISSION STATEMENT



Our mission is to produce high achievement

for all through continuous growth.

Our Vision is to be the standard for world-class education.

Dr. Richard Rogers
Superintendent of Schools

Table of Contents
(HCSD Portion)

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT CALENDAR 2026-2027 5
ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE 6
ATTENDANCE 6
Compulsory Attendance *6*
Excused and Unexcused Absences *6*
Military Family Deployment – Absences for Special Consideration *7*
Tardiness/Early Dismissal *8*
ATTENDANCE ZONES 8
BALLOONS/GIFTS AT SCHOOL 8
BEGINNING AND ENDING SCHOOL TIMES 8
BICYCLES 9
BUS CONDUCT 9
Minor Offenses *9*
Major Offenses *9*
Consequences for Infractions of Bus Conduct *10*
CENTRAL REGISTRATION 10
Change of Address *10*
COMMUNICATION SYSTEM/HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT APP 10
CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT 11
DISCIPLINE 11
Commission of a Crime *11*
Other Suspension/Expulsion Information *11*
Definitions of Disciplinary Actions *11*
Due Process for Students *12*
Suspension *12*
Expulsion or Long-Term Suspension *12*
In-School Suspension (ISS): General Regulations *12*
Student Rules for In-School Suspension *12*
Encouraging Parents To Inform Their Children Of The Circumstances Of Certain Conduct *13*
DRESS CODE 13
Dress Code Enforcement *13*
Dress Code Specifics *13*
DRILLS: FIRE/TORNADO/EMERGENCY/BUS EVACUATION DRILLS 14
DRUG FREE SCHOOLS 15
EARLY DISMISSAL 15
ELECTRONIC DEVICES 15
ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL) 15
Grade Placement for English Language Learners (ELLs) *15*
ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS 15
EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES 16
Student Extracurricular Activities Notification *16*
Conduct *16*
Student Pick-Up *17*
Eligibility *17*
Home Study Students *17*
Suspension from Participation *18*
FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA) 18
FIELD TRIPS 19
FITNESS ASSESSMENT 19
GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS 19
GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAM 20
Definitions *20*
Referral *21*
Eligibility *21*
Multiple-Criteria Assessment Process *21*
Continued Participation *21*
Reciprocity *22*
Curriculum *22*
GRADES 22

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING 22
HEALTH SERVICES 23
When to Keep a Student Home *23*
Medication Administration *24*
Head Lice *24*
Hospital-Homebound Services *24*
Water Safety Education *25*
Sex Education (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-143 and GA DOE Rule 160-4-2-.12) *25*
Suicide Awareness and Youth Violence Prevention Training *25*
HOUSTON COUNTY WIN ACADEMY 25
Houston County WIN Academy Mandatory Uniform Dress Code *25*
Houston County WIN Academy Behavior and Attendance Requirements *25*
HONOR ROLL 25
INSURANCE 26
INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES 26
Purpose *27*
Authorized User *27*
Terms and Conditions *27*
Encounter of Controversial Material *27*
Vandalism and Harassment *28*
Network Guidelines *28*
E-Mail Guidelines *28*
School Responsibilities *28*
Student Responsibilities *28*
Internet *29*
Use of Electronic Devices *29*
Penalties for Improper Internet Use *29*
LEAVING CAMPUS 29
LOCKERS 29
LUNCH/BREAKFAST PROGRAM 30
MEDIA CENTER 30
Challenged Materials *30*
PARENT PERMISSION TO DROP OUT 30
PERFECT ATTENDANCE 31
PROMOTION AND RETENTION 31
Grade 8 ..... *31*
Middle School Promotion and Retention Standards *31*
RELEASE OF STUDENTS 31
SECTION 504 - NOTICE OF RIGHTS OF STUDENTS AND PARENTS 32
SECTION 504 PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS 32
SECTION 504 PARENT/STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES 34
SELLING AT SCHOOL 34
SEXUAL HARASSMENT 35
SPECIAL EDUCATION 35
STUDENT OR PARENT GRIEVANCE 36
TEST SCHEDULE 36
TEXTBOOKS/LEARNING DEVICES 37
TITLE I/TITLE II PARENT/STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES 37
TITLE VI – ANTI-HARASSMENT 38
TITLE IX - NON-DISCRIMINATION 38
TITLE IX SEXUAL HARASSMENT 38
TOP STATE FOR TALENT ACT 39
GA Futures *39*
UNIVERSAL BEHAVIOR SCREENING 39
VOLUNTEERS AT SCHOOL 39
VISITORS AT SCHOOL 40
WEATHER 40
WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL 40
STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT 41
STUDENT EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES NOTIFICATION 47
RIGHT TO KNOW PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS 51

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT CALENDAR 2026-2027

August 4	Tuesday	First Day of School
September 7	Monday	**HOLIDAY** - Labor Day
September 8	Tuesday	Distance Learning Day/Site Collaboration
October 9	Friday	Student Holiday/Site Collaboration
October 12 - 16	Monday - Friday	**FALL BREAK**
November 11	Wednesday	**HOLIDAY** – Veterans Day
November 23 - 27	Monday - Friday	**HOLIDAY** – Thanksgiving Holiday
December 18	Friday	Last day before Holidays – ½ day for students
December 21 - January 1		**HOLIDAY** – Winter Break & New Year's Holiday
January 4	Monday	Student Holiday/Site Collaboration
January 5	Tuesday	First Day of Second Semester
January 18	Monday	**HOLIDAY** – Martin Luther King, Jr
February 15	Monday	**HOLIDAY** – Presidents' Day
February 16	Tuesday	Distance Learning Day/Site Collaboration
March 26	Friday	Student Holiday/Site Collaboration
March 29 - April 2	Monday - Friday	**SPRING BREAK**
May 26	Wednesday	Last Day of School – ½ day for students

REPORT CARD DATES 2026-2027

Semesters	End Date	Date Reports Issued
Progress Report, Day 30	September 15	September 23
Progress Report, Day 60	November 4	November 12
End 1st Semester, Day 86	December 18	January 6
Progress Report, Day 120	February 23	March 3
Progress Report, Day 150	April 14	April 22
End 2nd Semester, Day 180	May 26	May 26

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL PROGRAM

Middle School students are undergoing many changes -- physical changes, social changes, emotional changes, and mental changes. The middle school recognizes these changes and provides a curriculum and a climate for students to move more easily from elementary school to the high school. The subjects students learn are divided into two categories -- academic courses and connections courses.

The basic academic subjects are language arts, mathematics, social studies, and science. These subjects are taught in an academic block of time by a team of teachers. Students are assigned to a team for the school year. The teachers know the students and their capabilities and provide learning activities to meet the needs of the students on the team.

Students also take two connection classes each semester. The exploratory connection classes give students an introduction to courses they may wish to take in high school, help students begin looking at careers, or assist students in developing life and learning skills. Students will explore career technical education, agricultural education, fine arts, and physical education.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

Students should not arrive on campus more than 30 minutes before the first bell and should leave campus no later than 30 minutes after the last bell unless participating in a school-supervised activity approved by the principal or designee of the principal.

ATTENDANCE

Compulsory Attendance

Houston County School authorities, in cooperation with other county agencies, shall enforce the Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law, O.C.G.A. §20-2-690.1, Mandatory Attendance, which requires that every parent, guardian, or other person residing in the state having control of any school age child or children between the ages of 6 and 16 enroll and send such child or children to school. Further, all children enrolled for 20 school days or more in the public schools of Houston County prior to their SIXTH birthday shall become subject to all provisions of the law. All students missing more than 5 unexcused days in Georgia are declared as truant by law.

All Houston County students are affected by and fall under the provisions of our attendance protocol, which is stated as follows;

Level I
- Three (3) unexcused absences
- School staff will contact parents and document the contact. Contacts may consist of e-mail, phone call, or teacher notification form.

Level II
- Five (5) unexcused absences
- School staff will notify parents of the truancy. Parents/guardians may request a conference prior to signing an attendance contract.

Level III
- Eight (8) unexcused absences
- School staff notifies Social Services Department; Social Services provides data to the court for judicial proceedings to begin.

Any parent, guardian, or other person residing in Georgia having control or charge of a child or children and violates GA Code Section O.C.G.A. §20-2-690.1 shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be subject to a fine of not less than $25 and not greater than $100, imprisonment not to exceed 30 days, community service, or any combinations of such penalties, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction.

Excused and Unexcused Absences

Absence from school is classified as either excused or unexcused. Reasons established by the Georgia Board of Education as excused absences are set forth in this policy. Students may be temporarily excused from school and allowed to make up work when:

1. Personally ill and when attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others. Excessive/extended absences due to illness must be justified by a physician's statement.
2. A serious illness or death occurs in their immediate family. (Parent, sibling, or grandparent of child).
3. Mandated by order of governmental agencies, including preinduction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, or by a court order.
4. Celebrating religious holidays observed by their faith.

NOTE: An excused absence does not mean the student is given credit for being at school. It means that the student may make up work missed during the excused absence.

Students should present a written excuse within five (5) days following an absence whether excused or unexcused. Failure to do so will result in the absence(s) remaining unexcused. Excessive or extended absences due to illness must be justified by a physician's statement.

The following items should be specified and included on each written excuse:

1. The date the excuse is written.
2. The date of the absence.
3. Reason for the absence.
4. Signature of parent or guardian.

Upon returning to school, students should make up work missed within five (5) school days.

It is expected that each student will attend school regularly and be on time each day to class. Students who are absent from school may not participate in any extracurricular activity the day or night of the absence.

At the discretion of the principal, a statement from a physician may be required to validate extended or excessive absences.

Students shall be counted present when they are serving as pages of the Georgia General Assembly.

For reporting daily attendance, a student must attend for at least one-half of the instructional day before the student can be counted as present. At the middle school level, attendance shall be counted on a class-by-class daily basis for granting credit in each class.

1. When a student is denied bus transportation due to misconduct, his absence from school is not excused. The parent or guardian shall be expected to provide transportation during the time the pupil is excluded from the bus.
2. No student shall be allowed to be absent from school during the regular session to take private music, drawing, dancing, or other lessons.
3. A student shall not be absent from school or from any class or other required school function during school hours, other than for illness or other providential cause, without written permission of the teacher, principal, or other duly authorized school official, nor shall any student encourage, urge, or counsel other students to violate this rule.
4. According to law, students under 16 years of age must be admitted at any time, but with the understanding that credit is not automatic.

Military Family Deployment – Absences for Special Consideration

The Houston County School District is supportive of our military families, especially during the difficult time of deployment. Per OCGA 20-2-692.1, a student whose parent or legal guardian is serving in the military in the U.S. Armed Forces or National Guard on extended active duty is allowed up to a maximum of: 5 days excused absences per school year to visit with a parent/guardian prior to an overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, or during parent's/legal guardian's R&R leave or return from deployment; 5 days excused absences over two school years for military affairs sponsored event, to include visiting a military parent/legal guardian in a medical facility; or attending a ceremony for the military member, such as promotion, graduation or retirement.
The form for special consideration for absences for military deployment can be obtained from the school's office or on the school system website under the Parents tab and select the Military Family Support page. Please submit this request with documentation 10 days prior to an absence to the school principal. Either of the following may be provided: a copy of the Contingency, Exercise or Deployment Orders (CED) or a memo signed by the Robins Air Force Base School Liaison Officer (SLO).

Students will be responsible for their homework and making up any missed tests or class reports upon return to school. Parents are asked to work with the classroom teacher and their children to ensure that students stay up-to-date on class material. For general information regarding student absences, see Board Policy JBD, Absences and Excuses.

Tardiness/Early Dismissal

Instruction begins promptly at 7:30 a.m., therefore a student is considered tardy after that time. A student who is tardy must report to the office to check in. A parent is expected to accompany the student and to sign him/her in. If a school bus arrives after 7:30 a.m., students will not be considered tardy; and, no tardy permit is necessary.

Many people do not realize that missed instructional minutes add up quickly. For example, if your child arrives a mere 10 minutes late each day, they miss 50 minutes of instructional time every week. During a 36 week school year, they could miss nearly 30 HOURS OF INSTRUCTION! If they're 20 minutes late, it would be 60 hours, and so on. These instructional minutes are especially important to the achievement of our students and the success of our schools. An excessive number of lost instructional minutes could prevent your child from being promoted to the next grade level. For the benefit of ALL students, we may implement the following procedures with relation to unexcused tardies and unexcused early dismissals:

- 8 Unexcused Tardies/Early Dismissals – Parent Contact
- 10 Unexcused Tardies/Early Dismissals – Excessive Tardy/Early Dismissal Notification
- 15 Unexcused Tardies/Early Dismissals – Attendance Contract Meeting Scheduled with parents and administration
- 25 Unexcused Tardies/Early Dismissals – Referral to the HCSD Social Service Department

ATTENDANCE ZONES

The Houston County School District has approved student attendance zones. If the natural parent lives in Houston County, the student must attend the school in the zone where the student resides. A complete list of enrollment restrictions and enrollment determinations is included in policies JBC and JBCCA.

If the school personnel determine that a parent or guardian has changed addresses without informing the school or used false information to enroll a child in a school other than the school zone in which the parent/guardian resides, the child shall be withdrawn not later than the last grading period. School administrators may request proof of residence at any time to verify that a parent resides in the school zone. If it is determined that a student must enroll in another Houston County school, the parent will be directed to report to Central Registration to complete a change of address packet to transfer to the new school. Students must reside within the county in order to be enrolled in a Houston County school. Students are not allowed to attend Houston County schools if they reside in another county.

If school personnel determine that a parent or guardian has used false information or violated an enrollment restriction to enroll a child in a school other than the school in the zone in which the parent or guardian resides, the child shall be withdrawn to attend the school in the attendance zone or other county in which the parent resides. If the child(ren) are residing in another county, the Superintendent or designee may bill the parents the prorated amount of out of county tuition approved by the Board for district employees

Unsafe School Choice Option

If a student is a victim of a Violent Criminal Offense (as stated in OCGA 160-4-8-16/JBCCA Policy) on campus or at a school sponsored activity, he/she may request a transfer to a school which has not been identified as being on a school improvement, corrective action, or restructuring plan. This request must be made within ten (10) school days of the commission of the Violent Criminal Offense.

BALLOONS/GIFTS AT SCHOOL

Students will not be allowed to accept flowers, balloons, or other gifts sent to the school during the school day and should refrain from bringing those items on the school bus.

BEGINNING AND ENDING SCHOOL TIMES

School begins at 7:30 a.m.
School ends at 2:30 p.m.

Any student arriving after 7:30 a.m. will be considered tardy to school. Leaving school before 2:30 p.m. will be considered an early dismissal.

BICYCLES

Students who ride bicycles to school should park and lock them in the designated area immediately upon arrival. Students should not secure more than one bike with one lock. (Do not lock two bikes together). The school is at no time responsible for damage or loss of a bicycle. Students who ride bicycles to school should obey state laws for their safety.

BUS CONDUCT

The parents or guardians of students have the responsibility of supervision until such time as the student boards the bus in the morning and after the student leaves the bus at the end of the day. The school has the authority to discipline a student for any misconduct occurring on the way to or from school. Once the student boards the bus, the student is expected to conduct him/herself on the bus in a manner consistent with the established standards for classroom behavior.

Students who do not conduct themselves appropriately on a bus shall be brought to the attention of the administration by the bus driver. A student who cannot conduct himself/herself properly on a bus may have their riding privileges suspended. In such a case, the parent or guardian of the student involved shall be responsible for transporting the student to and from school. In cases of bus vandalism, the student and parent/guardian shall be held responsible.

Students are prohibited from any and all acts of physical violence, bullying, physical assault of other persons on the school bus, verbal assault of other persons on the school bus, disrespectful conduct toward the school bus driver or other persons on the school bus, and any other unruly behavior.

Students are prohibited from using any electronic devices during the operation of a school bus in a manner that might interfere with the school bus communications equipment or the school bus driver's operation of the school bus.

Students are also prohibited from using mirrors, lasers, flash cameras, or any other lights or reflective devices in a manner that might interfere with the school bus driver's operation of the school bus. (See Policy JCD – Student)

Minor Offenses

1. Failure to remain seated
2. Refusing to obey driver/monitor
3. Throwing objects on the bus
4. Improper/dangerous conduct boarding or exiting the bus
5. Inappropriate physical contact (Minor)
6. Excessive noise
7. Unsafe items
8. Eating/drinking on the bus
9. Discarding trash
10. Extending objects outside window
11. Other disruptive behavior

Major Offenses

Although there may be no other bus report, consequences for major offenses begin at the third report level and proceed as reports occur.

1. Disrespect of driver/monitor/administrator
2. Fighting
3. Severe vandalism - restitution required
4. Possession of tobacco
5. Inappropriate physical contact (Major)
6. Throwing objects off the bus

A student may be suspended from the bus for the remainder of the year for behaviors such as possession of weapons, drugs, and/or severe disrespect of the driver. When a student is denied bus transportation due to misconduct, his/her

absence from school is not excused. The parent/guardian shall be expected to provide transportation during the time the student is excluded from the bus.

Consequences for Infractions of Bus Conduct

Transportation by bus to and from school each day that is provided by the Houston County school district is a privilege. Students who choose to behave in an unruly manner and refuse to follow the rules sacrifice the safety of other students and the driver. Discipline for student misbehavior while riding the bus is progressive and ranges from parent/driver conferences to having the privilege of transportation provided by a Houston County school district taken away completely. Ultimately, all discipline procedures are at the discretion of the principal and depends on the severity of the offense.

First Sign of Student Misbehavior: The bus driver will attempt to make contact with the parent to ask for help with the student. The driver will document the specific elements of the incident and document the conversation with the parent.

First Bus Report: A conference may be held with the school official, parent, and driver. A contract may be executed between student, parents, and school.
Second Bus Report: One (1) day off bus.
Third Bus Report: Three (3) days off bus.
Fourth Bus Report: Five (5) days off bus.
Fifth Bus Report: Seven (7) days off bus.
Sixth Bus Report: Ten (10) days off bus.
Seventh Bus Report: Off bus the remainder of the year.

* This is a suggested progressive discipline system that comes with principal discretion.
Please be aware that a student may be suspended from the bus for 1-10 days on the first report if the principal determines the incident warrants suspension.

CENTRAL REGISTRATION

Parents of any student(s) new to Houston County Schools must complete the enrollment process at the Central Registration site located at 410 Bear Country Boulevard, Warner Robins, Georgia 31088. The enrollment process at Central Registration is done by appointment.

To enroll a new or returning student:

- Visit the Houston County website at www.hcbe.net
- Select the Parents Tab
- Scroll to Central Registration
- Locate and follow the 4 Steps for Student Registration:
    - Step 1: Complete the Online Application
    - Step 2: Schedule an appointment
    - Step 3: Review the documents required for registration
    - Step 4: Attend your scheduled appointment

Change of Address

Anytime a parent moves (changes address) within Houston County during the school year, the parent must go to Central Registration to update their address. The following must be provided:

- Lease or mortgage of the new residence
- Utility bill or connect order of the new residence
- Disconnect notice from the previous address

COMMUNICATION SYSTEM/HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOL DISTRICT APP

All parents should download the Houston County School District app to their mobile device(s). The app will be used by schools and the district office to notify parents of school events, items of importance, and upcoming important dates. The District also has an automated emergency communication system that can be used to deliver urgent or timely communication such as school closings, evacuations, natural disasters, off-campus events, school lock-downs, or other

major incidents. Messages can be sent to parents by text, email, or through a recorded message by telephone. This system enables the delivery of a fast, accurate message and is a valuable addition to our school safety program. Please ensure that your child's school has an accurate telephone number/email on file.

While messages will be delivered to parents using the language preferences that are saved in Infinite Campus, interpretation services are provided as practicable for languages other than English at no charge to parents.

CONCUSSION MANAGEMENT

Any student-athlete that exhibits symptoms of a concussion should be removed from the game/activity or practice immediately. No student-athlete may return to activity after an apparent head injury or concussion, regardless of how mild it seems or how quickly symptoms clear, without medical clearance. Close observation of the student-athlete should continue for several hours.

The Return to Play Act of 2013 code 20-2-2-324.1 became effective on January 1, 2014. The Houston County School District addresses this in policy JGFGB. Students who will participate in extracurricular athletic activities will receive information concerning this policy. Parents and students will be required to provide documentation that they have read and understand this policy in order to participate. You may obtain this information from your school's athletic director and/or Dragonfly.

DISCIPLINE

The school district reserves the right to punish any behavior that is subversive to good order and discipline in the schools, even though such behavior is not specified in the Student Code of Conduct or in the Student Handbook.

Commission of a Crime

1. Any student who commits a crime on school grounds or during a school activity whether on campus or not shall be subject to discipline including expulsion. Any student who commits a crime away from the school grounds and not during a school activity may be subject to discipline including expulsion if it is determined by the school system that the student's presence at school could endanger the lives or property of others or if the student's presence at school would be disruptive to the orderly conduct of school. (Policy JCD)

2. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. 20-2-1184, administrators are required to report students committing certain prohibited acts to the Superintendent of Schools or designee, police authority, and the district attorney.

Other Suspension/Expulsion Information

1. Students under expulsion are not allowed to make up any academic work at home or at school unless they are in attendance at the WIN Academy.
2. Students under short term home suspension will be allowed to make up work upon returning to school. It is the responsibility of the student to coordinate with each teacher within five (5) days of returning to school regarding makeup work.
3. Students under suspension or expulsion **are not allowed** on school campus or at school functions; they may not participate in extracurricular activities or practice of any kind.
4. School administrators may not delay suspension or expulsion so students may participate in extracurricular activities.
5. School administrators and/or designated representatives possess the authority to conduct a reasonable search of students, their possessions, their lockers, and their automobiles when on school property or on property being used by the school.
6. In some instances, students who have been suspended who are enrolled at the alternative school may return to the home school at the end of a semester upon recommendation by the alternative school principal and approval by the home school principal.

Definitions of Disciplinary Actions

1. Expulsion: Suspension of a student beyond the current school semester, up to and including permanent removal from the school system.
2. Suspension (Short-Term): A temporary termination of attendance, not to exceed ten days.
3. Suspension (Long-Term): A temporary termination of attendance that exceeds ten school days.

4. Probation: A conditional attendance during a trial period.
5. Student Review Committee (SRC): A committee appointed by the Houston County School District to hear cases of recommended long-term suspension or expulsion.
6. Detention: A requirement that the student remain after school for a disciplinary offense. All students must be given an advance notice of one day.
7. Alternative School: An alternative educational environment for suspended students, affording the student the opportunity to continue his/her regular class work. Students must apply for admission.
8. In-School Suspension (ISS): An alternative education environment located in the school but isolated from other normal school activities and supervised by a teacher. A student may be assigned to in-school suspension for up to 10 days by the principal or designee.
9. Bullying: See Student Code of Conduct.

Due Process for Students

Due process will include appropriate hearings and reviews; and, in all cases, the rights of individual students will be ensured and protected.

Suspension

1. Parents are given oral notice and opportunity to discuss the matter with the principal.
2. Parents are given written notice stating the reasons for the suspension.

Expulsion or Long-Term Suspension

1. Parents are given oral notice and opportunity to discuss the matter with the principal.
2. Parents are given written notice stating the reasons for the recommendation for expulsion/long-term suspension.
3. Parents are given written notice of a right to a hearing before Student Review Committee.
4. Parents have a right to a hearing within ten (10) school days by the Houston County School District Tribunal.
5. Students with disabilities will be reviewed by the Special Education Educational Management/Placement Committee hearing.

In-School Suspension (ISS): General Regulations

1. Students assigned to in-school suspension must be isolated in the designated room from the time they report to school until school dismissal time. At that time, they will either leave school or move to the bus loading area.
2. Suspended students' parents or guardians must receive written notification of the suspension. In addition, every effort should be made to contact the parents by telephone before the student is placed in in-school suspension.
3. Teachers should prepare realistic assignments for each student assigned to ISS. These assignments should be specific to each day of the student's suspension and should relate directly to the curriculum.
4. The ISS teacher should return each assignment for each day to the corresponding teacher at the end of each school day. The teacher should then examine the student's assignment and give feedback to the ISS supervisor the next morning. If problems are detected, the teacher should work with the ISS supervisor and the student to correct misunderstandings or problems. No contact with the teacher indicates that no problems exist.
5. No student may be assigned to ISS for more than ten (10) consecutive days. Care should be taken to avoid excessive accumulated assignments to ISS for any student.
6. Students in ISS are to have no contact with other students during the school day, especially at lunch and bathroom breaks.
7. Students in ISS are to be provided with regular student services.
8. ISS must be used in lieu of suspending students from school except in cases of clear and present threat to the safety of other students or in case of other extenuating circumstances.
9. Limited use may be made of ISS as a "time out" room. However, if a student is assigned for the same class period from two or more consecutive days, the assignment must be considered a suspension and the proper procedures, including parent notification, should be followed.
10. Each school should develop clearly defined expectations, rules, and procedures for ISS and distribute them to parents, students, and teachers.

Student Rules for In-School Suspension

The following will apply to all students assigned to ISS.
I understand that I must:

1. Remain in ISS until dismissed.

2. Attend ISS for the number of days assigned before being admitted to regular class.
3. Bring an excuse from my parent/guardian explaining reasons for any absence.
4. Complete to the best of my ability all assigned work.
5. Furnish or bring to class all required materials to complete the assignments.
6. Refrain from talking except as specifically authorized.
7. Refrain from chewing gum and eating.
8. Refrain from all communications with other students.
9. Not participate in any extra-curricular activities while assigned to ISS.
10. Abide by all school rules as explained in this handbook.

Encouraging Parents To Inform Their Children Of The Circumstances Of Certain Conduct

The General Assembly of Georgia requires the code of conduct include language encouraging parents and guardians to inform their children of the consequences, including potential criminal penalties, of underage sexual conduct and crimes for which a minor can be tried as an adult.

DRESS CODE

Good personal appearance, appropriate dress, proper behavior, and cleanliness are vital to each member of the school community. Developing good tastes in attire, good grooming habits, and good behavior are a part of the educational program.

Hoodies are approved to be worn at school: however, for safety reasons, hoods may not be worn while in the school building.

Students of the Houston County School District are expected to dress in a manner that is supportive of a positive learning environment that is free of distractions and disruptions. There is a direct correlation between student dress and student behavior. Students will be expected to observe modes of dress, styles of hair, and personal grooming which support the learning environment. The purpose of this dress code is to assure that consistency and interpretation is implemented county-wide, thus providing equitable treatment for all students.

In making a judgment concerning the appropriateness of a student's dress or grooming, the principal should adhere to the guidelines set forth in the procedures that accompany this policy.

Dress Code Enforcement

The principal of the school is charged with the enforcement of the student dress code. The principal is given wide latitude of discretion in the determination of proper or improper dress and behavior of students. Students who are found to be in violation of the dress code are subject to disciplinary action. The principal's actions may include:

- Counseling the student
- Warning the student
- Calling parents to bring a change of clothes
- After school detention
- Placing the student in in-school suspension for the remainder of the day
- Suspending the student short-term, or
- Recommending long-term suspension (for flagrant or repeated violations)

Dress Code Specifics

General Rules

• Outer clothing which resembles loungewear, pajamas, or underwear is prohibited.
• Fads and styles in dress, which differ extremely from conventionally accepted standards are prohibited.
• Any clothing that is viewed as distracting because of extremes in style, fit, color, pattern, fabric, etc., shall not be permitted. Undergarments may not be exposed at any time.

Specific Rules

• Blouses/shirts should be constructed so that the top of the shoulder is covered and is fitted under the arms (no halter tops, tank tops, strapless tops, spaghetti straps, or bare-shouldered tops of any type will be allowed). Blouses/shirts which expose any portion of the waist, hips, or midriff are not allowed. Blouses/shirts which are not

appropriate for school include those which are low-cut, see-through, backless, or tube tops.
- Holes in clothing that are excessive in size or amount, are a distraction to the learning environment, or allow skin to show mid-thigh or higher are prohibited.
- In accordance with board policy governing student conduct with regard to bullying, weapons, gangs, and drugs: clothing shall be free of inflammatory, suggestive, racial, or other inappropriate writing, advertisement, or artwork. This includes offensive words and designs, violence (blood, death, weapons), sex, playboy symbols, hate groups, tobacco products, drugs, and alcohol.
- No clothing or other article may be worn or displayed which may indicate membership in a gang at school or any school function.
- Pants, skirts, shorts, and dresses must be mid-thigh length or longer. Sagging pants are not allowed and pants must be worn at the waist.
- Excessively long shirts must be tucked in.
- When leggings are worn, a dress, shirt, or skirt must be worn over the leggings. The dress, shirt, or skirt must be mid-thigh length or longer.

Accessories
- Shoes/sandals must be worn at all times. Cleated shoes are prohibited inside the building. House/bedroom slippers are not acceptable.
- Students may not wear ornaments (jewelry) and piercings, which are extreme and may interfere with the learning process or cause a disruption of the educational environment.
- Students may not wear hats, caps, bandanas, sunglasses, combs, picks, etc., inside the building.

Hair & Grooming
- Hair must be well groomed. Extreme hairstyles, color, and fads that would interfere with the learning process or cause a disruption of the educational environment are prohibited.
- Facial hair should be neat, clean, closely trimmed and not be a distraction to the learning environment.

Coats
- Due to variances in physical design of schools, principal's discretion will apply to wearing of outer garments, coats, and jackets. Students may wear coats/winter garments to school, but may be asked to store them in their lockers during the school day. Students are encouraged to bring lightweight jackets to wear in the building as changes in weather dictate.

NOTE: The principal's discretion applies to all of the above.

DRILLS: FIRE/TORNADO/EMERGENCY/BUS EVACUATION DRILLS

Students, teachers, and other school district employees will participate in drills of emergency procedures. The following safety drills are practiced:

- Fire Drills – These are held nine (9) times a year. When the alarm is sounded, students should follow the direction of teachers or marshals quickly, quietly, and in an orderly manner.

- Tornado/Severe Weather – Tornado drills are held two (2) times a year. Schools do practice walk throughs in order to ensure students know where to go and what to do.

  A tornado watch: Conditions are favorable for a tornado or severe weather.
  A tornado warning: Tornado has been sighted.

  If a tornado warning is issued, bus dismissal may be delayed. If students are in-route to or from school and a tornado warning is issued, buses are required to stop at the nearest school and students/driver takes shelter there until the warning has passed.

- Bomb Threat – Procedures are based on recommendations from the Georgia Emergency Management Agency (GEMA).

- Lockdowns – Code Yellow and Code Red Drills – These will take place three (3) times each year. When schools have been placed on a true Code Red lockdown, you may be notified through our Houston County School District app before the end of the school day.
- Bus Evacuation - Safe Bus evacuation is practiced two (2) times a year during physical education classes with all students.

The safety plans of our schools are routinely assessed to ensure that the best practices are in place to protect our children. Teachers and students are taught what to do in the event of fire, severe weather and school lockdowns. We practice so that our students, faculty and staff have the knowledge to protect themselves and so they know what to do if a situation arises. Our communication system is capable of calling every parent in a matter of minutes to help keep you fully informed.

Throughout the school year, our teachers will be sharing and practicing our safety plans with the students. It will be handled in a low key way, but in a way that ensures that everyone understands what to do in an emergency situation.

In the event of an emergency, the students and staff in our system are our first priority. These procedures and practices are designed for their protection.

DRUG FREE SCHOOLS

Possession, sale, or use of illegal drugs or alcohol by a student at school or on property owned by the school district at any time; Off school grounds at any school-related activity, function or event and while traveling to and from such events; On school buses and at school bus stops is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Students who must leave school early should bring a note signed by parents or guardians stating the time and reason for the early dismissal. If an individual other than the person who enrolled the student in school is authorized to take the student from school on a regular basis (grandparent or other relative, childcare provider, etc.), the person who enrolled the student in school must notify the school of such in writing. A picture identification must be presented before the student will be released.

Any student arriving after 7:30 a.m. will be considered tardy to school. Leaving school before 2:30 p.m. will be considered an early dismissal.

ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The Houston County School District policy JCDAF outlines the access and use of personal electronic devices for students in pre- kindergarten through eighth grade while on school premises during school hours. Students in grades PK-8 are not permitted to access personal electronic devices while on school premises during school hours, including but not limited to cell phones, smartwatches, tablets, e-readers, headphones, earbuds, and other devices with functionalities such as wireless communication, internet access, messaging, video recording, gaming, social media access, or data transmission during school hours. Any student found in violation of this policy and/or its procedures during the school day shall be subject to progressive discipline consequences as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

ENGLISH TO SPEAKERS OF OTHER LANGUAGES (ESOL)

The English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program goals are to help students obtain English language proficiency and to meet age and grade appropriate academic achievement standards for grade promotion and graduation. The program aids students to succeed in all four language skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) both socially and academically. The ESOL program is federally mandated and was established to ensure equal access to the school system's instructional program for those students who have limited English proficiency.

Grade Placement for English Language Learners (ELLs)

For elementary and middle schools, placement will be made based on completed formal years of schooling and age appropriateness. Age appropriateness for elementary students is defined as not more than one year below the same-aged native English-speaking peers.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Parents of any student(s) new to Houston County Schools must complete the enrollment process at the Central Registration site located at 410 Bear Country Boulevard, Warner Robins, Georgia. The parent will need to schedule an appointment at Central Registration. To schedule an appointment, visit the Houston County website www.hcbe.net.

- Select Parents tab
- Scroll down and click on Central Registration

When a student initially enrolls in the Houston County School District, parents are responsible for providing the following documents:

Parent/Guardian Photo ID (driver's license, work ID, passport)	At Enrollment
Certified Birth Certificate or Passport	At Enrollment
Georgia Form 3231 (Out of State) Immunization Certificate	At Enrollment
Georgia Form 3231 (In State) Immunization Certificate	30 days
Georgia Form 3300- Ear, Eye, Dental, Nutrition Screening	30 days
Guardianship/Custody Orders (if applicable)	At Enrollment
Withdrawal Form/Latest Report Card (final report card if school is over)	30 days
Two Proofs of Residency	At Enrollment
Stop Services at Prior Address (In State)	At Enrollment
Social Security Card or Waiver or an Application for Social Security Number	At Enrollment
Medical Information which will impact instruction	At Enrollment

Georgia law requires that every student enrolled in a Georgia public school be immunized according to the rules and regulations established by the Department of Public Health. A Certificate of Immunization (Form 3231) must be on file. A Georgia physician or health clinic must complete the certificate. Students who do not provide the school with an approved certificate will not be allowed to remain in school. A child enrolling in a Georgia school for the first time at ANY GRADE LEVEL must be age-appropriately immunized with all required vaccines. In addition, those students entering a Georgia public school for the first time must provide a Certificate of Eye, Ear and Dental Examination (Form 3300) at enrollment.

NOTE: If immunizations are not appropriate for your child, you may complete the Affidavit of Religious Objection to Immunization form at the school or a Georgia Form 3231 with each medical exemption verified by your child's Physician.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Student Extracurricular Activities Notification

Each school principal shall implement procedures to annually notify all parents or guardians of all school-sponsored extracurricular activities, organizations and clubs in which students may participate and of the right of the parent or guardian to prohibit their child's participation.

Notification to parents and guardians shall be provided annually via the student handbook and shall include the name of each extracurricular activity, student organization or club; information regarding the purpose, activities or national affiliation of the extracurricular activity, organization or club. Any membership or financial requirements for a student to join or become a member of the activity, organization or club shall be included in the information provided.

No student shall be allowed to participate in any school-sponsored extracurricular activity, organization or club if the student's parent or legal guardian has indicated in writing that the parent will not allow the student to participate and has provided a copy of such written notice to the school principal.

For school clubs formed after publication of the student handbook, parents or guardians must approve their student's participation via email, fax or written permission to the school principal.

School extracurricular activities, organizations, or clubs for purposes of this policy are those that are supervised or sponsored by a school system employee designated by the principal, and that meet in school facilities.

Conduct

Students participating in or attending any school sponsored activities whether on or off school grounds or on the grounds of another school are under the authority of the system discipline policies. Students are expected to practice proper decorum and sportsmanship at all school events.

Student Pick-Up

Students should be picked up promptly following extracurricular activities. Appropriate authorities may be called if students are left at a school-sponsored event more than thirty minutes after the conclusion of the event. Efforts to contact a parent or guardian will be made prior to contacting authorities.

Eligibility

All 6th grade students are ineligible to participate in sports.
All students entering the 7th grade for the first time will be eligible for interscholastic extracurricular activities for the fall semester. If a 7th grade student will reach his/her 14th birthday prior to May 1st of the current school year, the student must participate on the 8th grade teams.

All students who participate in competitive extracurricular and co-curricular activities must pass all core academic classes and a minimum of one connections class each semester immediately preceding participation. These subjects shall carry credit toward grade promotion. Summer school is an extension of spring semester. All students must be on track toward promotion to participate. For determining student eligibility, the grading period shall be a semester.

Students must pass five of six subjects the previous semester and be enrolled in six subjects the current semester to be eligible for competitive extracurricular activities. Playing on sports teams or cheerleading in the 7th or 8th grade requires a physical examination**.** There are age limits for middle school athletic participation (See above). Proof of insurance is also required for participation in sports activities.

Students suspended for disciplinary reasons may not participate in extracurricular activities during the time of suspension.

Note: Students who are retained and those who have not met promotion criteria but who have been "placed" in the next grade level in middle school are not eligible the first semester. If the student passes five subjects the first semester, the student may become eligible the second semester if he meets other eligibility criteria.

Home Study Students

To participate in extracurricular or interscholastic activities, the Houston County School District requires resident students, other than home study students, to be enrolled full-time during the semester of participation unless the student's schedule approved by school officials during the registration process provides otherwise. Home study students must enroll in and complete one qualifying course as defined in state law for each semester of participation.

Effective July 1, 2021, eligible home study students will be able to participate in extracurricular or interscholastic activities at their zoned public school when the parent provides the following:

- written notice at least 30 calendar days before the first day of the semester in which a student will enroll in a qualifying course;
- written notice of the student's intent to participate in an activity and a copy of the student's most recent annual progress assessment report, along with written verification from the home study program instructor that the student currently is receiving a passing grade in each course, is maintaining satisfactory progress toward advancement, and meets the requirements for participation in the specified activity.

For each semester of participation, the home study student must enroll in and complete one qualifying course facilitated by the Houston County School District and required for participation in designated activities.

- The student must meet established age, academic, residence, zoning, and other rules and criteria required of all students who participate in the selected activity and provide any supporting documentation required by the school.
- The student must abide by the same Code of Conduct and disciplinary measures and transportation policies as students enrolled at the school who are participating in the activity, which includes completing the tryout process or equivalent required for all students for participation and being selected for the activity if there is a competitive selection process.

- For students participating in activities governed by the Georgia High School Association, students must meet the prerequisite eligibility requirements.
- Any student that withdraws from a public school to attend a home study program will be ineligible for participation in any extracurricular or interscholastic activity for 12 months from the date of the withdraw from a public school system and/or home study Declaration of Intent submission to the GaDOE.
- Parents are responsible for transportation to and from school.

Suspension from Participation

Any Houston County student who places himself/herself in a situation that results in the student's being arrested or charged with any felony offense by any law enforcement agency will lose all privileges of participation in competitive and non-competitive extracurricular or athletic activities sponsored by the school.

The length of suspension from participation in these activities will be until all charges are dismissed by official court order or one (1) calendar year. Conviction shall include any plea or court disposition under the applicable first offender's statute. If the arrest or charges result in either a guilty plea/admission or conviction/adjudication, the student will lose all privileges of participation in extracurricular or athletic activities for a minimum of at least one calendar year following the guilty plea/admission or conviction/adjudication. After one calendar year, the student may apply to the building principal for the suspension to be lifted. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the building principal, the student may appeal the matter to the Houston County School District using the tribunal process as set forth in Policy JCD.

Any Houston County student who places himself/herself in a situation that results in the student's being arrested and charged with any criminal misdemeanor offense by any law enforcement agency, will lose all privileges or participation in competitive and non-competitive extracurricular or athletic activities sponsored by the school in the same manner spelled out in Paragraph 1 above. However, the length of suspension from participation in these activities will remain in effect until the suspension is lifted by a joint decision of the building principal and the Executive Director of School Operations. In the event that said criminal misdemeanor arrests or charges result in either a guilty plea/admission or conviction/adjudication or if the original arrests or charges were reduced from felony offenses to criminal misdemeanor offenses by official court action, the suspension shall be lifted by the joint decision of the building principal and Executive Director of School Operations. If the student is not satisfied with the decision of the building principal and the Executive Director of School Operations, the student may appeal the matter to the Houston County School District using the tribunal process as set forth in Policy JCD. In no event shall the period of suspension in Paragraph 2 exceed one (1) calendar year.

This policy is in addition to any other discipline or other action which the Houston County School District may take as to the student.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

It is the policy of the Houston County School District that the school district shall comply with requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Student Data Privacy, Accessibility, and Transparency Act of Georgia. For the purposes of this policy, a "parent" is defined as a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian. An "eligible student" is defined as a student who has reached 18 years of age or is attending an institution of postsecondary education.

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

Confidentiality of student records shall be preserved while access is provided to parents, eligible students, and school officials with legitimate educational interests, as described in the annual parent notice. With the exception of directory information as defined below, personally identifiable information will not be released by the school district from an educational record without prior written consent of the parent or eligible student, except to the extent authorized by the FERPA and its implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. 99.31.

The Houston County School District designates certain information from student education records as "Directory Information." The primary purpose of “Directory Information” is to allow Houston County School District to include student information in certain school publications or school-related activities, including but not limited to:

- A playbill showing your student’s role in a drama production
- The annual yearbook
- Honor Roll or the recognition lists
- Graduation programs
- Class ring and graduation regalia
- Sports activities, such as wrestling, showing weight and height of the team members

Directory Information, which is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released can also be disclosed to outside organizations such as the companies who manufacture class rings, graduation regalia, or publish yearbooks. You have the right to limit or refuse the disclosure of “Directory Information”. If you do not want the Houston County School District to disclose any or all of the below information as “Directory Information”, you must notify the principal of the school the student attends in writing within 10 days of receipt of this notice/handbook to opt out of having your child’s information included as “Directory Information”.

Directory Information is as follows:

1. Student's name
2. Address
3. Phone number
4. Email address
5. Grade
6. Student’s month and day of birth
7. School at which a student is enrolled
8. Dates of attendance at schools within the Houston County School District
9. Student’s participation in official school activities and sports
10. Awards or honors received during the time the student is enrolled in the Houston County School District
11. Photographs used to publicize awards, honors, extracurricular activities, sports or school promotions
12. Weight and height of athletic team members used in information for the public

Student records will be forwarded without further notice to parents/guardians or eligible students to any school within or outside the Houston County School system, upon request of the school where a student is enrolling.

Local units of administration shall not withhold any student record because of nonpayment of fees. However, schools may withhold certain activities, report cards, diplomas, or certificates of progress until fees are paid.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are provided in order to enhance educational objectives. Students must provide written parental permission to teachers in order to participate in a field trip activity. Field trips are an extension of the school day. All school rules apply during a field trip.

FITNESS ASSESSMENT

As a part of the Georgia Student Health and Physical Education (GA SHAPE) initiative, all Houston County Public Schools (Grades 1-12) will participate in a required annual fitness assessment. The assessment is a comprehensive fitness assessment for youth designed to assess cardiovascular fitness, muscular strength and endurance, flexibility, and body composition. All students in grades 1-12 that are enrolled in a P.E. class, regardless of age, gender, or ability, will participate in the assessment.

GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS

State law prohibits discrimination based on gender in athletic programs of local school systems (Equity in Sports Act, O.C.G.A. § 20-2-315). Students are hereby notified that *Houston County School District* does not discriminate on the basis of gender in its athletic programs. The sports equity coordinator for this school system is**:**

Mrs. Alyson Keenom, Assistant Superintendent of School Operations
HCSD Board Office
1100 Main Street

Perry, Georgia 31069
Phone: (478) 988-6200
Fax: (478) 218-7517

GIFTED EDUCATION PROGRAM

The middle school gifted education program is a state program designed to meet the educational needs of students who demonstrate a high degree of intellectual ability, talent, and/or creativity. Teaching and learning focus on developing cognitive learning, research and reference, and metacognitive skills at each grade grouping, using principles of differentiation in core content areas. Gifted-identified sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students are served daily in gifted language arts, science, and social studies with the option of a fourth class, Accelerated Content (AC) math.

Gifted eligibility criteria are set by the state of Georgia. Students obtain eligibility through three of the four established criteria in the areas of achievement, mental ability, creativity, and motivation. The referral and placement process is coordinated by the school's Gifted Eligibility Team and District testing diagnosticians for consideration for formal evaluation. Parent permission will be obtained before any formal evaluation begins, and parents will be notified in writing regarding their child's eligibility for the gifted education program.

Definitions

Gifted Student - In Georgia, a gifted education student is defined as one who demonstrates a high degree of intellectual and/or creative ability(ies), exhibits an exceptionally high degree of motivation, and/or excels in specific academic fields and needs special instruction and/or special ancillary services to achieve at levels commensurate with his or her ability(ies).

Differentiated Curriculum- Gifted students need the opportunity to work through the curriculum at a faster pace and need less time on basics and revision. The curriculum is differentiated in complexity and acceleration, which offers a variety of options for students who differ in abilities, knowledge and skills. In a differentiated classroom, teachers differentiate content, process, product, environment and assessments according to a student's readiness, interest and learning profile. A differentiated curriculum for gifted learners includes, but not limited to the following expectations:

- Content– curriculum standards the student is expected to master incorporating related complex and challenging support materials that:
    - Requires intellectual struggle
    - Utilizes primary documents
    - Integrates research skills and methods
    - Incorporates relevant and real-life experiences
    - Integrates interdisciplinary connections
- Process– instructional strategies designed to ensure that students acquire a deep understanding of the curriculum standards by:
    - Emphasizing higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and communications skills
    - Fostering self-initiated and self-directed learning
    - Promoting creative application of ideas
    - Modeling and encouraging academic discussion
- Products– vehicles through which students demonstrate and extend what they have learned through demonstrating a developmentally appropriate capacity for:
    - Self-directed learning
    - Meaningful collaboration
    - Effective problem solving of challenging and complex issues
    - Effective communication
    - Social and emotional understanding of "self" relative to community, culture, and physical environment
- Environment- physical setting and work conditions modified to:
    - Change the actual work space for students
    - Allow flexible time
    - Provide opportunities for independent study and in-depth research
    - Provide opportunities for mentorship

- Assessment– formative and summative on and off-grade-level monitoring to document student mastery of curriculum standards and learning levels such as:
    - Pre/post assessments
    - Self-assessment through use of rubrics
    - Creation of goal-based checklist
    - Conferencing, commentary, and qualitative feedback (Cobb, 2012)
- Readiness- a student's entry point relative to a particular understanding or skill
- Learning Profile- how an individual student learns

Referral

Students currently enrolled in Houston County schools may be referred for testing at any time during the school year. All referrals will be reviewed by the schools' eligibility team for consideration for formal evaluation. Parent permission will be obtained before any formal evaluation begins, and parents will be notified in writing regarding their child's eligibility for the gifted program. Teachers and parents may make referrals by completing a basic Traits, Aptitudes, and Behaviors (TABS) form for review by the school eligibility team.

Eligibility

1. To be eligible for gifted education services, a student must either:
    a. score at the 99th percentile (for grades K-2) or the 96th percentile (for grades 3-12) on the composite or full scale score of a norm-referenced test of mental ability and meet one of the achievement criteria approved by the state of Georgia in Achievement, or
    b. qualify through a multiple- criteria assessment process by meeting the criteria in any three of the following four areas: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation.
2. To be eligible for gifted education services, a student must meet the criterion score on a norm-related test. Information is collected in each of the four areas: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation.

3. Any test score used to establish eligibility must be current within two-calendar years.
   Any data used in one area to establish a student's eligibility may not be used in any other data category.

Multiple-Criteria Assessment Process

A student must meet the criteria in any three of the following four areas: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation.

Mental Ability- Students score at or above the 96th percentile on a composite or full-scale score or appropriate component score on an approved nationally age normed mental ability test.

Achievement- Students score at or above the 90th percentile on the total battery, total math or total reading section(s) of a norm-referenced achievement test.
Creativity- Students score at or above the 90th percentile on the total battery score of a norm-referenced test of creative thinking.

Motivation- Students receive a score at or above the 90th percentile on a standardized motivational characteristics rating scale or for grades 6-12 students have a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.5 on a 4.0 scale where 4.0 = A and 3.0 = B, or a numeric grade point average (NGA) of 90 percent on a 100-point scale where 100 = A and an 89 = B.

Continued Participation

As per the Georgia Department of Education, students must perform at or above a certain level to continue to receive gifted education services. The continuation policy includes a probationary period in which a student who fails to maintain satisfactory performance in gifted education classes shall continue to receive gifted education services while attempting to achieve satisfactory performance status.

The continuation policy provides for a final review prior to discontinuing gifted education services for students who fail to demonstrate satisfactory performance in gifted education classes during the probationary period and criteria for resuming gifted education services for such students.

Reciprocity

Any student who meets the initial eligibility criteria for gifted education services in one Local Educational Agency (LEA) is considered eligible to receive gifted education services in any LEA within the state of Georgia. The receiving school or district should carefully review the student's gifted education records. If gifted education records are not available, the transferring district should be contacted to obtain the student's gifted education records before placing the student into the gifted education program. The receiving school or district should honor the continuation policy of the transferring school.

There is no mandated reciprocity between states unless the student is a dependent of military personnel. Therefore, a student who is eligible for services in one state is not automatically eligible in the state of Georgia. The receiving school should complete an eligibility evaluation on out-of-state transfer students. To aid in the process of determining Georgia gifted eligibility, the following documents should be presented to the student's new school: a current eligibility report and recent standardized test scores.

The Georgia General Assembly enacted legislation relating to the education of children of military families that impact the gifted education reciprocity of students whose households include an active member of the United States uniformed services, veteran of the United States uniformed services who is severely injured and medically discharged or a member of the United States uniformed services that died on active duty. The goal of the legislation is to maximize a student's educational continuity despite the frequent movement across states and school districts. Nothing in this code section precludes/prevents the school in the receiving state from performing subsequent evaluations to ensure appropriate placement of the student.

Curriculum

Houston County implements the Advanced Content delivery model based on Georgia's Programming Standards for Meeting the Needs of Gifted & High-Ability Learners and state guidelines. Classes in gifted education are courses of study in which the content, teaching strategies and expectations of student mastery have been adjusted to be appropriate for gifted students. Houston County employs rigorous and relevant curricula K-12 to accommodate the range of academic and intellectual needs of gifted learners. State-adopted standards are articulated and applied in differentiated curricula that match the identified academic needs, abilities, readiness, interests, and learning profiles of K-12 gifted learners in both the regular classroom and gifted education delivery systems. The curriculum enriches, extends and enhances learning in gifted learners' areas of strength. The gifted language arts and mathematics courses are designed to prepare students for the rigor of high school Honors and AP English and math courses as well as, gifted science and social studies courses providing a foundation for an AP science and social studies curriculum in the high school program.

Curricula for gifted students focuses on developing both cognitive and metacognitive skills through strengthening intellectual learning and research and reference skills at each grade level. The main goal of the program is to provide a stimulating and challenging course of study with emphasis on independent learning and critical thinking. The curriculum is supplemented with but not limited to independent research, projects and required outside readings.

For further information, contact the Gifted Lead Teacher, counselor, or instructional administrator at your child's school.

GRADES

All grades will be reported using the following numerical system:

90 - 100	=	A
80 - 89	=	B
70 - 79	=	C
Below 70	=	F (no credit)

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

The guidance office is open to any student at any time. It is best to stop by in the morning to make an appointment. Through guidance, a student can achieve greater awareness of who he/she is, what he/she is capable of, and what he/she can become. The guidance counselor collects information about each student in order to help the student understand himself/herself. Tests, autobiographies, and interviews are some of the ways counselors collect information. Counselors treat information about individual students with confidentiality. The counselor is available to help students with any problems. The problems listed below are only a few of the types of problems one may experience in middle school.

1. Why are all my friends mad at me?
2. What good are those standardized tests we take?
3. My parents don't seem to understand me.
4. I don't know how to study. Can you help?
5. Why is homework necessary?
6. Is it necessary to follow the crowd?

HEALTH SERVICES

If a child is injured at school, office personnel will render first aid. Parents will then be contacted in those cases which the school deems serious enough to warrant communication. If the school is unable to reach the parent, the emergency telephone contact person(s) will be called in an effort to find someone to come for the child. In the event a parent or emergency contact cannot be reached, EMS may be called for transport to the local hospital. When a child becomes ill at school, the parent will be notified just as in the case of an accident. Parents will also be contacted in cases of children soiling their clothes at school through accidents such as vomiting, urinating, or defecation. If a child shows signs of illness, he/she should not be sent to school.

Parental assistance is urgently needed in providing pertinent medical information upon the enrollment of the child in school. Please assist the school by notifying the office of any change in student data (medical or otherwise) that will ensure your child's success for a safe and healthy school year.

When to Keep a Student Home

Preventive and emergency school-based health services are provided to public school children in grades Pre-Kindergarten through Twelfth. The Health Related Services department uses "Best Practice" standards that strive to eliminate barriers, increase attendance, and identify health related concerns that influence learning.

Please refer to the following guidelines when a sick/recovering child returns to school:

1. A child should be fever-free for 24 hours without medication before returning.
2. A child must be diarrhea or nausea/vomiting free for 24 hours without medication (anti-diarrheal or anti-nausea/anti-emetic) before returning.
3. A child with strep throat must be on an antibiotic for 24 hours before returning.
4. A child with possible conjunctivitis (pink eye) must be seen by a doctor and may only return to school with a doctor's note.
5. A child with chicken pox may only return to school when all lesions have crusted over. Please provide a note from the doctor releasing the student to return to school and to excuse the absence(s).
6. All open, draining, or contagious skin areas (i.e. Staph, ringworm, Molluscum Contagiosum) must be able to be contained by a bandage/covering. Please provide a note from the doctor releasing the student to return to school and to excuse the absence(s).
7. A child with scabies will be allowed to return to school the following day after the first treatment.
8. A child must not require narcotics to control pain during school hours post procedure or injury.
9. A child who tests positive for contagious illnesses such as influenza, RSV, and COVID is recommended to stay home until fever free for 24 hours without medication and symptoms should be significantly improved.

KEEP A CHILD HOME, if she/he:

1. Has had a fever* of 100 degrees or higher in the past 24 hours.
2. Is nauseous and/or vomiting and/or has diarrhea.
3. Has been exposed to a contagious disease and is exhibiting signs/symptoms of the disease.
4. Has undiagnosed skin rashes or contagious conditions such as scabies or chicken pox. Students will be excluded from school until the rash is gone or when cleared by a physician for any contagious illness.
5. Has live lice on the scalp. A child will be allowed to attend if only nits are seen.

Children who have been at home because of illness should not be brought to school for parties and/or special events.

*A fever refers to a temperature of 100 degrees or more without the use of Tylenol or Advil or other fever reducing medications. The school cannot give aspirin, or products that contain aspirin products. A high occurrence of Reyes Syndrome is associated with viral infections and the use of aspirin.

Please send a parent or physician's note to the school within five days of the absence; otherwise, the absence is unexcused and subject to the truancy regulations.

Medication Administration

Prescription medicines (no narcotics) will be given to students by school personnel only when prescribed and ordered by a physician and when the following guidelines are followed:

1. All medication must be presented to the school office by a parent in a prescription labeled bottle, which will include the student's name, date, instructions for administering, name of the drug, and name of the issuing physician.
2. Medication Administration form HRS 29, is required to be filled out by the physician and parent in cases of long-term medication (more than 10 doses).

Non-prescription medicine or over the counter medicine, such as Tylenol, should be turned into the main office staff to be administered. Over the counter medicines will be given only for a short- term duration (for a total of 10 times a year) without a physician's order. Medication must be in the original unopened new container, age appropriate, and accompanied by written parental request with directions for administering documented on Short Term Medication form HRS 29C.

HERBAL medications will not be given without an order from the student's physician.

Expired medication will not be given. Please check expiration date before bringing medications to school.

Students requiring a rescue inhaler, epinephrine, or Glucagon are allowed to have them at all times. A Self-Carry and Self-Administration of Emergency Medication form is required prior to your student carrying the emergency medication on their person during the school day. It is critical that you discuss your child's medical condition(s) with the school. Students must not share these medications with other students. Disciplinary consequences will apply for students misusing these medications.

Head Lice

Head lice can infect anyone, not just children. Head lice are spread through head-to-head contact and sharing of brushes, combs, head bands, hats, jackets, etc. It is not our practice to check the entire class for head lice or send letters home to an entire class.

Lice are more common among preschool and elementary school-aged children and their families. Head lice cannot live on pets or animals, only on humans. No diseases are spread by head lice.

If a student is found to have active head lice, the parent will be called to pick him/her up. The school Health Technician will provide educational material to assist the parent in eliminating lice from the student and environment. The student will not be allowed back into school with live lice. The school Health Technician will inspect the student's scalp for active lice upon initial re-entry after first treatment and every 7 days up to 21 days or until clear of lice and nits.
Please help the school prevent lice outbreaks by encouraging your child not to share clothing items or other personal items such as combs, brushes, and towels with friends. The school nurse is available for consultation with difficult cases.

Hospital-Homebound Services

Hospital/Homebound refers to those students who are medically prevented from normal school attendance based upon certification of need by the licensed physician or mental health provider who is treating the student for the diagnosis. For more detailed information, please see your child's principal and counselor.

Scoliosis
Scoliosis is a sideways curve of the spine. About 3% of children are affected by scoliosis. It can occur at any age but is often noticeable between the ages of 9 and 16, when growth occurs rapidly. Early detection is important to avoid potentially serious problems later in life if not identified and treated. The screening test is an observation of the child's back when standing and bending forward. Under Georgia Law (O.C.G.A.§ 20-2-772), the school nurses with the assistance of the Houston County public health nurses are required to offer and screen students in the 6th and 8th grades for Scoliosis. Boys and girls are screened in separate rooms. Privacy is provided while each student's back is examined. If your child has a suspected curve, you will be notified by the Houston County Health Department for follow-up.

Parents or guardians can choose to not have their student screened for scoliosis at school by selecting the opt-out option on the Certificate of Scoliosis Screening, Form #4400. Form #4400 can be found at www.dph.georgia.gov. Form #4400

can be completed by a physician with an active GA license, person working under the supervision of a physician with an active GA license, or by the local health department. A completed Form #4400 should be provided to the school within the first 90 days of 6th and 8th grade if the student will not be screened at school.

Water Safety Education

Water safety education courses and swimming lessons for all ages play an important role in saving lives. Please refer to the following resources in our community to promote safety in, on, and around bodies of water to reduce the risk of injury or drowning.

- City of Warner Robins - https://www.wrga.gov/o/parks/page/aquatics
- Warner Robins Aquanauts – https://www.teamunify.com/team/gawra/page/home 478-929-8044
- Red Cross, Georgia Region – https://www.redcross.org/take-a-class 404-876-3302

Sex Education (O.C.G.A. § 20-2-143 and GA DOE Rule 160-4-2-.12)

The Houston County School District implements the Choosing The Best (CTB) sex education program in grades 6-12. The program content is designed for each grade level as appropriate. CTB promotes Sexual Risk Avoidance (SRA) practices based on researched-based and medically accurate information. CTB is not anti-contraception, but provides factual information about risks correlated to various methods with an emphasis that abstinence is the only 100% safe method. There are no demonstrations of contraceptive products (condoms or otherwise). The program does not legislate morality and religious and/or political views are not a part of the curriculum. The program teaches that risky behaviors and healthy choices apply to everyone regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation. Parents have the right to review all materials used and/or to exclude their child from participation in the program. Forms to opt-out of this instructional content can be found in the Parent Signature Pages provided at the beginning of the school year. More information can be found at https://www.hcbe.net/healthandpe. Parents should contact the school counselor with questions.

Suicide Awareness and Youth Violence Prevention Training

In accordance with House Bill 268, students in grades 6–12 will participate annually in at least one hour of evidence-based suicide awareness and prevention training and youth violence prevention training. These lessons are designed to promote a positive school climate and support students' overall well-being. Parents/guardians may opt out of this training in the online handbook Parent Signature Page at the beginning of the school year.

HOUSTON COUNTY WIN ACADEMY

Students suspended from their home schools for discipline reasons may be assigned to the Houston County WIN Academy.

Any students entering the Houston County School District from YDC, residential treatment facilities or other appropriate facilities must contact School Operations for admission.
Registration is held on Monday – Friday at 9:00 am.

Houston County WIN Academy Mandatory Uniform Dress Code

Any student attending the WIN Academy will be adhering to an alternate dress code which will be discussed during an intake meeting prior to enrolling that must be scheduled with the WIN Academy administration.

Houston County WIN Academy Behavior and Attendance Requirements

Students may be assigned an additional semester at the WIN Academy if their behavior or attendance is deemed unsuccessful by the WIN Academy and home school principals.

HONOR ROLL

Two honor rolls will be published each semester.

1. All “A” (90 - 100)
2. “A/B” honor roll – All “A’s” and one “B”

INSURANCE

At the beginning of the school year an independent insurance company offers student accident insurance coverage to students. Two plans are available: School-day coverage or twenty-four (24) hour coverage. Online and printable enrollment forms are available on the district website at www.hcbe.net/studentaccidentinsurance. Checks should be made payable to the insurance company. You may also pay online using the online enrollment form. **You are encouraged to carefully look at this affordable insurance as it definitely covers any accidents occurring at school. The Houston County School District's insurance does not cover your child if they have an accident at school.**

Insurance is mandatory for each student participating in athletics, certain trade and industry courses, and work-study courses. A certification from parent or guardian of private insurance coverage for the student will be acceptable.

INTERNET AND ELECTRONIC DEVICES

The Houston County School District recognizes the importance of making advanced technology and increased access to learning opportunities available to students and staff. The Houston County School District promotes the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning and support the mission and vision of the District.

It shall be the policy of the Board of Education that the school district shall be compliant with the "Protecting Georgia's Children on Social Media Act of 2024" (The Act) and have in continuous operation, with respect to any computers belonging to the school having access to the Internet :

1. A qualifying "technology protection measure," as that term is defined in Section 1703(b)(1) of the Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000 (CIPA) and is compliant with The Act; and
2. Procedures or guidelines developed by the Superintendent or designee, including administrators and/or other appropriate personnel which provide for monitoring the online activities of users and the use of the chosen technology protection measure to protect against access through such computers to visual depictions that are (i) obscene, (ii) child pornography, or (iii) harmful to minors, as those terms are defined in CIPA and The Act. Such procedures or guidelines shall be designed to:
   - I. Provide reasonable opportunities and procedures for parents/guardians of students to confer and collaborate with school administrators and teachers regarding appropriate internet access for such students;
   - II. Provide for monitoring the online activities of users to prevent, to the extent practicable, access by minors to inappropriate matters on the internet and the World Wide Web;
   - III. Promote the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications;
   - IV. Prevent unauthorized access, including so-called "hacking," and other unauthorized activities by minors online;
   - V. Prevent the unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors; and
   - VI. Restrict minors' access to materials "harmful to minors," as that term is defined in CIPA and The Act.
   - VII. 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 cyber bullying, and how to respond when subjected to cyber bullying.
   - VIII. Establish appropriate enforcement measures in response to:
     a. Students against students and school employees who willfully intentionally violate the acceptable-use policy, whether or not such student or school employee was, at the time of such violation, on school property, on a school bus or other school vehicle, at a school related function, or elsewhere, provided that such measures include disciplinary measures; and
     b. A person who is not a student or school employee who violates the acceptable-use policy, whether or not such person was, at the time of such violation, on school property, on a school bus or other school vehicle, at a school related function, or elsewhere;
   - IX. Provide for administrative procedures to: enforce the acceptable-use policy; for administrative procedures to address complaints regarding possible violations of the acceptable-use policy which, at a minimum, require that each complaint is responded to in writing by an appropriate school or local school district official; and provide for expedited review and resolution of a claim that the application of the acceptable-use policy is denying a student or school employee access to material that is not within the prohibition prohibitions of the acceptable-use policy.
   - X. Prohibit students from accessing social media platforms through the use of computer equipment, communications services, or internet access that is operated, owned, leased, and made available to students by the District. Students shall be permitted to access social media platforms only: a) As directed by school

personnel; b) For the exclusive purpose of accessing and utilizing age-appropriate educational resources; c) Under the supervision of such school personnel; and d) During the course of a school related activity.

XI. Include provisions in the Code of Conduct providing punishment for students violating this policy.

Upon written request, each parent/guardian shall be provided a copy of the school district's Internet Acceptable Use Policy, as well as the student Code of Conduct addressing its enforcement and related consequences, information regarding the administrative procedures in effect to enforce the Internet Acceptable Use Policy, and to address complaints about such enforcement. This shall include information about what social media platforms have been or are intended to be accessed in accordance with section X, including prohibiting their child from accessing one or more of those social media platforms.

No revision of this policy shall be implemented until such revision is approved by the state board. If the state board fails to provide a notice of noncompliance for the revision within 60 days after the submission is received, the District may proceed with the implementation of the revision.

An authorized administrator or designee may disable the software program or online server that is utilizing technology protection measure used to block access to material or take other reasonable steps for an adult or for a minor who provides written consent from his or her parent or guardian to enable access to the Internet for bona fide research or other lawful purpose.

Purpose

The purpose of informational technology is to facilitate communications in support of research and education by providing access to multiple resources. Use by any student or staff member must be in support of and consistent with the educational objectives of the Houston County School District. The State of Georgia has passed laws which govern the use of computers and related technology. The Georgia Computer Systems Protection Act specifically forbids computer misuse and abuse. The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) enacted by Congress in 2000 also provides guidance and regulations concerning students' computer use and access to content over the internet.

Authorized User

An authorized user for the purpose of this policy will be defined as any employee, student, or guest of the Houston County School District who has been issued and assigned a log-in account or uses guest services. Use of District technology resources indicates agreement to abide by this policy and applicable laws.

Terms and Conditions

An individual's use of the computing resources of the Houston County Schools is not an absolute personal right; rather, it is a privilege, conditional on the individual's compliance with state and federal laws, the Houston County Schools' policies and regulations, school regulations, and satisfactory behavior involving technology. Inappropriate use, including any violation of these conditions and policies, may result in cancellation of the privilege. The Houston County School District has the authority to determine appropriate use and may discipline, deny, revoke, or suspend any user's access at any time based upon the determination of inappropriate use.

It is the intent of Houston County School District to adhere to the provisions of copyright laws as they relate to informational technology. Transmission of any material in violation of United States Law or state regulations is prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, copyrighted material, threatening or obscene material, or material protected by patent.
Users are not allowed to purchase, download or load software without written permission from the HCSD Technology Services Center or Director of Technology Services.

Use for commercial activities, product advertisement, or political lobbying is prohibited.

The use of all school and central office networks shall be for the exchange of information in order to promote and support educational excellence in the school system.

Encounter of Controversial Material

The Houston County School District has a right and will make every effort to control the content of data accessed through the Internet by the use of firewalls and filtering software and teacher monitoring.

Users may encounter material which is controversial. It is the user's responsibility not to initiate access to controversial material purposely. If such material is accessed accidentally, the student/teacher shall notify an adult teacher/supervisor immediately.

Vandalism and Harassment

1. Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm, modify, or destroy data of a system or another user.
2. Harassment is defined as the persistent annoyance of another user or the interference in another user's work.
3. Vandalism and harassment will result in cancellation of user privileges.

Network Guidelines

1. Users will not post, publish, send or intentionally receive offensive messages or pictures from any source, including but not limited to any defamatory, inaccurate, abusive, obscene, profane, sexually oriented, threatening, racially offensive, sexist or illegal material. Access to materials "harmful to minors," as that term is defined in CIPA and The Act shall be restricted.
2. Users will not transmit or download information or software in violation of copyright laws. Only resources for which the author has given expressed consent for on-line distribution can be used. All users should consider the source of any information they obtain as well as the validity of that information.
3. Posting messages and attributing them to another user is prohibited.
4. Downloading of non-instructional materials from the Internet is unacceptable.
5. Users are not permitted to circumvent the District's content filtering systems by any means, including but not limited to the use of VPNs, proxies, or anonymous browsing tools. This applies both while on campus and when using District-issued devices off campus.
6. **Disclaimer**: Houston County School District makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for services through the Internet. It denies responsibility for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through Internet services. The school district shall not be responsible for any damages a user suffers, including loss of data resulting from delays, non-deliveries, mis-deliveries, or service interruption. Use of information obtained via the Internet is at the user's own risk.
7. Authorized users may access the network via personal user ID and not that of someone else. Users should not share their personal user IDs with any other person.

E-Mail Guidelines

1. All users are expected to abide by accepted rules of user etiquette. These rules include but are not limited to the following: Be polite, never send or encourage others to send abusive messages, and use appropriate language. E-mails are not guaranteed to be private.
2. Mass distribution e-mails must be approved by a school administrator.
3. Opening and forwarding any e-mail attachments from unknown sources and/or that may contain viruses is prohibited.
4. No internet e-mail is allowed except for that provided by the Houston County School District.

School Responsibilities

Schools shall ensure that all faculty, staff and students are aware of the rights and responsibilities of acceptable informational technology use contained in Houston County School District policies.

Student Responsibilities

1. Students will observe the standard of courtesy and behavior consistent with the practices and policies of the Houston County School District when sending or publishing messages or transmitting data or other information on the Internet.
2. Students will access the network using their personal ID and not that of someone else. Students will not share their user IDs, passwords, or log-on accounts with others and must make all efforts to safeguard any information from unauthorized users.
3. Students may not attempt to access information for which they are not authorized.
4. Students will use informational technology for instructional purposes only as it relates to classroom and cocurricular assignments and activities. Students will not use the system for any purpose if it is in violation of the law.
5. Any student who identifies a security problem must notify an adult teacher, supervisor, or administrator immediately.
6. Students may not have access to an employee's workstation under an employee ID and may be subject to disciplinary action if such attempt is made.

7. Students are violating network security if they enter the system under a user ID other than one that is assigned to them and may be subject to disciplinary action.
8. Students are violating network security if they alter programs or data on any system and will be subject to disciplinary action.
9. Students purposely infecting any HCSD computer with a malicious code will be subject to disciplinary action.

Internet

Internet Use:
To ensure a safe and productive learning environment, all students must adhere to the following rules regarding internet access and device usage:

1. **Use of District Network Required**
   All internet access during the school day and while on school property must occur through the School District's provided network. Students may not use personal cellular data plans, mobile hotspots, or any other means of connecting to the internet that bypasses the District's network. This includes devices with built-in connectivity such as cell phones, smartwatches, smart glasses, or cellular network adapters. Exceptions may only be granted for District-issued or District-approved devices.
2. **Bypassing Filters is Prohibited**
   Students are not permitted to circumvent the District's content filtering systems by any means, including but not limited to the use of VPNs, proxies, or anonymous browsing tools. This applies both while on campus and when using District-issued devices off campus. Prohibited activities include accessing blocked websites, downloading unauthorized materials, or engaging in any behavior designed to bypass monitoring or filtering systems.
3. **District-Issued Devices Only**
   Personal laptops, tablets, or similar computing devices are not permitted on campus. All students will be issued a District-owned device for educational use, and only these devices are approved for use during the school day.

Use of Electronic Devices

The Houston County School District policy JCDAF outlines the access and use of personal electronic devices for students in pre- kindergarten through eighth grade while on school premises during school hours. Students in grades PK-8 are not permitted to access personal electronic devices while on school premises during school hours, including but not limited to cell phones, smartwatches, tablets, e-readers, headphones, earbuds, and other devices with functionalities such as wireless communication, internet access, messaging, video recording, gaming, social media access, or data transmission during school hours. Any student found in violation of this policy and/or its procedures during the school day shall be subject to progressive discipline consequences as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct

Penalties for Improper Internet Use

Any violations of the internet procedures should be immediately reported to a supervising staff member.
Any user violating these rules or any other state or federal laws or classroom or school system policies is subject to lose network and/or computer use privileges. Furthermore, school disciplinary action, including in-school suspension and/or suspension or expulsion may be imposed.

If the actions of a user cause or contribute to the loss of service, applications, and/or data, school disciplinary action commensurate with the magnitude of the infraction shall be administered. In the event that such action causes the need for technical assistance to restore the service, application or data, restitution may be charged.
Any unauthorized access or breach of state or federal law is subject to criminal prosecution.

LEAVING CAMPUS

After arrival at school - whether by walking, by car, or by bus, students may not leave the campus for any reason in the morning or during the school day without the permission of the principal or designee.

LOCKERS

Lockers may be issued to students on an availability basis. Students may not share lockers with other students. Lockers are the property of the school and may be checked or searched at any time without notice to the student.

LUNCH/BREAKFAST PROGRAM

The Houston County School Nutrition Program provides fun and nutritious meals every school day. The menu for breakfast and lunch can be found by visiting https://www.hcbe.net/schoolnutrition.

The majority of schools (31 out of 40 sites) qualify as Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) schools. Under guidance from The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), CEP schools are eligible to serve meals at no cost to all students regardless of income status. Items that are not part of the meal, such as chips, slushies, and other snacks, are available for purchase. For more information on CEP schools please visit https://www.hcbe.net/snpcommunityeligibility.

For students who do not attend a CEP school, breakfast is $2.25 and lunch is $3.25 at the middle school level. Due to funding from the Georgia Department of Education, children approved for reduced-price meals will receive meals at no cost for the current school year. Therefore, families that may not have qualified for free meals in the past may now be provided breakfast and lunch at no additional cost to the family. Meal charging is not encouraged. Meal charging procedures may vary for each school. For most middle and high schools, the charge limit is $5.00. Schools will notify parents when the child reaches the charge limit. Purchases in addition to the school meal are not allowed until the debt is reconciled.

The Houston County School District encourages the family of each student who attends a non-CEP school to submit a Free and Reduced Price Meal application. The information on the application is used in determining other funding sources for schools. Without this information, funding for educational staff and supplies could be lost. Additionally, income guidelines are updated annually. The only way to know if a family qualifies for benefits is to complete the application. Complete the Free and Reduced Meal Application at https://www.hcbe.net/snpmealapp.

We strive to provide our students with ample time for their meal period. It is important that they are mindful of the line and refrain from cutting in front of other students. Students should avoid being loud and boisterous while in the cafeteria. Each student is responsible for keeping the lunchroom clean and orderly, and they should dispose of trays and other trash in the proper place immediately after finishing their meal. During the lunch period, students are advised not to use corridors where classes are in session to prevent disruptions to ongoing lessons. Students may not have snacks, breakfast, or lunch delivered to the school by a restaurant or third-party food delivery service i.e. Grub Hub, Door Dash, Uber Eats, etc.

More information on school meals including pricing, free and reduced meal applications, and Q&A's can be found by visiting https://www.hcbe.net/schoolnutrition.

MEDIA CENTER

The school provides material for recreational reading and research. The media center staff is eager to help students, and we urge students to request assistance when needed. During the school hours, admittance is by written permit only unless the student comes with a class and a teacher. A permit is obtained from the subject teacher and stamped by a library assistant when the student returns to class. Students coming to the library from class must have a purpose relative to the subject and require the use of library materials.

All books and materials taken from the media center will be checked out at the circulation desk. Reference books and magazines may have different circulation rules than books from the regular collection. Students should ask the media specialist about their school's policy for checking out these materials.
A reasonable fine per day per item is charged when overdue items are late. While in the media center, students are expected to follow all of the rules in their school handbook regarding food, snacks, drinks, and book bags. Food and drinks are never allowed in the shelves or at library computer stations.

Challenged Materials

Criticisms of instructional and library materials that are in the Houston County Schools shall be submitted in writing to the individual school principal on the form available in the school office. It is suggested that the critic file the complaint which will be submitted to the school Media Committee appointed by the principal. If a parent or guardian objects to a reading assignment made by a classroom teacher, the parent may request in writing that the student be given a comparable alternative assignment without penalty. In so doing, the parent should state the reason for the request.

PARENT PERMISSION TO DROP OUT

When a sixteen or seventeen year-old student desires to withdraw from school, he/she must have the written permission of his/her parent or guardian prior to withdrawing. Prior to accepting such permission, a school administrator will have a

conference with the student and parent/legal guardian within two school days of receiving notice of the intent of the student to withdraw. The purpose of the conference is to share with the student and parent/guardian educational options available and the consequences of not earning a high school diploma.

PERFECT ATTENDANCE

To receive an award for PERFECT ATTENDANCE, a student may not be absent, tardy, or be dismissed before the end of the instructional day.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Promotions are made on the basis of the ability of the pupil to do the work at the next level of instruction. Retention or promotion decisions will be the responsibility of the certificated staff. Parents, teachers, the student involved and other concerned persons must be included in the discussions leading to a decision. If any decision to retain or to plan for a longer-than-average time in a particular series of grades occurs, the school will notify the parents prior to the year's terminal report card. Any desire to change grade placement for the betterment of the child must be discussed with parents. The welfare of the student is the primary consideration.

In order to help assure appropriate achievement as students' progress through their school experience, the Houston County School District establishes the following basic promotion and retention criteria for use in the school system.

Promotion of students in grade 8 shall follow requirements set forth in Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2.11.

Grade 8

No eighth grade student shall be promoted to the ninth grade if the student does not achieve the minimum performance level for promotion on the English / Language Arts and mathematics state mandated assessment and meet promotion standards and criteria established by the local board of education for the school that the student attends.

The school principal or designee may retain a student who performs satisfactorily on the state mandated assessment but who does not meet promotion standards and criteria established by the local board of education.

Middle School Promotion and Retention Standards

Promotion of students in grades 6, 7, and 8 shall follow the requirements set forth in Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.11 and the local Board of Education.

Each student must take six subjects: language arts, mathematics, social studies, science and two courses during the exploratory block and will receive four grade averages at the end of a school year.

In order to be promoted, a student must pass a minimum of five subjects each year. Further, a student must pass all four core academic subjects (language arts, mathematics, science and social studies) in order to qualify for promotion to the next grade. Within specified guidelines, schools shall have the authority to "place" a student who does not meet promotion requirements based on the best educational interest of the child.

Attendance regulations set forth in Houston County School District Policy JBD shall be enforced.

RELEASE OF STUDENTS

The school may not release a student to any person other than the person who enrolled the student in school. If an individual other than the person who enrolled the student in school is authorized to take the student from school on a regular basis (e.g., a grandparent or other relative, childcare provider, etc.), the person who enrolled the student in school must notify the school of such in writing, and this notification should be placed in the student's record. A PICTURE ID MAY BE REQUIRED BEFORE THE STUDENT WILL BE RELEASED. If someone other than the person who enrolled the student in school (or an individual authorized in writing by this person) attempts to take custody of the child or to remove the child from the school, the school will immediately contact the person who enrolled the student in school. If a person who attempts to take custody of the child without consent of the person who enrolled the student in school refuses to leave the school or causes a problem the school should contact the appropriate law enforcement agency. (This provision shall apply with respect to State or local law enforcement officers.)

SECTION 504 - NOTICE OF RIGHTS OF STUDENTS AND PARENTS

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, commonly referred to as "Section 504," is a nondiscrimination statute enacted by the United States Congress. The purpose of Section 504 is to prohibit discrimination and to assure that disabled students have educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided to non-disabled students.

For more information regarding Section 504, or if you have questions or need additional assistance, please contact your local system's Section 504 Coordinator at the following address:

Dr. Dana Wiggins, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
HCSD Board Office
1100 Main Street, Perry, Georgia 31069
(478) 988-6200
dana.wiggins@hcbe.net

The implementing regulations for Section 504 as set out in 34 CFR Part 104 provide parents and/or students with the following rights:

1. Your child has the right to an appropriate education designed to meet his or her individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students. 34 CFR 104.33.
2. Your child has the right to free educational services except for those fees that are imposed on non-disabled students or their parents. Insurers and similar third parties who provide services not operated by or provided by the recipient are not relieved from an otherwise valid obligation to provide or pay for services provided to a disabled student. 34 CFR 104.33.
3. Your child has a right to participate in an educational setting (academic and nonacademic) with non- disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate to his or her needs. 34 CFR 104.34.
4. Your child has a right to facilities, services, and activities that are comparable to those provided for non- disabled students. 34 CFR 104.34.
5. Your child has a right to an evaluation prior to a Section 504 determination of eligibility. 34 CFR 104.35.
6. You have the right to not consent to the school system's request to evaluate your child. 34 CFR 104.35.
7. You have the right to ensure that evaluation procedures, which may include testing, conform to the requirements of 34 CFR 104.35.
8. You have the right to ensure that the school system will consider information from a variety of sources as appropriate, which may include aptitude and achievement tests, grades, teacher recommendations and observations, physical conditions, social or cultural background, medical records, and parental recommendations. 34 CFR 104.35.
9. You have the right to ensure that placement decisions are made by a group of persons, including persons knowledgeable about your child, the meaning of the evaluation data, the placement options, and the legal requirements for least restrictive environment and comparable facilities. 34 CFR 104.35.
10. If your child is eligible under Section 504, your child has a right to periodic reevaluations, including prior to any subsequent significant change of placement. 34 CFR 104.35.
11. You have the right to notice prior to any actions by the school system regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child. 34 CFR 104.36.
12. You have the right to examine your child's educational records. 34 CFR 104.36.
13. You have the right to an impartial hearing with respect to the school system's actions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, with opportunity for parental participation in the hearing and representation by an attorney. 34 CFR 104.36.
14. You have the right to receive a copy of this notice and a copy of the school system's impartial hearing procedure upon request. 34 CFR 104.36.
15. If you disagree with the decision of the impartial hearing officer (school board members and other district employees are not considered impartial hearing officers), you have a right to a review of that decision according to the school system's impartial hearing procedure. 34 CFR 104.36.
16. You have the right to, at any time, file a complaint with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

SECTION 504 PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

1. Overview: Any student or parent or guardian ("grievant") may request an impartial hearing due to the school system's actions or inactions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement under Section 504. Requests for an impartial hearing must be in writing to the school system's Section 504 Coordinator;

however, a grievant's failure to request a hearing in writing does not alleviate the school system's obligation to provide an impartial hearing if the grievant orally requests an impartial hearing through the school system's Section 504 Coordinator. The school system's Section 504 Coordinator will assist the grievant in completing the written Request for Hearing.

2. Hearing Request: The Request for the Hearing must include the following:
    a. The name of the student.
    b. The address of the residence of the student.
    c. The name of the school the student is attending.
    d. The decision that is the subject of the hearing.
    e. The requested reasons for review.
    f. The proposed remedy sought by the grievant.
    g. The name and contact information of the grievant.

    Within 10 business days from receiving the grievant's Request for Hearing, the Section 504 Coordinator will acknowledge the Request for Hearing in writing and schedule a time and place for a hearing. If the written Request for Hearing does not contain the necessary information noted above, the Section 504 Coordinator will inform the grievant of the specific information needed to complete the request. All timelines and processes will be stayed until the Request for Hearing contains the necessary information noted above.
3. Mediation: The school system may offer mediation to resolve the issues detailed by the grievant in his or her Request for Hearing. Mediation is voluntary and both the grievant and school system must agree to participate. The grievant may terminate the mediation at any time. If the mediation is terminated without an agreement, the school system will follow the procedures for conducting an impartial hearing without an additional Request for Hearing.
4. Hearing Procedures:
    a. The Section 504 Coordinator will obtain an impartial review official who will conduct a hearing within 45 calendar days from the receipt of the grievant's Request for Hearing unless agreed to otherwise by the grievant or a continuance is granted by the impartial review official.
    b. Upon a showing of good cause by the grievant or school system, the impartial review official, at his or her discretion, may grant a continuance and set a new hearing date. The request for a continuance must be in writing and copied to the other party.
    c. The grievant will have an opportunity to examine the child's educational records prior to the hearing.
    d. The grievant will have the opportunity to be represented by legal counsel at his or her own expense at the hearing and participate, speak, examine witnesses, and present information at the hearing. If the grievant is to be represented by legal counsel at the hearing, he or she must inform the Section 504 Coordinator of that fact in writing at least 10 calendar days prior to the hearing. Failure to notify the Section 504 Coordinator in writing of representation by legal counsel shall constitute good cause for continuance of the hearing.
    e. The grievant will have the burden of proving any claims he or she may assert. When warranted by circumstances or law, the impartial hearing officer may require the recipient to defend its position/decision regarding the claims (i.e. A recipient shall place a disabled student in the regular educational environment operated by the recipient unless it is demonstrated by the recipient that the education of the person in the regular environment with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. 34 C.F.R. §104.34). One or more representatives of the school system, who may be an attorney, will attend the hearing to present the evidence and witnesses, respond to the grievant testimony and answer questions posed by the review official.
    f. The impartial review official shall not have the power to subpoena witnesses, and the strict rules of evidence shall not apply to hearings. The impartial review official shall have the authority to issue pre-hearing instructions, which may include requiring the parties to exchange documents and names of witnesses to be present.
    g. The impartial review official shall determine the weight to be given any evidence based on its reliability and probative value.
    h. The hearing shall be closed to the public.
    i. The issues of the hearing will be limited to those raised in the written or oral request for the hearing.
    j. Witnesses will be questioned directly by the party who calls them. Cross-examination of witnesses will be allowed. The impartial review official, at his or her discretion, may allow further examination of witnesses or ask questions of the witnesses.
    k. Testimony shall be recorded by court reporting or audio recording at the expense of the recipient. All documentation related to the hearing shall be retained by the recipient.
    l. Unless otherwise required by law, the impartial review official shall uphold the action of school system unless the grievant can prove that a preponderance of the evidence supports his or her claim.
    m. Failure of the grievant to appear at a scheduled hearing unless prior notification of absence was provided and approved by the impartial review official or just cause is shown shall constitute a waiver of

the right to a personal appearance before the impartial review official.

5. Decision: The impartial review official shall issue a written determination within 20 calendar days of the date the hearing concluded. The determination of the impartial review official shall not include any monetary damages or the award of any attorney's fees.
6. Review: If not satisfied with the decision of the impartial review official, any party may pursue any right of review, appeal, cause of action or claim available to them under the law, existing state or federal rules or regulations.

SECTION 504 PARENT/STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Although the below steps are recommended for the most efficient resolution at the lowest level, the parent/student has the right to by-pass these steps at any time and request an impartial due process hearing related to decisions or actions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, educational program, or placement. You and the student may take part in the hearing and have an attorney represent you at your own expense. The impartial Hearing Officer will be selected by the district. Hearing requests must be made to the District 504 Coordinator identified in Step II below.

Step I

The complaint shall be presented orally or in writing to the school principal within ten (10) calendar days after the most recent incident upon which the complaint is based. Any witness or other evidence should be provided at this time. The administrator will conduct an investigation and render a written decision within ten (10) calendar days of the filing of the complaint.

Step II

A complainant dissatisfied with the decision of the school principal may appeal to the District Section 504 Coordinator by submitting a written statement of complaint to the District Section 504 Coordinator. This statement must be filed within ten (10) calendar days after the complainant receives the decision from the school principal. The complaint should be mailed to:

Dr. Dana Wiggins, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
HCSD Board Office
1100 Main Street
Perry, Georgia 31069
(478) 988-6200
dana.wiggins@hcbe.net

Upon receipt of the written statement, the Section 504 Coordinator will schedule a meeting to attempt resolution of the concerns. The District Section 504 Coordinator will render a written decision within ten (10) calendar days after the meeting.

Step III

A complainant dissatisfied with the decision of the District Section 504 Coordinator may appeal to the Houston County School District by filing a written request to the Office of the Superintendent. The complaint should be mailed to:

Dr. Richard Rogers
Office of the Superintendent
HCSD Board Office
1100 Main Street
Perry, GA 31069-1850 (478) 988-6200

The appeal must be filed within ten (10) calendar days after the complainant receives the decision from the District Section 504 Coordinator. The Board of Education will act on the complaint at the next regularly scheduled BOE meeting, not less than seven (7) days thereafter.

SELLING AT SCHOOL

Students are prohibited from selling items to other students at school.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Houston County School District will not tolerate sexual harassment in any form by any person.

It is the policy of the Houston County School District to maintain a learning environment that is free from sexual harassment. It shall be a violation of this policy for any person to harass a student, an employee, or any other person through conduct or communications of a sexual nature as defined below. It shall also be a violation of this policy for students to harass other students through conduct or communications of a sexual nature as defined below.

1. Submission to such conduct is made, either explicitly or implicitly, as a term or condition of employment or an individual's education;
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for promotion or academic decisions affecting that individual; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of substantially interfering with an individual's academic or professional performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive academic or work environment.

Any person who has knowledge of or suspects that sexual harassment is occurring within the system shall immediately make a report to the school's principal or the District Title IX Coordinator.

The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the respondent, will be respected consistent with the Board's legal obligations, and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and take corrective action when this conduct has occurred.
All allegations of sexual harassment shall be immediately reported to the school's principal, be fully investigated, and immediate and appropriate corrective or disciplinary action shall be initiated by the principal or the Title IX Coordinator at the District Office, which is the Assistant Superintendent of School Operations. A substantiated charge against an employee shall subject such person to disciplinary action, including discharge.

For additional information, also see "Title IX Non-Discrimination" in student handbook.

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Houston County School District operates in strict adherence to policies and procedures set forth in IDEA and the State Rules and Regulations Pertaining to Special Education. The state rules, as well as parental rights may be referred to online at the following address:

https://gadoe.org/special-education/

What is Child Find?
The purpose of Child Find is to identify, locate, and evaluate children and youth, birth to age 21, who are suspected of, or have a disability or developmental delay. Houston County Schools serve children ages 3 through 21 with identified special education needs.

How can children be referred?
A referral may be made by anyone who has a concern about a child's development. All referrals are considered confidential. The parent retains the right to refuse services. Children may be referred by any of the following:

- Parents/legal guardians/foster parents
- Other family members
- Physicians/health care providers
- Preschool programs
- School system personnel
- Community agencies
- Private school personnel
- Others who are concerned about a child's development

When should a child be referred to Child Find?
A child should be referred when:

- A health or medical disorder interferes with development or learning.
- A child seems to have difficulty seeing or hearing.
- A child appears to have social, emotional or behavioral difficulties that affect his/her ability to learn.

- A child has a diagnosed progressive or degenerative condition that will eventually impair or impede the child's ability to learn.
- A child seems to have difficulty understanding directions like others that are his/her age.
- A child's speech is not understandable to family or friends.
- A child has difficulty with reading, math, or other school subjects.

Where can I find out more about Child Find?
For a preschool aged child, with a chronological age of 3 through 5, who has or may have a developmental disability, please contact Student Services at (478) 988-6200 Ext. 1023.

Parents of students, kindergarten through 12th grade, who suspect their child may have a disability, should contact the teacher, principal or the chairperson of the school's Student Support Team.
What is Special Education and who is eligible for services?

Special Education is instruction designed to meet the unique learning strengths and needs of individual students with disabilities from birth through age 21. A child must be evaluated and identified as having a disability to be eligible for Special Education and/or related services. Programs are provided for students in all disability areas recognized by the State of Georgia. Disability categories are: Autism spectrum disorder, Deaf/blind, Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Emotional and Behavioral Disorder, Intellectual Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairment, Other Health Impairment, Significant Developmental Delay, Specific Learning Disability, Speech/language Impairment, Traumatic Brain Injury, Visual Impairment. Once identified as eligible for special education services, a student will have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) put into place.
The Individual Education Plan (IEP)
The IEP is a legal document written for students determined to need special education services. This document addresses the unique abilities and needs and how the student will access the general education curriculum. This includes the special education and related services needed to participate in the educational environment. The IEP is developed by the IEP team. The IEP team is a group of individuals that are responsible for developing, reviewing, or revising an IEP for a child with a disability. The IEP team includes the following participants: the parents or guardian of the child, the LEA, not less than one regular education teacher, and related services providers when appropriate.

A *Quick Guide to the IEP* can be found at the following address:

https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/parents/needs/speced/iepguide/iepguide.pdf

If you would like a further explanation of any of this information, you may contact, Dr. Kristi Lee Arrington, Director in the Houston County School District, at (478) 988-6216, or by email at kristi.arrington@hcbe.net.

Or you may ask for assistance from the Georgia Department of Education, Divisions for Special Education Supports and Services, Suite 1870, Twin Towers East, Atlanta, Georgia 30334-5010, (404) 656-3963 or 1-800-311-3627 or www.gadoe.org. Regional assistance can be found by contacting the Georgia Learning Resource System (GLRS) by phone (1-800-282-7552), or through their website at www.glrs.org.

STUDENT OR PARENT GRIEVANCE

All parties are encouraged to resolve issues at the lowest level before filing a formal grievance. The school principal may try to resolve concerns informally if the complainant expresses a willingness to participate in this process.

Please refer to the grievance procedures provided on the district website.

TEST SCHEDULE

A statewide testing program is established in Georgia to facilitate instructional planning, to provide feedback to students and parents, and to evaluate the effectiveness of educational programs. The Houston County School District's Department of District and School Effectiveness provides support to schools for the implementation of state mandated assessments. The department works with schools and district departments to provide training, data analysis, and appropriate use of assessment and assessment strategies.

Information about assessments and the assessment calendar can be found on the Houston County assessments website at https://www.hcbe.net/assessments.

TEXTBOOKS/LEARNING DEVICES

Houston County School District provides all textbooks and learning devices to students. Students will be responsible for the textbooks and learning devices assigned to them. The following guidelines and expectations apply to students' use of textbooks and learning devices:

1. Students must pay for textbooks and learning devices that are lost or damaged beyond normal wear or repair.
2. All books and learning devices will be barcoded. Barcodes should not be removed from books and learning devices. Books will not be accepted with the barcode removed or damaged.
3. Students will be charged the purchase price for books if the barcode is missing or damaged.
4. Students will pay the replacement cost for any lost/damaged books, learning devices, chargers, and protective cases.
5. Charges for damaged books are assessed by the principal according to the book's condition when issued and the extent of the damages.
6. A student's failure to pay for lost or damaged books, media materials, and learning devices will result in the withholding of report cards and graduation diplomas.
7. Students should not place stickers, drawings, or other markings on books, learning devices, and protective coverings. Students will be assessed fees for altering books, learning devices, and protective coverings in this manner.
8. Replacement textbooks and learning devices will not be issued until payment has been made for lost or damaged materials. A textbook and learning device price list will be made available to parents of students who lose or damage materials.

TITLE I/TITLE II PARENT/STUDENT GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

Although the below steps are recommended for the most efficient resolution at the lowest level, the parent/student has the right to by-pass these steps at any time and request an impartial due process hearing related to decisions or actions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, educational program, or placement. You and the student may take part in the hearing and have an attorney represent you at your own expense. The impartial Hearing Officer will be selected by the district. Hearing requests must be made to the Director of Federal Programs identified in Step II below.

Step I

The complaint shall be presented orally or in writing to the school principal within ten (10) calendar days after the most recent incident upon which the complaint is based. Any witness or other evidence should be provided at this time. The administrator will conduct an investigation and render a written decision within ten (10) calendar days of the filing of the complaint.

Step II

A complainant dissatisfied with the decision of the school principal may appeal to the Director of Federal Programs by submitting a written statement of complaint to the Director of Federal Programs. This statement must be filed within ten (10) calendar days after the complainant receives the decision from the school principal. The complaint should be mailed to

Dr. Dana Morris, Director of Federal Programs
HCSD
1100 Main Street
Perry, GA 31069-1850
Phone: (478) 988-6200
Fax: (478) 988- 6220 dana.h.morris@hcbe.net

Upon receipt of the written statement, the Director of Federal Programs will schedule a meeting to attempt resolution of the concerns. The Director of Federal Programs will render a written decision within ten (10) calendar days after the meeting.

Step III

A complainant dissatisfied with the decision of the Director of Federal Programs may appeal to the Houston County School District by filing a written request to the Office of the Superintendent. The complaint should be mailed to:

Dr. Richard Rogers
Office of the Superintendent
HCSD

The appeal must be filed within ten (10) calendar days after the complainant receives the decision from the District Director of Federal Programs. The Board of Education will act on the complaint at the next regularly scheduled BOE meeting, not less than seven (7) days thereafter.

TITLE VI – ANTI-HARASSMENT

The Houston County School District by and through its Houston County Board of Education believes that each and every student should be able to receive their educational benefit free of acts of harassment based on a student's race, color or national origin. To this end and in the effort to foster a school atmosphere free from racial animus, discord or harassment, the Houston County School District makes this policy statement. Students and their parents have the right to and should report harassment on the basis of race, color or national origin and the reporting of such conduct assists the District to meet its goal as hereinabove stated. Any student who believes they have been subjected to harassment or that a hostile environment has been created based on race, color or national origin should report it to Houston County School District administration.

The complaint policy as outlined in Board Policy JCE shall be followed. The Houston County School District personnel shall conduct a prompt investigation and those persons who are found to have engaged in acts of harassment that create a hostile environment based on race, color or national origin may be disciplined to include as warranted suspension, expulsion or termination of employment. The Houston County School District will not tolerate acts of retaliation against individuals who report harassment, or the creation of a hostile environment based on race, color or national origin. It is the hope of the Houston County School District that students, parents/guardians and Houston County School District staff will work together to prevent acts of harassment based on race, color or national origin and any retaliation which is found to exist.

TITLE IX - NON-DISCRIMINATION

Federal law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964); sex (Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972); or disability in educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance. Students and parents are hereby notified that the Houston County Board of Education does not discriminate in any educational programs or activities. For questions or concerns about Title IX, a student or parent should contact the District's Title IX Coordinator at: Mr. Del Martin, Director of School Operations, 1100 Main Street, Perry, Georgia, 31069 or by phone at 478-988-6200, or email address, TitleIX@hcbe.net. Complaint forms are available in the principal's office at each school.

TITLE IX SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Houston County School District desires that all students receive the benefit of an adequate education. With this view in mind, the District prohibits unlawful discrimination against students on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or disability in its programs and activities. Any student, parent, or other person, who believes sexual harassment has occurred, should complete the "Title IX Sexual Harassment Formal Complaint Form" and submit it to the Title IX Coordinator. The Title IX Coordinator is a Director of School Operations in the district office. The Coordinator may be contacted at 1100 Main Street, Perry, Georgia, 31069 or by phone at 478-988-6200, or email address, TitleIX@hcbe.net. Complaint forms are available in the principal's office at each school. In all Title IX investigations, the District will use a preponderance of the evidence standard.

Sexual Harassment is defined pursuant to Federal Law, 34 C.F.R. § 106.30(a) as follows:

a) An employee of the District conditioning and provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the District on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (i.e., quid pro quo sexual harassment);

b) Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the District's education program or activity;

c) "Sexual assault" as defined in Federal Law 20 U.S.C. 1092(f)(6)(A)(v) and parallel provisions of the Georgia Official Code Annotated, "dating violence" as defined in Federal Law, 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(10), and parallel provisions of the Georgia Official Code Annotated, "domestic violence" as defined in Federal Law 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(8), or "stalking" as defined in Federal Law 34 U.S.C. 12291(a)(30) and parallel provisions of the Georgia Official Code Annotated.

TOP STATE FOR TALENT ACT

Georgia General Assembly HB 192: July 1, 2025

The purpose of the Top State for Talent Act is to provide a process for the development of an individual graduation plan for each student in Georgia. It allows students and parents to work together to plan for the future.

"Beginning with the 2010-2011 school year, students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades shall be provided counseling, advisement, career awareness, career interest inventories, and information to assist them in evaluating their academic skills and career interests. Before the end of the second semester of the eighth grade, students shall develop an individual graduation plan in consultation with their parents, guardians, or individuals appointed by the parents or guardians to serve as their designee. High school students shall be provided guidance, advisement, and counseling annually that will enable them to successfully complete their individual graduation plans, preparing them for a seamless transition to postsecondary study, further training, or employment."

Advisement is a major part of education and career planning for ALL students. The Top State for Talent Act mandates advisement in grades 6 through 12.

Effective advisement is measured by the utilization of the selected Career Information System (CIS) in all middle and high schools. In Houston County, Georgia Student Finance Commission's GACollege411 has been utilized. Their new site, GAfutures.org, is being launched for the 2015-2016 school year.

GA Futures

www.gafutures.org tools that will assist students with educational and career planning. Students and parents can gather educational and career-related information upon which they can make better and more informed decisions about their futures.

UNIVERSAL BEHAVIOR SCREENING

FOCUS (Factors of Concern, Understanding, and Safety) is a brief, adaptive universal behavioral screening tool completed by students in grades 6-8.

This is a proactive way to identify behaviors, feelings, or experiences that may be obstacles to learning. FOCUS is not a diagnostic tool. Students complete FOCUS independently using a 5-point response scale (Never, Occasionally, Sometimes, Often, Always). The screener takes approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. FOCUS uses an adaptive design, meaning that based on a student's initial response, there may be additional follow-up questions. The data discovered from the use of this tool will not be used to label students, but to drive District and school decisions around student supports and school safety.

Parents may request access to their students' screening information by contacting the school counselor.

Additional information regarding can be found by visiting our website at https://www.hcbe.net/screening.

VOLUNTEERS AT SCHOOL

The Houston County School District welcomes the involvement of parents and other members of the community as volunteer helpers in the school. Because student welfare and safety are primary concerns, volunteers who provide direct services to students and staff are required to obtain security clearance. Additional information about this process may be obtained from school personnel.

VISITORS AT SCHOOL

A visitor is defined as any person who is not a student at such school, an employee of the school or school system, a school board member, an approved volunteer following established guidelines of the school, or a person who has been invited to or otherwise authorized to be at the school by a principal, teacher, counselor, or other authorized employee of the school. All visitors are required to report to the school office upon entering and leaving the school building to obtain a pass. Visitors are limited to the office area of the school only, unless otherwise directed by the school principal or designee.

Any person who shall not have any legitimate cause or need to be present upon the premises or within the school safety zone of any school and who willfully fails to remove himself or herself from such premises after the principal or designee of such school requests him or her to do so, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature.

All visitors are reminded of the following Georgia law:

> **Any parent, guardian, or person other than a student at a public school who has been advised that minor children are present who continues to upbraid, insult, or abuse any public school teacher, public school administrator, or public school bus driver in the presence and hearing of a student while on the premises of any public school or public school bus may be ordered by any of the above designated school personnel to leave the school premises or school bus, and upon failure to do so, such persons shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon conviction thereof, shall be punished by a fine not to exceed $500.**

Each principal or designee of each school shall have the authority to exercise such control over the buildings and grounds upon which a school is located so as to prohibit any person who does not have a legitimate need or cause to be present thereon from loitering on such premises.

Any person who is not a member of the school staff or student body who loiters on or about any school building or grounds without written permission or who causes disturbances may be prosecuted according to law.

WEATHER

In the event of school cancellation, parents may be notified through Houston County School District communication platforms.

If a tornado warning is issued, bus dismissal may be delayed. If students are enroute to or from school and a tornado warning is issued, buses are required to stop at the nearest school and students/driver takes shelter there until the warning has passed.

WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

Parents should notify the school if for any reason it becomes necessary for their child to be withdrawn from school. Fees owed for lost or damaged books, library fines, lunch fees, etc. must be paid before the withdrawal process is complete. Parents should take a copy of the withdrawal form with them to the new school.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the purpose of the Houston County Board of Education to operate each school in a manner that will provide an orderly process of education and that will provide for the welfare and safety of all students who attend the schools within the District. In accordance with that purpose, the Board of Education has adopted a policy, which requires all schools to adopt codes of conduct. Students are required to follow the Code of Conduct at all times in order to facilitate a positive learning environment for themselves and other students. These standards for behavior require students to respect each other and school district employees, to obey student behavior policies adopted by the Board and to obey student behavior rules established at each school within the District.

A school's primary goal is to educate, not to punish; however, when the behavior of an individual student comes in conflict with the rights of others, corrective actions may be necessary for the benefit of that individual and the school as a whole. Accordingly, students shall be governed by policies, regulations and rules set forth in the Code of Conduct.

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

The Code of Conduct is effective during the following times and in the following places:

- At school or on property owned by the school district at any time;
- Off school grounds at any school-related activity, function or event and while traveling to and from such events;
- On school buses and at school bus stops.

Also, students may be disciplined for conduct off campus, which could result in the student being criminally charged with a felony and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process.

Major offenses including, but not limited to, drug and weapon offenses can lead to schools being named as an Unsafe School according to the provisions of State Board Rule 160-4-8-.16, UNSAFE SCHOOL CHOICE OPTIONS.

Parents are encouraged to become familiar with the Code of Conduct and to be supportive of it in their daily communication with their children and others in the community.

AUTHORITY OF THE PRINCIPAL

The principal is the designated leader of the school and, in concert with the staff, is responsible for the orderly operation of the school. In cases of disruptive, disorderly or dangerous conduct not covered in the Code of Conduct, the principal may undertake corrective measures, which he or she believes to be in the best interest of the student and the school provided any such action does not violate school board policy or procedures.

AUTHORITY OF THE TEACHER

The Superintendent fully supports the authority of principals and teachers in the school district to remove a student from the classroom pursuant to provisions of state law.

Each teacher shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-2-737, which requires the filing of a report by a teacher who has knowledge that a student has exhibited behavior that repeatedly or substantially interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in their class or with the ability of such student's classmates to learn. Such report shall be filed with the principal or designee on the school day of the most recent occurrence of such behavior, shall not exceed one page, and shall describe the behavior. The principal or designee shall, within one school day after receiving such a report from a teacher, send to the student's parents or guardian a copy of the report and information regarding how the student's parents or guardians may contact the principal or designee.

The principal or designee shall notify in writing the teacher and the student's parents or guardian of the discipline or student support services, which has occurred as a result of the teacher's report within one school day from the imposition of discipline or the utilization of the support services. The principal or designee shall make a reasonable attempt to confirm that the student's parents or guardian has received the written notification, including information as to how the parents or guardian may contact the principal or designee.

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

When it is necessary to impose discipline, school administrators and teachers will follow a progressive discipline process as appropriate considering the student's discipline history and conduct.

The Code of Conduct provides a systematic process of behavioral correction in which inappropriate behaviors are followed by consequences. Disciplinary actions are designed to teach students self-discipline and to help them substitute inappropriate behaviors with those that are consistent with the character traits from Georgia's Character Education Program.

The following disciplinary actions, or any of them, may be imposed for any violation of this Code of Conduct:

- Warning and/or Counseling with a School Administrator, Counselor, or Teacher:
- Loss of Privileges
- Removal from Class or Activity
- Notification of Parents
- Parent Conference
- Detention
- In-school Suspension
- Placement in an Alternative Education Program
- Short-term Home Suspension
- Referral to a Tribunal for Long-term Suspension or Expulsion
- Suspension or Expulsion from the School Bus
- Referral to Law Enforcement or Juvenile Court Officials: Georgia law requires that certain acts of misconduct be referred to the appropriate law enforcement officials. The School will refer any act of misconduct to law enforcement officials when school officials determine such referral to be necessary or appropriate.

The maximum punishments for an offense include long-term suspension or expulsion, including permanent expulsion, but those punishments will be determined only by a disciplinary tribunal as outlined in the Board of Education policies.

Disciplinary hearings shall be held no later than ten school days after the beginning of the student's suspension unless the school district and parents or guardians mutually agree to an extension.

Any teacher who is called as a witness by any person shall be given notice no later than three days prior to the hearing.

In the event a student or their parent/guardian does not wish to contest the charge(s) of violation(s) of the discipline rules of the school's Code of Conduct for which a tribunal has been requested, the student and parent may voluntarily accept the consequences recommended by the school by signing a Tribunal Waiver Agreement form. Such waiver shall specify an agreement to waive the opportunity to participate in a tribunal hearing, present evidence, cross examine witnesses, and be represented by an attorney. The decision to waive the tribunal shall be final and cannot be appealed by the school or family. The waiver must be signed by a parent/guardian and a school administrator.

Before a student is suspended for ten days or less, the principal or designee will inform the student of the offense for which the student is charged and allow the student to explain their behavior. If the student is suspended, the student's parents will be notified if possible. School officials may involve law enforcement officials when evidence surrounding a student's conduct necessitates police involvement or when there is a legal requirement that an incident be reported.

School officials may search a student if there is reasonable suspicion the student is in possession of an item that is illegal or against school rules. Students' vehicles brought on campus, student book bags, school lockers, desks and other school property are subject to inspection and search by school authorities at any time without further notice to students or parents. Students are required to cooperate if asked to open book bags, lockers or any vehicle brought on campus. Metal detectors and drug or weapon sniffing dogs may be utilized at school or at any school function, including activities, which occur outside normal school hours or off the school campus at the discretion of administrators.

BEHAVIOR WHICH WILL RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES

The degree of discipline imposed will be in accordance with the progressive discipline process unless otherwise stated.

- **Possession, purchase, transfer, sale, use in any amount, distribution, or being under the influence of any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturates, marijuana, drug paraphernalia or alcoholic beverage or other intoxicant, to include prescription, over the counter drugs, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) oil, cannabidiol (CBD) oil, and substances represented as drugs or alcohol may be subject to suspension up to two full semesters.**
- **Possession of a firearm, dangerous instrument, hazardous object, or weapon shall require expulsion for a period of not less than one calendar year;** provided, however, that a hearing officer, tribunal panel, administrator, superintendent, or local board of education shall have the authority to modify such expulsion requirement on a case by case basis. For definitions, refer to Policy JCDAE.
- **Verbal assault, written assault, including threats of violence or bodily harm and/or sexual assault or harassment, of teachers, administrators, other school personnel, other students, or persons attending school-related functions:** Immediate suspension and automatic referral to a disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed a verbal or physical assault upon a teacher or other school personnel; possible referral to a disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed an assault upon another student or a person attending a school-related function.
- **Physical assault or battery, including sexual battery, of other students, or persons attending school-related functions:** possible referral to a disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed battery upon another student or a person attending a school-related function.
- **Fighting**: any student engaged in fighting (mutual combat or assault/battery) may be subject to discipline up to and including long-term suspension at the discretion of the student's building administrator. Penalties recommended for fighting shall not be reduced or limited by, but shall be in addition to, any penalties imposed by any court of competent jurisdiction.
- **Terroristic Threats and Acts:** any student who commits a terroristic threat or act shall be subject to discipline, including expulsion.
- **Physical violence against a teacher, school bus driver, or other school personnel:** Immediate suspension and automatic referral to the disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed an act of physical violence against a teacher or other school personnel. Possible punishments include short term suspension, long term suspension, or expulsion. Appropriate law enforcement personnel will be notified as necessary.
- **Physical violence against a teacher, school bus driver, or other school personnel, which caused physical harm**: A student found by a disciplinary hearing officer, panel, or tribunal to have committed an act of physical violence, which caused harm against a teacher, school bus driver, school official, or school employee shall be expelled from the public school district. The expulsion shall be for the remainder of the student's eligibility to attend public school pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 20-2-150. Appropriate law enforcement personnel will be notified as necessary.
- **Disrespectful conduct, including use of vulgar or profane language, toward teachers, administrators, other school personnel, other students, or persons attending school-related functions.**
- **Any behavior based on a student's race, national origin, sex, or disability that is unwelcome, unwanted, and/or uninvited by the recipient is prohibited, including verbal or non-verbal taunting, physical contact, unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature, up to and including sexual harassment as used in connection with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.**
- **Possession or use of tobacco in any form or any product, paraphernalia, or substance that is represented as tobacco or any smoking/vaping oil to include all forms of electronic cigarettes, vapor pens and any instrument used to inhale vapor.**
- **Unauthorized use of school computers or computer network for anything other than instructional purposes**. This includes, but is not limited to computer misuse, using computer to view or send inappropriate material, hacking, and violation of school computer use policy.
- **Damaging or defacing personal property, including the property of another student or any person legitimately at the school, or school property (vandalism or graffiti) during school hours or off-school hours.**
- **Theft:** taking of personal property of another person or the school.
- **Burglary of school property.**
- **Extortion or attempted extortion.**
- **Possession and/or use of fireworks or any explosive.**
- **Activating a fire alarm under false pretenses or making a bomb threat shall at a minimum result in suspension for one full semester.**
- **Disruption of school.**
- **Insubordination, disorderly conduct, disobeying school rules, regulations, or directives.**

- **Disobeying directives given by teachers, administrators, or other school staff or refusal to talk with an administrator.**
- **Classroom and school disturbances.**
- **Violation of school dress code.**
- **Use of profane, vulgar, or obscene words or indecent exposure.**
- **Use of cell phone or electronic communication device during the school day except as approved by a staff member.**
- **Inappropriate public displays of affection.**
- **Gambling or possession of gambling devices.**
- **Moving and non-moving motor vehicle violations upon school property and at school events.**
- **Giving false information to school officials.**
- **Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information regarding instances of alleged inappropriate behavior by a teacher, administrator, or other school employee toward a student or other students.**
- **Cheating on school assignments.**
- **Unexcused absence, chronic tardiness, skipping class, leaving campus without permission, failure to comply with compulsory attendance law.**
- **Bullying:** Bullying, as the term is defined in Georgia law, of a student by another student is strictly prohibited. Acts of bullying shall be punished by a range of consequences through the progressive discipline process. Such consequences shall include, at a minimum, counseling and disciplinary action as appropriate under the circumstances. However, Georgia law mandates that upon a finding by the disciplinary hearing officer, panel or tribunal that a student in grades 6-12 has committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year, the student shall be assigned to an alternative school.
- **Intentionally aiding, abetting or participating in a violation of the student Code of Conduct as a party to the prohibited acts.**
- **Any overt act associated with others to effect the object of a conspiracy to commit a violation of the student Code of Conduct.**
- **Inciting, advising, or counseling of others to engage in prohibited acts.**
- **Willful and persistent violation of the student Code of Conduct**.
- **Criminal law violations/Off-campus misconduct:** A student whose conduct off campus could result in the student being criminally charged with a felony and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process may be subject to disciplinary action, including in-school suspension, short-term suspension and referral to a disciplinary tribunal.
- **Gang Related Activity**: Any group of three or more students with a common name or common identifying signs, symbols, tattoos, graffiti, and/or attire which engage in activity that violates O.C.G.A. § 16-15-3 and/or is conduct subversive to the good order and discipline of the school and/or a violation of the student Code of Conduct.
- **Physical contact of a sexual nature on school property.**
- **Any Other Conduct**: A student shall not engage in any other conduct not listed above subversive to the good order and discipline of his/her school and/or school district.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Aggravated Battery: Intentionally making physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with the person of another or intentionally making physical contact with any object, which causes physical harm to another.

Assault: Any threat or attempt to physically harm another person or any act, which reasonably places another person in fear of physical harm. (Example: threatening language or swinging at someone in an attempt to strike.)

Battery: Intentionally making physical contact with another person in an insulting, offensive, or provoking manner.

Behavior Contract: A written agreement between a student and the school to address chronic misbehavior or return from an alternative program placement. Any student on a behavior contract who continues to violate school rules shall be subject to discipline consequences ranging from in school suspension to an alternative program placement at the discretion of the building principal.

Bullying: In accordance with Georgia law, Bullying is defined as follows: An act that is: (1) Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so; (2) any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or (3) any intentional written, verbal,

or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that: (a) causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1; (b) has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education or otherwise substantially infringing upon the rights of a student; (c) is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or (d) has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school. The term applies to acts which occur on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school related functions or activities including, but not limited to, extracurricular activities, or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of a local school system. The term applies to acts which occur on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school related functions or activities including, but not limited to, extracurricular activities, or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of a local school system. Such term includes acts of cyberbullying that originate on school property or involve the use of school equipment, including, but not limited to, acts that occur within a school sponsored online activity.

Burglary of school property: breaking and entering into school district property.

Chronic Disciplinary Problem Student: A student who exhibits a pattern of behavioral characteristics which interfere with the learning process of students around him or her and which are likely to recur.

Conspiracy: A student commits a violation of the student Code of Conduct when together with one or more other persons conspires to commit an act that would be a crime or violation of the student Code of Conduct and such other person does any overt act to effect the object of the conspiracy.

Detention: A requirement that the student report to a specified school location and to a designated teacher or school official to make up work missed. Detention may require the student's attendance before school or after school. Students are given one days' warning so that arrangements for transportation can be made by the parents or guardians.

Disciplinary Tribunal: School officials appointed by the Board of Education to sit as fact finder and judge with respect to student disciplinary matters.

Dress Code: The current dress code is explained in the student handbook.

Drug: A legal substance used as medicine with or without a prescription or an illegal substance scheduled in the Georgia Controlled Substance Act. All legal substances shall only be possessed or dispensed according to Board Policy. Use of a drug authorized by a medical prescription from a registered physician and taken in accordance with the guidelines in the student handbook and the Health Services Manual shall not be considered a violation of this rule.

Expulsion: Suspension of a student from a public school beyond the current school quarter or semester. Such action may be taken only by a disciplinary tribunal.

Extortion: Obtaining another person's consent to any act, money, personal property, or goods from another student by violence, threats, or misuse of authority.

Fighting: Fighting is defined as "*a physical struggle or a physical struggle and confrontation wherein blows of the fist, arms, legs or feet are intended to hit or do in fact hit any other student or any other person while a student is going to or from school, during the school day, at any school related activity and/or on school property*."

Fireworks: The term "fireworks" means any combustible or explosive composition or any substance or combination of substances or article prepared for the purpose of producing a visible or audible effect by combustion, explosion, deflagration, or detonation, as well as articles containing any explosive or flammable compound and tablets and other devices containing an explosive substance.

Gambling: Engaging in a game or contest in which the outcome is dependent upon chance even though accompanied by some skill, and in which a participant stands to win or lose something of value.

In-School Suspension: Removal of a student from class(es) or regular school program and assignment of that student to an alternative program isolated from peers.

Party to a crime or violation of the student Code of Conduct: Every student concerned in the commission of a crime or violation of the student Code of Conduct may be charged with or found in violation of the student Code of Conduct may be charged with and found guilty of the prohibited acts. A student concerned in the commission of a violation of the student Code of Conduct if:

(1) Directly commits the prohibited act(s).
(2) Intentionally causes some other person to commit the prohibited act under such circumstances that the other person is not guilty of any prohibited act in fact or because of legal incapacity.
(3) Intentionally aids or abets in the commission of the prohibited acts; or
(4) Intentionally advises, encourages, hires, counsels, or procures another to commit the prohibited acts.

Suspension: Removal of a student from the regular school program for a period not to exceed 10 days (short-term) or for a period greater than 10 days (long-term, which may be imposed only by a disciplinary tribunal). During the period of suspension, the student is excluded from all school-sponsored activities including practices, as well as competitive events, and/or activities sponsored by the school or its employees.

Theft: The offense of taking or misappropriating any property, of another with the intention of depriving that person of the property, regardless of the manner in which the property is taken or appropriated.

Terroristic Threats and Acts: Any student who commits a terroristic threat or act shall be subject to discipline, including expulsion. A student commits the offense of a terroristic threat when he threatens:

- To commit any crime of violence, or
- To burn or damage property for the purpose of terrorizing another, or
- By causing the evacuation of a school building, place of assembly for school-related events or school bus transportation, or
- Causing serious school inconvenience in reckless disregard of the risk of causing such terror or inconvenience, or
- A student shall not knowingly furnish or disseminate through a computer or computer network any picture, photograph, or drawing or similar visual representation or verbal description of any information designed to encourage, solicit, or otherwise promote terroristic acts as herein defined.

Waiver: A waiver is an agreement not to contest whether a student has committed an infraction of the Code of Conduct and the acceptance of consequences in lieu of a hearing before a disciplinary tribunal.

Weapons: For the purpose of this policy, the term weapon includes any object, which is or may be used to inflict bodily injury or to place another in fear for personal safety or well-being. (Refer to Policy JCDAE).

Any Other Conduct: A student shall not engage in any other conduct not listed above subversive to the good order and discipline of their school.

BUS MISBEHAVIOR

The following specific provisions shall govern student conduct and safety on all school buses:

(1) All provisions of the student Code of Conduct apply to behavior on the school bus, including but not limited to, acts of physical violence as defined by Code Section 20-2-751.6, bullying as defined by subsection (a) of the Code Section 20-2-751.4, and Board Policy, physical assault or battery of other persons on the school bus, verbal assault of other persons on the school bus, disrespectful conduct toward the school bus driver or other persons on the school bus, and other unruly behavior;

(2) A meeting of the parent or guardian of the student and appropriate school district officials must be held to form a school bus behavior contract whenever:

- A student is found to have engaged in bullying; or
- A student is found to have engaged in physical assault or battery of another person on the school bus.

The school bus behavior contract shall provide for age-appropriate discipline, penalties, and restrictions for student misconduct on the bus. Provisions may include, but are not limited to, assigned seating, ongoing parental involvement, and suspension from riding the bus.

These provisions regarding use of a bus behavior contract are not to be construed to limit the instances when other Code of Conduct violations may require use of a student bus behavior contract.

(3) Students shall be prohibited from using any electronic devices during the operation of a school bus in a manner that might interfere with the school bus communication equipment or the school bus driver's operation of the school bus; and

(4) Students shall be prohibited from using mirrors, lasers, flash cameras, or any other lights or reflective devices in a manner that might interfere with the school bus driver's operation of the school bus.

STUDENT SUPPORT PROCESSES

The Board of Education provides a variety of resources that are available at every school within the district to help address student behavioral problems. The school discipline process will include appropriate consideration of support processes to help students resolve such problems.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

This Code of Conduct is based on the expectation that parents, guardians, teachers and school administrators will work together to improve and enhance student behavior and academic performance and will communicate freely their concerns about, and actions in response to, student behavior that detracts from the learning environment. School administrators recognize that two-way communication through personal contacts are extremely valuable; therefore, they provide information to parents as well as on-going opportunities for school personnel to hear parents' concerns and comments.

Parents and students should contact the principal of the school if specific questions arise related to the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct specifies within its standards of behavior various violations of the Code which may result in a school staff member's request that a parent or guardian come to the school for a conference. Parents are encouraged to visit the schools regularly and are expected to be actively involved in the behavior support processes designed to promote positive choices and behavior.

Georgia law mandates that any time a teacher or principal identifies a student as a chronic disciplinary problem student, the principal shall notify by telephone call and by mail the student's parent or guardian of the disciplinary problem, invite the parent or guardian to observe the student in a classroom situation, and request at least one parent or guardian to attend a conference to devise a disciplinary and behavioral correction plan.

Georgia law also states that before any chronic disciplinary problem student is permitted to return to school from a suspension or expulsion, the school shall request by telephone call and by mail at least one parent or guardian to schedule and attend a conference to devise a disciplinary and behavioral correction plan.

The law allows a local school district to petition the juvenile court to require a parent to attend a school conference. If the court finds that the parent or guardian has willfully and unreasonably failed to attend the conference requested by the principal pursuant to the laws cited above, the court may order the parent or guardian to attend such a conference, order the parent or guardian to participate in such programs or such treatment as the court deems appropriate to improve the student's behavior, or both. After notice and opportunity for hearing, the court may impose a fine, not to exceed $500.00, on a parent or guardian who willfully disobeys an order of the court under this law.

This Conduct Code shall be strictly construed subject only to exceptions required by a State or Federal law applicable hereto, and exceptions made by a disciplinary tribunal on a case-by-case basis.

STUDENT EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES NOTIFICATION

Each school principal shall implement procedures to annually notify all parents or guardians of all school-sponsored extracurricular activities, organizations and clubs in which students may participate and of the right of the parent or

guardian to prohibit their child's participation. Notification to parents and guardians shall be provided annually via the student handbook and shall include the name of the extracurricular activity, student organization or club; and information regarding the purpose, activities or national affiliation of the extracurricular activity, organization or club. Any membership or financial requirements for a student to join or become a member of the activity, organization or club shall be included in the information provided.

No student shall be allowed to participate in any school-sponsored extracurricular activity, organization or club if the student's parent or legal guardian has indicated in writing that the parent will not allow the student to participate and has provided a copy of such written notice to the school principal.

For school clubs formed after publication of the student handbook, parents or guardians must approve their student's participation via e-mail, fax or written permission to the school principal.

School extracurricular activities, organizations, or clubs for purposes of this policy are those that are supervised or sponsored by a school district employee designated by the principal, and that meet in school facilities.

Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Richard Rogers
Board Members
Dr. Rick Unruh, Chair
Dave Crockett, Vice Chair
Angel Brown
Mark Ivory
Clyde Jackson, Jr.
Lori Johnson
Jon Nichols

Career Technical Student Organization (CTSO) Code of Conduct Agreement

HCSD CTSOs

Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) | Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) | First Tech Challenge (FTC) | First Robotics Competition (FRC) | Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA) | Future Farmers of America (FFA) | Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) | SkillsUSA |Technology Student Association (TSA)

Purpose

The Houston County School District is proud to support Career Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) that enhance our Career, Technical, and Agricultural Education (CTAE) programs. These organizations provide students with leadership, teamwork, and career-readiness skills that prepare them for success beyond the classroom.

Participation in a CTSO is a privilege, not a right. Members are expected to demonstrate exemplary conduct, academic effort, and integrity that reflect positively on themselves, their school, and the district.

CTSO Member Expectations

1. Academic Eligibility
- Maintain good academic standing in all core and elective classes, as defined by the school's grading policies.
- Complete all assigned coursework, including CTAE pathway requirements.
* Failure to maintain passing grades may result in ineligibility for competition, travel, or leadership positions until improvement is shown.

2. Attendance
- Maintain regular school attendance in accordance with district policy.
- Students must be present for at least half of the school day to participate in CTSO activities, practices, or events on that day.
* Excessive absences or tardies may result in suspension of CTSO privileges (travel, competition, etc.).

3. Behavior and Conduct
As a representative of Houston County Schools, CTSO members must:
- Demonstrate respect, honesty, and responsibility at all times.
- Follow all school, district, and CTSO rules and policies.

- Refrain from any behavior, in person or online, that discredits the CTSO, school, or district.
- Follow all rules of conduct during trips, competitions, and conferences, including curfews and dress code expectations.
- Use of tobacco, vaping products, alcohol, or drugs will result in immediate disciplinary action and possible removal from the CTSO.

4. Travel and Event Conduct
- Abide by all school and district travel policies.
- Remain under the supervision of advisors and chaperones at all times.
- Conduct themselves with professionalism, courtesy, and integrity.
- Wear appropriate official dress or school-approved attire for all events.
- Observe all hotel, venue, and transportation rules.

5. Financial Responsibility
- All CTSO dues, competition fees, and travel costs must be paid in full by the stated deadlines.
* Students who fail to meet financial commitments may lose eligibility to participate in future CTSO events or trips.

6. Social Media and Digital Conduct
- Members are representatives of their school and the district at all times, including online.
* Inappropriate, disrespectful, or offensive posts, including those involving drugs, alcohol, or harassment will result in disciplinary action and may impact CTSO eligibility.

7. Disciplinary Action and Removal
*Violation of this Code of Conduct, school policy, or district policy may result in:
- Temporary or permanent removal from the CTSO.
- Loss of eligibility for competitions, conferences, or leadership positions.
- Notification to parents and administrators.
- Possible school disciplinary consequences.

Acknowledgment
By signing, we acknowledge that we have read and understand the Houston County School District CTSO Code of Conduct and agree to abide by all expectations and policies outlined above. We understand that participation in CTSOs is a privilege, and failure to meet these expectations may result in suspension or removal from the organization.

Superintendent of Schools
Dr. Richard Rogers
Board Members
Dr. Rick Unruh, Chair
Dave Crockett, Vice Chair
Angel Brown
Mark Ivory
Clyde Jackson, Jr.
Lori Johnson
Jon Nichols

RIGHT TO KNOW PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS AND PARAPROFESSIONALS

Dear Parent(s) or Legal Guardian(s),

In compliance with the requirements of the Every Students Succeeds Act, the Houston County School District would like to inform you that you may request information about the professional qualifications of your student's teacher(s) and/ or paraprofessional(s). The following information may be requested:

- Whether the student's teacher—
  - has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
  - is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and
  - is teaching in the field of discipline of the teacher's certification.

- Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

If you wish to request information concerning your child's teacher's and/ or paraprofessional's qualifications, please contact your child's school or you may contact Dana Morris, Director of Federal Programs, at the Houston County Board of Education at (478) 988-6200 ext. 3449 or email at dana.h.morris@hcbe.net.

Thank you for your interest and involvement in your child's education.

Sincerely,
Dana Morris
Director of Federal Programs