



**2024-2025
EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK**

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Dr. Marcy Burroughs, Superintendent

Sumter County Public Schools is fortunate to have a dedicated and committed Board of Education. Its six members have a combined total of over fifty years of experience serving the children and communities of our County.

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"Learning Today, Leading Tomorrow"

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook is intended to be a resource for employees and should be utilized as a guide to inform employees of the policies, procedures and benefits of Sumter County School System (SCSS). Although this handbook is intended to explain certain policies and practices of the Board, it does not establish or create a legal right, claim, or interest to or in any title, position, assignment, duty, work location, level or rate of compensation, benefit, or term of employment.

Employees are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the content of this handbook, for it will answer many common questions concerning employment with Sumter County School System (SCSS); however, the handbook cannot anticipate every situation or answer every question about employment. As a result, the employee should consult with his or her work site supervisor or the Human Resources Department regarding any questions not answered in this handbook. All forms associated with Human Resources and Payroll/Benefits information can be found online at www.sumter.k12.al.us.

It is our desire that all employees of SCSS find their employment to be personally and professionally rewarding. As such, our objective is to create a work environment that is conducive to these goals. This in turn will create an atmosphere of excellence in supporting our educational mission. We ask that all employees be dedicated to providing the very best educational experience for the students of Sumter County Schools.

Mission, Vision, Values and Beliefs

Our Mission:

The mission of the Sumter County System is to foster a challenging learning environment that creates opportunities for students to graduate college and career-ready.

Our Vision:

The Sumter County School System is committed to empowering learners to maximize their full potential today, making them leaders tomorrow.

Our Beliefs

1. We believe the support from parents, teachers, and stakeholders are valuable to student success.
2. We believe it is our responsibility to prepare students to be College and Career ready.
3. We believe the school system will provide a challenging curriculum.
4. We believe each student will receive a quality education.
5. We believe each student can reach their full potential in a supportive environment.
6. We believe we can meet the diverse needs of all students.

Non-Discrimination Statement

The Sumter County Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities and provides equal access to the Boys Scouts and other designated youth groups. The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the non-discrimination policies: Ms. Shirley Mosley, 504 Coordinator, smosley@sumter.k12.al.us, (205) 652-9605, ext. 1212; and Ms. Clyvie Pritchett, Title IX Coordinator, lpritchett@sumter.k12.al.us, (205) 652-9469, ext. 2101.

Equal Opportunity Employer

The Sumter County Board of Education provides an equal opportunity in education and employment for all qualified persons regardless of race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, pregnancy, age, genetic or disability, military status, or any other legally protected basis. The Board makes personnel decisions based only on valid job-related requirements. The Board does not discriminate on the basis of a physical or mental disability with regard to application for employment and any terms and conditions of employment, provided the individual is qualified, with or without reasonable accommodations, to perform the essential functions of the job.

Employment Requirements

All applicants must submit an online application, any required documents, and a copy of their diploma if applicable. An official transcript and a teaching certificate must also be submitted, if applying for a certified position. Upon recommendation to hire, all employees of Sumter County Board of Education are subject to a background check through the Alabama State Department of Education and are required to be e-verified through the Department of Homeland Security

Alabama Educator Code of Ethics

Introduction

Every educator in Alabama must always strive to provide an environment where all students can learn. To accomplish that goal, educators must value the worth and dignity of every person, be devotional to excellence in all matters, actively support the pursuit of knowledge, and fully participate in the nurturing of a democratic citizenry. Adhering to a high ethical standard is also required.

The Alabama Educator Code of Ethics defines the professional behavior of educators in Alabama and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The code protects the health, safety, and general welfare of students and educators, outlines objective standards of conduct for professional educators, and clearly defines actions of an unethical nature for which disciplinary sanctions are justified.

CODE OF ETHICS STANDARDS

Standard 1: Professional Conduct

An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Encouraging and supporting colleagues in the development and maintenance of high standards.
- o Respecting fellow educators and participating in the development of a professional and supportive teaching environment.
- o Engaging in a variety of individual and collaborative learning experiences essential to developing professionally in order to promote student learning.

Unethical conduct is any conduct that impairs the certificate holder's ability to function in his or her employment position or a pattern of behavior that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Harassment of colleagues.
- o Misuse or mismanagement of tests or test materials.
- o Inappropriate language on school grounds.
- o Physical altercations.
- o Failure to provide appropriate supervision of students.

Standard 2: Trustworthiness

An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Properly representing facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.

- o Advocating for fair and equitable opportunities for all children.
- o Embodying for students the characteristics of intellectual honesty, diplomacy, tact, and fairness.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting professional qualifications, criminal record, or employment history when applying for employment or certification.
- o Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information submitted to federal, state, and/or other governmental agencies.
- o Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel.
- o Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting reasons for absences or leaves.
- o Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information submitted in the course of an official inquiry or investigation.

Standard 3: Unlawful Acts

An educator should abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the commission or conviction of a felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought or a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted.

Standard 4: Teacher/Student Relationship

An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Fulfilling the roles of trusted confidante, mentor, and advocate for students' growth.
- o Nurturing the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of all students.
- o Providing an environment that does not needlessly expose students to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
- o Creating, supporting, and maintaining a challenging learning environment for all students.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Committing any act of child abuse, including physical or verbal abuse.
- o Committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment.
- o Committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act.
- o Engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, national origin, religion, or disability.

- o Soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, or physical relationship with a student.
- o Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

Standard 5: Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Use or Possession

An educator should refrain from the use of alcohol and/or tobacco during the course of professional practice and should never use illegal or unauthorized drugs.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Factually representing the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use and abuse to students during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Being under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs.
- o Being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while documented as being under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages or using tobacco. A school-related activity includes, but is not limited to, any activity that is sponsored by a school or a school system or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum such as field trips, etc., where students are involved.

Standard 6: Public Funds and Property

An educator entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Maximizing the positive effect of school funds through judicious use of said funds.
- o Modeling for students and colleagues the responsible use of public property.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Misusing public or school-related funds.
- o Failing to account for funds collected from students or parents.
- o Submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay.
- o Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts.
- o Using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing body.

Standard 7: Remunerative Conduct

An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Insuring that institutional privileges are not used for personal gain.
- o Insuring that school policies or procedures are not impacted by gifts or gratuities from any person or organization.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local governing body.
- o Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there appears to be a conflict of interest.
- o Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education.

Standard 8: Maintenance of Confidentiality

An educator should comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material, and other information covered by confidentiality agreements.

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Keeping in confidence information about students that has been obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
- o Maintaining diligently the security of standardized test supplies and resources.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Sharing confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status/income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law.
- o Violating confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, and violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items.
- o Violating other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

Standard 9: Abandonment of Contract

An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or educational agency for the duration of the contract.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- o Abandoning the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the employer;
- o Refusing to perform services required by the contract.

Reporting

Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics as soon as possible, but no later than sixty (60) days from the date the educator became aware of the alleged breach, unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of their local school board policies and procedures and/or chain of command for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the local or state school boards, or with the State Department of Education Teacher Certification Section, must be filed in writing and must include the original signature of the complainant.

Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2-.05

(1)-5-c Each Superintendent shall submit to the State Superintendent of Education within ten calendar days of the decision, the name and social security number of each employee holding an Alabama certificate or license who is terminated, or non-renewed, resigns, or is placed on administrative leave for cause, and shall indicate the reason for such action.

Disciplinary Action

Disciplinary action shall be defined as the issuance of a reprimand or warning, or the suspension, revocation, or denial of certificates. "Certificate" refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate issued by the authority of the Alabama State Department of Education.

Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2-.05

(1) Authority of the State Superintendent of Education

- (a) The Superintendent shall have the authority under existing legal standards to:
1. Revoke any certificate held by a person who has been proven guilty of immoral conduct Or unbecoming or indecent behavior in Alabama or any other state or nation in accordance with Ala. Code §16-23-5 (1975).
 2. Refuse to issue a certificate to an applicant whose certificate has been subject to adverse action by another state until after the adverse action has been resolved by that state.
 3. Suspend or revoke an individual's certificate issued by the Superintendent when a Certificate or license issued by another state is subject to adverse action.
 4. Refuse to issue, suspend, or recall a certificate for just cause.

Any of the following grounds shall also be considered cause for disciplinary action:

- o Unethical conduct as outlined in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics,

Standards 1-9.

- o Order from a court of competent jurisdiction.
- o Violation of any other laws or rules applicable to the profession.
- o Any other good and sufficient cause.

An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, or substitute teacher during the period of his or her revocation, suspension, or denial.

WORK SCHEDULES

The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) requires overtime pay at time and a half for all eligible employees who work over forty hours (40) in any one work week. The work week begins on Sunday and ends on Saturday. Only actual hours worked applies when determining if 40 hours for the work week have been exceeded before overtime pay is due. If there is a holiday, sick, or vacation day during the week, then that period of time does not apply to the 40-hour requirement.

An employee is determined to be either exempt from the overtime provisions of the FLSA or non-exempt from those same provisions. An exempt employee is not eligible for overtime pay or compensatory time. Teachers and administrators are exempt employees and not eligible for overtime pay. A non-exempt is due overtime pay or compensatory time off for hours worked over 40 in any one work week.

Employees cannot make up missed time from one work week to another work week. This means that if the employee works 36 hours during one week and 44 hours during the second week, it does not average out to 40 hours a week and therefore no overtime is due. Each work week stands as a separate period of time and the employee is due 4 hours overtime for the second week.

All employees (exempt/certified and nonexempt/classified) are required to use the time clock system. Nonexempt employees are required to clock in and out for payroll and attendance purposes. Exempt employees are required to only clock in and out to document attendance. The time clock records will be used to track attendance for exempt employees.

CLOCKING IN AND OUT

In the time keeping system, “clock in” and “clock out” punches will be rounded according to a 7-minute grace period that rounds up or down to the nearest quarter hour (15 minutes). Employees should clock in no sooner than seven minutes before or after the scheduled shift.

Principals/supervisors may change an employee’s established work day or schedule according to the needs of the school or department. Unless approved as part of an employee’s daily work schedule, nonexempt employees are required to clock in and out for 30-minute unencumbered lunch breaks in addition to clocking in and out at the beginning and end of each work day. Any deviation from an employee’s work schedule must be approved by the employee’s supervisor (e.g., clocking in early/late).

If an employee misses a punch, the employee must follow appropriate procedures to ensure that his/her accurate time is recorded. Employees must complete a Request for Time Clock Override Form (one day per form). Employees who are having issues clocking in/out must contact their supervisor and/or technology.

OVERTIME AND COMPENSATORY RELEASE TIME

Non-exempt employees should clock in and out at their scheduled times. Overtime not authorized unless approved by your supervisor. Continual accumulation of overtime without your supervisor's direct approval may lead to disciplinary action.

Any accumulated, but unused, compensatory time will be paid out at the end of each month (with the exception of maintenance).

Employees must submit approval in advance to their supervisor to request compensatory time. Like all other leave, compensatory time may only be used in whole or half-day increments.

Bus drivers requested to drive a field trip must notify the principal or supervisor in advance if overtime pay will be required. Extended field trip rules are very specific. Employees only receive pay or compensatory release time when driving and doing other required work such as pre-trip inspections, supervising students, and protecting school or student belongings or equipment. Employees do not receive pay while sleeping.

TEACHER WORK SCHEDULE

Supervisory and instructional duties of teachers commence a minimum of fifteen (15) minutes prior to the beginning of the instructional day and conclude fifteen (15) minutes after the dismissal of students. Assignments and duties may extend beyond the instructional day and may include off-campus functions, events, and activities; conferences and meetings with parents; supervision of student arrival and departure; and preparation for the following instructional day. Teachers will be provided a minimum of thirty (30) minutes free of instructional and supervisory responsibilities each teaching day (Policy 5.01.2a).

WORK SCHEDULES SUPPORT PERSONNEL

The Superintendent is authorized to establish work schedules, including minimum work times, for support personnel. Said work schedules shall be in compliance with the Fair Labor Standards Act.

Any classified employee, if directed by his/her supervisor, may be required to work beyond his/her regularly scheduled time if special circumstances (including emergency situations) arise.

Employees are in "pay status" when actually working or when on authorized paid leave. Every employee is expected to comply with established work hours and work schedules.

If an employee's work time along with their authorized paid leave is less than their scheduled work hours for the week, payroll will use compensatory time, vacation time, and personal leave (in that order) for all time worked less than their scheduled hours for the week.

EMPLOYEE ATTENDANCE REQUIREMENTS

Punctual, regular attendance is an essential job function of every job and position, and employees are expected to report to work when scheduled to work and to remain at work each working day. Employees are expected to have a record of hours worked; therefore, all employees are required to utilize the time clock or time sheet at his/her work location as directed.

EMPLOYEE ABSENCES - Aesop

When an employee needs to be absent from work, some are required to enter absences in Aesop, and all other employees must notify their immediate supervisor and building administrator in a timely manner. Please verify with the building administrator/supervisor if you must utilize the Aesop service. It is the employee's responsibility to register an absence when he/she will not be reporting to work or notify the building administrator/supervisor of the absence in a timely manner. Additional questions can be addressed to the Human Resources Office at 205-652-9605. In the event an employee must leave work in the middle of the day, he or she must notify an administrator who will arrange coverage. In the event of an emergency or incapacity that makes advance notice impractical, an employee must notify the supervisor of their absence as early as possible. Except as otherwise provided or permitted, an employee who is absent from work without approved leave will be considered absent without leave in violation of Board policy and subject to appropriate disciplinary measures. Employees who are approved for paid leave or absences will be paid at the regular daily rate of pay; however, a day of paid leave of absence will not count as a day worked for the purposes of computing overtime under the Fair Labor Standards Act. Pay will be reduced on a pro-rata basis for leaves or absences not covered by sick, vacation, personal, or other appropriate form of paid leave. The continuation of benefits during an approved absence is subject to the provisions of the particular benefits policy or plan.

TYPES OF LEAVE

Regular and on time attendance is an essential function of all employees in the Sumter County Schools. Tardiness and absenteeism disrupt work schedules and place an added burden on fellow employees and supervisors.

An employee not reporting to work must be off-duty on some type of approved leave. An employee cannot choose to “drop-off” the payroll or request unpaid/no-pay status at his/her discretion even though he/she is receiving no pay. An employee who is absent from work without approved leave is subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

The SCSS does not “pay out” unused sick, or personal leave upon separation of employment. Unused sick leave, however, may be transferred to another public-school system. Accumulated vacation time will be forfeited if not used prior to the effective date of an employee’s resignation or retirement; provided that an employee who resigns or retires in good standing shall be compensated for up to twenty (20) accumulated, unused vacation days at the employee’s then effective rate of pay (Policy 5.10.6c).

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE

Family Medical Leave is provided in accordance with the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The leave will be for up to 12 weeks (60 workdays) in any 12-month period and may be taken for one (1) or more of the following reasons:

1. Birth of a child, or
2. Adoption of a child or placement of a foster child, or
3. Care of a sick spouse, child, or parent (does not include “in-laws”), or
4. Serious health condition of the employee, or
5. Military Family Leave Entitlements.

To be eligible for FMLA the employee **must have been employed** by the Board for at least twelve (12) months and have worked at least 1,250 hours during the prior 12-month period. FMLA request forms may be obtained from the Human Resources Department.

Board policy requires any available paid leave run concurrently with FMLA and be exhausted before the use of unpaid leave. However, sick leave may only be taken for reasons allowed under policy or by state law.

HOLIDAYS

Annual holidays generally are July 4, Labor Day, fall holidays, Veterans’ Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year’s Day, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday, spring holidays, Memorial Day, and Juneteenth.

LEGAL LEAVE

- Court Leave- Permanent and full-time employees are entitled to regular compensation while performing jury duty (ALA. CODE §12-16-8) or when the employee is summoned for school-related purposes under subpoena or other legal requirement to testify at trial in a court of law or in an administrative proceeding constituted under the statutory authority of the agency conducting the proceedings. Paid leave is not authorized for employees to meet with attorneys, to attend depositions, or to otherwise prepare for legal proceedings

unless the presence of the employee is requested or required by the Superintendent and/or Board.

- **Job Related Subpoenas-** An employee who receives a subpoena due to their job with the Sumter County Board of Education shall receive the regular pay to which he/she is entitled. A copy of the subpoena should be submitted with the appropriate time sheet for documentation.
- **Other Subpoenas-** An employee who receives a subpoena for personal reasons or another reason not job related will be required to use their own personal leave for the absence(s).

MILITARY LEAVE

Military leave shall be granted in compliance with state and federal laws and with applicable court rulings. Employees ordered for such duty shall provide a copy of their orders to the Superintendent or designee.

ON-THE-JOB INJURIES

All full-time employees are covered by the SCSS's On-the-Job Injury program. On-the-job injuries are defined as those injuries occurring during the normal school working day, at school-sponsored activities when responsibility is assigned, or when conducting school business at the request of supervisory personnel. All procedures must be followed, including the notification of the supervisor within 24 hours after the injury and completion of the "On-The-Job Injury Report," as outlined in the Board's Policy Manual (5.10.4). School System personnel may be granted up to ninety (90) work days of paid leave for on-the-job injuries.

On-the-job injuries must be reported immediately or soon as practicable to the employee's immediate supervisor, and the appropriate form must be completed and forwarded to the Personnel Office. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that all required documents are provided to the Human Resources office. For further information, contact the HR office at 205-652-9605.

All medical expenses for on-the-job injuries are the responsibility of the employee and his/her insurance carrier. The school system does not pay for medical expenses for on-the-job injuries. All requests for reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses must be submitted to the Alabama Board of Adjustment. All claims must be filed with the State Board of Adjustment within one year of the date of injury.

Critical Points to Remember:

- All job-related incidents must be reported to the immediate supervisor within twenty-four (24) hours of the incident.
- A completed Report of Injury/Accident form must be sent to Human Resources.

- The employee must use his/her own insurance for any medical expenses. The system does **Not** pay for medical treatment of job-related injuries.
- If the employee requires medical attention for the job-related injury, he/she must submit the On-the-Job Injury Physician Statement form or physician's statement of disability before reimbursement of any sick leave days used will be considered.
- The employee may be eligible for up to 90 days reimbursement or continuation of pay. Proper documentation is required for the employee to receive reimbursement or continuation of pay.
- The employee must be cleared by Human Resources prior to returning to work.
- The employee can submit a claim to the Board of Adjustments for any out-of-pocket expenses.
- SCSS may, at its expense, require the employee seek a second opinion as to the nature of the on On-the-Job injury.

PERSONAL LEAVE

All regular, full time employees are eligible for two (2) non-cumulative personal leave days each scholastic year without loss of pay. Personal leave must be requested in writing in accordance with such procedures as may be established by the Superintendent or the Board. Personal leave may not be taken immediately before or after a school holiday or in the first or last ten days of a school term. Upon written request, certified employees may be compensated for unused personal leave at the end of the school year at the same daily rate of pay used for substitute teachers. All other unused personal leave days convert to sick leave days at the end of the school year (Policy 5.10.5).

SICK LEAVE

Full-time, permanent employees earn one (1) sick leave day each month of their employment. Leave may be taken for personal illness, attendance upon an ill member of the employee's immediate family, bodily injury of the employee, or for death in the immediate family of the employee. An employee may be required to provide a physician's statement and/or other acceptable documentation if there is probable cause to believe that sick leave day usage is being abused or if an absence exceeds three (3) consecutive days.

Taking sick leave for reasons not allowed under policy may constitute an Alabama Educator Code of Ethics violation and/or lead to disciplinary action. Employees are not allowed to donate days to another employee except as provided for catastrophic leave purposes.

SICK LEAVE BANK

Participation in the sick leave bank is voluntary. All full-time employees of the Board who have completed Sick Leave Bank Authorization Forms contributing five (5) days to the Sick Leave Bank are eligible to borrow up to fifteen (15) days from the Sick Leave Bank in accordance with State Board of Education guidelines regulating sick leave. A Sick Leave Bank Committee determines:

- Forms to request borrowed days must be submitted within the appropriate payroll period with supporting documentation. Forms are available through local school bookkeepers as well as the “forms” section of the SCSS website. These forms must be completed as soon as the employee returns to work. Failure to submit a request to borrow days in a timely manner may result in the day being unpaid in violation of SCSS leave policy and may subject the employee to disciplinary action.
- All sick days borrowed from the Sick Leave Bank must be repaid within two (2) years from the date the first sick leave day was borrowed. After the sick leave days have been repaid, the cycle starts over. If an employee separates from the school system before repayment of the sick days and the borrowed sick leave days cannot be deducted from the employee’s final payroll check, the Board will deduct the cost of those days from their payroll check.
- **CATASTROPHIC LEAVE** – In extreme circumstances, a member of the sick leave bank may request catastrophic leave. All other available forms of leave must be exhausted and other conditions apply. If catastrophic leave is approved, other employees may donate sick days to the employee. If there are not enough days donated to cover the leave, those days are unpaid. Catastrophic leave may be granted for the same duration as other leaves of absence. If an employee wishes to donate sick days to a member of the sick leave bank, forms are available from their local school sick bank representative or the Central Office.
- Donated days are applied in the order they are received and excess days will not be charged. Once an employee returns to work following catastrophic leave, no additional days may be donated.

SICK LEAVE TRANSFER FROM ANOTHER SYSTEM

Personnel employed by the Sumter County Board of Education may transfer an unlimited number of sick leave days from another Alabama school system upon proper verification of the number of days from the previous employing board.

UNPAID LEAVE

In cases of substantial hardship or extraordinary circumstances, the Superintendent may, in extremely limited cases, excuse an absence that results in unpaid leave where an employee has exhausted all other available forms of leave. Requests must be made in writing directly to the Superintendent and building principal for consideration. Additional documentation supporting the necessity of the leave may be required. Unexcused unpaid leave will result in disciplinary action.

VACATION LEAVE (Policy 5.10.6)

- Eligible Employees – Twelve-month (240 day) full-time employees are eligible for paid vacation.

- b. Eligible employees will earn ten (10) paid vacation days a year at the rate of one day per month during the scholastic year, excluding the months of May and June. Vacation days may be taken as earned.
- c. Accrual and Accumulation of Vacation Time – Twelve-month employees may carry over unused vacation days from one scholastic year to the following scholastic year, but no more than twenty (20) vacation days may be carried over beyond July 1st. Vacation days may not be bought, sold, or donated. Accumulated vacation time will be forfeited if not used prior to the effective date of an employee’s resignation or retirement; provided that an employee who resigns or retires in good standing shall be compensated for up to twenty (20) accumulated, unused vacation days at the employee’s then effective rate of pay. Employees who are terminated for misconduct or who are not in good standing at the time of their separation from employment with the Board may not convert accumulated and unused vacation days to monetary compensation.
- d. Scheduling – Vacations must be scheduled with the knowledge and approval of the employee’s supervisor. Vacation leave in excess of five (5) consecutive days must be approved by the Superintendent or his/her designee.

OTHER LEAVE

Please refer to the SCSS Policy Manual (beginning with Board Policy 5.10) for other forms of available leave not addressed in this handbook. Note: SCSS does not provide professional development leave for employees to complete internship requirements for administrative, library media, counseling, or other certifications. In those cases, internship hours should be met through the use of personal leave, before/after contracted hours, or during non-contracted days.

BENEFITS AND PAYROLL

TEACHERS’ RETIREMENT SYSTEM

Telephone: 1(877)517-0020

Website: www.rsa-al.gov

All regular employees of the school system are required to be members of the Teachers’ Retirement System of Alabama. The major portion of the contribution is provided by the State of Alabama through legislative appropriation.

Any member of the Retirement System who had service for which he or she received credit in the Employees’ Retirement System or in the Teachers’ Retirement System prior to January 1, 2013, is considered a Tier 1 plan member. The employee contribution (7.5% of contract salary) is tax sheltered. This means that employees do not pay income tax on their 7.5%

contribution until such time as it is received by the employee as retirement income. The retirement program for Tier 1 employees provides for retirement at age 60 with ten (10) years or more of participation service credit OR at any age after accumulating 25 years of employment service credit.

A Tier 2 plan member is any member of the Retirement System who first began eligible employment with the Employees' Retirement System or the Teachers' Retirement System as a participating employee on or after January 1, 2013, and who had no eligible service in the Employees' Retirement System or the Teachers' Retirement System prior to January 1, 2013. The employee contribution is 6%. The retirement program provides for retirement at age 62 with at least ten (10) years of employment service credit.

In addition to retirement benefits, the Retirement System also provides the beneficiary(ies) or estate of a deceased full-time active member or a full-time member who dies within ninety (90) days of being in active pay status is eligible to receive \$15,000 in term life insurance benefits. For members who are less than full-time, the benefit will be prorated. For example, if the member was a half-time employee, the benefit paid would be \$7,500.

FILING FOR RETIREMENT

A completed Retirement Application Packet Part I must be received by the State Retirement System no less than thirty (30) days nor more than ninety (90) days before the effective date of expected retirement. For example, if you wish to retire on June 1, you must file your application with the State Retirement System by the end of April. A representative of the Retirement System conducts local retirement seminars periodically throughout the year for school system employees planning to retire. Information regarding these meetings is available on the RSA website. Employees who are contemplating retirement are highly encouraged to contact RSA prior to making a final decision concerning retirement. Any employee who decides to file for retirement is also required to submit his/her resignation in writing to the Sumter County Board of Education (Ala. Code § 16-25-1).

MEDICARE AND RETIREMENT

If a member or dependent is already Medicare eligible due to age or disability on his or her retirement date, Medicare will become the primary payer and PEEHIP the secondary payer effective on the date of the member's retirement. Medicare-eligible members and/or dependents must have both Medicare Parts A and B on their retirement date to have coverage with PEEHIP and this coverage must be in effect no later than the date of retirement to avoid a lapse in coverage.

ANNUITIES – LIFE INSURANCE

Payroll deductions are available through the Payroll Department for life insurance and annuity policies with certain companies. Contact the Payroll Department for details at 205-652-9605.

FEDERAL LAW SECTION 125 – EMPLOYEE BENEFIT PLAN

All full-time employees are eligible to participate in a “cafeteria employee plan.” This plan gives employees an opportunity to recognize additional monthly income through pre-tax savings. A signature is required annually to re-enroll or deny the available cafeteria plan for all employees. Contact the Payroll Department for details at 205-652-9605.

PAY FOR HIGHER DEGREE PURPOSES AND/OR NATIONAL BOARD CERTIFICATION

Degree credit will be given to current certificated personnel who earn advanced degrees from accredited institutions, upon recognition of the higher degree for pay purposes by the ALSDE. Questions about being paid based on earning an advanced degree may be sent to payforadvanceddegrees@alsde.edu. ***Not all higher degrees may qualify for higher pay, so employees are strongly encouraged to verify that a graduate program will qualify before enrollment.*** It is the certified employee’s responsibility to notify the HR Department upon meeting the qualifications for an advanced degree. New certified employees will be placed on the salary matrix considering the highest degree recognized by the ALSDE and years of experience served in public education.

Each teacher who holds valid certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching/Counseling Standards will be given an annual lump sum of \$5,000 upon the allocation and receipt of funds from the ALSDE. It is the employee’s responsibility to notify the HR Department of initial and renewed National Board Certification.

PAYCHECKS

Employees are paid on a monthly basis. **Paychecks are issued the last banking day of the month.** Pay stubs are available online on the Employee Self-Service Website.

Nine- and ten-month employees, substitutes, and part-time/temporary employees are paid one month in arrears. Twelve-month employees are paid current.

Nine- and ten-month employees do not work during parts of the summer months; however, we pay all full-time employees on a twelve-month basis. Nine- and ten-month full-time employees are paid on a “stretch-out” basis during the summer. This means that each pay period a certain number of days are “set aside” to pay for the months during the summer that the employees do not work. These summer payout checks are for time worked during the year but withheld to pay employees during the summer months.

Employees who are new to SCSS and who are hired on or before August 15th (approximately), will receive 13 paychecks with the first paycheck paid at the end of August. This is to prevent a new employee, hired in early August, from waiting until the end of September for his/her first paycheck.

Those employees hired for less than twelve months and who are hired at the beginning of the contract year should receive their full pay during each month worked. However, employees who start work after the start of their contract year will receive a lower salary for the months worked during the first year because they will not work their full contracted number of days. All employees who do not work their entire contract period will receive a prorated salary. A significant amount of approved unpaid leave will change an employee's total monthly pay for the remainder of the contract period.

RSA-1

The RSA-1 Plan is an IRS Section 457 deferred compensation plan for public employees that can assist employees in saving for retirement through payroll deduction while deferring taxes. More information about RSA-1, including how to enroll, may be found on the Retirement Systems of Alabama (RSA) website.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Employees are covered by Federal Social Security. The legal percentage for this program is deducted from the monthly paychecks. For information, contact the Social Security District Office at 205-349-4863 or 1-800-772-1213.

HEALTH INSURANCE

STATE HEALTH INSURANCE PROGRAM (PEEHIP)

Medical insurance through a combination of State and employee contributions is available. Each employee may choose the particular plan desired. Each full-time employee receives a monthly allotment which may be applied toward the cost of health care. Employees working less than full-time receive a prorated health insurance allotment. In cases where the spouse of an employee has other hospital insurance, the state allocation may be used to purchase additional optional insurance to cover cancer, dental, hospital indemnity, and vision for single or family coverage. Optional insurance is available to those who are insured through the state plan at an additional cost. More detailed information about hospital / medical insurance is available from www.rsa-al.gov.

If there are any questions regarding coverage, call or write the PEEHIP office in Montgomery at 201 South Union Street, Montgomery, AL 36104. The mailing address is P. O. Box 302150, Montgomery, AL 36130-2150, (334) 517-7000 or Toll Free (877) 517-0020.

The Open Enrollment period usually begins on July 1st and ends on August 31st for paper enrollment and July 1st ending on September 10th for online enrollment in order for the changes to be effective October 1. All open paper enrollment forms and written requests must be postmarked no later than August 31st for the PEEHIP office to accept the request. Members can add new types of coverage, dependent coverage or change coverage types during this open enrollment period.

PEEHIP determines and manages the premium deductions; therefore, active and retired members will be required to make all insurance changes with PEEHIP. Members will no longer go to their employer to make changes in their insurance. Prior to the payroll cutoff date, PEEHIP will send an electronic file to each employer authorizing the payroll deductions for each employee. The payroll deduction amount will be based on the insurance plan(s) each member selects. If the payroll deduction is incorrect, members will need to contact PEEHIP instead of their employer. It is imperative for PEEHIP to have the correct home mailing address so all members can receive important PEEHIP information.

Premium Assistance Program

PEEHIP members who have a combined family income of 200% or less of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) may qualify for a reduced premium on their hospital medical or HMO premium. To qualify for the FPL assistance, PEEHIP members must furnish acceptable proof of total income based on their most recently filed Federal Income Tax Return along with copies of pertinent W-2's and 1099's. The premium discount will be effective for the plan year only, and re-certification will be required annually during open enrollment. The most recent Federal Poverty guidelines are listed on the back of the FPL APPLICATION form and are on the PEEHIP website at www.rsaal.gov.

HOSPITAL / MEDICAL (PEEHIP)

Hospital / Medical is a basic plan including major medical. The cost is shared by the State and the employee. Coverage is through PEEHIP and is administered by Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Alabama. All members enrolled in the PEEHIP Hospital / Medical Plan have access to Teladoc, which provides consultations with board-certified doctors via phone or video 24 hours a day / 7 days a week. This service is available at zero copay and can be used to speak to a doctor about a variety of issues such as cold, flu, allergies, infections, and more. When necessary, the doctor can even prescribe medication for treatment.

OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD

Open enrollment for all current and new employees is provided during July 1 through August 31 of each year for coverage effective October 1. ***It is the responsibility of the employee to complete PEEHIP's online enrollment on or before September 10th.*** An insurance card will be mailed to the employee following the initial enrollment. Employees may add new coverage and change coverage types during the open enrollment period only. Employees may add a qualifying life event (e.g., birth of a child) through PEEHIP's online portal.

Employees Hired After October 1st

These employees may enroll only on their date of employment or the first day of the month following their date of employment. New employees who enrolled in the optional plans outside of the Open Enrollment period are required to retain the coverage(s) for at least one year or until the next Open Enrollment period.

Transfers

Employees who transfer from another system are considered current employees and must keep existing insurance coverage until the Open Enrollment period. Changes will be effective October 1st.

OPTIONAL PLANS

There are optional plans offered through PEEHIP. Employees should refer to the PEEHIP Member Handbook for detailed information and limitations on these plans. The current PEEHIP Open Enrollment/ Member Handbook is now available online or members can request a hard copy to be mailed to them by contacting the member's services department at 877-517-0020. The information available in the Member Handbook is effective October 1 of the school year. All optional plans must be retained for the entire insurance year, i.e., until the end of September 30. New employees employed during the Open Enrollment period cannot enroll in the optional plans on their date of employment and cancel the plans October 1 of that same year.

If a member is enrolled in one or more of the Optional plans, the contracts must be all family or all single plans. Members enrolled in family optional plans cannot change to single Optional plans outside of the Open Enrollment period unless all dependent(s) become ineligible due to age, death, or divorce. Optional plans offered include cancer, dental, hospital indemnity, and vision; these are available for full-time employees, and the designated forms are provided through the RSA website.

STATE INSURANCE ALLOTMENT

The state insurance allotment is a fringe benefit provided state employees to assist with the purchase of insurance. The amount paid by the State may vary from one year to the next. A member receives the State insurance employer contribution for each month as long as that member is in pay status at least one-half of the working days of that month.

3-1 RULE

A member earns one month of additional insurance allocation for every three months the employee is in pay status at least one-half of the workdays in the month for that school year. The 3-1 Rule only applies in a situation where an employee has terminated employment, retires, is not in pay status at least one half of the work days in the month, goes on an approved leave of absence without pay, or begins employment in the middle of the year.

- The 3-1 Rule is applied using an August through August fiscal year.
- Extra allocations earned by a member must be applied to insurance premiums immediately after the member is separated from employment.
- The member cannot pick and choose the months to use the allocation.
- An employee must be in pay status at least one-half of the available workdays for three full months to earn an extra one month of insurance allocation.
- An employee can only use the earned allocation credit for the current fiscal year, i.e., the allocation credit cannot be used after August 31st.

- The 3-1 Rule is handled in the same manner for all employees regardless of whether they are paid on a nine (9), ten (10), eleven (11), or twelve (12) month basis.
- Retiring members are eligible to receive the extra allocations earned under the 3-1 Rule.

The table below should be used when calculating the number of months an employee is entitled to receive the insurance allocation.

Actual Service (in months) Earned Allocation(s)

Actual Service (in months)	Earned Allocation(s)
1	1
2	2
3	4
4	5
5	6
6	8
7	9
8	10
9	12
10	12
11	12
12	12

ELIGIBILITY

To be eligible for health insurance, an employee must be employed in a permanent capacity working at least twenty (20) hours per week. (Exception: Bus drivers are considered full-time by law.) Nine (9) and ten (10) month employees' effective date must be on or before September 15 to earn full summer insurance allocations. Employees starting after September 15 will earn a prorated insurance allocation for the summer months. This does not apply to twelve (12) month employees.

All employees participating in the State Insurance Program who have exhausted all leave days as provided by the State of Alabama and the School System must pay the State's share of insurance coverage in addition to the employee's share, within certain guidelines.

FAMILY MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (FMLA)

The 3-1 Rule applies even when a member is granted leave under the Family Medical Leave Act. If the employee earns additional allocations under the 3-1 Rule prior to going on leave under FMLA, the extra allocations should be applied to the months following said leave. Unpaid leave under FMLA will require that the employee pays his/her share directly to the Board (this is the same amount that is deducted for the employee's share from his/her paycheck).

LEAVES OF ABSENCE/COBRA – IMPACT ON HEALTH INSURANCE

When an employee goes off payroll for a leave of absence or other unprotected unpaid leave, that employee is required to submit their monthly premium payment directly to PEEHIP. For members on a leave of absence or COBRA, refer to the PEEHIP member handbook for the premium amount.

EMPLOYMENT STATUS

CERTIFICATION AND CERTIFICATION RENEWAL

Certificates may be reviewed at <https://tcert.alsde.edu/Portal/Public/Pages/SearchCerts.aspx>.

During the spring semester, personnel staff will assist employees up for certificate renewal with the certification renewal process, **but it is the responsibility of each certified employee to keep track of his/her certification renewal date and to take required action needed for certificate renewal in accordance with ALSDE deadlines and regulations.**

Certified employees who are on alternative, non-traditional certification pathways (e.g., emergency, provisional, interim, etc.) are responsible for meeting the requirements for the issuance of the next valid certificate from one school year to the next.

Administration Certification - Administrative certificates must be renewed every five years. Documentation of five (5) PLUs is a requirement for recertification. Two of the PLUs must be state earned and the other three can be local PLUs. The employee is responsible for documenting professional development and submitting that information with the application when it is time for recertification. The application for recertification can be found at www.alsde.edu. The personnel staff will assist employees upon request, but will not be responsible for notification of expiration of certificates for all employees.

Teacher Certification - Teaching certificates must be renewed every five years. Documentation of at least 50 clock hours of professional development activities is a requirement for recertification. Certified employees are expected to document all professional development activities through the use of PowerSchool, the school system's on-line professional development tracking system. At the close of each school year, individual professional development reports must be updated to reflect any activities attended during the school year. The requirements for renewal of a teaching certificate are 50 professional development hours and three years satisfactory teaching within the five-year period of the valid certificate being renewed. Please contact Human Resources with any questions. The personnel staff will assist employees upon request but will not be responsible for notification of expiration of certificates for all employees.

SUBSTITUTES

Teachers

Substitute teachers are required to follow the policies and procedures outlined by Kelly Educational Staffing for substitute staff. Substitute teachers will use the AESOP system through Kelly Services to search and sign up for openings. It shall be the responsibility of the principal and the regular teacher to ensure that the substitute teacher has the necessary instructions and materials to teach effectively, including textbooks, lesson plans, class rolls, schedules, and an outline of local school procedures. The substitute teacher shall provide the regular teacher with a brief report of the day's activities.

Support

It shall be the responsibility of the principal to ensure that the substitute support staff member has the necessary instructions and materials to effectively carry out assigned duties and an outline of local school procedures.

WORK VERIFICATION PROCEDURES

Verification of prior work experience must be obtained through the interview and hiring process. Employees are responsible for providing proper documentation of previous experience for placement on the salary schedule. The Human Resources Department will provide the necessary form to complete the verification process.

EMPLOYEE CLASSIFICATION

Certified employees include teachers and other employees who are required by law to hold Alabama Educator certification as well as JROTC instructors. Classified personnel include bus drivers, bus aides, Child Nutrition Program workers, custodians, mechanics, maintenance personnel, secretaries, clerical assistants, para-educators (clerical, instructional, and special education) and all other persons not otherwise certified by the State Board of Education. Part-time personnel employed in the above positions are referred to as classified employees for business purposes in the Sumter County Schools.

Persons employed for an indefinite period of time and who are employed to work twenty (20) hours or more each week and all bus drivers are defined as full-time permanent employees. Part-time employees (those working less than 20 hours each week); temporary employees (those who employed for a short, finite period of time, such as employees hired for summer employment with specific contract dates); and substitute employees who are employed on a day-to-day "fill-in" basis, even if on a long-term substitute contract, are not eligible for benefits.

EVALUATION

Certified Personnel – Certified employees (other than contract principals) will be evaluated in accordance with an evaluation program approved for use by the Alabama State Board of Education. Contract principals will be evaluated in accordance with rules, regulations, and requirements promulgated by the State Department of Education or as may otherwise be permitted by law. The ALSDE has directed school districts to implement the Alabama Teacher Growth Program. All educators holding a professional educator certificate must have at least one classroom observation by the end of the school year.

Non-Certified Personnel – Non-certified personnel may be evaluated in accordance with criteria and procedures to be developed by the Superintendent.

Use of Evaluations in Connection With Employment Decisions – Unless prohibited by law (including applicable regulations) or the terms of the evaluation instrument, employment evaluations may be considered in making employment decisions, together with such other information and considerations as may reasonably bear upon the wisdom, necessity, or advisability of the employment decision. However, employment evaluations are intended to enhance the overall quality of the school system’s instructional program and are not intended to confer, constitute, or give rise to any individual right, entitlement, or enforceable expectation of continued employment or advancement. Accordingly, except as may be specifically provided otherwise in state law applicable to “contract principals,” employees do not acquire any employment right or right of legal action based on any actual or alleged failure on the part of the Board or the evaluator to follow specific evaluation policies, regulations, or procedures.

Special Evaluation Situations – The Superintendent, the Chief School Financial Officer, and other employees who serve in positions of special trust or sensitivity may be evaluated by such means as may be permitted by law or applicable regulation or as agreed to in an employment contract.

Exempt Personnel – Except when required by law or contract, temporary, substitute, and occasional employees, or employees appointed to supplemental positions (e.g., coaches, extracurricular activity sponsors) will not be formally evaluated in those roles.

JOB ABANDONMENT

Any employee will be considered to have abandoned his/her job and will be terminated as a voluntary resignation, who:

- leaves work and does not report back to work or
- who says he/she quits or who says he/she will not return to work and for whatever reason fails to return to work without notification.

Any employee who has been absent from work for more than ten (10) consecutive work days and who has not obtained an approved leave of absence or otherwise accounted for the absences will be considered to have abandoned his/her job. The employee may be recommended for termination.

Any employee who has been absent from work for more than twenty (20) consecutive work days without contacting his/her supervisor, without good cause, and without an approved leave of absence will be considered to have voluntarily resigned from his/her position and will be processed as having resigned from the position.

All property of the Board in the possession of an employee who separates employment must be inventoried by the employee's immediate supervisor prior to the issuance of his/her paycheck. The employee's last paycheck will be withheld if there is a discrepancy until the matter is resolved. The supervisor must contact the Payroll Department if a check is to be withheld.

JOB VACANCIES

Job vacancy notices shall be posted online at www.sumter.k12.al.us through the ALSDE's approved online application portal (currently HireTrue). Job vacancy notices will also be posted in each school, at each work site, and at the Central Office at least fourteen (14) days when a vacancy occurs in a new, supervisory, or managerial position. All other vacancies will be posted not less than seven (7) calendar days before the position is to be filled.

Any person not employed by Sumter County Schools who believes he/she possesses the certification/qualifications of the advertised vacancy may apply.

PERSONNEL FILE

A central personnel file will be maintained for all regular employees. The personnel file may contain information regarding the employee's current assignment, payroll status, and work history, including but not limited to job qualifications, certification, licenses, employment contract(s), evaluation data, disciplinary information, and such other documents, written materials, and data as may be reasonably deemed necessary and appropriate by the Board for sound and efficient personnel administration. Anonymous material and other matters that are prohibited by law, regulation, or Board policy from being maintained in personnel files may not be included therein. Employees may reasonably supplement or respond in writing to any material contained in the personnel file with which they disagree, and such responses will also be included in the personnel file.

If an employee wishes to have a copy of his/her personnel file, a copy will be provided at cost to the employee.

PROBATIONARY PERIOD

The probationary period for employees is defined as three (3) complete years of service of full-time employment. The first year of service is effective if the employment begins prior to October 1 of the school year.

Employees are required to serve the maximum period of any probationary service provided or permitted by law before tenure, non-probationary status, or any other statutorily sanctioned form of employment security will be recognized by the Board.

RESIGNATIONS

Certified employees may resign by providing thirty (30) days' notice. Depending on the reason for the resignation and ability of the school system to accommodate an earlier release, the Superintendent may release a certified employee before the 30-day notice period ends. Failure to provide appropriate notice by a certified employee may result in a report to the ALSDE to consider taking action against the employee's certification. All other employees may resign by providing appropriate notice (generally two weeks). When any employee decides to resign, a letter of resignation signed by the employee must be forwarded to Human Resources for Board action.

SALARY SCHEDULE

SCSS adopts a salary schedule effective October 1 of each fiscal year. Pay increases mandated by state law shall be implemented on the date dictated by said law. No mandated pay raises shall be implemented retroactively unless the Board takes affirmative steps to do so.

SCHOOL PROPERTY

All property of the Board in the possession of an employee who resigns or is terminated must be inventoried by the employee's immediate supervisor prior to the issuance of his/her final paycheck. The employee's last paycheck will be converted to a "live" check if there is a discrepancy until the matter is resolved. The supervisor must contact the Payroll Department immediately if school property is not returned upon an employee's separation from employment.

SUPERVISORS

Certified and classified personnel within a school are under the immediate supervision of the principal or assistant principal in their particular school. All other personnel are under the immediate supervision of special supervisors. Technical supervision for classified employees is also provided by area supervisors, such as the Director of the Child Nutrition Program or Lead Nurse.

TERMINATION

The Sumter County Board of Education may suspend or terminate employees who have earned tenure or non-probationary status or are principals serving under contract for the following reasons:

1. Immorality;
2. Incompetence;
3. Insubordination;
4. Neglect of duty;
5. Failure to perform duties in a satisfactory manner;
6. Justifiable decrease in the number of positions (for contract principals, decrease must be due to decreased enrollment or funding); and/or
7. Other good and just cause.

Notification to Sumter County Schools employee of a proposed termination and his/her hearing rights will be governed by applicable state law.

TRANSFER OF PERSONNEL

The Board, upon the recommendation of the Superintendent, shall have the authority to involuntarily transfer personnel from one position to another when such transfers shall be in accordance with the provisions outlined in *The Students First Act*.

All qualified personnel may be considered for voluntary transfers to other employment positions within the School System. A voluntary transfer request form shall be submitted to the employee's current supervisor, and the Superintendent.

Voluntary, lateral transfers of personnel require that an employee be tenured in his/her present position and may only be made during specific times of year (except for CNP and transportation employees).

Other voluntary transfers may be made, regardless of status and time of year, based upon the needs of the school system upon the approval of the Superintendent. Employees, regardless of status, may always be considered for positions that are promotions (including increased pay) or changes of employment (e.g., teacher to instructional coach, CNP worker to custodian).

In an effort to protect the educational interests of students and established schedules, voluntary transfers initiated by certified employees may be made for next school year postings that close on or before June 30. Classified employees, with the exception of CNP employees and bus drivers/ para-educators, may only be considered for voluntary transfers for postings that close on or before July 15.

GENERAL INFORMATION

CASH IN THE SCHOOL BUILDING

In the interest of building security, no cash or other valuable articles should be left in classrooms or other locations in the school. School funds must be receipted in the office before school is dismissed for the day. Personal articles of value should be secured in a locked cabinet or removed from the building by the owner.

CODE OF CONDUCT

County School System personnel are employed for the express purpose of contributing in a positive way to the education of the youth of the community. The community desires and deserves School System employees who will provide an environment that will engender a well-rounded educational program and a safe and conscientious place for the children to learn. In order to provide such educational programs and school environments in the respective schools of the School System, all employees of the board are expected to abide by (1) all federal and state laws, (2) all State Board of Education policies, (3) all local ordinances, and (4) all local Board policies; and to adopt and follow ethical and professional codes of conduct that reflect favorably upon the School System. Failure to comply with the above-noted expectations may result in disciplinary action.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Generally, a conflict of interest exists when a Board member, Board employee, or agent of the Board participates in a matter that is likely to have a direct effect on his or her personal and financial interests. A financial interest may include, but not limited to, stock ownership, partnership, trustee relationship, employment, potential employment, or a business relationship with an applicant, vendor, or entity.

A Board member, Board employee, or agent of the Board may not participate in his or her official capacity in a matter that is likely to have a direct and predictable effect on his or her financial interests. A Board member, Board employee, or agent of the Board will abide by the Federal and state laws and regulations that address conflict of interest standards. In general, the Federal rules provide that:

No employee, officer, or agent of the Board shall participate in selection, or in the award or administration of a contract supported by Federal funds if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict would arise when the employee, officer, or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs, or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein, has a financial or other interest in a tangible personal benefit from the firm considered for a contract. The Board's officers, employees, or agents will neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors, or parties to subcontractors.

The Board's conflict of interest policies include adherence to the Alabama Ethics Law, as it may be amended from time to time, which defines conflict of interest as:

A conflict on the part of a public official or public employee between his or her private interests and the official responsibilities inherent in an office of public trust. A conflict of interest involves any action, inaction, or decision by a public official or public employee in the discharge of his or her official duties which would materially affect his or her financial interest or those of his or her family members or any business with which the person is associated in a manner different from the manner it affects the other members of the class to which he or she belongs.

A Board member, Board employee, or agent of the Board may not review applications, proposals, or participate in the evaluation or selection process where his or her participation in the review process would create the appearance that he or she is: (a) giving preferential treatment; (b) losing independence and impartiality; (c) making decisions outside official and appropriate channels; or (d) harming the public's confidence in the integrity of the Board.

Situations and circumstances presenting an actual conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest should be brought to the immediate attention of the Superintendent. A Board employee, Board members, or agent of the Board who has knowledge of a possible conflict of interest should identify the conflict and notify the Superintendent. The Superintendent will document his or her actions related to the reported conflict of interest. Resolution can consist of disqualification, recusal, waiver, or other appropriate measures. Appropriate measures may include reporting a conflict of interest to the State Ethics Commission, the Alabama State Board of Education, or the appropriate federal agency.

CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE AND ALCOHOL TESTING, DRUG FREE AND TOBACCO FREE WORKPLACE

Any employee who drives a vehicle owned by the School System is required to submit to controlled substance and alcohol testing under the conditions specified in policy. It is the policy of the Board that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance in the School System's workplace is prohibited. All Sumter County Board of Education facilities, buildings, grounds, vehicles, and other property are declared tobacco free. Smoking and the use of smokeless tobacco are prohibited on all Board property and premises at all times.

CRIMINAL CONDUCT

Whenever an employee is arrested for, or otherwise charged with, committing a criminal offense, other than a minor traffic violation*, that employee shall notify his or her

supervisor and the Human Resource Specialist of such occurrence and of all subsequent proceedings pertaining to that arrest or charge. The Human Resources Specialist shall immediately inform the Superintendent of the incident. Notice shall be given to the Human Resource Specialist in accordance with a regulation established by the Superintendent. The failure to give prompt and proper notice as required may constitute grounds for dismissal.

*A “minor traffic violation” is a violation which is not punishable by imprisonment or by revocation or suspension of the operator’s license. Bus operators are required to report traffic violations to the Director of Transportation or his/her designee. Any other employee who receives a traffic citation while operating a school board owned vehicle must report the citation to his/her immediate supervisor.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES FOR SEXUAL OFFENSES BY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES INVOLVING A STUDENT

A school employee is specifically prohibited from having any sexual relationship with a student. The definition of “school employee” includes volunteers. “Student” includes any child under the age of 19. Consent is NOT a defense under this statute. Offenses are classified as follows:

- Sexual intercourse – Class B Felony
- Sexual contact – Class C Felony
- Soliciting a sex act – Class A Misdemeanor
- Obscene material – Class A Misdemeanor

For more specific information, see §§ 13A-6-80 through 83 of the *Code of Alabama* (1975).

DRESS CODE GUIDELINES FOR PERSONNEL

All employees have a responsibility to model appropriate dress in order to maintain respect and establish credibility which is reflected by authority figures. It is therefore the policy of Sumter County School System that teachers, administrators, and office staff dress in a professional manner. The Board recognizes that "professional" work attire will vary depending on the position held by the individual. Employees should wear attire suitable for the type of work they perform.

Attire shall be considered professionally appropriate if it does not disrupt the educational or workplace environment. While individual style will be recognized, there are minimum standards of grooming and attire to which employees must abide.

Uniforms and other dress regulations may be required by specific departments including Maintenance, Transportation, and Child Nutrition. Should a department provide its personnel with uniforms, then the supervisor will require the uniform to be worn by all department employees.

Minimum Standards

- All employees shall be neat and clean when reporting to work.
- Clothing shall be free from holes or tears and should not expose undergarments, buttocks, chests or midriffs.
- Clothing shall be loose fitting.
- Clothing and exposed body art shall be free from:
 - profanity,
 - obscene gestures,
 - sexually graphic pictures
 - supportive references to alcohol, cigarettes, drugs or sexual activity,
 - messages degrading others on the basis of race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation or disability.
- Dresses, skirts and shorts should be long enough to touch the fingertip when hands are placed at the employee's sides or longer.
- Caps, hats and sunglasses may be worn outside only.
- Shoes or sandals must be worn. Rubber/plastic flip-flops are not considered to be sandals.
- All employees will abide by all health and safety rules relating to their specific assignment. (Example: hairnets for food service workers or close-toed shoes for custodial staff)

The Board also recognizes that all employees enjoy full rights of citizenship and liberty as guaranteed by the Constitutions of the United States and Alabama. However, individual freedom of expression of employees must be balanced with the impressionability of students. Accordingly,

- Religious symbols or emblems are permissible as long as they do not bring about a religious conversion or degrade the religious beliefs of others, and
- Clothing should be free of non-neutral political messages. ("VOTE" is permissible; "VOTE FOR JOHN DOE" is not.)

IDENTIFICATION BADGES

All employees of the Sumter County Board of Education will be issued photo badges. The first badge is issued to an employee at no charge. An additional or replacement badge may be obtained at cost paid by the employee. The ID badge is to be worn at all times while performing assigned duties on school property during a normal school day. The badge is the property of the Sumter County Board of

Education and must be surrendered upon termination of employment. The ID badge may be used for the employee's admittance to sporting events within the school district unless the event is an Alabama High School Athletic Association (AHSAA) sanctioned playoff or postseason event.

POSSESSION OF DEADLY WEAPONS BY SCHOOL SYSTEM PERSONNEL

A deadly weapon is anything manifestly designed, made or adapted for the purpose of inflicting death or serious bodily injury. No employee shall be permitted to have or to carry a deadly weapon in his/her bodily possession while on school property or in School System buildings or facilities, on school grounds, or on school buses or at any school-sponsored event during or after regular employment hours. In addition, no employee shall have in his/her possession a firearm in or on school property except as provided for in the U.S. Code Title 18, Part I, Chapter 44 § 921. Employee violations of this code shall be subject to suspension, termination, and/or separation from service in accordance with Board policy.

PURCHASE ORDERS

Purchase orders are required for all materials, equipment, and supplies paid for from funds of the Sumter County Board of Education. No purchases shall be made which obligate the income of a subsequent year nor shall any purchases be made which encumber a school system fund or local school fund or account beyond the available resources of that fund or account.

SAFETY

All employees are expected to maintain good housekeeping practices to insure safe working conditions. All employees are to familiarize themselves with safety regulations and adhere to OSHA requirements.

TEST SECURITY

Failure to follow security procedures promulgated by the Alabama State Board of Education and the test administrator's manual may result in disciplinary action by the Board and/or revocation of the teaching certificate by the Alabama State Department of Education. Each employee will be required to sign a test security policy stating specific actions which are inappropriate and violate, in spirit and intent, the stated policy.

SCHOOL PROPERTY

The employee is responsible for the security and safe-keeping of SCSS property issued for work-related duties. This includes technology, tools, keys, door fobs, etc. If an employee discovers that SCSS property is stolen or missing, he or she must notify a supervisor immediately. All property of the Board in the possession of an employee who resigns or is terminated must be inventoried by the employee's immediate supervisor prior to the issuance of his/her final paycheck.

TRAVEL

The Board authorizes the reimbursement of personnel for travel expenses incurred as a requirement of their jobs. Reimbursement may be made for travel that has received prior approval from the Superintendent (or designee) and the employee's immediate supervisor. Such reimbursement shall not exceed travel and per diem authorized by the Board. **Prior approval for all travel shall be obtained before any travel expenses may be incurred.**

IN-COUNTY TRAVEL EXPENSES

A travel report with the following information must be submitted:

1. Date(s) of travel.
2. Destination/Purpose.
3. Miles traveled. Mileage begins when you leave your first work station (school) not your home. It ends at the last work station (school). Mileage from your home to work and return home is not paid. However, special trips after normal working hours will be from home address to the school and the return home.
4. Employee signature.
5. Signed approval or Principal, Coordinator, or Director (if required).
6. Meals purchased in Sumter County are not reimbursable.

OUT-OF-COUNTY TRAVEL EXPENSES

Out-of-county travel expenses incurred to send employees to attend a required educational workshop or work-related training are an allowable cost. Employees must submit leave for professional/work-related leave and related travel expenses (ten (10) days in advance) in Frontline Absence Management. Travel that is necessary and that is directly related to the operation of the SCSS may be reimbursed as follows:

1. **Mileage** - Mileage for travel reimbursement must be for official business of the Sumter County Schools and not for personal use. Commuting miles from home to base of employment is not an allowable mileage claim. When calculating mileage driven to a meeting or conference, an employee must claim the shortest distance either from the employee's base of employment to the meeting place or from the employee's home to the meeting place (if the employee is starting travel from home instead of his/her office). Mileage reimbursement is only for the driver. If a group carpools, only the driver may claim mileage reimbursement.

If an employee receives a monthly stipend amount for travel, he/she may not claim travel within Sumter County for any events. **Employees will be reimbursed for mileage based on the state rate.**

2. **Meals** –Meals purchased in Sumter County are not reimbursable. Any food or drink purchases (i.e., snacks or groceries) other than meals are not reimbursable. There is no reimbursement for alcoholic beverages or meals for persons not employed by the SCSS.

Meal reimbursement will be allowed for out-of-county travel with original itemized receipts attached. Meal reimbursements are as follows:

- 6 to 12 hours - \$12.75
- Over 12 hours - \$34.00
- Overnight stay – up to \$50.00 daily

3. **Overnight Travel** – If there is a specified hotel to use for a conference with a set room rate, reservations should be made to stay at that hotel. If you choose to stay at a different hotel other than the conference hotel, you will be responsible for the difference in the room charges if there is a higher room rate. Occasionally, an employee is asked to attend a workshop after the host hotel is booked, and the group rate cannot be obtained elsewhere. If a hotel cannot be found within a reasonable travel distance to the conference at the United States General Services Administration (GSA rate), a written justification explaining why a higher rate is the only option and, with the approval of a supervisor and Superintendent, a higher but reasonable rate may be allowed. The Board will only pay for the rate for a single occupancy. If other individuals accompany an employee, the employee must pay for any additional rate above the standard single rate, or if multiple rooms are included in the booking, the rate must be prorated.

Generally, an overnight hotel stay for a trip less than 100 miles from the employee's base and only one day is not allowable. Only on a limited basis, with written justification and prior approval by the appropriate personnel will overnight stay be reimbursed by the District.

4. Entertainment (movie rentals, alcoholic beverages, etc.) and other personal items are not reimbursed.

Requests for reimbursement for any travel-related expenses shall be submitted for approval as soon as practicable but shall not exceed thirty (30) calendar days from the employee's date of return from travel.

For travel reimbursement, you must submit a travel report with the following information and attachments:

1. Date(s) of travel.
2. Destination/Purpose.
3. Miles traveled with a printout of MapQuest or Google Maps for a trip to show mileage.
4. Employee signature.
5. Signed approval or Principal, Coordinator, or Director (if required).
6. A copy of your professional/work-related leave form showing final approval.
7. Original ITEMIZED receipts for meals. Original receipt or invoice for registration, hotel, parking, etc. Tips are to be shown on itemized receipts (can be hand-written).

If a request for reimbursement includes two or more people on a receipt, a copy of each person's approved request for travel must be attached. This is also if a Principal makes reservations for a group and requests to be reimbursed for the charges. (See Sumter County School Travel Procedures for additional information if needed).

VEHICLES

All SCSS vehicles should be fueled in a manner that will expedite the work day. The Transportation Department will keep fuel (gas cards) and maintenance records on all county-owned vehicles.

County-owned vehicles will not be used for any purpose other than specific job assignments or trips directly related to job assignments. County-owned vehicles shall not be used for any non-school purpose.

Only employees and students in the Sumter County Schools are allowed to ride school buses, except in the case of field trips where adult chaperones are allowed.

All vehicle keys must be stored in the appropriate office site when employees are not on duty. Keys must not be left in vehicles.

USE OF TOBACCO

All Sumter County Board of Education facilities, buildings, grounds, vehicles, and other property are declared tobacco free. Smoking, the use of smokeless tobacco, and vaping are prohibited on all Board property and premises at all times.

STUDENT WELFARE AND SAFETY

ERIN'S LAW

Erin's Law, started by Erin Merryn who is a childhood sexual assault survivor, was passed in 2011 in Illinois. As of June 2018, Erin's Law has been passed in 35 states including Alabama. The law requires that all public schools implement a prevention-oriented child sexual abuse program which teaches students, school personnel, and parents/guardians about how to recognize child sexual abuse. All school personnel are required to receive online training in order to be aware of the warning signs of an abused child:

- Nightmares
- Trouble sleeping
- Bed wetting
- Change in appetite
- Fear of certain people, places, activities
- Mood swings: Rage, Anger, Fear, anxiety, insecure or withdrawn
- Depression
- Aggression
- Feeling shameful or guilty
- Isolating oneself
- Withdrawal from someone
- Resisting removing clothes when appropriate times (bedtime, bath time)
- Change in academics
- Running away from home
- Suicidal thoughts
- Acting out sexually
- Exhibits adult sexual behaviors, knowledge, and language.

JASON FLATT ACT

The Jason Flatt Act, first passed in 2007 in Tennessee, is an inclusive and mandatory youth suicide awareness and prevention legislation. Teachers in Alabama are now required to receive training in order to recognize the warning signs of suicidal thoughts. Some of these signs include:

- Talking about suicide
- Making statements about feeling hopeless, helpless, or worthless
- A deepening depression
- Preoccupation with death
- Taking unnecessary risks or exhibiting self-destructive behavior
- Out-of-character behavior
- A loss of interest in the things one cares about
- Visiting or calling people one cares about
- Making arrangements; setting one's affairs in order
- Giving prized possessions away

Along with these warning signs, there are certain risk factors that can elevate the possibility of suicidal ideation:

- Perfectionist personalities
- Gay and Lesbian youth
- Learning disabled youth
- Loners
- Youth with low self- esteem
- Depressed youth
- Students in serious trouble
- Abused, Molested or Neglected Youth
- Genetic predisposition
- Parental history of violence, substance abuse, or divorce

MANDATORY REPORTING OF CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Under Alabama law, all public K-12 employees, including all school teachers and officials, are required to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect immediately, either by telephone or direct communication, followed by a written report, to a “duly constituted authority” (Ala. Code § 26-14-3[a]). A “duly constituted authority” under the law is “[t]he chief of police of a municipality or municipality and county; or the sheriff, if the observation of child abuse or neglect is made in an unincorporated territory; or the Department of Human Resources; or any person, organization, corporation, group, or agency authorized and designated by the Department of Human Resources to receive reports of child abuse and neglect; provided, that a ‘duly constituted authority’ shall not include an agency involved in the acts or omissions of the reported child abuse or neglect” (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[4]). A “child” is defined as someone “under the age of 18 years” (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[3]). “Child abuse” under Alabama law is defined as the “[h]arm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare,” which can “occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation” (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[1]). “‘Sexual abuse’ includes the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of the conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of the conduct; or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children as those acts are defined by Alabama law” (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[1]). “‘Sexual exploitation’ includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution and allowing, permitting encouraging, or engaging in the obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child for commercial purposes” (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[1]).

“Neglect” is defined as Alabama law as the “negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, medical treatment, supervision, clothing, or shelter” (Ala. Code §26-14-1[2]). Certainty that child abuse or neglect has occurred is NOT required to trigger your mandatory reporting responsibility. All that is required is a reasonable suspicion that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect. If you have a reasonable suspicion, you must report.

The mandatory reports required by Alabama law “shall state, if known, the name of the child, his or her whereabouts, the names and addresses of the parents, guardian, or caretaker, and the character and extent of his or her injuries. The written report shall also contain, if known, any evidence of previous injuries to the child and any other pertinent information which might establish the cause of such injury or injuries, and the identity of the person or persons responsible for the same” (Ala. Code § 26-14-5). Failure to comply with Alabama’s mandatory reporting law is a crime. Under Ala. Code § 26-14-13, “[A]ny person who shall knowingly fail to make the report required by [the law] shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a sentence of not more than six months' imprisonment or a fine of not more than \$500.00.”

PROHIBITION OF DISCRIMINATION/HARASSMENT

The Sumter County Board of Education prohibits discrimination any employee, applicant for employment, student, or student applicant based upon race, color, religion, gender, age, ethnicity, national origin, marital status, disability, political or religious beliefs, or social and family background. This policy also applies to non-employment volunteers who work subject to the control of school authorities. The Board is committed to providing a working environment and an academic environment that is free of unlawful harassment and will seek to utilize available measures to deter such conduct. Any employee should bring to the administration’s attention any incidence of what he/she believes to be any form of discrimination.

If discrimination is observed or believed to have occurred, the employee should immediately report the circumstances of the alleged incident to his/her supervisor, or if the report involved the employee’s supervisor, the Superintendent and/or Human Resources. An investigation of the allegations will be conducted by a designee of the Superintendent.

Employees against whom charges are made shall have full opportunity to understand the charges made against them and to present pertinent facts bearing on the charges before official action is taken. Persons making serious charges shall be required, before any action is taken, to submit complaints in writing or to sign prepared statements summarizing the charges. Any information obtained will be kept confidential to the extent practicable.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Sexual harassment in any form that is directed toward employees is prohibited. Persons who violate the policy will be subject to the full range of disciplinary consequences up to and including termination as dictated by the nature and severity of the violation and other relevant considerations. If appropriate, the circumstances constituting the violation may be reported to law enforcement agencies for further investigation and action.

Definition of Sexual Harassment – Title IX regulations define sexual harassment to include one or more of the following:

- a. An employee conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the school/school 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 school/ school district's education program or activity; or
- c. Sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking, as each of those terms is defined by federal statutes enumerated in the Title IX regulations, 34 C.F.R. § 106.30(a).

EXAMPLES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The following are examples of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment, depending on individual circumstances:

- a. Verbal harassment or abuse of a sexual nature, including graphic comments, the display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, and sexual propositions;
- b. Repeated unwelcome solicitation of sexual activity or sexual contact;
- c. Unwelcome, inappropriate sexual touching;
- d. Demands for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt promises of preferential treatment or threats with regard to an individual's employment status. Sexual harassment does not include occasional compliments or welcomed interactions of a socially acceptable nature.

REPORTING INCIDENTS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT

An individual employee who feels that he/she has been sexually harassed shall report the incident in writing to his/her immediate supervisor (except in cases of harassment involving the supervisor, in which case the complainant shall report to the Superintendent or other person designated by the Superintendent). Such report shall be made as soon as possible after the incident or, if a series of incidents, as soon as possible after the latest occurrence. The complaint should state the act(s), the date(s), and the name(s) of witnesses and be signed by the complainant. ***No employee or student shall be retaliated against for reporting misconduct.*** A prompt and thorough investigation will follow. Any suspected child abuse shall be reported in accordance with state law.

Right to Rebuttal

Both the complaining employee and the employee who has been accused of sexual harassment have the right to submit facts, documents or other evidence contesting or supporting the report of the investigator, to the Superintendent or the Board if the circumstances so dictate and have a due process hearing as required by the teacher tenure law and fair dismissal law.

TECHNOLOGY SECURITY AND INTERNET USE

Access to Technology Resources

The Board permits restricted and conditional access to and use of its technology resources, including but not limited to computers, the “Internet,” network storage areas, and electronic mail. Such access and use are restricted to employees, students, and other persons who are engaged in *bona fide* educational and administrative activities that serve and are consistent with identified educational objectives or authorized support functions, and who, by signing an “Acceptable Use Agreement,” agree to abide by all Board policies, rules, and regulations regarding technology use. The Acceptable Use Agreement will be developed by the Superintendent for approval by the Board.

Restriction or Loss of Technology Privileges

Persons who violate any Board policy, rule, or regulation regarding technology use may be denied use of the Board’s technology resources and may be subject to additional disciplinary action.

Ownership of Technology Resources and Data

All technology resources, including network and Internet resources, e-mail systems, and computers or other access devices owned, leased, or maintained by the Board are the sole property of the Board. Board personnel may, at any time and without prior notice, access, search, examine, inspect, collect, or retrieve information of any kind from the Board’s technology resources, including computer or related equipment, files, and data, to determine if a user is in violation of any of the Board’s policies, rules, and regulations regarding access to and use of technology resources, for or in connection with any other matter or reason related to the safe and efficient operation or administration of the school system, or for any other reason not prohibited by law. Users of school system technology resources have no personal right of privacy or confidentiality with respect to the use or content of such resources.

Adoption of Rules and Regulations

The Superintendent is authorized to develop for Board approval additional or more specific rules and regulations regarding access to and use of its technology resources and to require adherence to such rules and regulations through such means as the “Acceptable Use Agreement” and application of appropriate disciplinary policies and procedures. Such rules and regulations will address or provide:

- a. Measures to block or filter Internet access to pictures that are obscene, that constitute child pornography, or that are harmful to minors;
- b. Restriction of access by minors to inappropriate material on the Internet;

- c. The safety and security of minors when they are using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications;
- d. Prevention of “hacking” and other forms of unauthorized use of or access to computer or Internet files, sites, databases or equipment; and
- e. Unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal information regarding minors;
- f. Restriction of minors’ access to harmful material; and
- g. Educating minors about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms and cyberbullying awareness and response.

Disclaimer

The Board makes no warranties of any kind, either express or implied, that the functions or the services provided by or through the Board’s technology resources will be error-free or without defect. The Board will not be responsible for any damage users may suffer, including but not limited to loss of data or interruption of service.

Data Governance and Use

The Superintendent is authorized to establish procedures governing the storage, use, and sharing of data maintained electronically by the school system. Such procedures shall comply with applicable state and federal law and shall include provisions for data security (including physical security measures), access controls, quality control, and data exchange and reporting (including external data requests, and third-party data use). Nothing in this policy or in any procedures authorized hereunder creates or expands any entitlement to confidentiality of records beyond that which is established by law or specific Board policy.

Any unauthorized access, use, transfer, or distribution of Board data by any employee, student, or any other individual may result in disciplinary action (up to and including termination for employees) and other legal action.

Cell Phone Use

The purpose of this cell phones at work policy is to form a work environment that is productive and free of distractions.

All employees must operate under this policy, regardless of position. The Superintendent expects that all cell phones will be off or on silent during the instructional day. It is expected that employees will only use their personal cell phones for emergencies or during non-instructional or supervisory time. For safety, while operating school board vehicles or machinery, employees must refrain from using their cell phones. Failure to follow this cell phone policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination.