



# Fannin County School System

## Fannin County Middle School

### Handbook

### 2023-2024



The Fannin County School System is committed to graduating all students on time with the skills they need to be successful. We believe this can best be accomplished in a high performing learning environment focused on continuous improvement.

#### ***Vision***

The Fannin County School System holds a vision of excellence for all students with successful progression at each level and a 100% graduation rate.

#### ***Mission***

Developing young futures...  
Learning for tomorrow,  
Today

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## WELCOME

Dear Parents/Guardians and Students:

We are so excited to welcome you to Fannin County Middle School. Every member of the faculty and staff join us in saying we're happy to have you as part of the FCMS family. We hope this will be a successful and amazing year for you and your student.

The pages of this handbook are filled with important information regarding school policy and procedures. Parents/guardians and students should review the contents together. If you have any questions, please call the school office at 706-632-6100. We believe that open and clear communication between school and home is important to the success of our educational growth.

We welcome your participation and support this school year. Working together, we will be able to reach our collective goals and celebrate the achievements of our students.

Thank you,

Dr. April Hodges  
Principal

Keshia Dover  
Chuck Patterson  
Assistant Principals

## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **District Office Contact Information**

Board of Education	706-632-3771
Bus Garage	706-632-7802
Nutrition Office	706-258-2619
Technology Department	706-258-2791

### **School Contact Information**

Fannin County Middle School	706-632-6100
School Fax	706-632-0461
Dr. April Hodges, Principal	ahodges@fannin.k12.ga.us
Ms. Keshia Dover, Assistant Principal	kdover@fannin.k12.ga.us
Mr. Chuck Patterson, Assistant Principal	cpatterson@fannin.k12.ga.us
Mrs. Katie Seabolt, Parent Liaison	kseabolt@fannin.k12.ga.us
Theresa Ray, Cafeteria Manager	tray@fannin.k12.ga.us
FCMS Attendance Notes	fcmsnotes@fannin.k12.ga.us

# **Fannin County Middle School**

## **Student/Parent Handbook**

The Fannin County School System does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, religion, creed, or disability in admission to its programs, services, and activities, in access to them, in treatment of individuals, or in any aspect of their operations to also include but not be limited to additions, modifications, or alterations to the physical plan of any school facility. For additional information or referral to the appropriate system coordinator, contact the system superintendent's office at 6145 Old Hwy 76, Blue Ridge, Georgia 30513 or 706-632-3771.

### **FCMS Mission**

Our mission is to provide students with an education that prepares them to be successful and meet future challenges.

### **Title I Funding Notification**

Money is provided by the federal government to support student academic achievement. Fannin County Middle School (FCMS) is currently a school-wide Title I school and must specify how Title I funds are to be spent. At FCMS, Title I funds are used to support student achievement through supplemental reading, writing, and math materials as well as computer technology which may be purchased to promote differentiated instruction for Title I students.

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The policies and procedures contained in this handbook have been carefully prepared so that they will help you to be successful at Fannin County Middle School. It is our aim to help you develop and accept the responsibilities and obligations of your education in order that you may become a good citizen in the world of tomorrow. Organize your days and weeks to stay on course, take advantage of all the school and community has to offer, and enjoy the experience. We hope you will set your goals high, participate in school activities, and always do your very best in everything you attempt.

## **II. GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **ACADEMIC DISHONESTY/CHEATING**

Students will be disciplined for any form of academic dishonesty to include but not be limited to giving or receiving unauthorized assistance on any assignment, turning in work that is not the student's original work, plagiarism, etc.. This can include but not be limited to peers, cell phones, earbuds, chromebooks, etc... This policy applies to any assignment or assessment including but not limited to daily work, quizzes, tests, projects, using ChatGPT, etc...

### **ACCREDITATION**

Fannin County Middle School is accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission and is fully accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools/AdvanceED.

### **ATHLETICS AND EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

In order to provide a positive experience for the students of Fannin County Middle School, the following objectives will be our focus:

- To strive for excellence that will lead to competitive programs within the boundaries of good sportsmanship and moral behavior of the coach/sponsor and student participants.
- To provide students with opportunities and exposure to new experiences with extracurricular activities.
- To ensure the growth and development that will raise the number of participants and enable our programs to continuously improve.
- To provide opportunities that will allow the programs to serve as a setting where students may learn to cope with problems and handle situations that may arise in a real world setting.

### **Student Responsibilities**

Expectations:

- a. Have a current physical on file before tryouts or any practices.
- b. Have a school approved accident insurance policy or family insurance policy on file before participating.
- c. Complete all necessary paperwork at the start of the season; including concussion, medical release, sudden cardiac arrest, and heat policy.
- d. Maintain academic eligibility
- e. Attend all organized practices, unless excused.
- f. Treat your teammates, officials, and your opponents with dignity, respect, and good sportsmanship.
- g. Take proper care of equipment.

Participation in extracurricular activities is a privilege extended to the students by the Board of Education. Students of Fannin County Middle School are expected to conduct themselves in such a manner as to meet the highest standards at all times.

The Code of Conduct is designed to establish high expectations and standards for all participating students and goes into effect on the first day a student joins a FCSS athletic team, or any other competitive group or extracurricular program. The Code remains in effect for the entire school year.

All school rules apply immediately before, during and immediately after an extracurricular event. In order to be eligible to participate in practices or competitions, students must be in attendance for at least half of the school day. If a student receives ISS or OSS, they will not be allowed to take part in games or competitions until their consequences are completed.

Students must maintain academic eligibility in order to participate in extracurricular activities. A student must have received a semester average of 70 or higher in 5 out of 7 classes the semester prior to the activity in which they are to participate. Participation in extracurricular events including cuts and playing time are at the coaches/sponsors discretion.

## **ATTENDANCE/ABSENCES**

### **Attendance Policy**

All students are expected to be in attendance at school except for situations where absence is absolutely necessary. If your child has a fever (100 degrees or higher), then your child must stay at home until there is no fever without using fever-reducing medications for 24 hours. If your child is vomiting or having diarrhea, then your child must stay at home until he or she is symptom free without using medications for 24 hours. Each morning, the parent/guardian of students who are marked absent will receive an automated phone call from the school indicating the student's absence.

### **Absences**

The school recognizes there are times when a student must be absent for reasons that are beyond the control of the student and the parent. Absences of this nature will be excused in accordance with state attendance laws. According to the Georgia Compulsory Attendance Law, lawful absences are: (1) personal illness (2) serious illness or death in the immediate family (3) recognized religious holidays (4) absences mandated by governmental agency (i.e. summons for court) (5) Acts of God (6) a student whose parent is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard, and such parent has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting, shall be granted excused absences up to a maximum of five school days per school year (7) serving as a Page for the General Assembly. All other absences are considered unexcused.

### **Return to School**

Upon returning to school, students are to submit a note to the main office or an email to [fcmsnotes@fannin.k12.ga.us](mailto:fcmsnotes@fannin.k12.ga.us) containing the following information: the students first and last name, the reason the student was absent, the number of days and dates of the absence, a valid phone number to contact the parent/guardian or medical office. The student has a maximum of 3 days to provide this note to change an unexcused absence to an excused absence.

### **Make Up Work**

Students will be allowed to make up all work missed during an absence. It is the student's responsibility to make the arrangements for make-up work, either before or immediately following the absence. The number of days a student has to complete make-up work will be equal to the number of days absent, plus one day. If a student is absent on a test day, and misses no further instruction on the test material, then the student is expected to take the test upon returning to school. Students who have been suspended from school will be allowed to make up the work missed as outlined above.

### **AST Protocol**

The FCSS notifies the parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of the student by letter and/or phone call when such student has 5 unexcused absences and again when a student has 7 unexcused absences. At the seventh unexcused absence, the parent will be asked to meet with the Attendance Support Team. If a student reaches ten unexcused absences; FCSS will send written notice via certified mail with return receipt requested, to inform them that they are being referred to Juvenile Court pursuant to O.C.G.A. 20-2-735 and State Board Rule 160-5-1-.10. Mandatory Attendance in a public school, private school, or home school program shall be required for children between their sixth and sixteenth birthdays. Such mandatory attendance shall not be required where the child has successfully completed all requirements for a high school diploma. O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1

### **Leaving School Early**

Once a student arrives on campus, he/she becomes the responsibility of the FCSS. All students must have permission to leave school grounds after arriving regardless of time. Students who leave campus without permission and without signing out will be subject to disciplinary action. An exception to this is students who are required to be on campus before school hours for school-based events.

Should a student find it necessary to leave school before the end of the school day, the following procedures are to be followed:

1. The parent/guardian should contact the office via note, phone call, or in person. Persons allowed to pick up students will only be those listed on the health form/pickup list.
2. The parent must sign the student out in the main office and the student must leave the campus immediately.
3. Student's returning to school the same day must check back in at the office with a parent/guardian.

### **Tardy**

A student is tardy to class when he/she is not in the classroom, ready to start class when the bell rings. Any student reporting to class after the tardy bell must report directly to the main office in order to receive an admit to class slip. Failure to follow this procedure will be considered skipping. Tardies are only excused with a note from a medical provider.

### **AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

Students who remain at school after 3:10 p.m. are expected to be under the direct supervision of a teacher, coach or sponsor. Students are not allowed to stay at school in the afternoon unless they are staying for an extracurricular activity. When the extra-curricular activity has been concluded, students are expected to promptly leave campus. They are not allowed access to the entire campus. If students must wait for a ride, they must stay in the area designated by the coach or sponsor.

### **BULLYING**

The Fannin County Board of Education believes that all students can learn better in a safe school environment. Behavior that infringes on the safety of students will not be tolerated. Bullying, as the term is defined in Georgia law, of a student by another student is strictly prohibited. Any student found guilty of bullying another student will receive disciplinary consequences as prescribed by the Georgia code of state law and the Fannin County School System's Code of Conduct. Consequences are given at the discretion of the principal or principal's designee.

### **CAFETERIA**

All FCMS students receive free breakfast.

Lunch prices subject to change upon board approval.

Free and reduced price meals will be served to those who qualify.

NO OUTSIDE LUNCHES are allowed to be delivered to students. Students are not permitted to check out of school for lunch and return to campus.

### **Free/Reduced Meals Prices**

Applications for Free or Reduced Price meals are sent home on the first day of school and as requested anytime during the school year. Please remember that if the student qualified for Free or Reduced Price meals last year, you must complete a new application within the first 30 days of the school year to continue in the program. During the school year, if your family has a change in income or family size, you may submit a new Free/Reduced Meal application to the office. If you have any questions, please contact the School Nutrition Director, Martha Williams, at Fannin County Board of Education, 706-258-2619 or Teresa Ray, Fannin County Middle School Nutrition, 706-632-6100.



### **Meal Collection Procedures**

Students are allowed to charge meals. Any balance on the student's meal account at the end of the school year will remain current on a student's account until paid. The balance will carry over into the next school year. If a student moves to a new school or new grade level unpaid meal charges will remain on the student's lunch account. If a student withdraws from FCMS and has a positive balance, the refund will be mailed to the address on the withdrawal form.

Prepayment for lunches is encouraged. Students may present cash or checks to cashiers at breakfast or lunch. Please place your student's payment in an envelope with the student's name and lunch number. Parents may also pay online at [www.myschoolbucks.com](http://www.myschoolbucks.com). To complete this process, parents will need to know the student identification for their child. It begins with 655 and contains 9 to 11 digits.

### **CELL PHONE POLICY**

Student cell phone use is prohibited unless directed by school faculty or staff. Cellular devices should not be on or out during class unless directed by the teacher. Unauthorized use of a cellular device will result in disciplinary consequences and are at the discretion of the principal or principal's designee.

### **CLUBS**

*The following clubs are active at FCMS:*

Future Farmers of America (FFA)  
Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA)  
Technology Student Association (TSA)  
Reading Bowl/Academic Team  
Yearbook Staff

NOTE: If you have an objection to your student participating in any of the clubs at FCMS you must provide the principal's office with a written notice. Please remember to date your letter, include your student's full name, the name of the club(s) for which you do not want your student to participate, and your signature.

### **COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE SCHOOL**

FCMS believes in informing families about school activities and their students. Parents and Guardians may call the office between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. to make appointments, or to speak with administrators, counselors or teachers when available. Important information is reviewed with students in the classroom and posted in common areas of the school, and classrooms. Parents and guardians may learn of school activities in the following ways:

- SCHOOL WEBSITE ([fcms.fannin.k12.ga.us](http://fcms.fannin.k12.ga.us))
- SCHOOL SOCIAL MEDIA (Facebook, Instagram)
- SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENTS/NEWSLETTER (contact parent liaison for more information)
- CLASS TAG is an electronic, app-based communication system used by FCMS
- INFINITE CAMPUS, a web-based resource allows parents/guardians to track a student's grades, attendance, and discipline.
- IC MESSENGER is an electronic telephone program that calls automatically to inform families of school closings and other information. This program can also send information via text, when requested.
- STUDENTS receive progress reports and report cards every 4.5 weeks.
- PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCE DAYS are planned to help monitor student progress.
- FANNIN COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES are posted on the Fannin County School system website ([www.fannin.k12.ga.us](http://www.fannin.k12.ga.us)).

### **DRESS CODE**

DRESS CODE/GROOMING (FCBOE Administrative Regulation)

Students are expected to observe a standard of dress and grooming consistent with the level of formality appropriate for a middle school classroom. Students should conform to these minimum expectations:

1. Clothing that creates a distraction for other students or causes a disruption in class is not permitted.

2. Students are to wear clothing that does not expose any skin or undergarments from mid-thigh to the chest-line while standing. This includes sheer, lace, and see-through garments.
3. Tops should have a minimum of 1.5 inches of material across each shoulder.
4. Oversized clothing, such as long trench coats, is not permissible.
5. Clothing that displays alcohol, drugs, tobacco, or weapons is not permissible.
6. Clothing with gang related symbols is not permissible.
7. Clothing with derogatory, sexual, terroristic, violent, or insulting messages is not permissible.
8. Hats, bandanas, and other head coverings are NOT permissible inside the building.
9. Students cannot wear masks that cover the face, except masks worn over the nose and mouth for health reasons.
10. Sunglasses are not permitted inside school buildings but can be worn outside.
11. Shoes are required at all times.
12. Pajamas and blankets are not permitted.
- 13 During the instructional day, earbuds may be used with permission, only for educational purposes.

### **Definitions**

Mid-thigh is the midpoint from the knee to the bend at the hip.

Chest-line is a horizontal line observed when the student is standing in an upright position and holding his/her arms out to his/her side parallel to the ground.

### **Discipline**

The administration has the authority to determine inappropriate dress not considered by the above-mentioned guidelines.

Students in violation of the dress code will be asked to change immediately or will be picked up for an early dismissal.

Alternative clothing will be provided to students by the school system, if possible.

The principal or principal's designee will have the final discretion regarding dress code decisions.

### **ELECTRONIC INHALANT DEVICES**

This includes but is not limited to vapes, e-cigarettes, and juul pods and paraphernalia. The use of and/or the possession of such items will result in disciplinary actions and are at the discretion of the principal.

### **FINAL ASSESSMENT DAYS**

Assessment days will be the final two days of each semester. Teachers may assess students in various formats to include but not be limited to final exams, projects, etc...

The assessment grade will be weighted 10% of the final semester average.

Students will be required to attend assessment days if they are failing a course, or have absences exceeding the following:

Five absences: 90 or above average

Four absences: 80 or above average

Three absence: 70 or above average

### **GIFTED**

The Fannin County Board of Education recognizes the need to provide gifted education services to students who have the potential for exceptional academic achievement in Grades K – 12. The Gifted Education Program is designed to provide an enriching and challenging alternative to the regular curriculum program. Students in Grades 6-8 are provided gifted instruction through the advanced content model. These students are given instruction for a minimum of five segments per week by a certified teacher with a gifted endorsement. Students are referred for consideration for the gifted program by teachers, counselors, administrators, parents or guardians, peers, self, or other individuals with knowledge of the student's abilities. Identification and eventual placement decisions are made on a case-by-case basis. In order to qualify for placement, students must meet three of the four components established by the State Board of Education. These include: mental ability, achievement, creativity, and motivation. On the mental abilities measure students in grades 3 – 12 must score in the 96 percentile. If a student does not qualify for gifted placement, they cannot be tested again for two school years.

### **GUIDANCE**

Students are encouraged to visit with the counselor for personal guidance and for information on grades, study help, and testing programs. A student is encouraged to visit the counselor whenever he/she needs to talk with the counselor. Students may request an appointment and will be given a specific time and a pass to leave class.

Parents, teachers, and administrators may ask the counselor to meet with a student. The counselor is available to discuss any home, school, or social concerns.

### **HALL PASSES**

Any student in the hallway or on campus during an instructional period must have the appropriate hall pass issued per school procedures.

### **HOMELESS STUDENTS**

The McKinney Vento Act requires homeless liaisons to provide public notice of the education rights of homeless students disseminated in places where homeless students receive services under the Act, such as in homeless shelters. If you have any questions or concerns regarding student homelessness, please contact FCSS Homeless Liaison, Tara Cantrell, at 706-632-2081.

### **HOSPITAL/HOMEBOUND**

If a student has a medical condition that prohibits him/her from attending school for 10 days or more, the student may be eligible for homebound services. Contact FCMS for the forms to begin these services. Be sure to let the school know if the student is receiving special education services. The State Board of Education and the Fannin County Board of Education cannot provide homebound instruction for students who are pregnant; therefore, students who are pregnant are not eligible for homebound services. There must be a medical condition other than pregnancy that qualifies a student for homebound services.

### **HOUSE BILL 1176 – Child Abuse Reporting Revisions:O.C.G.A 19-7-5.**

which now holds volunteers in schools, hospitals, social agencies, or similar facilities responsible for the same child abuse reporting requirements as employees. Volunteers will be asked to complete Compliance Director Modules that give guidance on confidentiality and reporting.

### **IMMUNIZATION RECORDS & MEDICATION**

It is mandatory that each child have an adequate, updated Georgia certificate of immunization on file in the school office. These certificates may be obtained from the local health department or your family physician. First time Georgia residents have 30 calendar days to comply with these regulations. **Failure to comply with this STATE law may lead to suspension from school.** Parents wishing to exempt their child(ren) from this law due to religious convictions must obtain the appropriate forms from the local health department and present the school with a copy.

All students entering a Georgia school for the first time must also present records of proper eye, ear, and dental exams from the local health department (DHR Form 3300) within 120 days of entering school.

### **INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES EDUCATION ACT (IDEA)**

Under the IDEA, school districts must give parents of a child with disabilities a copy of their parental rights one time a year. Also, a copy of their rights must also be given to parents upon initial referral or parental request for an evaluation, upon filing a request for a due process hearing, and upon request of a parent. A school district may post a copy of the procedural safeguards on its website.

### **INSURANCE/STUDENT ACCIDENTS**

All students at FCMS involved with sports, extracurricular activities or enrolled in career technical and lab courses must show proof of hospitalization or accident insurance. There is a policy available for the students to purchase if needed. Information regarding the plan as well as application for enrollment is available at the front office or online. FCMS and the Fannin County Board of Education cannot be responsible for medical and dental bills.

### **LEARNING COMMONS**

The learning commons' purpose is to serve the students and teachers at FCMS. It provides a wide collection of books, audiovisual materials, and is considered the hub for academic progress. Students will be allowed to go to the learning commons as needed with permission and a teacher issued hall pass. Learning commons personnel can assist students in locating and using learning commons materials. **Students must pay for any material damaged, lost, or not returned.**

### **LEARNING LUNCH**

Any student who has accumulated multiple missing assignments may be assigned to a learning lunch in order to have the opportunity for the student to get caught up and back on track. This time is designed to assist students in staying on track with their learning and achievement.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

Lost and found items should be reported to and/or turned in to the designated area. Students needing to check for turned in lost items should search the designated area, after getting permission to go to the school office with a teacher issued hall pass. Periodically, lost and found items are donated to charity.

### **MEDICINE AT SCHOOL**

All medications brought to school must be given to the school nurse. Any Over the Counter medications (Advil, Tylenol, etc) should be in an UNOPENED container, any loose pills, capsules medications in baggies or foils cannot be accepted. A signed medication sheet should be filled out. Any prescription medications will have to be brought in by the parent or guardian and a Prescription Medication sheet signed by a doctor. It must be in its original prescription container and must be clearly labeled with the student's name and dosage. You may request an additional labeled container from your pharmacy. Students requiring daily medications will be given the medication per instructions on the medication container and the physician's direction. Violating this procedure is a violation of our drug policy. The school nurse or designated person will dispense medication as prescribed or recommended dosage. Any school employee who in good faith administers or chooses not to administer the medication is immune from civil liability. Clinics do not keep stock medications, aspirin based or aspirin products cannot be accepted or given out. Should you have questions regarding this matter, please feel free to call the school nurse at the school office. Information regarding medication procedures is sent with this book at the beginning of the year. For more information contact the school office at 706-632-6100.

### **NUISANCE/PERSONAL ITEMS**

In an effort to reduce the opportunity for property to be stolen, we recommend certain items not be brought on school campus. These items include but are not limited to all electronic devices, headphones/earbuds, laser pointers, non-band musical instruments, card games, etc. School personnel are not required to investigate any reported thefts of these nuisance/personal items. Nuisance/personal items may be confiscated by school personnel and will be returned to the parent/guardian. Repeated violations may result in more serious disciplinary action.

### **PARENT CONFERENCES**

Communication between parents and teachers is essential to the growth and success of children at FCMS, and we encourage this interaction. We have parent/teacher conference days built into our school calendar; however, you are welcome to contact your child's teacher via phone or e-mail to schedule a conference any time throughout the year. You may also contact Katie Seabolt, parent involvement coordinator ([kseabolt@fannin.k12.ga.us](mailto:kseabolt@fannin.k12.ga.us)) or Shandra English, school counselor ([senglish@fannin.k12.ga.us](mailto:senglish@fannin.k12.ga.us)) or Trudy Smith, school counselor ([tsmith@fannin.k12.ga.us](mailto:tsmith@fannin.k12.ga.us)).

### **PARENT RESOURCE CENTER**

The Parent Resource Center is located in the conference room and remains open from 8:00-3:30 Monday-Friday. We have books, laptops, and other resources for you to use to help increase student achievement.

### **PROGRESS REPORTS & REPORT CARDS**

Report cards are issued at the end of each nine weeks. Progress reports are available at mid-term to alert parents of any potential problems. Parents may access student grades at any time on the Internet through Infinite Campus. Contact the school office for information on how to set up your Parent Portal password.

### **RESTRICTED AREAS**

1. Students should remain inside the school building unless they are being supervised by teacher or staff member.
2. Students should use sidewalks when possible.
3. Staff parking area is off limits to students.
4. Faculty workrooms and restrooms are restricted to faculty use only.
5. Instructional area hallways, field house, gym/gym hallway, locker rooms, and nature trail are off limits to students before school and during lunch, without teacher supervision.

### **RETENTION AND PROMOTION**

Promotion and retention decisions at all levels will be made based on student grades, attendance, and achievement as measured by various assessments which may include but are not limited to the Georgia Milestones Assessments. Retention decisions will be a joint decision made by teachers, parents/guardians, and school administrator(s). Appeals for promotion, retention, and/or grade placement decisions can be made in writing to the Superintendent of the School

System within 30 calendar days of the decision. Retention for athletic/competitive purposes is prohibited. This will also result in ineligibility in high school per GHSA by-laws.

### **SCHOOL NURSE INFORMATION**

If your child has a fever (100 or higher), then your child must stay at home until there is no fever without using fever-reducing medications for 24 hours.

If your child is vomiting or having diarrhea, then your child must stay at home until he or she is symptom free without using medications for 24 hours.

### **STUDENT COMPLAINT AND GRIEVANCE PROCESS**

From time to time, if conditions arise within the school or school system that need improvement, parents and students have the right to appropriately express concerns. These concerns shall be resolved in an orderly process and addressed first at the particular level of concern that is directly with the person involved (i.e., classroom teacher, principal, etc.) without fear of retaliation for such reports. Complaints and grievances shall be approached in the following manner:

1. The opportunity shall be provided any student or his/her parents to first discuss with his/her teacher a decision or situation which he/she considers unjust or unfair;
2. If the matter remains unresolved after discussing it with the teacher involved, the student or his/her parents, or the teacher, may then bring the matter to the Principal's attention for his/her consideration. Official grievances to the Principal may be made in writing.
3. If the matter remains unresolved after discussing it with the Principal, it may then be brought to the Superintendent or a designee for his/her consideration.
4. Complaints that remain unresolved following any action of the Superintendent may then be referred to the Fannin County Board of Education.

### **STUDENT INSURANCE**

Student accident insurance is available at the beginning of the school year for a nominal fee. Two plans are available. One is for accidents at school; the other covers students on a 24-hr. basis. Any student trying out or participating in football, basketball, cheerleading or any other interscholastic sports must obtain athletic insurance through the school at the student's expense or show proof of other insurance. Accidents occurring on school grounds, athletic practices, or at any athletic event sponsored by the school must be reported immediately to the person in charge and to the school office as soon as possible.

### **STUDENT SERVICES**

Fannin County Board of Education, in compliance with public law 94-142, provides all services for exceptional children. These are: speech, hearing impaired, gifted, behavior disorders, learning disabilities, psychological services, and all physical and mental handicaps.

### **SUSPENSIONS**

There are three types of suspension:

1. In-School-Suspension (ISS): The student will be isolated in the suspension room under direct supervision of a teacher. Class assignments will be provided. Limited restroom breaks are allowed. Students who are habitually absent from ISS for all or any part of the school day will be dismissed from the program.
2. Out-of-School Suspension (OSS): The student is denied the privilege of attending school. During out-of-school suspensions, the student is not allowed on campus or any Fannin County Board of Education properties for any reason. He/she is not allowed to attend or participate in any school functions during this time.
3. Parental Suspension: Student is sent home and cannot return to school until accompanied by a parent or guardian.

### **TELEPHONE MESSAGES**

The office staff makes every effort to get messages to students. Please call 706-632-6100 to leave a message. Phone messages will be taken and given to the student at a time least disruptive to instruction. FCMS recognizes the value and security that cell phones afford students and their families. It disrupts the learning environment when cell phones ring in a classroom or students use them in violation of policy. Do not use your student's cell phone to get messages to him/her during class. It violates our cell phone policy and often disrupts instruction.

### **TEXTBOOKS, LOCKERS AND OTHER SCHOOL PROPERTY-SEARCH & SEIZURE**

Textbooks and lockers issued to students are the property of Fannin County Board of Education. Textbooks should be used with care and returned in good condition. Students are responsible for and must pay replacement cost for textbooks, Chromebooks, and library books that are lost, stolen, or damaged beyond use. Each student is assigned a locker by his/her homeroom teacher. Students are responsible for the contents of their locker and are expected to keep it in an orderly fashion. ***School officials may inspect the contents of backpacks, lockers or other personal property at any time.*** Students may not write, mark, or use tape in or on lockers. Locks are not permitted on hall lockers. Locks for gym lockers will be provided to students.

Students are responsible for the proper care of all books, supplies, and furniture supplied by the school. Students who disfigure property, or do damage to school property or equipment, or the property of others will be required to pay for the damage done to replace the item.

### **TEXTBOOKS/CHROMEBOOKS**

At the beginning of each course, students may receive textbooks and/or Chromebooks. These items are on a loan basis and the student must pay for any damages incurred to the items. Regardless of who does the damage to the items, the student to whom the items are issued is held responsible. All books are to be checked in at the end of the course or when the student withdraws from school. All Chromebooks are to be checked in at the end of the school year or when the student withdraws from the school. The replacement costs for damaged, lost or stolen items are full price. The Chromebook Usage Agreement Form can be accessed on the school website.

### **THEFT AND VANDALISM**

All acts of theft and vandalism involving personal property or school property should be reported at once to an administrator. Students are warned to keep all monies, valuables, books, and clothing under constant surveillance and under lock and key at all times. Large sums of money and unnecessary valuables should not be brought to school. The penalty for theft or vandalism may include a referral to police. Restitution for stolen or damaged property will be assessed against the guilty student.

### **TOBACCO USE**

A student shall not, while under the responsibility of the school or at any school activity on any state school property, possess or use smoking tobacco, chewing tobacco, snuff, or smoking paraphernalia which includes, but is not limited to pipes, matches, lighters, and rolling papers. Disciplinary action will be taken against such offenses and are at the discretion of the principal or principal's designee.

### **TORNADO DRILLS**

Specific instructions will be posted in each classroom. The class teacher will instruct students where the safe areas are and will see that the students go to them as quickly and quietly as possible. Students will sit with their knees drawn up and head resting on them. The student will fold their hands at the base of their skull. Students are to remain in the position until instructed to return to class.

### **VISITORS AT SCHOOL**

- Friends or relatives of students will not be allowed to visit during classes or to remain on the campus.
- All visitors to the school must register in the main office and receive a visitor's pass, which should be returned to the office upon leaving.
- Former students who have withdrawn are not permitted on campus, except on school business, and they must apply in the main office for a visitor's pass. Visitor's passes or badges must be worn at all times, visible to all.
- Parents are welcome to visit the school at any time and the school is eager to cooperate with them. However, parents wishing to discuss issues with the teachers should make an appointment with the teacher during the teacher's planning block or after school.

### **UNSAFE SCHOOLS**

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

### **WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL**

A parent who desires to withdraw their student from Fannin County Middle School to transfer to another school or for any other reason should go to the main office and must follow the established procedure.

## **STUDENT HANDBOOK STATEMENTS**

### **ASBESTOS STATEMENT**

This is to certify that the Fannin County School System has fully complied with Federal Regulation HOCFR 763 – Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA). An EPA certified inspector has inspected all school buildings for asbestos. A Management Plan for each school is on file in the Principal's office. The Management Plan is available to the public during regular business hours. Copies may be obtained for a fee of \$.10 per page.

### **ELECTRONIC DEVICE USE**

During the instructional day personal electronic devices should remain on silent or may be used only at the discretion of administration or designee.

Students using electronic devices must abide by the Internet Acceptable Use Agreement signed upon enrollment.

Students are prohibited from using electronic devices on school buses in a manner that might interfere with the school bus communication equipment or the school bus driver's safe operation of the school bus.

Any use of electronic devices during the instructional school day without permission of the administrative staff shall be considered a disciplinary violation and will be subject to disciplinary action as specified in the student code of conduct.

### **INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE AGREEMENT**

The Fannin County School District will enforce its Acceptable Use and Internet Safety Guidelines. Upon reading the guidelines, each student must sign an approved Internet Network Access Agreement before they will be given the opportunity to enjoy Internet access at school. If a student is under the age of 18, his or her parents or legal guardians must also read and sign the agreement. The school district will not provide access to any student who fails to obtain the required signature on an approved agreement.

#### **A. INTERNET SAFETY AND EDUCATION**

A. Individual Responsibility of Parents and User: All users and their parents or guardians are advised that due to the nature of the Internet, it is extremely difficult for the Board of Education to completely regulate and monitor the information received or sent by students. Students will be required to make independent decisions and use good judgment in their use of the Internet.

B. Personal Safety: Be safe. When using the computer network and Internet, users should not reveal personal information such as name, home address, or home telephone number without authorization from the school.

C. Users should not arrange an in-person meeting with someone they "meet" on the computer without their parent's permission.

D. In order to promote the safety and security of students when accessing the Internet and any online communication programs, the school district will provide age-appropriate education regarding appropriate online behavior, including interacting with others on social networking websites and in chat rooms, as well as cyberbullying awareness and response.

E. "Hacking" and Other Illegal Activities: It is a violation of these guidelines to use the schools computer network or the Internet to gain unauthorized access to other computers or computer systems, or to attempt to gain such unauthorized access.

F. Active Restriction Measures: The school district, either by itself or in combination with the Data Acquisition Site providing Internet access, will utilize filtering software or other technologies to prevent students from accessing visual depictions that are (i) obscene, (ii) child pornography, or (iii) harmful to minors. The school will also monitor the online activities of students, through direct observation and/or technical means, to ensure that the students are not accessing such depictions or any other materials which are inappropriate for minors.

#### **B. PRIVACY**

Electronic devices, as well as access to the network and Internet, are provided as a tool for education. The school district reserves the right to monitor all computer and Internet activity by a user. Therefore, privacy is not guaranteed. All such information files shall be and remain the property of the school district and no user shall have the expectation of privacy regarding such materials.

#### **FAILURE TO FOLLOW GUIDELINES**

The use of the computer network and the Internet is a privilege, not a right. Anyone violating these guidelines shall be subject to having their privileges revoked and face potential disciplinary or legal actions.

#### **DIRECTORY INFORMATION NOTICE**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), a Federal Law, requires that the Fannin County School District obtain your written consent prior to the disclosure of personally identifiable information from your child's education record unless a certain exception is met. One exception is Directory Information. Directory information is information that is generally not considered harmful or an invasion of privacy if released. The primary purpose of Directory Information is to allow the Fannin County School System to include student information in certain school publications or school-related activities such as:

- Yearbooks
- Honor Roll or other recognition lists
- Graduation programs
- Athletic and other extracurricular programs
- Class ring manufacturing companies
- Military recruiters

The Fannin County School District has designated the following information as "Directory Information:

- Student's name, address and telephone number;
- Student's date and place of birth;
- Student's e-mail address;
- Student's participation in official school activities and sports;
- Weight and height of members of an athletic team;
- Dates of attendance at schools within the district;
- Honors and awards received during the time enrolled in the district's schools;
- Photograph; and
- Grade level

You have the right to limit or refuse the disclosure of "Directory Information". If you do not want the Fannin County School District to disclose any or all the above information as directory information, you must notify the principal of the school the student attends in writing within 10 days of receipt of this notice/handbook to opt out of having your child's information included as Directory Information. The written notice must: (1) include the name of the student; (2) include a statement that the parent/guardian or eligible student is opting out of the disclosure of Directory Information under FERPA; and (3) be signed and dated by the parent, guardian, or eligible student (a student age 18 or older). Please note



that your written notice will be effective for the current year only and must be renewed on an annual basis should you wish to continue to opt out of the release of Directory Information.

### **ESSA RIGHT TO KNOW**

In compliance with the requirements of the Every Student Succeeds Act, parents may request the following information:

1. Whether the student's teacher:
  - Has met State qualification and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction
  - Is teaching under emergency or other provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and
  - Is teaching in the field of discipline of the certification of the teacher.
2. Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

### **MINDSET PROGRAM**

FCSS has adopted the Mindset Program in order to facilitate insight, raise awareness, enhance skills and certify response teams in preventing and managing aggressive behavior. FCSS uses physical restraint only in circumstances where the student is harming themselves, harming others, or there is imminent danger. If a student has to be restrained under the preceding circumstances, a written report will be given to the parent/guardian within one school day.

### **NONDISCRIMINATION**

#### **Sports Equity Nondiscrimination Notice**

State law prohibits discrimination based on gender in athletic programs of local systems (Equity in Sports Act, O.C.G.A. 20-2-315). Students are hereby notified that Fannin County School System does not discriminate on the basis of gender in its athletic programs. The sports equity coordinator for the school system is Dr. Scott Ramsey, Fannin County High School, 360 Rebel Circle, Blue Ridge, Georgia, and (706) 632-2081. Inquires or complaints concerning sports equity in this school system may be submitted to the sports equity coordinator.

#### **Statements of Nondiscrimination**

The Fannin County Board of Education prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities, as well as employment, on the basis of race, color, sex religion, creed, national origin, age or disability. FCMS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap in any educational program or employment policy. All programs are offered to all students, regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, or handicap

### **PARENT/ELIGIBLE STUDENT DATA PRIVACY COMPLAINT POLICY**

It is the policy of the Board of Education that the School District ("District") shall comply with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Student Data Privacy, Accessibility, and Transparency Act, which are designed to ensure that education records and student data are kept confidential and secure from unauthorized access and disclosure.

For the purposes of this policy, a "parent" is defined as a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian. An "eligible student" is defined as a student who has reached 18 years of age or is attending an institution of postsecondary education.

Any parent or eligible student ("Complainant") may file a complaint with the District if that individual believes or alleges that a possible violation of rights under the above laws has occurred not more than one (1) year prior to the date the complaint is received by the District.

#### **Complaints shall be handled in accordance with the following procedures.**

All complaints shall be directed to the Superintendent's Designee:

FCSS Director of Technology and Information Systems

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130 Rebel Circle  
Blue Ridge, GA 30513  
706-258-2791  
[technologyhub@fannin.k12.ga.us](mailto:technologyhub@fannin.k12.ga.us)

Upon the receipt of a request from a Complainant, a compliant form will be provided within 3 business days, which is also available on the District's website.

A written response shall be provided to the Complainant within 10 business days of the Designee's receipt of the completed complaint form.

The Complainant may file an appeal with the Superintendent within 10 business days of receipt of the Designee's response.

The Superintendent shall provide a written response to the Complainant within 10 business days of receipt of the appeal.

The Complainant may file an appeal to the Board of Education within 10 business days of receipt of the Superintendent's response.

The Board of Education shall render a final decision within 10 business days of receipt of an appeal.

**Parental Rights under Family Educational Rights Privacy Act**  
**For Elementary and Secondary Schools**

A. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student's education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the Fannin County School System receives a request for access.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.
3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the Fannin County School System to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

B. The Georgia Student Data Privacy, Accessibility, and Transparency Act afford parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") the right to file a complaint with their local school system regarding a possible violation of rights under O.C.G.A. 20-2-667 or under other federal or state student data privacy and security laws. Direct complaints to:

Fannin County School System  
Heather Finley  
FCSS Director of Technology and Information Systems  
130 Rebel Circle  
Blue Ridge, GA 30513  
706-258-2791  
[hfinley@fannin.k12.ga.us](mailto:hfinley@fannin.k12.ga.us)

C. FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in §99.31 of the FERPA regulations. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student –

1. To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in §99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(2) are met. (§99.31(a)(1))
2. To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure Model Annual Notification is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of §99.34. (§99.31(a)(2))
3. To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency in the parent or eligible student's State (SEA). Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of §99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf. (§§99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)
4. In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§99.31(a)(4))
5. To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to §99.38. (§99.31(a)(5))
6. To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction. (§99.31(a)(6))
7. To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§99.31(a)(7))
8. To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§99.31(a)(8))
9. To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena. (§99.31(a)(9))
10. To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to §99.36. (§99.31(a)(10))
11. Information the school has designated as "directory information" under §99.37. (§99.31(a)(11))

### **PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS AMENDMENT (PPRA)**

Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) The Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) 20 U.S.C. § 1232h, requires the Fannin County School District to notify you and obtain consent or allow you to opt your child out of participating in certain school activities. These activities include a student survey, analysis, or evaluation that concerns one or more of the following eight areas ("protected information surveys"):

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parents
  2. Mental or psychological problems potentially embarrassing to the student and his/her family
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3. Sex behavior and attitudes
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating and demeaning behavior
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships
6. Legally recognized privileged relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, or ministers
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parents
8. Income, other than as required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program

This requirement also applies to the collection, disclosure, or use of student information for marketing purposes ("marketing surveys"), and certain physical exams and screenings. Following is a schedule of activities requiring parental notice and consent or opt-out for the upcoming school year. This list is not exhaustive, and for surveys and activities scheduled after the school year starts, the Fannin County School District will provide parents, within a reasonable period of time prior to the administration of the surveys and activities, notification of the surveys and activities and be provided an opportunity to opt their child out, as well as an opportunity to review the surveys. (Please note that this notice and consent/opt-out transfers from parents to any student who is 18 years old or an emancipated minor under State law.)

If you wish to review any survey instrument or instructional material used in connection with any protected information or marketing survey, please submit a request to your child's principal. He or she will notify you of the time and place where you may review these materials. You have the right to review a survey and /or instructional materials before the survey or instruction is administered to a student.

#### **PLANNED ANNUAL SURVEYS:**

**Georgia Student Health 2.0 Survey Consent:** If you do not wish for your child to participate in this survey, please send a letter stating that you do not want your student to participate with your signature and phone number by September 30, 2023.

#### **RIGHT TO REVIEW INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS § 20-2-1017**

You may, upon request, inspect any instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum for your student.

Request to review instructional materials should be directed to the Fannin County School System

Director of Curriculum

6145 Old Hwy 76

Blue Ridge, GA 30513

706-632-3771

#### **SECTION 504**

Any student or parent or guardian ("grievant") may request an impartial hearing due to the school system's actions or inactions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement under Section 504. Requests for an impartial hearing must be in writing to the school system's Section 504 Coordinator; however, a grievant's failure to request a hearing in writing does not alleviate the school system's obligation to provide an impartial hearing if the grievant orally requests an impartial hearing through the school system's Section 504 Coordinator. The school system's Section 504 Coordinator will assist the grievant in completing the written Request for Hearing. The Section 504 Coordinator may be contacted through the school system's central office. Copies of the 504 Procedural Safeguards and Notice of Rights of Students and Parents under Section 504 may be found at the system website or may be picked up at the central office or at any of the school offices.

# **STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT FANNIN COUNTY SCHOOLS**

**Revised 4-12-23**

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

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

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

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

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

## **AUTHORITY OF THE PRINCIPAL**

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

## **AUTHORITY OF THE TEACHER**

The superintendent fully supports the authority of principals and teachers in the school system to remove a student from the classroom pursuant to provisions of state law. Each teacher shall comply with the provisions of O.C.G.A. § 20-20-737-738 which requires the filing of a report by a teacher who has knowledge that a student has exhibited behavior that repeatedly or substantially interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in his or her class or with the ability of such student's classmates to learn, where such behavior is in violation of the student Code of Conduct. Such report shall be filed with the principal or designee on the school day or the following school day of the most recent occurrence of such behavior, shall not exceed one page, and shall describe the behavior. The principal or designee shall, within one day of receiving such report, notify in writing the teacher and the student's parents or guardian of the discipline or student support services which has occurred as a result of the teacher's report. This written notification shall include information as to how the parents or guardian may contact the principal or designee. Reasonable attempts to confirm receipt of such written notification by the parent or guardian shall be made.

## **PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES**

When it is necessary to impose discipline, school administrators and teachers will follow a progressive discipline

process. The degree of discipline to be imposed by each school official will be in proportion to the severity of the behavior of a particular student and will take into account the student's discipline history, the age of the student, and other relevant factors such as placement in special education programs. Discipline for special education students will be dictated by the student's IEP and in accordance with due process.

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

The Code of Conduct shall be available in each school, classroom and online at [www.fannin.k12.ga.us](http://www.fannin.k12.ga.us). It shall also be provided for each student upon enrollment and to the parents and guardians. Students and parents or guardians are asked to sign to acknowledge receipt of the Code of Conduct.

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

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

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

Parents or students may elect not to contest whether a student has violated the Code of Conduct or the appropriate discipline, and in such cases, an agreement may be negotiated which would include the parents or students waiving a right to a hearing before a disciplinary tribunal. Such an agreement and waiver must be approved also by the disciplinary tribunal or hearing officer in accordance with local board policy.

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

Any disability of a student will be taken into account when addressing misbehavior. All discipline of students with disabilities must follow the requirements of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, IDEA, and the Georgia Special Education rules.

No student in preschool through third grade shall be expelled or suspended from school for more than five consecutive or cumulative days during a school year without first receiving a multi-tiered system of supports, such as response to intervention, unless such student possessed a weapon, illegal drugs, or other dangerous instrument or such student's behavior endangers the physical safety of other students or school personnel pursuant to O.C.G.A. 20-2-742.

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

## **BEHAVIORS WHICH WILL RESULT IN DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

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

**Possession, sale, use in any amount, distribution, or being under the influence of any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate marijuana, drug paraphernalia, or alcoholic beverage or alcoholic beverage or other intoxicant**

**Possession, distribution, attempted sale, or sale of substances represented as drugs or alcohol**

**Sale, attempted sale, distribution, or being under the influence of a prescription or over the counter drug**

**Possession or use of a weapon or dangerous instrument:** As outlined in O.C.G.A. 16-11-127.1, A student shall not possess, use, handle, or transmit any object that reasonably can be considered a weapon on property or in a building owned or leased by a school district, at a school function, or on a bus or other transportation provided by the school district. Weapons may include, but are not limited to:

1. Any handgun, firearm, rifle, shotgun or similar weapon; any explosive compound or incendiary device; or, any other dangerous weapon as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-11-121, including a rocket launcher, bazooka, recoilless rifle, mortar, or hand grenade.
2. Any hazardous object, including any dirk, bowie knife, switchblade knife, ballistic knife, any other knife having a blade of two or more inches, straight-edge razor, razor blade, spring stick, knuckles, whether made from metal, thermoplastic, wood, or other similar material, blackjack, any bat, club, or other bludgeon-type weapon, or any flailing instrument consisting of two or more rigid parts connected in such a manner as to allow them to swing freely, which may be known as a nun chahka, nun chuck, nunchaku, shuriken, or fighting chain, or any disc, of whatever configuration, having at least two points or pointed blades which is designed to be thrown or propelled and which may be known as a throwing star or oriental dart, or any instrument of like kind, any nonlethal air gun, and any stun gun or taser. Such term shall not include any of these instruments used for classroom work authorized by the teacher.

Students who possess any weapon described in paragraph 1 will be subject to a minimum of a one calendar year expulsion and will be referred to the appropriate law enforcement authority and district attorney. Students who possess other weapons or hazardous objects as described in paragraph 2 will be subject to discipline as specified in the student code of conduct. See Board Policy JCDAE-Weapons

**Assault, including threats of bodily harm and/or sexual assault, of teachers, administrators, other school personnel, other students, or persons attending school-related functions:**

Immediate suspension and automatic referral to a disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed an assault upon a teacher or other school personnel; possible referral to a disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed an assault upon another student or a person attending a school-related function

**Battery, including sexual battery, of teachers, administrators, other school personnel, other students, or persons attending school-related functions:** Immediate suspension and automatic referral to the disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed battery upon a teacher or other school personnel; possible referral to the disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed battery upon another student or a person attending a school-related function.

**Physical violence against a teacher, school bus driver, or other school personnel:** (1) Immediate suspension and automatic referral to the disciplinary tribunal if a student is alleged to have committed an act of physical violence against a teacher or other school personnel: Expulsion for the remainder of the student's eligibility to attend public schools for acts of physical violence found by a tribunal to have intentionally made physical contact which causes physical harm to another unless such physical contact or physical harm was in defense of himself or herself, as provided in Code Section 16-3-21; or



the Board may authorize the student to attend alternative school for the period of the expulsion; provided, however, that such student is in kindergarten through grade six, then the Board, upon the recommendation of the Tribunal, may permit the student to re-enroll in regular programs for grades 9 through 12; and provided further that if the Board does not operate an alternative education program for grades kindergarten through grade six, then the Board may permit the student in kindergarten through grade six who commits such an act to re-enroll in the public school system. The student shall be referred to juvenile court with a request for a petition alleging delinquent behavior. (2) Possible punishments may include expulsion, long-term suspension, or short-term suspension for students found by a tribunal to have intentionally made physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with the person of another.

**Bus Misbehavior:** Students shall be prohibited from acts of physical violence as defined by Code Section 20-2-751.6. These include bullying, as defined by subsection (a) of Code Sections 20-2-751.4, physical assault or battery of other persons on the school bus, verbal assault of other persons on the school bus, disrespectful conduct toward the school bus driver or other persons on the school bus and other unruly behavior. As defined by Code Section 20-2-751.5, The local school board policy shall require a meeting of the parent or guardian of the student and appropriate school district official to form a school bus behavior contract for the student. Such contracts shall provide for progressive age-appropriate discipline, penalties, and restrictions for student misconduct on the bus. Contract provisions may include but shall not be limited to assigned seating, ongoing parental involvement, and suspension from riding the bus. This subsection is not to be construed to limit the instances when a school code of conduct or local board of education may require use of a student bus behavior contract. Students are allowed to “Bring Your Own Device” (BYOD), but shall be prohibited from using such devices during the operation of a school bus in such a manner that interferes with the communication equipment or the bus driver’s operation of the school bus. The bus driver may allow wearing of headphones with an audio system on a case-by-case basis as long as it is in accord with local school rules. Students shall be prohibited from using mirrors, lasers, flash cameras, or any other lights or reflective devices in a manner that might interfere with the school bus driver’s operation of the school bus.

**Disrespectful conduct, including use of vulgar or profane language, toward teachers, administrators, other school personnel, other students, or persons attending school-related functions**

**Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information regarding instances of alleged inappropriate behavior by a teacher, administrator, or other school employee toward a student**

**Any behavior based on a student’s race, national origin, sex, or disability that is unwelcome, unwanted, and/or uninvited by the recipient is prohibited, including verbal or non-verbal taunting, physical contact, sexual harassment in the form of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical contact of a sexual nature**

**Possession or use of tobacco in any form**

**Possession or use of e-cigarettes, vaping or related paraphernalia**

**Damaging or defacing personal property, including the property of another student or any person legitimately at the school, or school property (vandalism or graffiti) during school hours or off-school hours**

**Theft**

**Extortion or attempted extortion**

**Possession and/or use of fireworks or any explosive**

**Activating a fire alarm under false pretenses or making a bomb threat**

**Insubordination, disorderly conduct, disobeying school rules, regulations, or directives;**

**Disobeying directives given by teachers, administrators, or other school staff**

**Classroom and school disturbances**

**Violation of school dress code**

**Indecent exposure or use of profane, vulgar, or obscene words**

**Inappropriate public displays of affection**

**Gambling or possession of gambling devices Moving and non-moving**

**driving violations Giving false information to school officials Cheating on**

**school assignments**

**Unexcused absence, chronic tardiness, skipping class, leaving campus without permission, failure to comply with compulsory attendance law as required under O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1**

**Bullying:** Georgia law O.C.G.A. 20-2-751.4 mandates that upon a finding by the disciplinary hearing officer, panel, or tribunal of school officials that a student in grades 6-12 has committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year, the student shall be assigned to an alternative school.

**Hazing**

**Inciting, advising, or counseling of others to engage in prohibited acts**

**Willful and persistent violation of the student Code of Conduct**

**Criminal law violations:** A student who has committed a violation of the criminal laws and whose presence on the school campus may endanger the safety of other students or cause substantial disruption to the school operation may be subject to disciplinary action, including in-school suspension, short-term suspension and referral to a disciplinary tribunal.

## **DISRUPTIVE PRESENCE**

The Fannin County School District reserves the right to exclude a student's enrollment/attendance at a school due to any off-campus behavior which could result in the student being criminally charged with a felony and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process.

If, through notification by legal authorities or other official/unofficial entities, a principal needs to make a determination regarding the application of this policy as it relates to a student's off-campus behavior, the principal will adhere to the following protocol:

- Contact the Assistant Superintendent of Transportation and Student Conduct, who will work with the principal, the school resource officer, and the school board attorney in order to confirm whether or not charges are being filed against the student.
- Work with the Assistant Superintendent of Transportation and Student Conduct on the potential application of the Fannin County School System "Disruptive Presence" infraction code regarding the student's off-campus behavior.
- Communicate with the student's parents regarding (a) the current Georgia requirements regarding schools/school districts dealing with off-campus behaviors and (b) the application of local board policy as it pertains to their student.

## **DEFINITION OF TERMS**

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

**Battery:** Intentionally making physical contact with another person in an insulting, offensive, or provoking manner or in a way that physically harms the other person (Example: fighting)

**Bullying:** In accordance with Georgia law as defined in O.C.G.A 20-2-751.4, bullying is defined as follows: An act that is: Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so; Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that:

- a. Causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1;
- b. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
- c. Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- d. has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

The term applies to acts which occur on school property, on school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school related functions or activities or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of a local school system. The term also applies to acts of cyberbullying which occur through the use of electronic communication, whether or not electronic act originated on school property or with school equipment, if the electronic communication (1) is directed specifically at students or school personnel, (2) is maliciously intended for the purpose of threatening the safety of those specified or substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school, and

(3) creates a reasonable fear of harm to the students' or school personnel's person or property or has a high likelihood of succeeding in that purpose. Electronic communication includes, but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, data or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo electronic or photo optical system.

**Chronic Disciplinary Problem Student:** A student who exhibits a pattern of behavioral characteristics which interfere with the learning process of students around him or her and which are likely to recur. Disruptive students can be placed in alternative education settings in lieu of being suspended or expelled.

**Corporal Punishment:** Physical punishment of a student by a school official in the presence of another school official.

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

**Disciplinary Tribunal:** School officials appointed by the Board of Education to sit as fact finders and judge with respect to student disciplinary matters. These officials have received the appropriate initial and ongoing trainings to serve in this capacity. Georgia law shall be observed in developing and implementing disciplinary hearings held by the hearing officer, disciplinary panel, or disciplinary tribunal pursuant to O.C.G.A. 20-2-751 through O.C. G.A. 20-2-759 including the ability to honor disciplinary orders of private schools and other public schools/school systems as outlined in O.C.G.A. 20-2-751.2.

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

**Drug:** The term drug does not include prescriptions issued to the individual, aspirin or similar medication and/or cold medications that are taken according to product use recommendations and board policy. Caffeine pills are considered drugs.

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

**Extortion:** Obtaining money or goods from another student by violence, threats, or misuse of authority.

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

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

**Hazing:** Any conduct which subjects another person, whether physically, mentally, emotionally, or psychologically, to anything that may endanger, abuse, degrade, or intimidate the person as a condition of association with a group or organization, regardless of the person’s consent or lack of consent.

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

**Physical Violence:** Intentionally making physical contact of an insulting or provoking nature with the person of another; or intentionally making physical contact which causes physical harm to another.

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

**System’s Early Intervention Program for Student and Parent:** This early intervention program is for youth ages 12-18 and their parents/guardians. First offenders for possession or use of alcohol or other intoxicants may be offered the opportunity to attend the Substance Use Prevention Education Resource (SUPER) Program.

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

**Truant:** Any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences.

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

**Weapon:** The term weapon is defined as any object which is or may be used to inflict bodily injury or to place another in fear for personal safety or well-being. The following may be defined as dangerous weapons: Any handgun, firearm, rifle, shotgun or similar weapon; any explosive compound or incendiary device; or, any other dangerous weapon as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-11-121, including a rocket launcher, bazooka, recoilless rifle, mortar, or hand grenade, OR any hazardous object, including any dirk, bowie knife, switchblade knife, ballistic knife, any other knife having a blade of two or more inches, straight-edge razor, razor blade, spring stick, knuckles, whether made from metal, thermoplastic, wood, or other similar material, blackjack, any bat, club, or other bludgeon-type weapon, or any flailing instrument consisting of two or more rigid parts connected in such a manner as to allow them to swing freely, which may be known as a nun chahka, nun chuck, nunchaku, shuriken, or fighting chain, or any disc, of whatever configuration, having at least two points or pointed blades which is designed to be thrown or propelled and which may be known as a throwing star or oriental dart, or any instrument of like kind, any nonlethal air gun, and any stun gun or taser. Such term shall not include any of these instruments used for classroom work authorized by the teacher.

## **UNSAFE SCHOOLS**

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

## **STUDENT SUPPORT PROCESSES**

The Fannin County Board of Education provides a variety of resources which are available at every school within the district to help address student behavioral problems. The school discipline process will include appropriate consideration of support processes to help students resolve such problems. This Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) includes interventions, Student Support Teams, school counselors, and chronic disciplinary problem student plans.

### **PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT**

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

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

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

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

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

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