



STEPHENS COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT HANDBOOK

2023-2024

Vision Statement

A school climate of safety, trust, learning, growth, and encouragement.

Mission Statement

To empower students to continuously learn, experience personal growth, and encourage each other through meaningful activities that promote student-centered learning and responsible behavior in preparation for middle school and future endeavors.

Motto

Believe. *LEAD*. Inspire.

STEPHENS COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL

1315 Rose Lane

Toccoa, Georgia 30577

(706) 886-2880

Fax (706) 886-2882

STEPHENS COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL

Administration

Paul DeFoor – Principal

Dr. Jennifer Austin – Assistant Principal

Paul Batchelor – Assistant Principal/Athletic Director

Counselors

Carimy Cobb

Cortney Ragsdale

Jennifer Miller

Media Specialist

Dale Dean

Media Clerk

Katrena Brock

School Nurse

Patricia Beack

School Resource Officer

Staff Sargeant David Kiser

Family Connection

Kelly O'Shields

School Social Worker

Barbara Stevens

Students Services

Kim LeCroy

Traci Stephens

Bookkeeper

Keisha Phillips

Student Agenda: This agenda has been purchased by Stephens County Middle School. The agenda will be used as a hall pass, a pass to the Media Center, permission to use the phone, to see the nurse, administrator, or counselor, to record daily assignments, and for communication with parents and teachers.

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Web Site: <http://www.stephenscountyschools.com>

**Student Calendar
2023-2024**

Preplanning	July 27-August 1, 2023
First Day of School	August 2, 2023
Labor Day Holiday	September 4, 2023
Fall Break	October 9-13, 2023
Thanksgiving Holidays	November 20-24, 2023
End 1st Semester (Early Release)	December 15, 2023
Winter Holidays	December 18 - January 1, 2024
Teacher Work Day	January 2-3, 2024
Second Semester Begins	January 4, 2024
MLK Holiday	January 15, 2024
Presidents' Day/Holiday	February 19, 2024
Teacher Work Day	March 15, 2024
Spring Break	March 29-April 5, 2024
End 2nd Semester (Early Release)	May 24, 2024
Post Planning	May 28-30, 2024

If it becomes necessary to close school due to inclement weather or other conditions, parents and students can obtain accurate information by:

**School system website:
www.stephenscountyschools.com**

Radio: FM WNEG 93.1

Phone: 706-886-9415

Automated Call System*

***Please keep phone information current at the school in order to receive this call.**

SCMS Bell Schedule

7:00 -- Students report to the Cafeteria upon arrival at school until 7:15 a.m.

7:15 -- Students released to go to 1st Period

7:40 -- Students report to their 1st Period Class

6th Grade		7th Grade		8th Grade	
7:00-7:40	Arrival	7:00-7:40	Arrival	7:00-7:40	Arrival
7:42-8:27	1st Connection	7:42-8:47	1st Academic	7:42 - 8:52	1st Academic
8:30-9:15	2nd Connection	8:50-9:55	2nd Academic	8:55 - 10:05	2nd Academic
9:18-10:23	1st Academic	9:58-11:28	3rd Acad/Lunch	10:08 - 11:18	3rd Academic
10:25-10:45	R2S	11:33-12:18	1st Connection	11:21 -12:51	4th Acad/Lunch
10:45-12:15	2nd Acad/Lunch	12:21-1:06	2nd Connection	12:51 - 1:06	R2S
12:18-1:28	3rd Academic	1:10-1:30	R2S	1:09-1:54	1st Connection
1:31-2:42	4th Academic	1:30-2:40	4th Academic	1:57-2:42	2nd Connection
2:42	Dismissal	1:57-2:42	Dismissal	2:42	Dismissal

Students are considered tardy if they do not arrive in their homeroom to be counted as present by 7:40 a.m. Parents/Students are encouraged to arrive by 7:35 in order to get to class prior to the 7:40 late bell. Students that do not arrive to class before 7:40 will be marked tardy even if they were in the building before then. Please plan accordingly.

An Educational Partnership

The primary goal of our school is to develop each student's potential for learning and growth. In order for effective instruction to occur, there must be a cooperative relationship among students, parents, and educators. The participants in this relationship may be described as follows:

Parents or legal guardians who:

1. Keep in regular communication with the school concerning their child's progress and conduct
2. Ensure that their child is in daily attendance and promptly report and explain an absence or tardiness to school
3. Provide their child with the resources needed to complete work
4. Assist their child in being healthy, neat, and clean
5. Bring to the attention of school administrators any problem or condition that affects their child or other children of the school
6. Discuss report cards and work assignments with their child
7. Maintain up-to-date home, work, and emergency telephone numbers at the school
8. Expect and insist that their child conforms to the school's standard of conduct
9. Monitor their child's progress in extracurricular activities and provides timely transportation

Students who:

1. Attend all classes daily and are punctual in attendance

2. Are prepared to come to class with appropriate working materials
3. Are respectful of all individuals and property
4. Refrain from profane or inflammatory statements
5. Conduct themselves in a safe and reasonable manner
6. Are clean and neat
7. Are responsible for their own work
8. Abide by the rules and regulations of the school system, the school, and the classroom

A school that:

1. Provides a rigorous and challenging academic program
2. Encourages the use of good guidance procedures
3. Maintains an atmosphere conducive to good behavior
4. Exhibits an attitude of respect for students
5. Plans a flexible curriculum to meet the needs of all students
6. Develops a good working relationship among staff and with students
7. Encourages the school staff, parents or legal guardians, and students to use the services of the school and community agencies
8. Encourages parent participation in the affairs of the school
9. Endeavors to involve the entire community in order to improve the quality of life therein

Dear Parents:

On behalf of the faculty and support staff, we hope that you will be satisfied with the quality education and support provided to your child during their tenure at Stephens County Middle School. We strive to deliver a quality program with technology embedded in the instruction.

Please read through the agenda with your child. It will answer many of your questions and should make you and your child enthusiastic about our instructional program and extracurricular activities. However, do not hesitate to ask our staff if you have any questions.

If you have any concerns, we would like to know. This information will help us deliver a more individualized overall educational program. We look forward to a partnership with you and your child during the middle school years. We can be reached at 706-886-2880 or at the following email addresses.

Paul DeFoor -- Principal	paul.defoor@stephenscountyschools.org	
Dr. Jennifer Austin -- Assistant Principal	jennifer.austin@stephenscountyschools.org	
Paul Batchelor -- Assistant Principal/AD	paul.batchelor@stephenscountyschools.org	
Carimy Cobb – Counselor	carimy.cobb@stephenscountyschools.org	706-886-2880 ext. 2025
Cortney Ragsdale -- Counselor	cortney.ragsdale@stephenscountyschools.org	706-886-2880 ext. 2024
Jennifer Miller -- Counselor	jennifer.miller@stephenscountyschools.org	706-886-2880 ext. 2021

Visitors at School

For your child's protection, all visitors must check in and obtain permission to proceed through Student Services. **All visitors must then sign in and wear a visitor's badge while in the building.** Please use the front entrance to the building. As a courtesy to the teacher, please notify your child's teacher when you would like to make a classroom visit. It is important that teachers maximize use of instructional time with the students. Students not enrolled at Stephens County Middle School cannot visit friends or relatives during the school day. Visitors will not be allowed in the cafeteria to eat lunch with students. We will have a designated visitor lunch area near the front entrance if you wish to do so.

Registration Requirements – Immunizations

An official birth certificate, up to date Georgia Immunization record (Form 3231), current Certificate of Vision, Hearing, Dental, and Nutrition Screening (Form 3300), Social Security Card, Proof of Address, and drivers license or state issued ID of the enrolling parent/guardian must be provided at the time of enrollment. Students enrolling from out of state are required to have their immunization record transferred to the appropriate Georgia form. Stephens County Health Department can assist with this process. Acceptable proof of residency documents are a current power, gas, or water statement (a cell phone bill is not acceptable proof of residency) or current rental lease (with address and signed by the landlord and the tenant). Any questions about registration documentation can be directed to Central Records & Enrollment at 706-886-9415.

Required Enrollment Documentation

- 1. Age Verification** - The school system requires evidence of the student's date of birth and accepts as evidence a certified copy of a birth certificate, a certified hospital issued birth record or an alternate document from the prioritized list in the state enrollment rule.
- 2. Immunization Certificate** – The school system requires proof of immunization as required by O.C.G.A. 20-2-771, which includes an exemption for religious grounds.
- 3. Nutritional Screening and Eye, Ear and Dental Exam Certificate** - The school system complies with the provisions of O.C.G.A. 20-2-770 concerning nutritional screening and eye, ear, and dental examinations of students entering the first grade.
- 4. Social Security Number** - The school system complies with the provisions of O.C.G.A. 20-2-150, which requires a person enrolling the student to provide a copy of the student's social security number or to sign a form stating that the person does not wish to provide the social security number.
- 5. Academic and/or Transfer Records, if applicable** – Student enrollment and placement decisions are based on performance in previous schools or programs. A transferring student in a grade higher than the sixth grade must present a certified copy of his or her academic transcript and disciplinary record from the school previously attended.
- 6. Documentation for Homeless Students** - Homeless students, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act, shall be enrolled immediately with full participation in school activities, regardless of whether required documentation can be provided at the time of enrollment. The designated employee responsible for care of homeless students shall assist the person enrolling the

homeless student or the unaccompanied youth in acquiring the necessary documents for enrollment in accordance with the requirements of the state enrollment rule and the Act.

7. **Proof of Residence** shall be required in accordance with regulations developed by the superintendent or designee.

Provisional Enrollment

A student shall be enrolled on a provisional basis and allowed to attend a school for 30 calendar days while awaiting evidence of age, residence, or other local requirements, unless enrollment may be properly denied in accordance with a provision of law or the state enrollment rule. If evidence is not provided within 30 days, the superintendent or designee shall withdraw the student at the end of the 30th day. The 30-day period may be extended for extenuating circumstances in the discretion of the superintendent or designee. Prior notice of withdrawal to the parent or registering person and, as appropriate, reports to appropriate agencies of non-compliance with attendance laws shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of the state enrollment rule.

Campus Messenger

School Messenger is an automated system of communication with parents via the telephone, texts, or emails. Throughout the year you will receive timely information concerning important dates and events at Stephens County Middle School. **Please contact the records clerk to update changes in telephone numbers and email addresses.**

Media Center

The Media Center is an active part of the school's educational program and is open each school day from 7:30–3:00. Students should adhere to the following guidelines:

Books may be checked out for 2 weeks.

Books may be renewed for one 2-week period.

Overdue books accrue fines of .05 per day.

Report cards are withheld for students who have fines or overdue books.

Students may place books on reserve.

If a book is lost, the patron must pay the replacement cost of the book.

Students must have their agenda and library barcode to check out books.

Students receive their first barcodes and protectors free; additional ones are \$1.

Guidance and Counseling Services

Counseling and guidance services are available to all students. Counselors are mindful that the success of students depends upon the counselor's service to parents, legal guardians, and students. This guide provides essential information spanning a student's entire middle school career.

Counselors are available to assist students with academic and personal success. Several of the specific services available are:

- Academic development
- Advisement training
- Advocacy
- Assessment/testing and use of data
- Attendance/hospital-homebound services
- Career counseling
- Classroom and individual counseling
- Consultation through conferencing
- Coordination/collaboration with students, parents, school staff, and community
- 504 Plan Coordinators
- Personal/social development through individual and group counseling

Frequently Asked Questions about the Guidance and Counseling Program

How do I see a counselor?

Students may request to see their counselor by talking to their teacher, teachers will then send a request to the counselor. Please note your teachers will ask the reason why you need to see the counselor. Once the request is submitted your counselor will see you as soon as she is available.

Counselors are available via email, as well.

Cortney Ragsdale-6th Grade: cortney.ragsdale@stephenscountyschools.org

Jennifer Miller-7th grade: jennifer.miller@stephenscountyschools.org

Carimy Cobb-8th grade: carimy.cobb@stephenscountyschools.org

What are some reasons I may want to see the counselor?

Your counselor can offer you guidance/counseling with any situation concerning academic, career, personal, or social issues.

Is everything that I say in the counselor's office confidential?

Yes, with the exception of information that may result in harm to you, others, or the school.

School Arrival and Departure

The school day officially begins at 7:40 and ends at 2:42. The doors to SCMS will open at 7:00 am each morning. Breakfast is served from 7:00–7:40. Buses will arrive at school between 7:15 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. All buses will use the entrance from Big A Elementary/Stephens County High School. Parents who transport their children to school will use the Rose Lane entrance. Parents should remain in their cars so traffic can move smoothly. Students are to exit/enter vehicles only within the designated areas. Stephens County Middle School staff members will be on duty at the car drop-off/pick-up and bus area to supervise students. Students arriving prior to 7:15 must report directly to the cafeteria and remain there unless directed elsewhere by school personnel. Students eating breakfast will report directly to the cafeteria upon arrival. **ALL STUDENTS TRANSPORTED BY PARENTS MUST BE PICKED UP BY 3:30 PM. Staff members will direct parents during loading and dropping off students. Please pull forward as far as possible to allow more cars to enter the pick up/drop off zone.**

MIDDLE SCHOOL ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES SY 2023-2024

Absences and Tardiness

STUDENTS ARE TARDY IF THEY ARE NOT IN THEIR ASSIGNED ROOM BY 7:40. Students who are late will report to Student Services and receive a permission slip to enter class. Chronic tardiness and early dismissal from school may result in administrative assignment to After School Detention or In-School Suspension.

Students who are absent from school must turn in a written excuse from the parents or doctor to the counselors at Student Records. **THIS NOTE MUST BE PRESENTED ON THE DAY THE STUDENT RETURNS TO SCHOOL.** The note must state the date of the student's absence and must refer to one of the legal reasons for which an absence may be excused.

Parent notes will be accepted for 7 total absences. After the 7th parent note, a student would need a medical excuse or release from the school nurse in order to be excused.

Excused absences include the following: (1) Illness, (2) Immediate Family illness or death, (3) Emergency medical or dental attention, (4) Authorized religious holidays and trips of educational value approved by the principal in advance, (5) Conditions rendered hazardous to their health and safety. All excused absences must be approved within three school days. Forms for educational field trips are available from Student Services or Student Records.

The immediate family is defined as spouse, children, mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, grandchildren, mother-in-law, father-in-law, sister-in-law, daughter-in-law, son-in-law, brother-in-law, or any relative living in the household of the student. This policy includes all step relatives as identified in this paragraph.

Interventions for Unexcused (UNX) Absences:

- 3 UNX - Parent Contacted by School Personnel
- 5 UNX - Parent Contacted by School Personnel
- 10 UNX - An Attendance Support Team (AST) meeting will be held with Social Worker
- 11 UNX - A referral will be made to the court system
- 15+ UNX - Parent Contacted by School Personnel

Interventions for Excused Absences:

- 10 Excused - School Counselor will review with Social Worker
- 15+ Excused - School Counselor will review with Social Worker

Interventions for Tardiness and Early Check-Outs:

- 14+ Tardies and/or Early Check Outs - Parent Contacted by School Personnel

- 20+ Tardies and/or Check Outs - An Attendance Support Team (AST) meeting will be held with Social Worker

Tardy/Sign-in/out Procedure: Middle School students are required to check in at the front office when arriving at school after the beginning of the official school day at 7:40 am. Records of tardiness are monitored and maintained in the Infinite Campus Student Information System. A tardy slip will be issued which must then be presented to the teacher of the class to which the student reports. Students must also be checked out through the front office and only the individuals listed on the Infinite Campus portal will be able to check the student out with guardian permission. Photo I.D. will be required.

Excessive Tardies: Upon any middle school student's 6th unexcused tardy and/or unexcused early dismissal during a single nine-weeks grading period, the student will receive appropriate administrative consequences. The student will thereafter receive additional administrative consequences for each subsequent unexcused tardy during the same nine-weeks grading period. Administrative consequences may include, but are not limited to the following: being prohibited from participating in a school activity (e.g., incentive); lunch detention; ISS; after-school detention; or any other progressive administrative disciplinary consequence to be used at the discretion of school administration.

If parents cannot be contacted by phone or letter, then the school social worker will do a home visit in an effort to discuss attendance and get the contract signed. Parents who fail to respond to letters, phone calls, and home visits will be referred to the appropriate court.

Leaving School/Early Dismissal

Students are required to remain at school throughout the school day unless a note is received at the Student Services desk by 7:40. Board of Education Policy requires that students are not allowed early release unless the reason is covered under the Georgia Code for Absenteeism. This note must be presented to the Student Services desk as the student enters school and a check out slip will be given to the student at this time. At the time designated on the early dismissal, the student will report to the Student Services desk. Parents arriving to pick up students are required to come to the school office to sign out the student. In all instances before a student is permitted to leave school prior to the dismissal bell, the parent, legal guardian, or designated person must call for the student in person at Student Services and sign the student out. Students will use the note to leave class and report to the main office. **PARENTS ARE ASKED TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS FOR EARLY DISMISSAL BY WRITING A NOTE BEFORE LEAVING IN THE MORNING.** Parents may not go to the classroom to pick up a child; rather, check in at the Student Services desk. Calling over the intercom for early dismissal disrupts instruction for the entire classroom. Anyone checking out a student must be on the student's pickup list. **All checkouts after 2:15 must have an administrator's approval.**

If your child has parental permission for transportation other than the regular way, the student **must** bring a written note from home stating this. This note is to be presented to the Student Services desk as the student enters school. For safety and security reasons, telephone calls will not be accepted in lieu of a note. Students must return at lunch to pick up the note and present it to the bus driver. Without a note, no change will be permitted. Thank you for advanced planning.

If your child becomes sick during the school day, the following procedure must be followed. Students should ask his/her teacher to write a note in his/her agenda to see the school nurse. The school nurse will determine if a child is too sick to stay at school, and parents will be notified. The student must check out of school at the Student Services desk. **Students may not directly contact parents.**

Make-up Work

It is the student's responsibility to ask for all assignments that were missed due to an excused absence from school. Any time a student knows in advance of an upcoming excused absence, assignments should be requested from the classroom teachers in advance. Parents may request make-up work from teachers if the student will be missing multiple days. Please allow 24 hours for teachers to gather work.

ACADEMIC ASSIGNMENTS

At Stephens County Middle School we have high academic expectations for all students and believe completing assignments is a vital part of that. Teachers will make every effort to make sure assignments are meaningful, the instructions are clear, and that the due date is understood. We encourage parents to check their child's agendas routinely. The agenda may also be utilized as a tool to communicate between families and teachers.

Parent Portal (Via Home Computer)

Parent Portal is a convenient home-to-school collaboration tool that allows parents to keep track of their children's academic progress—online—via an easy-to-use Web site. With their personal password, parents gain access to a secure, "read only" system and variety of functions to help them stay involved and informed including:

- Read school program announcements
- Access student schedules, grades, assignments, and attendance
- Easily communicate with teachers via email

In order to use Parent Portal, the following must be completed:

- Go to Stephens County school system website.
- Select “Infinite Campus parent portal.”
- Once on the Infinite Campus site, you will need to select the “click here” that indicates you DO NOT have the “activation key.”
- Next, click on “click here to request activation key.”
- You will need to input information (SSN, DOB, etc.) for the child and “submit.”
- Once the required information is given, you will then receive an “activation key” that will allow you access to the parent portal. The activation key is very long, so you may need to write it down or print it out.
- Then go back to the option to enter your “activation key” and follow the steps. You will set up a username and password.
- If you have more than one child in the school system, you will need to follow these steps for each child.

Report Cards and Grading System

Report cards will be sent to parents every nine weeks. Parents/Guardians are asked to sign the agenda indicating that they have reviewed the report card. Notes to teachers may be written in the agenda. Each teacher checks all agendas on their return to see if they have been signed and if there are parental comments or notes enclosed. Teachers send an interim progress report at the mid-term of each nine-week grading period.

Honor Students Requirements

All “A” Honor Roll	90-100
A/B Honor Roll	80-89

The final average percentage grade for any honors or advanced coursework shall be weighted by an increase of three additional (3) percentage points not to exceed a total of 103. Top 5 ranking for all grades shall be determined by the unrounded cumulative numerical average of weighted midpoint of 4th 9 week grades for all classes.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parents are urged to take an active interest in their child's schoolwork. Parent/Teacher Conferences can be scheduled during a team's planning period. Other arrangements can be made through the principal, assistant principal, or counselor's office. You may also request a conference with a teacher by voicemail, email, or agenda.

Locker Assignments—Backpacks

Students in grades 6-8 will not be using lockers and are encouraged to bring a backpack to school in order to carry their items (books, notebooks, pencils, paper, etc).

School Bus Procedures

The bus driver is in complete charge of the bus. If necessary, the bus driver will assign students to specific seats. Bus drivers will communicate with parents concerning problems via a disciplinary form. Problems of a serious nature must be reported promptly to an administrator. Consequences for bus discipline referrals range from parental contact to loss of bus transportation privilege. **If a student is denied transportation by bus, the requirement to attend school does not change.** All students must follow the bus rules in order to continue riding the bus to and from school. Failure to abide by these rules will result in the bus-riding privileges taken away for various amounts of time. Additional consequences may be assigned as needed. Parents and students must understand and respect the fact that riding a bus is not a right—it is a privilege.

Student Bus Responsibility

- Be ready to board the bus upon its arrival.
- Students must be in sight—drivers will not wait.
- Stay away from danger zones around the bus.
- Do not push or shove when boarding the bus.
- Secure dangling jacket strings, book bag straps, or loose fitting clothing that might get caught on bus equipment.
- Take seats promptly and remain seated, facing the front, while the bus is moving.
- Keep the center aisle clear. Keep feet out of the aisle.

- Misbehavior of any kind will not be tolerated.
- Do not put arms, head, hands, or feet out of windows.
- Bus seats are designed to seat three people. Do not save seats.
- Bus will stop at designated stops only.
- Students are not allowed to change buses without prior written approval from an administrator.
- Food, gum, and drinks are not allowed on buses.
- Radios and recreational equipment are not allowed on buses.
- Glass containers, balloons, and live animals may not be transported on the bus.
- **Bus transportation changes are not permitted at the school level. Any bus transportation changes must be submitted to and approved by the Transportation Department. Changes will not be approved by the school.**
- It shall be unlawful for any person to disrupt or interfere with the operation of any public school, public school bus, or public school bus stop as designated by the board of education.

Medication

If a child becomes ill, attempts will be made to notify parents. Students who need to take medicine on a short-term basis (one week or less) will need to provide a written request from the doctor or parent. In all cases, the medication must be brought to school by an adult and **must be in the original container with specific directions**. **This medication needs to be taken to the nurse's office. Students are never allowed to carry medications of any kind with them at school. No self-medicating is permitted. Asthmatic students may keep inhalers with them. The student must report to the nurse that an inhaler is being carried.**

Long-term prescription medication (two weeks or more) requires a form to be completed by the parents and the student's doctor. Medication must be in the original container with specific directions. The school nurse will keep medication in a locked area and will document each time medication is given.

The school nurse assesses symptoms but does not diagnose illnesses. Permission to dispense medication must be given on the Clinic Information Form. No medication is given without your permission. To better serve our students, the school nurse will keep a limited supply of "Parent Request" meds at school. There will be a small cost to keep this supply of Tylenol, Benadryl, Neosporin, Band-Aid anti-itch gel or hydrocortisone. The donation is not mandatory. Parents will be notified by phone or in the agenda when Benadryl is given or if your child is frequently requesting Tylenol.

Medications

Long Term (over 10 days)

1. Must have, on file in the nurse's office, a current Request for Administration of Long-Term medication form filled out and signed by a physician and by a parent.
2. Medication should be brought in an original labeled bottle with the name of the child, medication name, correct dosage, and physician's name.

Over the Counter Medications:

1. All medications must be brought to the nurse in the morning.
2. Must have a dated note from the parent.
3. Must bring in a new unopened bottle, or may bring individual single dose packets.

Please note: All medications must be picked up by the end of the school year by a parent, or they will be destroyed by the nurse.

Telephones

Students may ask permission to use the telephone only in case of an emergency. Written permission, including reason for calling, must be granted by the classroom teacher. The permission to use the phone must be written in the agenda by the faculty member granting permission to use the phone. If a teacher grants permission for a student to use a classroom phone, the front office should be notified concerning the call.

Cell Phones

Cell phones should not be visible during the school day (Including courtyard time, dismissal, car rider, gym, etc.). Use of cell phones during extra-curricular activities is at the discretion of the club sponsor.

1st violation—phone collected by teacher and returned to the student at the end of class.

2nd violation—phone collected and turned in to the office—student may pick up at the end of the day—Parent Contact will be made.

3rd violation—phone collected — student will serve 1 day ISS and the parent will need to pick up the phone—Parent Contact will be made.

4th violation—phone collected — student will serve 2 days of ISS and the parent will need to pick up the phone—Parent Contact will be made.

Additional violations will be handled by administration if occasions arise.

Personal Property

The school is not responsible for lost or stolen items. To reduce the number of lost or stolen items, please make sure your child is only bringing necessary items to school. Your child should immediately report any lost or stolen items to the classroom teacher. .

Emergency Drills

Fire Drills are held monthly during the year. Student cooperation and attention are needed to evacuate the building safely. The signal for a fire drill is a continuous blast from the fire alarm system or by intercom. At this time evacuation procedures go into effect:

- Walk, quickly and quietly, in a single file line through the appointed exit and to a safe distance from the building. **No Horseplay!**
- Teachers take their roll book outside and take attendance.
- Remain in a designated area until the all-clear signal is given.
- In case of other threats, locations for evacuation will be announced.

Severe Weather Drills will be held throughout the year. Signals for a drill will be announced over the intercom system.

- All students will move into the hallway. Students in mobile classrooms will move into the main building.
- Assume the proper position and remain until the all-clear signal is given.
- If students are outside, they will enter the nearest building.

Intruder Alert Drills will be held throughout the year. The signal for an Intruder Alert Drill will be given over the intercom. Teachers and staff will proceed with the lock-down procedure.

Student Dress Code

The faculty of Stephens County Middle depends on the good judgment of our parents and the sensitivity of our students not to wear clothing that may cause disruption in the learning process. Parents or students who have specific questions about an item's appropriateness should consult the local school administration.

Stephens County School System is the workplace for our students. Therefore, proper attire is the expected norm for students at our schools. In an effort to establish positive and productive attitudes, the following guidelines are provided for modest and appropriate dress.

- Clothing with open or frayed holes above extended fingertips must be covered underneath (no paper, tape, etc). No undergarments should be visible.
- Bike/spandex shorts, cut-off leggings, etc., may not be worn.
- Pants with elastic waistbands may be worn as long as all other dress code conditions are met. All pants must be worn securely around the waist. Students may not wear pajamas to school.
- Sleeveless shirts must have straps at least 3 inches wide. No tank tops, tube tops, spaghetti straps, halter tops, mesh or see-through garments may be worn. Shirts cannot hang off the shoulder. The midriff must be covered at all times (no crop tops). No undergarments should be visible.
- Any other article of appearance that is physically revealing, provocative or sexually suggestive is not permitted.
- Shoes must be worn at all times and as the manufacturer intended. Shoes must have a sole. Bedroom slippers (shoes without a sole) are not allowed.
- Hoods, hats, caps, bandanas, headbands, or sunglasses may not be worn inside the building during the regular school day. Fish hooks may not be worn on hats. Head coverings may not be worn inside the

building except for religious attire.

- Jewelry or clothing that projects violence or sexual innuendo is prohibited. Dog collars, neck/wallet/pocket chains, or spike necklaces/bracelets are not allowed. Items not designed as jewelry such as safety pins, staples, paper clips, etc., should not be worn as jewelry.
- Students are not permitted to write, draw, color, etc., on themselves while at school or come to school with writings, drawings, etc on their bodies.
- Blankets and pillows are not permitted at school.
- Earbuds and/or headphones may not be worn at school (unless directed by the teacher for instructional purposes). They should **not** be worn in the hallways, cafeteria, car riders, etc. Students wishing to bring them to school must keep them in their book bag until school is dismissed.
- Garments and jewelry that display emblems relating to sex, drugs, weapons, obscenities, gang membership which includes bandanas, confederate flags and/or abusive substances, such as tobacco, drugs, alcohol products, or **anything deemed inappropriate or disruptive by the administration** may not be worn.

Students must adhere to the dress code or parents will be called to bring more clothes or to pick up the student.

If a parent/guardian is unable to be reached, the school may provide a seat for the student in ISS until the parent can be reached. Consequences will be administered to students who repeatedly violate this policy.

School Lunch and Breakfast Program

Lunch and breakfast menus are posted. Students will be provided the opportunity to participate in the breakfast and lunch program at no cost. Each student will be responsible for entering his or her assigned lunch number when passing through the lunch line. Students may purchase extra items upon availability. Checks and cash may be used for purchasing extra items should be made payable to Stephens County Middle School Cafeteria. Please do not include snack or ice cream money in this check.

Students are expected to eat and handle food properly. Any misuse or behavior problems in dealing with improper use of food will not be tolerated. All students will exhibit good manners at all times. The cafeteria should be a calm, relaxed environment where both teacher and student can fully enjoy his or her meal. Please enter the cafeteria quietly in a single line. Keeping the tables clean is the responsibility of each academic team.

- Talking in a normal conversation is permitted. If the noise level becomes too high, your teacher may take away the talking privilege.
- Please clean around your chair before you get up.
- Pick up all the trash in your area.
- Your teacher will dismiss you from the table.
- Remain in a single line when putting your tray in the window. Put silverware in the container provided.
- If you drop anything on the floor, please pick it up.
- Each team will designate students to clean tables.
- Use only what is needed for condiments.
- Food items may not be taken from the cafeteria except with special permission from the teacher.
- Students will be allowed to purchase snacks after given time to eat lunch.
- Show respect to the food nutrition staff who are there to assist students.

Visitors, regardless of age, must pay an adult price. Students with food allergies should submit a doctor's note to the food service manager.

School Accident Insurance

It is recommended that your child be covered under a health insurance plan. Accidents do occasionally occur at school—on the school grounds, in the gym, in the classroom, etc. An accident insurance policy that parents may purchase for your child is available. If you wish to purchase student accident insurance, which includes options for around the clock coverage and football, please click on the link for student accident insurance that is located on the district website at www.stephens.k12.ga.us or on our school webpage at <http://scms.stephens.k12.ga.us>. If you do not have Internet access or need assistance, please contact the school office; we will assist you in getting your coverage started. The school encourages parents to have their children covered by an accident insurance policy of some kind since the school is not financially responsible for medical bills incurred by accidents at school. **All participants in athletic activities must present written evidence of insurance coverage in order to participate in athletics or any other extracurricular activity.**

School Pictures – School Yearbook

Stephens County Middle School offers fall and spring pictures. Several package options are available. When purchasing pictures, please make checks payable to the company indicated. A yearbook will be on sale during the school year.

Field Trips

Field trips are planned to enhance our curriculum. Trips are carefully planned by the teacher and approved by the administration and Board of Education. Parents will be notified of these trips in advance. All out-of-county field trips require a permission slip from the parents prior to the date of the trip. This permission slip must indicate the date, time, and purpose of the trip. Students on the ineligible list for discipline may not attend the field trip. All field trips shall begin and end at the school site. Teachers shall accompany students on all field trips and assume responsibility for their proper conduct and safety. For safety factors, sponsors of the field trip must provide the driver with a list of students on the bus. Additionally, all students attending field trips for a club or organization must have the teacher permission slip signed.

Change of Address/Phone

Please notify the school office of any change as soon as possible. It is vitally important for us to have a telephone number on student records so that we can reach you in case of emergency. If you do not have a telephone, please use a telephone number from a close friend, relative, or neighbor. It is necessary to have an accurate address and phone number on file for your child.

Transfers

Students transferring to other schools shall get a withdrawal form from their counselor. All teachers, media specialists, food service managers, and an administrator shall sign the form. A parent or guardian must be present at the time of withdrawal.

Gifted Education

The middle school program for the gifted, SEARCH, serves eligible students in grades 6-8 in the areas of Language Arts, Social Studies, Math, and Science. Students may be referred for consideration for educational services in the gifted program by parents, teachers, counselors, administrators, guardians, peers, self, and other individuals with knowledge of the student's abilities. **The deadline for referrals is the Friday following spring break. Testing takes place during the school year after Georgia Milestones testing.**

Clubs

The faculty and staff take a special interest in all students in a caring, positive, and challenging environment. We have many teacher-sponsored clubs. We encourage each child to join a club.

Interscholastic Sports

Sports include Football, Cheerleading, Cross Country, Softball, Basketball, Wrestling, Golf, Tennis, Soccer, Baseball, and Track. ***Sixth Grade students are eligible for all sports except football, according to NEGIAA Conference by-laws.***

Parent-Teacher-Student Organization

The Stephens County Middle School Parent-Teacher-Student Organization is active in various activities that help all students. They sponsor dances during the school year. Membership is at no cost, and there will be an opportunity to join at orientation and at PTSO meetings. Parents are encouraged to join this organization.

Textbooks / Computers

Textbooks, computers, and calculators that are issued to students are the property of the Stephens County Board of Education. They should be used with care and returned in good condition. Students are responsible for books that are lost, stolen, or damaged. Full replacement cost will be charged for lost, stolen, or damaged textbooks and library books. **Agendas are considered a textbook.**

Agenda

Parents, guardians, care providers, or mentors are requested to sign the agenda each Thursday evening or as requested by the teacher. Please use the agenda to communicate with your child's teacher. Pages and the cover must not be removed from agendas. The replacement cost for the agenda is \$6.

Charter System/School Governance Team

Stephens County Schools operate under a charter from the Georgia Department of Education. As a charter system, we have the opportunity to implement innovative ways to secure the best possible education for all of our students. The School Governance Council (SGC) is entrusted with the responsibility of providing input, making recommendations, and rendering decisions regarding various aspects of the instructional program of the school and the school's operational scheme.

The middle school SGC will consist of seven members: the principal, two staff members (one of whom must be certified), two parents who cannot be employed at the school and who must have children in the school, two community members recommended by the principal, and two students nominated by teachers and recommended by the principal. Each member will serve a three-year term of service from July 1 through June 30 of each year. Teachers and parents will be elected by the people they represent with nominations accepted the first two weeks of May and elections in May. Stakeholders may contact the principal with suggestions for SGC meeting agenda items. The SGC will post the dates for monthly meetings and is subject to the Open Meetings Act and Open Records Act.

NOTICE OF NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Stephens County School System does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, creed, age, national origin, marital status, or handicap (Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972 and Rehabilitation Act of 1973) in educational programs or activities receiving federal assistance. Employees, students, and the general public are hereby notified that the Stephens County Board of Education does not discriminate in any educational programs or activities or employment policies. Inquiries, concerning the application of Title VI, Title IX, or Section 504 in regard to the policies and practices of this board, may be addressed to the coordinators listed below.

Title VI or Section 504
Brandy Stacy
Special Programs Director
Stephens County School System
191 Big A School Road, Toccoa, GA 30577
brandy.stacy@stephenscountyschools.org
Phone: 706-886-9415, ext. 1632

Title IX
Chuck King
Athletic Director
Stephens County High School
323 Indian Trail, Toccoa, GA 30577
chuck.king@stephenscountyschools.org
Phone: 706-886-6825

In addition, other inquiries may be directed to the Regional Office of Civil Rights, Atlanta, Georgia, 30323; or to the Director, Office of Civil Rights, Education Department, Washington, D.C., 30301.

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, disability, or sex in its employment practices, student programs and dealings with the public. It is the policy of the Board of Education to comply fully with the requirements of Title VI, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans With Disabilities Act and all accompanying regulations.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, anyone attending school activities and needing assistance due to a disability should notify the school in advance. Any concerns regarding the Americans with Disabilities Act should be directed to the respective school's principal.

Any employee, student, applicant for employment, parent or other person who believes he or she has been discriminated against or harassed in violation of this policy must make a complaint in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Complaints made to the school system regarding alleged discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color or national origin in violation of Title VI, on the basis of gender in violation of Title IX or on the basis of disability in violation of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 or the Americans With Disabilities Act will be processed in accordance with the following procedure:

1. Any student, employee, applicant for employment, parent or other person with a complaint alleging a violation as described above shall promptly notify, in writing or orally, either the principal for his/her school or the appropriate coordinator designated from time to time by the Board of Education. If the complaint is oral, either the coordinator or school principal to whom the complaint is made shall promptly prepare a memorandum or written statement of the complaint made to him or her by the complainant and shall have the complainant read and sign the memorandum or statement if it accurately reflects the complaint made. If the complaint is made to a school principal, he or she shall be responsible for notifying the appropriate coordinator of the complaint.
2. If the alleged offending individual is the coordinator designated by the Board of Education, the complaint shall either be made by the complainant to the Superintendent or, if the complaint is initially made to the school principal, reported by the principal to the Superintendent.
3. The coordinator or his or her designee shall have fifteen work days to gather all information relevant to the complaint made, review the information, determine the facts relating to the complaint, review the action requested by the complainant, and attempt to resolve the complaint with the complainant and any other persons involved. The coordinator or designee shall prepare a written response to the complaint detailing any action to be taken in response to the complaint and the time frame in which such action will be taken and copies of this response shall be furnished to the complainant, the appropriate coordinator and the Superintendent or his or her designee.
4. If the complaint is not resolved at the conclusion of this fifteen-day period or if the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint, the complainant shall have the right, within five working days of receiving a copy of the written response, to have the complaint referred to the Superintendent of Schools. If the alleged offending

individual is the Superintendent, the Complainant may have the complaint referred to the Board of Education, rather than the Superintendent.

5. The Superintendent shall have fifteen work days to review the complaint and the response of the coordinator or designee and attempt to resolve the complaint. The Superintendent shall furnish to the complainant a written response setting forth either his or her approval of the action recommended by the coordinator or designee or the action to be taken by the system in response to the complaint in lieu of that recommended by the coordinator or designee and the time frame in which such action shall be taken.
6. If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response of the Superintendent, then the complainant shall have the right, within fifteen working days of the receipt of the written response of the Superintendent, to have the complaint referred to the Board of Education. In order to have the Board review the Superintendent's decision, the complainant must file with the Superintendent a written statement setting forth the reasons he or she disagrees with the response of the Superintendent and the action the complainant is requesting the system to take. The complainant shall also include in the written response a request that his or her complaint be referred to the Board of Education.
7. Within thirty working days of receipt of the written request of the complainant, the Superintendent shall present the matter to the Board of Education at its regular meeting or at a special meeting called for that purpose. The Board shall review the original complaint, the response of the coordinator or designee, the response of the Superintendent, and the response of the complainant. In addition, the Board may, but is not required to, hear directly from any individuals with knowledge of any relevant facts relating to the complaint.
8. The Board of Education will either uphold the recommendation of the Superintendent or require the system to take some other action in response to the complaint. A copy of the action of the Board will be furnished to the complainant, either as a part of the minutes of the Board of Education or as a separate written statement. The Board shall be the final reviewing authority within the system.
9. This policy is not intended to deprive any employee of any right they may have to file a grievance pursuant to any other policy of the local Board of Education, specifically the policy designed to implement Official Code of Georgia Annotated 20-2-989.5, where appropriate. This policy is not intended to provide an alternative process for resolving evaluation and employment disputes where there already exists a due process procedure mandated by state law or State Department of Education regulations, specifically including, but not limited to, hearings to be conducted pursuant to the Fair Dismissal Act of Georgia. The complainant retains at all times the right to contact the Office of Civil Rights or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission with regard to any allegations that the system has violated the statutes described above.
10. The school system shall be responsible for distributing and disseminating information relevant to this policy and procedure to students, applicants for employment and employees through appropriate procedures.
11. No reprisal shall occur as a result of reporting unlawful discrimination or harassment under this policy, and any attempt to retaliate against a complainant shall be disciplined as is appropriate.
12. The confidentiality of any individual making a complaint or report in accordance with this policy, to the extent it is reasonably possible, shall be protected, although the discovery of the truth and the elimination of unlawful harassment shall be the overriding consideration.

GENDER EQUITY IN SPORTS

It shall be the policy of the Stephens County Board of Education to prohibit discrimination based on gender in any interscholastic or intramural athletics offered by the Stephens County School District. The District shall undertake all reasonable efforts to provide equal athletic opportunities for members of both genders. In accordance with the Georgia Equity in Sports Act, the District's high school shall not participate in, sponsor, or provide coaching staff for interscholastic sports events which are conducted under the authority of, conducted under the rules of, or scheduled by any athletic association unless the charter, bylaws, or other governing documents of such athletic association comply with the Georgia Equity in Sports Act.

The Superintendent shall designate an individual, known as the sports equity coordinator, to coordinate compliance with the Georgia Equity in Sports Act. The school system shall annually notify all its students of the name, office address, and office telephone number of the sports equity coordinator.

The sports equity coordinator shall investigate any complaint received by the local school system alleging noncompliance with the Georgia Equity in Sports Act. The investigation shall be in accordance with the grievance procedures provided by administrative regulation to this Policy.

The Stephens County Board of Education acknowledges that it has authority to accept donations for the use of the District. Donations may be monetary, real or personal property or services. Any donations made to athletic programs of the District shall conform to state and federal laws and to the policies of the Board. To assist the District in maintaining compliance with the Georgia Equity in Sports Act, any donations made to athletic programs of the District must be accompanied by either a valuation of such donation or an accounting of actual costs incurred by the donor regarding the donation. The Superintendent

or designee shall establish criteria for the evaluation of offers and acceptance of donations to the athletic programs of the District.

Right to Know Notification

Right to Know Professional Qualifications of Teachers and Paraprofessionals

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

Whether the student's teacher—

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

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

If you wish to request information concerning your child's teachers and/or paraprofessional's qualifications, please contact the principal at 706-886-2880.

504 STUDENT RIGHTS AND PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

SECTION 504 INFORMATION

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 is designed to prohibit discrimination based on disability in any program or activity receiving Federal money. This statute obligates public schools to provide equal access and equal opportunity to otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. To determine 504 eligibility, a student must demonstrate: as a result of an evaluation, to have a physical or mental disability/impairment (or having a history of a physical or mental disability/impairment) that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

For more information regarding Section 504 Eligibility and Plan development process, contact your school SST/504 coordinator or the Stephens County System 504 Coordinator at the following address:

191 Big A School Road
Toccoa, GA 30577
(706) 886-5609

PARENTS' RIGHTS UNDER SECTION 504 / ADA

Notice of Rights of Students and Parents Under Section 504

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

1. Your child has the right to an appropriate education designed to meet his or her individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students. 34 CFR 104.33.
2. Your child has the right to free educational services except for those fees that are imposed on non-disabled students or their parents. Insurers and similar third parties who provide services not operated by or provided by the recipient are not relieved from an otherwise valid obligation to provide or pay for services provided to a disabled student. 34 CFR 104.33.
3. Your child has a right to participate in an educational setting (academic and nonacademic) with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate to his or her needs. 34 CFR 104.34.
4. Your child has a right to facilities, services, and activities that are comparable to those provided for non-disabled students. 34 CFR 104.34.
5. Your child has a right to an evaluation prior to a Section 504 determination of eligibility. 34 CFR 104.35.
6. You have the right to not consent to the school system's request to evaluate your child. 34 CFR 104.35.
7. You have the right to ensure that evaluation procedures, which may include testing, conform to the requirements of 34 CFR 104.35.
8. You have the right to ensure that the school system will consider information from a variety of sources as appropriate, which may include aptitude and achievement tests, grades, teacher recommendations and observations, physical conditions, social or cultural background, medical records, and parental recommendations. 34 CFR 104.35.

9. You have the right to ensure that placement decisions are made by a group of people, including persons knowledgeable about your child, the meaning of the evaluation data, the placement options, and the legal requirements for least restrictive environment and comparable facilities. 34 CFR 104.35.
10. If your child is eligible under Section 504, your child has a right to periodic reevaluations, including prior to any subsequent significant change of placement. 34 CFR 104.35.
11. You have the right to notice prior to any actions by the school system regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child. 34 CFR 104.36.
13. You have the right to examine your child's educational records. 34 CFR 104.36.
14. You have the right to an impartial hearing with respect to the school system's actions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, with opportunity for parental participation in the hearing and representation by an attorney. 34 CFR 104.36.
15. You have the right to receive a copy of this notice and a copy of the school system's impartial hearing procedure upon request. 34 CFR 104.36.
16. If you disagree with the decision of the impartial hearing officer (school board members and other district employees are not considered impartial hearing officers), you have a right to a review of that decision according to the school system's impartial hearing procedure. 34 CFR 104.36.
17. You have the right to, at any time, file a complaint with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

SECTION 504 PROCEDURAL SAFEGUARDS

1. **Overview:** Any student or parent or guardian ("grievant") may request an impartial hearing due to the school system's actions or inactions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement under Section 504. Requests for an impartial hearing must be in writing to the school system's Section 504 Coordinator; however, a grievant's failure to request a hearing in writing does not alleviate the school system's obligation to provide an impartial hearing if the grievant orally requests an impartial hearing through the school system's Section 504 Coordinator. The school system's Section 504 Coordinator will assist the grievant in completing the written Request for Hearing.
2. **Hearing Request:** The Request for the Hearing must include the following:
 1. The name of the student.
 2. The address of the residence of the student.
 3. The name of the school the student is attending.
 4. The decision that is the subject of the hearing.
 5. The requested reasons for review.
 6. The proposed remedy sought by the grievant.
 7. The name and contact information of the grievant.
 8. Within 10 business days from receiving the grievant's Request for Hearing, the Section 504 Coordinator will acknowledge the Request for Hearing in writing and schedule a time and place for a hearing. If the written Request for Hearing does not contain the necessary information noted above, the Section 504 Coordinator will inform the grievant of the specific information needed to complete the request. All timelines and processes will be stayed until the Request for Hearing contains the necessary information noted above.
3. **Mediation:** The school system may offer mediation to resolve the issues detailed by the grievant in his or her Request for Hearing. Mediation is voluntary and both the grievant and school system must agree to participate. The grievant may terminate the mediation at any time. If the mediation is terminated without an agreement, the school system will follow the procedures for conducting an impartial hearing without an additional Request for Hearing.
4. **Hearing Procedures:**
 - a. The Section 504 Coordinator will obtain an impartial review official who will conduct a hearing within 45 calendar days from the receipt of the grievant's Request for Hearing unless agreed to otherwise by the grievant or a continuance is granted by the impartial review official.
 - b. Upon a showing of good cause by the grievant or school system, the impartial review official, at his or her discretion, may grant a continuance and set a new hearing date. The request for a continuance must be in writing and copied to the other party.
 - c. The grievant will have an opportunity to examine the child's educational records prior to the hearing.
 - d. The grievant will have the opportunity to be represented by legal counsel at his or her own expense at the hearing and participate, speak, examine witnesses, and present information at the hearing. If the grievant is to be represented by legal counsel at the hearing, he or she must inform the Section 504 Coordinator of that fact in writing at least 10 calendar days prior to the hearing. Failure to notify the Section 504 Coordinator in writing of representation by legal counsel shall constitute good cause for continuance of the hearing.
 - e. The grievant will have the burden of proving any claims he or she may assert. When warranted by circumstances or law, the impartial hearing officer may require the recipient to defend its position/decision regarding the claims (i.e. A recipient shall place a disabled student in the regular educational environment

operated by the recipient unless it is demonstrated by the recipient that the education of the person in the regular environment with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily. 34 C.F.R. §104.34). One or more representatives of the school system, who may be an attorney, will attend the hearing to present evidence and witnesses, respond to the grievant testimony and answer questions posed by the review official.

- f. The impartial review official shall not have the power to subpoena witnesses, and the strict rules of evidence shall not apply to hearings. The impartial review official shall have the authority to issue pre-hearing instructions, which may include requiring the parties to exchange documents and names of witnesses to be present.
 - g. The impartial review official shall determine the weight to be given any evidence based on its reliability and probative value.
 - h. The hearing shall be closed to the public.
 - i. The issues of the hearing will be limited to those raised in the written or oral request for the hearing.
 - j. Witnesses will be questioned directly by the party who calls them. Cross-examination of witnesses will be allowed. The impartial review official, at his or her discretion, may allow further examination of witnesses or ask questions of the witnesses.
 - k. Testimony shall be recorded by court reporting or audio recording at the expense of the recipient. All documentation related to the hearing shall be retained by the recipient.
 - l. Unless otherwise required by law, the impartial review official shall uphold the action of the school system unless the grievant can prove that a preponderance of the evidence supports his or her claim.
 - m. Failure of the grievant to appear at a scheduled hearing unless prior notification of absence was provided and approved by the impartial review official or just cause is shown shall constitute a waiver of the right to a personal appearance before the impartial review official.
5. **Decision:** The impartial review official shall issue a written determination within 20 calendar days of the date the hearing was concluded. The determination of the impartial review official shall not include any monetary damages or the award of any attorney's fees.
 6. **Review:** If not satisfied with the decision of the impartial review official, any party may pursue any right of review, appeal, cause of action or claim available to them under the law or existing state or federal rules or regulations.

HARASSMENT

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

Sexual harassment may include conduct or speech which entails unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, taunts, threats, comments of a vulgar or demeaning nature, demands or physical contact which creates a hostile environment for a student or employee. There may be other speech or conduct which employees or students experience as inappropriate or illegal harassment which should also be reported; harassment can take many forms and it is not possible to itemize every aspect of the harassment forbidden by this policy.

Any student, employee, applicant for employment, parent or other individual who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination by other students or employees of the school district as prohibited by this policy should promptly report the same to the principal of the school or to the appropriate coordinator designated in policy JAA/GAAA, who will implement the Board's discriminatory complaints procedures as specified in that policy. Students may also report harassment or discrimination to their school counselor or any administrator. Students and employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination. If at any point in the investigation of reported sexual harassment of a student, the coordinator or designee determines that the reported harassment should more properly be termed abuse, the reported incident or situation shall be referred pursuant to the established protocol for child abuse investigation.

It is the duty of all employees to promptly report harassment forbidden by this policy. All supervisors will instruct their subordinates as to the content of this policy and, through appropriate professional learning activities, enlighten employees as to the varied forms or expression of prohibited harassment. The principals of all schools shall ensure that students and parents are informed through student handbooks and verbally that such harassment is strictly forbidden, how it is to be reported and the consequences for violating this policy.

MINDSET RESTRAINT

Stephens County administrators and designated staff are trained in the Mindset model of therapeutic physical restraint. Restraint will only be used as a last resort, and only when the student presents an immediate threat of danger to himself,

herself, or others. De-escalation techniques will be attempted prior to use of physical restraint. Parents and/or guardians will be notified, in accordance with the Georgia Department of Education State Board Rule 160-5-35, if or when their child has been restrained.

STUDENT BEHAVIOR CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the purpose of the Stephens County Board of Education to operate each school in a manner that will provide for the welfare and safety of all students who attend the schools within the district. In accordance with that purpose, Stephens County Middle School has adopted a policy which requires all schools to adopt codes of conduct which require students to conduct themselves at all times in order to facilitate a learning environment for themselves and other students. These standards for behavior require students to respect each other and school district employees, to obey student behavior policies adopted and to obey student behavior rules established at each school within the district.

The school's primary goal is to provide all students a safe and nurturing learning environment that is conducive to learning. When a student displays behavior that does not meet the expectations of the Code of Conduct, disciplinary consequences may be assigned. Accordingly, students shall be governed by the 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 the school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process.

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

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

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

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

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

PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

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

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

The following disciplinary actions may be imposed for any violation of this Code of Conduct as defined in the Stephens County Board of Education policy:

- Warning and/or Counseling with a School Administrative Counselor
- Loss of Privileges
- Isolation or Time Out
- Removal from Class or Activity
- Notification of Parents
- Parent Conference
- Detention
- 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 punishment for an offense includes long-term suspension or expulsion, including permanent expulsion, but those punishments will be determined only by a disciplinary tribunal as outlined in the Code of Conduct 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 parents 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.

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 further notice to students or parents. Cell phones/multimedia/electronic devices taken from students due to possession and/or use in violation of school rules are subject to having their contents searched. 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 or off the school campus at the discretion of administrators.

STUDENT CONDUCT

I. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The following uniform Student Disciplinary Code has been developed to foster consistent discipline in the Stephens County School System. Principals and teachers may only develop individual rules and disciplinary practices which supplement this Code. This Code applies to all students enrolled in the Stephens County School System except for those rules which specifically limit the application to specific grade levels.

II. STUDENT OFFENSES

No student shall, while on school grounds, off school grounds at a school activity, function or event, or en route to and from school by bus or other transportation provided by the school system, at school bus stops, or while in any vehicle used in connection with a school function or activity, violate any of the following rules of the Stephens County Middle School Code of Conduct. Note, this list is not all-inclusive and a student committing an act of misconduct not listed will be subject to the discretionary authority of the principal or designee.

Rule 1: Occupying Property with Intent to Deprive Others Use: A student shall not occupy any school building, gymnasium, school grounds, properties or any part thereof with intent to deprive others of its use, or where the effect thereof is to deprive others of its use.

Rule 2: Blocking Entrances, Exits or Corridors: A student shall not block the entrance or exit of any school building or property or corridor or room thereof so as to deprive others of access thereof.

Rule 3: Damage or Destruction of School Facilities: Setting Fires: A student shall not set fire to or otherwise damage or destroy any school building or property.

Rule 4: Activating False Alarms A student shall not falsely activate any alarm system, including but not limited to fire and security systems or call 911 without good reason to do so.

Rule 5: Terroristic Threats: A student shall not make any bomb threats or terroristic threats that may cause the discontinuance or interruption of school, or a school activity, function, or event.

Rule 6: Weapons: A student shall not possess, discharge, display, or otherwise use any firearms, explosives, or other weapons.

Rule 7: Blocking Traffic: A student shall not, except under the direction of the school principal, block normal pedestrian or vehicular traffic on a school campus or adjacent grounds.

Rule 8: Disruption of School Activity: A student shall not in any manner, by the use of violence, force, noise, coercion, threat, intimidation, fear, passive resistance, or any other conduct, cause or attempt to cause the disruption of any lawful mission, process, or function of the school, or engage in any such conduct for the purpose of causing the disruption or obstruction of any such lawful mission, process, or function.

Rule 9: Refusal to Identify Self: A student shall not refuse to identify himself/herself upon request of any teacher, principal, superintendent, school bus driver, or other authorized personnel.

Rule 10: Theft of School Property: A student shall not steal or attempt to steal school property.

Rule 11: Theft or Damage of Private Property: A student shall not cause or attempt to cause damage to private property or steal or attempt to steal private property.

Rule 12: Physical and Verbal Assault: A student shall not physically or verbally assault a teacher, other school officials, school employee, those persons attending a school related function, another student, or any persons.

Rule 13: Battery on Students and Non-School Employees: A student shall not batter another student or any other non-school employee, including those persons attending a school related function.

Rule 14: Drugs and Alcohol: A student shall not possess, sell, use, distribute, attempt to distribute, or be under the influence of any alcoholic beverage, intoxicant, inhalant, narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana of any kind, drug paraphernalia, or any substance set out or controlled under and by virtue of the Georgia Controlled Substances Act. A student shall not possess, sell, use, distribute, or attempt to distribute any substance under the pretense that it is an alcoholic beverage, intoxicant, narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana of any kind, or any substance set out or controlled under and by virtue of the Georgia Controlled Substances Act. Use of an over-the-counter drug as an over-the-counter drug and following the directions of the same shall not be a violation of this rule. In those cases in which it is necessary for a student to take medicine at school, a student shall follow the regulations established by the school. No student shall be in possession of any drugs or medicines without approval of an administrator or the school nurse. The use of prescription medication as prescribed by a doctor and in compliance with the regulations established for medications at school shall not be a violation of this rule. Under no circumstances should students distribute or sell or attempt to distribute or sell prescription drugs.

Rule 15: Failure to Obey: A student shall not fail to comply with reasonable directions or commands of teachers, student teachers, substitute teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, counselors, media specialists, school bus drivers, or other authorized school personnel.

Rule 16: Excessive Tardiness and Truancy: A student shall not miss or be tardy for class or required activities during school hours unless permission has been granted by the school administration.

Rule 17: Tobacco: A student shall not use, possess, distribute, or sell tobacco or tobacco products. (See minimum discipline).

Rule 18: Profane, Vulgar, or Obscene Words or Gestures: A student shall not use, speak, utter, or write profane, vulgar, obscene, disrespectful, or inflammatory words, language, or drawings or make such gestures.

Rule 19: Pornographic Materials: A student shall not possess, sell, use, view, or transmit pornographic or obscene materials, literature, or electronic media.

Rule 20: Criminal Violations: A student shall not commit any crime (felony or misdemeanor) as defined by the laws of Georgia, nor violate any City, County, State, or Federal law while under the jurisdiction of the Stephens County School System.

Rule 21: Inappropriate Displays of Public Affection and/or Sexual Misconduct: A student shall not engage in or encourage others to engage in any kind of amorous kissing or sexual activity with or without the consent of the other individual involved. A student shall not expose one's intimate body parts.

Rule 22: Trespassing: A student shall not trespass nor unlawfully enter onto school property or into school facilities.

Rule 23: Electronic/Communications Devices: A student is prohibited from using any electronic device in a manner that might interfere with the normal operating procedures of the school, classroom, bus or any other school-related activity/function. This includes but is not limited to: school owned computers and laptops, cell phones, MP3 players, iPads, tablets, gaming devices, Bluetooth speakers, headphones, earbuds, and other electronic devices. *The school system assumes no liability for theft, loss, damage or unauthorized use of student-owned personal electronic devices possessed by students on school property.*

Rule 24: Gambling: A student shall not engage in gambling or participate in games of chance for money or property.

Rule 25: Academic Dishonesty: A student shall not use the work of another student or person for academic purposes unless authorized, or engage in the unauthorized use of notes or materials for completion of an assignment or test.

Rule 26: Encouraging Violation of Rules: A student shall not urge, encourage, or counsel other students to violate any of the preceding rules.

Rule 27: Bullying: A student shall not bully any person.

Rule 28: Threat, Harassment, Intimidation: A student shall not threaten, verbally or written, expressed or implied, to cause bodily injury to any student, teacher, school official, school employee, or any person attending a school related function. A student shall not harass or intimidate any student, teacher, school official, school employee, or any person attending a school related function.

Rule 29: Physical Violence: A student shall not inflict physical violence upon a student, teacher, school bus driver, school official, or school employee.

Rule 30: Prohibited Items on the Bus: A student shall not use 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.

Rule 31: Falsifying reports of Alleged Inappropriate Behavior by Teacher or School Personnel: A student shall not falsify, misrepresent, omit or erroneously report information regarding instances of alleged inappropriate behavior by a teacher, administrator or other school employee toward a student.

Rule 32: Conduct Subversive to Good Order: A student shall not perform any other act, on or off campus, which is subversive to good order and discipline in the schools. This rule includes any off campus behavior of a student, 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.

Rule 33: Repeated Violations/Willful Misbehavior: Students may not willfully and repeatedly violate school rules and state or federal laws. Students who chronically disrupt the school environment or repeatedly violate school rules may be charged with repeated violation of school rules for expected behavior.

Rule 34: Electronic Smoking Device: Students may not be in possession (intentional or unintentional) of any device used to deliver nicotine or any other substance intended for human consumption that may be used by a person to simulate smoking through inhalation of vapor or aerosol from the device.

The following criminal offenses committed by students can lead to schools being named as an Unsafe School according to the provisions of State Board Rule for Unsafe School Choice Option: aggravated battery, aggravated child molestation, aggravated sexual battery, aggravated sodomy, armed robbery, arson - first degree, kidnapping, murder, rape, voluntary manslaughter, non-felony drugs, felony drugs, felony weapons, and terroristic threats.

III. DISCIPLINE

Disciplinary infractions and recommended responses to them are divided into four (4) levels. Each level governs progressively more serious behavior. It is the responsibility of the principal or his or her designee to determine the level of the offense and the appropriate discipline.

A. LEVEL I

Level I offenses are acts of misconduct which interfere with orderly classroom procedures, school functions, extracurricular programs, approved transportation, or a student's learning process.

Level I offenses should be handled first by the teacher or staff member involved in the incident. When the teacher or staff member determines that additional action is necessary because of repeat violations or other concerns, the student may be referred to the principal or his or her designee for appropriate disciplinary action. The principal or designee, after review of the student's explanation, consultation with the school personnel involved, and further investigation (when needed), will determine the appropriate disciplinary action, consistent with this Code.

Level I offenses include, but are not limited to: abusive language, cheating, defiance, disorderly conduct, classroom disruption, threat, harassment, intimidation, tardiness, parking and/or traffic violations, rude and/or disrespectful behavior.

Disciplinary responses that may be taken in response to Level I offenses include, but are not limited to: probation, verbal reprimand, parental contact, withdrawal of privileges, corporal punishment, after school detention, in-school suspension, and warning of referral to Level II.

The principal/designee shall also utilize student support services that may help address behavioral problems. The principal/designee shall also inform parents/guardians of student support services that may be available through Family Connections.

The principal/designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the student's parents regarding the offense and discipline.

B. LEVEL II

Level II offenses are intermediate acts of misconduct which may include repeated acts of misconduct and acts directed against persons or property, but which do not seriously endanger the health and safety of others.

Level II offenses must be reported to the principal or designee. The principal or designee, after review of the student's explanation, consultation with the school personnel involved, and further investigation (when needed), will determine the appropriate disciplinary action, consistent with this Code.

Level II offenses include, but are not limited to: repeated Level I offenses, abusive language, defiance, destruction of property, disrespect of others, fighting, gambling, misconduct on the bus or at the bus stop, skipping class, stealing, theft, rude and/or disrespectful behavior, unauthorized possession of electronic devices.

Disciplinary responses that may be taken in response to Level II offenses include, but are not limited to: probation, verbal reprimand, parental contact, schedule change, withdrawal of privileges, behavior contract, corporal punishment, confiscation of unauthorized materials, restitution of damages, after school detention, suspension from the bus, in-school suspension, short-term suspension, and warning of referral to Level III.

The principal/designee shall also utilize student support services that may help address behavioral problems. The principal/designee shall also inform parents/guardians of student support services that may be available through Family Connections.

The principal/designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the student's parents regarding the offense and discipline.

C. LEVEL III

Level III offenses are serious acts of misconduct. Level III offenses must be reported immediately to the principal or designee and may result in the immediate removal of the student from the school or extracurricular activities.

Level III offenses include, but are not limited to: repeated Level II offenses, abusive language to school personnel, verbal assault, physical assault, physical violence, bullying, destruction of property, vandalism, defiance, extortion, threats, fighting, harassment, intimidation, sexual harassment, tobacco possession or use, theft, trespassing, breaking and entering.

Disciplinary responses that may be taken in response to Level III offenses include, but are not limited to: probation, parental contact, corporal punishment, restitution of damages, after school detention, suspension from the bus, behavior contract, in-school suspension, short-term suspension, referral to an alternative disciplinary program, referral to law enforcement, and warning of referral to Level IV.

The principal/designee shall also utilize student support services that may help address behavioral problems. The principal/designee shall also inform parents/guardians of student support services that may be available through Family Connections.

The principal/designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the student's parents regarding the offense and discipline.

D. LEVEL IV

Level IV offenses are the most serious acts of misconduct. Committing any of these acts will be sufficient grounds for long-term suspension, expulsion, or permanent expulsion. Level IV offenses must be reported immediately to the principal or designee. Acts which are violations of the law must be reported to law enforcement.

Level IV offenses include, but are not limited to: repeated Level III offenses, verbal assault, physical assault, physical violence, battery, aggravated battery*, sexual battery*, arson*, firearms*, weapons, explosives*, homicide*, kidnapping*, robbery*, breaking and entering, alcohol, drugs, destruction of property, threats, sexual harassment, sex offenses, serious misconduct on bus or at bus stop, theft, trespassing, inciting, leading, or participating in acts that substantially disrupt orderly conduct at a school or school function, possession, use, sale, or distribution of stolen property, violation of criminal law.

Disciplinary responses that may be taken in response to level IV offenses range from probation, parental contact, restitution of damages, long-term suspension from the bus, in-school suspension, short-term suspension, referral to an alternative disciplinary program, referral to law enforcement, long-term suspension, expulsion, and permanent expulsion.

The principal/designee shall also utilize student support services that may help address behavioral problems. The principal/designee shall also inform parents/guardians of student support services that may be available through Family Connections.

The principal/designee shall make a reasonable effort to contact the student's parents regarding the offense and discipline.

*Any student found to have committed these offenses will also be referred to law enforcement authorities.

*The administration reserves the right to accelerate or alter consequences based on the context, nature, and/or severity of the incident.

IV. VICTIM REPORTS

Victims of certain alleged student misconduct may file a written complaint with the Stephens County Board of Education through the school administration, describing the alleged incident and the injury or damage sustained. A student disciplinary hearing will be held as follows:

- a. Any alleged violation of the student code of conduct where the principal recommends a suspension or expulsion of longer than 10 school days.
- b. An alleged assault or battery by a student upon any teacher, other school official, or school employee, if such teacher or other school official or employee so requests.

V. DEFINITIONS

"Abusive Language" -means swearing, cursing, or using profane, vulgar, and/or obscene words.

"Aggravated Battery"-means the intentional or knowing commitment of an act which causes great bodily harm or permanent disfigurement or use of a deadly weapon.

"Alcohol"- means all alcoholic beverages, including, but not limited to, beer, wine/wine coolers, and liquor.

"Arson" -means setting or attempting to set a fire.

"Battery" - means intentionally making physical contact of an insulting provoking nature with the person of a student or a non-school employee; intentionally causing physical harm to a student or non-school employee; or causing or attempting to cause injury or behaving in such a way as to cause physical injury to a student or non-school employee.

"Breaking and Entering/Burglary"- means the unlawful entry into a building or other structure or vehicle with the intent to commit a felony or theft.

"Bullying"- means an act which occurs 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, that is:

1. any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so;
2. any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or
3. any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that:
 - a. causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1
 - b. has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
 - 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.

"Cheating" -means willful or deliberate unauthorized use of the work of another person for academic purposes, or inappropriate use of notes or other materials in the completion of an academic assignment or test.

"Classroom Disruptions"- See *Disorderly Conduct*

"Corporal Punishment" -means a paddling administered following the guidelines of Policy JDA.

"Defiance" -means not following the directions of staff, failure to observe rules, or openly challenging the authority of a school official.

"Detention"-means remaining after school or attending school on Saturday as an alternative to suspension for violation of certain offenses.

"Disorderly Conduct/Classroom Disruption"- means any act which disrupts the orderly conduct of a school function, behavior substantially disrupting the orderly learning environment, or behavior that poses a threat to the health, safety, and/or welfare of students and/or staff.

"Drugs" -means controlled substances excluding alcohol, but including, but not limited to, drugs which require a physician's prescription, and drugs which are classified as "designer drugs".

"Drug Paraphernalia"-means equipment or a device used for preparing or taking drugs.

"Electronic Smoking Device"- means any device used to deliver nicotine or any other substance intended for human consumption that may be used by a person to simulate smoking through inhalation of vapor or aerosol from the device.

"Expulsion" -means the removal of a student from school beyond the current school semester.

"Fighting" -means the mutual participation in an altercation.

"Firearms/Explosives" - See *Policy JCDAE*

"Gambling"- means any participation in games (or activities) of chance for money and/or other things of value.

"Harassment/Intimidation" -means using unwelcome remarks or acts to annoy, demean, or ridicule another; forcing another to do something; or preventing another from doing something by threatening, bullying, or making the person afraid.

"Homicide"- means the murder and non-negligent manslaughter killing of one human being by another or killing a person through negligence.

"In-school Suspension" -means the temporary removal of a student from the regular school program and placement in an alternative program, under the direction of school district personnel. School administrators may assign a student to in-school suspension for a maximum of ten consecutive school days. While assigned to in-school suspension, a student will have all regular school privileges and extracurricular activities withdrawn during the period of in-school suspension. There shall be no interruption of services a student may be receiving from a counselor, psychologist, or social worker while serving in-school suspension.

"Kidnapping"- means the unlawful seizure, transportation, and/or detention of a person against his/her will or of a minor without the consent of his/her custodial parent(s) or legal guardian.

"Long-term Suspension" -means the removal of a student from school for more than ten days. A long-term suspension may only be assigned by a Student Disciplinary Tribunal or the Board of Education.

"Parental Contact" -means the notification to the parent (s) or legal guardian (s) of a disciplinary problem his/her child is having, explaining possible disciplinary actions to be taken to resolve the matter, allowing the parent(s) or legal guardians to have input into how the matter might be resolved, and requesting help from the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) in resolving the matter.

"Physical Assault"- means an intentional threat by act to do violence to another person, coupled with an apparent ability to do so, while creating a well-founded fear in the other person that such violence is imminent without subjecting him or her to physical attack.

"Physical Violence" - means (1) intentionally making physical contact of an insulting and provoking nature with the person of a school employee or (2) intentionally making physical contact which causes physical harm to a school employee unless the student caused such physical harms in self defense as provided in Georgia law.

"Permanent Expulsion" -means the permanent removal of a student from the Stephens County School System.

"Probation" -means the trial period of time during which a student committing further disciplinary offenses is subject to further disciplinary action that might be more severe than otherwise.

"Restitution" -means the restoration or full payment for damaged or stolen property.

"Sex offenses"- means inappropriate sexual behavior or conduct without force or threat of force including, but not limited to, sexual conduct, inappropriate bodily contact, indecent exposure, and the possession or distribution of pornographic materials.

"Sexual Battery" -means any sexual act directed against another person, forcibly and/or against the victim's will or not forcibly or against the person's will where the victim is incapable of giving consent because of his/her youth or because of temporary or permanent mental incapacity.

"Sexual Harassment" - See *Policy JCAC*

"Skipping Class" -means the unexcused absence(s) from class period(s) or for school day(s).

"Short-term Suspension" -means the removal of a student from school for ten (10) days or less. A short-term suspension may only be assigned by a school administrator, a Student Disciplinary Tribunal, or the Board of Education.

"Stealing" - See *Theft*

"Student Disciplinary Tribunal"-means, unless otherwise established by the Board of Education, the tribunal designated in Policy JCEB to hear and render decisions concerning certain student disciplinary matters.

"Student Support Services"- means all resources that may be used to help students with behavioral problems. These resources include but are not limited to parent/teacher conferences, parent/administrator conferences, referrals to Student Support Team, individual and/or group counseling sessions, referrals to SUPER program, referrals to Mentoring program, opportunity rooms, peer mediation sessions, tribunal intervention counseling program, DARE program referrals, and Crossroads Alternative School referrals. Also, these resources may include programs available through Family Connections.

"Tardy" -means being late for school or class.

"Theft/Larceny" -means the unlawful taking, carrying, leading, or riding away of property from the possession, or constructive possession, of another person.

"Threat" - means a verbal or nonverbal expression of an intention to inflict pain, injury, evil, or punishment on another person or an intention to damage, destroy, vandalize, or steal another person's property.

"Trespassing" -means to enter or remain on school property without authorization or invitation and with no lawful purpose for entry, including students under suspension or expulsion.

"Vandalism"- means the willful and/or malicious destruction, damage, or defacement of public or private property without the consent of the owner or person having custody or control of the property including, but not limited to graffiti.

"Verbal assault"- means an intentional threat by word to do violence to another person, coupled with an apparent ability to do so, while creating a well-founded fear in the other person that such violence is imminent without subjecting him or her to physical attack.

"Weapons"- means the possession, use, or intention to use any instrument or object that is used or intended to be used in a manner that may inflict bodily harm.

VI. ADDITIONAL GUIDELINES

- i. Students under suspension or expulsion are not allowed to make up any academic work nor will Stephens County School System recognize or grant academic credit for work completed by the student through any home study program or through any non-accredited private school during a suspension or expulsion. This applies to all offenses

listed in this policy. Students under suspension or expulsion are not allowed on the school campus or at any school functions or events.

- ii. Students are to notify a school administrator or staff member when illegal or suspected illegal items, dangerous items, or other items prohibited from school are found in the school building, on the school campus, or on the school bus. Students are not to pick up or handle these items.
 - iii. Due to the immaturity of elementary students (grades kindergarten through five), school administrators may use discretion in applying the aforementioned policy.
 - iv. School administrators and/or designees have the authority to conduct reasonable searches of students, their possessions, their lockers, and their automobiles while on school property, or property being used by the school, at any school function or activity, or at any school-related event held away from the school campus. Strip searches are not allowed. The school administrator is required to have reasonable suspicion prior to conducting a search, but shall have the right without notice or suspicion to search desks, lockers, and/or automobiles. If the student and/or his/her parent(s) or legal guardian(s) refuse to allow a search, a law enforcement official(s) will be contacted immediately and the matter turned over to them.
 - v. A student is deemed to be in possession of an item(s) when such item(s) is found on the person of the student, in his/her possessions, in his/her locker, in a student's vehicle on school property, or in any vehicle brought on school property by a student.
6. Students found guilty of being accessories to any violation of this Code are subject to the same penalties as the students who are actively involved in committing such offenses.
 - b. Students and parents will be provided a copy of the rules and regulations as contained in this Policy through each school's student and parent handbook which will be given to the student upon initial enrollment in school and annually thereafter. The student and parent handbook will also be available in each school and classroom. It will be the responsibility of the student to know and adhere to the contents of these rules and regulations. Students and parents are encouraged to ask faculty and staff members for any clarification of this Code.
 - c. A teacher who has knowledge that a student has exhibited behaviors that repeatedly or substantially interfere with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with students in his or her class or with the student's classmates' ability to learn and that violate this Code shall file a report describing the behavior to the principal/designee. The report may not exceed one page and must be filed within one school day of the most recent occurrence of the behavior. The principal/designee shall send a copy of the report to the student's parent/guardian with information regarding how the parent/guardian may contact the principal/designee. If the principal/designee takes disciplinary action against or utilizes student support services with the student, the principal/designee shall send written notification of the action to the teacher and the student's parent/guardian within one school day. The written notification to the parent/guardian shall include information regarding how the student's parent/guardian may contact the principal. The principal/designee shall make a reasonable attempt to confirm that the written notification has been received by the student's parent or guardian.
 - d. Nothing in this Policy shall infringe upon any right provided to students with individualized education programs or plans pursuant to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, or the Americans with Disabilities Act.

VII. OFF-CAMPUS OFFENSES

Students shall be disciplined for engaging in off-campus conduct that 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. Off-campus misconduct for which a student shall be disciplined includes, but is not limited to, any off-campus conduct that is prohibited by the Georgia or United States criminal codes, is punishable as a felony or would be punishable as a felony if committed by an adult and for which a student has been arrested, indicted, adjudicated to have committed, or convicted.

VIII. STUDENT LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

State legislation has deemed that parental involvement processes shall be designed to create the expectation that parents/guardians, teachers, and administrators will work together to improve and enhance student behavior and academic performance and will freely communicate concerns about and actions in response to student behavior that detracts from the

learning environment. Thus, the Stephens County Board of Education encourages parents/guardians to inform their children on the consequences, including potential criminal penalties, of underage sexual conduct and crimes for which a minor can be tried as an adult.

IX. CLUBS AND ORGANIZATIONS

As required by state statute, a listing of all clubs and organizations within the school systems can be found on the district policy website as an exhibit for policy JCD. This listing includes the name of the club or organization, the mission or purpose of the club or organization, the name of the club's or organization's faculty advisor, and a description of past or planned activities. Any parent/guardian who wishes to decline participation for his/her child to participate in a club or organization should indicate this on the form provided with the distribution of this Student Conduct policy.

STEPHENS COUNTY MIDDLE SCHOOL CLUB LIST

4-H - All schools

Purpose: to assist youth in acquiring knowledge, developing life skills, and forming attitudes that will help them become self directing, productive, and contributing citizens

Sponsors: Forrest Connely, Susan Yearwood, Gina Gailey, and Stephens County 5th Grade teachers

Activities: Events, classes, activities, and forums at local, state, and national levels including, but not limited to, fundraiser for Ronald McDonald House, leadership instruction, and cooking activity

Academic Bowl

Purpose: Academic Bowl is an organization open to students in grades 6-8 that rewards and encourages learning and fosters good study habits. Students develop poise, confidence, citizenship qualities, and teamwork as they compete against other schools in academic trivia contests.

Sponsor: Wynette Neal

Activities: Academic team practices weekly to prepare for regional and state academic trivia competitions

Archery Club (NASP)

Purpose: To teach archery skills, wildlife conservation, and outdoor skills to students.

Sponsors: Melody Housley and Kerrie Perrin

Auxiliary

Purpose: Dance Team

Activities: Red Rage, Football Games, Pep Rallies, Christmas Parade and select Basketball Games

Sponsors: Heather Marriott (Head Coach) and Joni Minchew (Asst. Coach)

Brewing Inspiration

Purpose: Our purpose is to promote a culture of inclusion while allowing students to develop and discover their unique abilities. Our slogan is "Building Exceptional Leaders, One Cup of Coffee at a Time"

Sponsors: School Level Sponsors- Britney Baldwin, Audrey Williams

District Level Sponsors- Brandy Stacy

Activities: Student run coffee shop for teachers, facilitate drink sales to students, teach life skills to students with exceptionalities utilizing general education students as peer mentors, serve SCMS and S5GA when needed in the form of providing refreshments for events.

Drama Club:

Purpose: Gives students a chance to explore and learn about acting and theater, as well as costume and set design.

Sponsors: Hagan Farmer and Chloe Tallent

Activities: Spring Performance

Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) - Stephens County Middle School

Purpose: to see the world impacted for Jesus Christ through the influence of athletes and coaches

Sponsor: Coach Adams, Coach Roberts, and Coach Stowe

Activities: meetings, participation in the National Day of Prayer and See You at the Pole, Winter Recharge, and summer camps

FFA - Stephens County Middle School

Purpose: to make a positive difference in the lives of students by developing potential for premier leadership, personal growth, and career success through agriculture education

Sponsor: Madison Holton

Activities: monthly meetings which include recreation and refreshment activities, monthly officer meetings, participation in Career Development Events at local and state levels, opportunities to raise livestock as projects

Junior Beta Club - Stephens County Middle School

Purpose: promote the ideals of character, service, and leadership among students, to reward meritorious achievement, and to encourage and assist students in continuing their education after high school

Activities: School and local community services such as peer-tutoring, leadership roles, teacher aide, librarian aide, classroom cleanup, school campus beautification, community outreach, food drive, concession stand aide, career-choice volunteering, and more.

Sponsor: TBD

SCMS Robotics Club

Purpose: To provide a place for students to explore engineering, coding and problem solving in a competitive environment.

Activities: Designing and Fabricating New Parts for Robots, Designing and Assembling Robots, Creating Code to Run Robots, Competing in FIRST Tech, First Lego, and Vex Robotic Competitions.

Sponsor: Erica Martin

Science Olympiad - Stephens County Middle School

Purpose: to promote and improve student interest in science and to improve the quality of K-12 science education

Sponsor: Kerrie Perrin

Activities: Preparation and participation in tournaments in which students compete in hands-on, problem solving events.

Yearbook Club - Stephens County Middle School

Purpose: The purpose of the yearbook club/staff is to develop and publish a yearbook for our school that represents the student body and showcases the school year through photographs.

Sponsor: Megan Ivester

Activities: Weekly or bi-weekly yearbook staff meetings. Students taking pictures and developing photography skills. Students will have some special events just for the club meme era throughout the school year. Taking photos at sporting events, pep rallies and other events the school hosts. Students work directly with the Herf Jones Rep to learn the software and how to upload pictures to a platform and design pages for the book, which allows middle school students to be prepared to participate in the Yearbook class at the High School.

INTERROGATIONS AND SEARCHES OF STUDENTS

Interrogations

The principal of each school, or the authorized representative, possesses the authority to conduct reasonable interrogations of students in order to properly investigate and punish student misconduct.

Searches

The system endeavors to provide a safe and secure environment for all students. The Board authorizes reasonable searches of students directed to that end by authorized school officials. Searches based on reasonable suspicion may proceed without hindrance or delay, but they shall be conducted in a manner, which ensures that students are not arbitrarily stripped of personal privacy.

The principal of each school, or an authorized representative, possesses the authority to conduct inspection of students' school lockers or articles carried upon their persons. Such search shall be based on a reasonable suspicion of the presence of deleterious items. Examples of deleterious items will include, but are not limited to, secreted noisemakers, water guns, contraband drugs, a handgun or other dangerous weapons.

Principals of each school where lockers are issued shall ensure that at the time lockers are made available to students, it is clearly specified in writing that lockers are subject to inspection and search by school officials. Each school shall maintain duplicate keys or records of all locker combinations, and avoid any practices, which lead students to believe the lockers are under their exclusive control.

In the event a search of a student's person, personal possessions, or locker reveals the student is concealing material, the possession of which is prohibited by federal, State or local law, local law enforcement authorities shall be notified so that they may take appropriate action.

Strip searches are prohibited.

It is the policy of the schools to cooperate with law enforcement agencies in the interest of the larger welfare of all citizens. At the same time, schools have the responsibility to parents/guardians for the welfare of the students while they are in the care of the school. To carry out this responsibility school officials should observe the following:

- A student in school may not be interrogated by any authority without the knowledge of the school official.
- Any interrogation must be done in private with an official school representative present.
- A student may not be released to the custody of persons other than parent or legal guardian, unless placed under arrest by legal authority.
- If a student is removed from the school by legal authority, parents/guardians should be notified of this action by school officials as soon as possible.

STUDENT HEARING PROCEDURE

For the purpose of conducting certain student discipline hearings, as defined below, rendering a decision and imposing punishment, the Board of Education hereby adopts the following procedures:

1. The Superintendent shall convene a hearing in the following cases:
 - a. Where a student has committed an alleged assault or battery upon a teacher, other school official or employee, if such teacher or other school official or employee so requests;
 - b. Where a student has violated any school or system rule or engaged in any other act of misconduct or insubordination for which the student's principal recommends a suspension or expulsion longer than ten school days.
2. The Board of Education hereby designates its administrative staff to serve as members of hearing tribunals. When the principal of a school or his or her designee refers a student to the Superintendent or his or her designee for a hearing as described in paragraph 1, the Superintendent or his staff shall choose three of these members to serve as the hearing tribunal. No member of the hearing tribunal shall be a member of the staff at the school which the student attends.
3. Whenever a principal or his or her designee refers a student discipline matter to the Superintendent or his or her designee, the Superintendent or his or her designee shall send a letter by regular or certified mail to the student and his or her parents or guardians containing a statement of the time, place and nature of the hearing, a short and plain statement of the matters asserted and charges against the student, a list of potential witnesses, a statement setting forth the right of the student to present evidence, cross-examine witnesses and be represented by legal counsel. The hearing must be held no later than ten school days after the beginning of the suspension unless the school system and parents or guardians mutually agree to an extension.
4. The school principal or his or her designee shall be responsible for presenting evidence in support of the charges against the student and all parties shall be afforded an opportunity to present and respond to evidence and to examine and cross-examine witnesses on any and all issues. Any teacher who is called as a witness by the school system shall be given notice no later than three days prior to the hearing. The hearing tribunal shall have made a verbatim electronic or written record of the hearing. This record shall be available to all parties but the cost of transcribing such record shall be borne by the party requesting the transcript.
5. The hearing tribunal shall render a decision finding whether the student committed the offense and, if so, the appropriate punishment. The decision of the hearing tribunal shall be based solely on the evidence received at the hearing, including any evidence presented by either party relevant to the appropriate punishment to be imposed. The hearing tribunal shall render a decision in writing within ten days of the close of the record and shall furnish a copy of the decision to the student, his or her parents or legal guardians, the principal or his or her designee and the Superintendent. The decision of the hearing tribunal shall be final and shall constitute the decision of the Board of Education unless either party should appeal the decision to the Board of Education. In any case where the tribunal finds that the student has committed an act of physical violence as that term is used in O.C.G.A. 20-2-751.6, any recommendation of the tribunal as to when and whether the student may return to school in accordance with the code section shall constitute the decision of the Board of Education unless there should be an appeal of the decision to the Board.
6. In the event a student or his/her parent does not wish to contest the charge(s) of violation(s) of the discipline rules of the school's code of conduct for which a tribunal has been requested, the student and parent may voluntarily accept the consequences prescribed by the school by signing a Waiver of Disciplinary Tribunal Hearing form. Such waiver shall specify the rule violation, the date and description of the incident, the prescribed consequences, and an agreement to waive the opportunity to participate in a tribunal hearing, present evidence, cross examine witnesses, and be represented by an attorney. The decision to waive the tribunal shall be final and cannot be appealed by the school or family. The waiver must be signed by the student, a parent, a school administrator and a district level administrator from the Superintendent's office, who shall act as hearing officer with authority to approve the disciplinary consequences set forth in the waiver.
7. Any party may appeal the decision of the hearing tribunal to the Board of Education by filing with the Superintendent a written notice of appeal within twenty days from the date the decision is rendered. Such notice of appeal shall set forth the decision of the hearing tribunal and the basis of the appeal. Any decision of the hearing

tribunal not appealed in this manner shall be final. The Superintendent may suspend the disciplinary action imposed by the hearing tribunal pending the outcome of the appeal.

8. The Board of Education shall review the record of the hearing before the hearing tribunal, the decision of the hearing tribunal and the notice of appeal and shall render its decision in writing within ten days from the date it receives the notice of appeal. The decision of the Board of Education shall be based solely on the record before the hearing tribunal and the Board shall not consider any other evidence in ruling on the appeal. The Board may find the facts to be different than those found by the hearing tribunal and the Board may change the punishment, in accordance with state law. Any decision of the local Board may be appealed to the State Board of Education by filing an appeal, in writing, within thirty (30) days after the local Board renders its decision.
9. Any student subject to a disciplinary hearing who withdraws from the school system prior to the hearing must appear before a Disciplinary Hearing Tribunal to determine the student's eligibility to return to the school system in the event the student ever seeks to return to the system. Alternatively, the school district may, in its discretion, proceed with the tribunal in accordance with Board policy despite the student's withdrawal from school.

WEAPONS

The presence of weapons on school property is detrimental to the welfare and safety of the students and school personnel, and is a violation of State law. It is the policy of the Board of Education that 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, nunchuck, 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 terms shall not include any of these instruments used for classroom work authorized by the teacher.

Students who possess any weapon described in paragraph 1 in violation of this policy will be subject to a minimum of one calendar year expulsion. The Superintendent shall have the authority either before or after the student is referred for a tribunal hearing to reduce the mandated one year expulsion under circumstances where the one year expulsion appears excessive to the superintendent. The tribunal shall also have the authority to modify such expulsion requirements on a case-by-case basis in determining the appropriate punishment. Finally, in any tribunal decision appealed to the board of education, the board may reduce the mandated punishment but shall consider whether the superintendent and/or tribunal considered a reduction and any rationale in denying such a reduction. 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.

Students with Disabilities

A. **45-Day Interim.** Any student with a disability cognizable under IDEA, 20 USC 1400 et seq., who is determined to have brought a weapon to school may be placed in an interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 days, as determined and ordered by a special education committee qualified to make special education decisions under 20 USC 1401 (a) (20). If a parent or guardian requests a due process hearing under IDEA, the student shall nevertheless remain in the alternative educational setting above referred to during the pendency of any proceeding conducted in connection therewith, unless the parents and duly authorized school system representative agree otherwise.

B. **Students Whose Disability is Unrelated to the Misbehavior.** Any student with a disability whose behavior is unrelated to the disability shall be subject to the one-year expulsion requirement the same as a student without such disability, except to the extent that such expulsion is inconsistent with the Department of Education's final guidance concerning state and local responsibilities under the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994, as amended; provided, in any event, some educational services shall be provided to such suspended student.

Reporting

Any employee who has reasonable cause to believe that a student possesses a weapon as defined in paragraph 1, is involved in an assault using a weapon as defined in paragraph 2, or is involved in a second offense with a weapon on campus must report such violations to the principal or assistant principal of the school. If the principal has reasonable cause to believe that such a report is valid, he/she must immediately make an oral report to the Superintendent and to the appropriate law enforcement authority and district attorney. The student's parents or guardian will be notified immediately of his/her child's involvement in any activity involving weapons.

BULLYING

The Stephens 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. Such prohibition shall be included in the Student Code of Conduct for all schools within the school system.

Bullying is defined as follows: An act that is:

1. Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so;
2. Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or
3. Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, which a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that:
 - a. Causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1;
 - b. Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;
 - 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.

Procedures may be developed at each school encouraging a teacher or other school employee, student, parent, guardian, or other person who has control or charge of a student, either anonymously or in the person's name, at the person's option, to report or otherwise provide information on bullying activity. Any teacher or other school employee who, in the exercise of his or her personal judgment and discretion, believes he or she has reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that someone is a target of bullying is encouraged to immediately report it to the school principal. Any report will be appropriately investigated by the administration based on the nature of the complaint in a timely manner to determine whether bullying has occurred, whether there are other procedures related to illegal harassment or discrimination that should be implemented and what other steps should be taken. Any report of retaliation for reporting bullying will also be investigated and addressed as called for in this policy and in accordance with school procedures.

Acts of bullying shall be punished by a range of consequences through the progressive discipline process, as stated in the Code of Conduct. However, upon a finding by the disciplinary hearing officer, panel or tribunal that a student in grades 6-12 has committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year, the student shall be assigned to an alternative school.

Upon a finding by a school administrator that a student has committed an act of bullying or is a victim of bullying, the administrator or designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of the student by telephone call or through written notice, which may be done electronically.

Students and parents will be notified of the prohibition against bullying and the penalties for violating the prohibition by posting information at each school and by including such information in the student/parent handbooks.

BUS CONDUCT

Bus Driver in Charge of Riders

Each bus driver has charge of the pupils riding in his/her bus. Improper language, smoking, or misbehavior of any kind is not tolerated. Bus drivers handle problems with pupils according to the specified procedure given below which may result in suspension of the right of bus transportation or suspension from school.

The bus driver is in complete charge of his/her bus. The bus driver will assign pupils to specific seats as necessary.

Bus drivers are to deal with children in a friendly but firm manner at all times.

Problems of a serious nature must be reported promptly to the principal of the school, which the pupil attends.

The principal will take up the matter with the pupil and, if necessary, with the parents.

Should there be any recurrence of unsatisfactory behavior on the bus, the matter will be reported a second time to the principal.

If the problem cannot be resolved, the principal may notify the parent that the pupil is denied access to transportation by bus.

Transportation problems of an unpleasant nature are not to be discussed on roads while pupils are being transported. These problems should be taken up with the principal of the pupil and the bus driver if necessary.

When access to transportation by bus is denied to a pupil, this denial does not change the requirement of attendance at school. Under such a condition, it is the responsibility of the parent to transport the pupil to school.

The principal may restore access to transportation by bus to a pupil as justified.

Students are not allowed to change buses without prior approval of their principal.

Express buses are non-stop between schools.

Unauthorized passengers will not be allowed by the driver.

No seats on the buses are to be reserved by students.

No food or drinks are allowed on buses.

Students shall receive instructions on safe riding practices while on the bus and emergency evacuation procedures on an annual basis.

INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE

Appropriate Use of Electronic Information Resources

Electronic information resources such as the Internet, World Wide Web, electronic mail (email), Local Area Networks (LAN), Wide Area Networks (WAN), network services, and computers are provided to help achieve the instructional goals of the Stephens County School System. Any activities involving the use of these resources that do not support these instructional goals are forbidden and should be avoided.

When using electronic information resources, students are expected to apply the Student Code of Conduct just as they would in any other instructional activity.

The use of electronic information resources including the Internet is a privilege and not a right and continued use is subject to the user's adherence to the letter and spirit of this policy.

Student Expectations in the use of Electronic Information Resources

- a. Students shall not access material that is obscene, pornographic, child pornography, harmful to minors, or otherwise inappropriate, as defined in the Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000, for educational uses.
- b. Students shall not use school resources to engage in hacking or attempts to otherwise compromise system security.
- c. Students shall not allow other students the use of passwords or other credentials at any time.
- d. Students shall not engage in any illegal activities on the Internet.
- e. Students shall only use electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications for school-related purposes.
- f. Students shall not disclose personal information, such as name, school, address, and telephone number, outside of the school network.
- g. Students shall notify school personnel if they become aware of any violation of this policy.
- h. Students shall notify school system personnel if they accidentally violate any portion of this policy.

Any violation of school policy and rules may result in the loss of school-provided access to electronic information resources. Additional disciplinary action may be determined in keeping with existing procedures and practices regarding inappropriate language or behavior. When and where applicable, law enforcement agencies may be involved.

Staff Expectations in the use of Electronic Information Resources

- a. Staff shall not use these resources to access material that is obscene, pornographic, or is child pornography.
- b. Staff shall not use school resources to engage in hacking or attempts to otherwise compromise system security.
- c. Staff shall not allow others the use of their passwords or other credentials except when necessary for the purpose of maintaining or servicing these resources.
- d. Staff will provide for students age-appropriate instruction regarding safe and appropriate behavior on social networking sites, chat rooms, and other Internet services, behaviors that may constitute cyber bullying, and how to respond when subjected to cyberbullying.

Expectations for staff and students in the use of Electronic Information Resources

- a. Use of these resources to lobby for votes is forbidden.
- b. Use of these resources for commercial advertising is forbidden.
- c. All copyright laws will be observed at all times.
- d. Use of these resources for sending and receiving large numbers of personal messages is prohibited.
- e. All users should recognize that email and Internet use is not private.
- f. Wasteful use of these resources is forbidden.

Any violation of school policy may result in loss of school-provided access to the Internet. Additional disciplinary action may be determined in keeping with existing procedures and practices. When and where applicable, law enforcement agencies and the Professional Standards Commission may be involved.

Acceptable Use Contract

Families should be aware that some materials accessible via the Internet might contain content that is illegal, offensive, defamatory, or inaccurate. The Stephens County School System respects the rights of families to decide whether or not to allow a child Internet access. Only those students who return a signed Acceptable Use Contract including parental permission will be allowed access to the Internet.

For elementary school students this contract shall be signed/renewed at the beginning of each school year.

This contract shall be signed/renewed upon entering middle school and shall remain in force as long as the student is in middle school.

This contract shall be signed/renewed upon entering high school and shall remain in force as long as the student is in high school.

Enforcement of policy

a. The Stephens County School System uses a technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access to inappropriate material, as described above, including Internet sites that are not in accordance with the policy of the Stephens County School System. However, given the Internet's global nature, it is impossible to control all materials that students or staff may discover. The Stephens County School System disclaims responsibility for inappropriate material students or staff may access on the Internet while using the Stephens County School System's electronic information services.

b. The technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access may be disabled by a Stephens County School System staff member for bona fide research purposes by an adult.

c. A Stephens County School System staff member may override the technology platform measure that blocks or filters Internet access for a student to access a site with legitimate educational value that is wrongly blocked by the technology protection measure that blocks or filters Internet access.

d. Stephens County School System staff will monitor students' use of the Internet, through either direct supervision or by monitoring Internet use history to ensure the enforcement of this policy.

e. Internet activities may be monitored and/or recorded and reviewed for the purpose of enforcing this policy.

f. All users of electronic information resources must agree to and sign an Appropriate Use Contract.

STUDENT ATTENDANCE

Board Policy JBD

Regular school attendance is a law in Georgia. Parents and students must assume responsibility for being punctual and regular in school attendance. It is the position of the Stephens County Board of Education that each school day is important, and no student should be absent except for extraordinary reasons. Excessive tardiness and early dismissals interrupt the school day and can negatively impact student learning.

NOTE: Students serving as pages at the Capitol are considered present for that day. Students in foster care are counted present when they are attending court proceedings relating to their foster care.

*Excused Absences

An excused absence is an absence for which a student may make up any school work missed during the absence; however, when a student does not satisfactorily make up the school work missed or does not provide an excuse from the parent/guardian within the time limits required by the school the absences will be treated as an unexcused absence.

Absences from school may be excused for the following reasons:

1. The pupil is personally ill and attendance at school will endanger his/her health or the health of others.
2. The pupil's immediate family has a serious illness or death, which would reasonably necessitate absence from school.
3. A special and recognized religious holiday observed by the faith of the pupil occurs on a school day.
4. A court order or an order by a governmental agency including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces, mandating absences from school.

5. Conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to student health or safety.
6. A period not to exceed one day is allowed for registering to vote or voting in a public election.
7. The pupil has a special medical or dental appointment that cannot be made for after school hours.
8. The pupil attends a funeral, which is approved at the discretion of the school administration.
9. An educational trip if approved by the school administrator after the parent submits the required application.
10. Visitation with parent/guardian up to five days for parent's/guardian's call to duty or leave from overseas deployment to a combat zone or combat support posting.

The school may request that the parent(s)/guardian(s) provide one or more of the following documents to validate the absence as excused:

- School nurse release
- Doctor's excuse
- Subpoena/Court Order
- Obituary of an immediate family member
- Hospital intake form for an immediate family member
- Government document for pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces

This list is not all inclusive.

When a student is absent from school, an excuse must be submitted to the school within two school days of the student's return to school.

In regards to excused absences, a parent/guardian note may serve as documentation for a MAXIMUM OF SEVEN missed days of school. After SEVEN parent notes have been submitted, all additional absences will be considered unexcused unless accompanied by appropriate documents to validate the absences as excused. Please refer to the list above for documentation that will be accepted.

For an excused absence, a student will have a maximum of three school days to complete make-up work. For excused absences of 2-5 consecutive days, a student will have a maximum of five school days to complete the make-up work. For excused absences of 6-9 consecutive days, a student will have a maximum of ten school days to complete the make-up work. Students who miss 10 or more consecutive days due to illness may apply for hospital homebound services. The student must complete all make-up work within 14 calendar days after the close of a semester.

***Unexcused Absences**

All absences that are not validated as excused according to the above conditions will be considered unexcused. Absences due to suspension or expulsion are unexcused.

***Excuses for Tardiness/Early Dismissals**

The policy concerning EXCUSES FOR ABSENCES also applies to tardiness/early dismissals. Tardiness and Early Dismissals may be excused for the following reasons.

1. The pupil is personally ill.
2. The pupil's immediate family has a serious illness or death, which would reasonably necessitate a tardy or early dismissal.
3. A court order or an order by a governmental agency including pre-induction physical examinations for service in the armed forces.
4. The pupil has a special medical or dental appointment that cannot be made for after school hours.
5. The pupil attends a funeral, which is approved at the discretion of the school administration.

Consequences and Penalties for Excessive Absences

When a student accumulates 5 unexcused absences, the school will notify the parent/guardian of the consequences and penalties of such absences and that each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent/guardian, the school will send written notice via first class mail or certified mail with return receipt requested. Once the letter is sent to the parent, the school has fulfilled its responsibility to notify the parent.

On an annual basis, the Stephens County School System will provide to the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student enrolled in school a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance regulations. By September 1 of each school year or within 30 school days of a student's enrollment in the school system, the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student shall sign a

statement indicating receipt of such written notification of possible consequences and penalties. After two (2) reasonable attempts to secure such signatures, the school will send written notice via first class mail or certified mail with return receipt requested. Once the letter is sent to the parent, the school has fulfilled its responsibility to notify the parent.

In addition, students who are age 10 or older by September 1 shall also sign a statement indicating receipt of written notification regarding possible consequences for non-compliance with compulsory attendance regulations and the Stephens County Board of Education policy governing student attendance.

If a student accumulates a total of eight absences or five unexcused absences, an attendance support team meeting will be held at the student's school in order to discuss attendance, grades, and discipline. An attendance support team meeting may be held when a student accumulates 14 tardies or early check-outs.

Truancy

The Stephens County Board of Education defines truancy as “any child subject to compulsory attendance who during any school year is absent 5 or more days without a valid written excuse.”

***Permission to Leave School**

All pupils are required to remain at school at all times during school hours unless permission to leave is granted by the principal upon a bona fide request of the parent(s)/guardian(s), provided the reason for leaving school is in keeping with attendance regulations.

Enrollment Requirements for Driver's License/Permit (O.C.G.A. § 40-5-22):

The Department of Driver Services (DDS) shall not issue an instruction permit or driver's license to a person who is younger than 18 years of age unless at the time such minor submits an application for an instruction permit or driver's license the minor presents acceptable proof that he or she has received a high school diploma, a general educational development (GED) diploma, a special diploma, or a certificate of high school completion or has terminated his or her secondary education and is enrolled in a postsecondary school, is pursuing a GED diploma, or the records of the DDS indicate that the applicant is enrolled in and not under suspension or expulsion from a public or private school or is enrolled in a home education program that satisfies the reporting requirements of all state laws governing such program.

Attendance Support Teams

Each school will establish an Attendance Support Team (AST) chaired by an attendance support worker/counselor or principal designee. The team will be responsible for monitoring and implementing procedures to reduce tardy days, early dismissals, and truancy at the applicable school. The team will assess each truancy case and develop strategies and interventions to correct the student's truancy.

***Educational Trips**

Parents/guardians must complete the application for an Educational Trip and submit the request to the school one week before the trip. Principals have the ability to approve or to deny educational field trips. The administrator will review the student's attendance record prior to making the decision to approve or to deny. Educational trips will not be excused for more than 5 school days. No trip will be excused for more than 5 consecutive school days. No trip will be excused during the last week of a semester due to exams. All work missed must be made up within the number of allotted days as previously specified. In addition, the student must keep a log of the activities that occurred that are related to his/her educational experience and write a paper concerning these activities. These documents must be presented to the administration in a similar manner as all other make-up work.

***Hospital/Homebound**

A hospitalized or homebound pupil who receives as much as three hours of instruction per week from a certified hospital/homebound teacher may be counted present at the school for that week.

STUDENT RECORDS

It is the policy of the Board of Education that all employees shall comply with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Pupil Protection Rights Amendment (PPRA). The Superintendent shall implement procedures whereby every principal is directed to develop a means to notify, on an annual basis, students and parents, including non-English-speaking parents, of their rights under FERPA and PPRA, either by letter or through a student handbook distributed to each student in the school.

FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT (FERPA)

Confidentiality of student records shall be preserved while access is provided to parents, eligible students (those over eighteen years of age or enrolled in post-secondary educational institutions), school officials with legitimate educational interests, and those federal or state officials whose access is authorized in connection with an audit or evaluation of federal or state supported education programs or for the enforcement or compliance with federal legal requirements related to those programs. Records will be sent to a school where the student seeks or intends to enroll or is already enrolled upon request of the school.

With the exception of directory information as defined below, personally identifiable information will not be released by the school system from an education record without prior written consent of the parent or eligible student, except where authorized by the regulations governing the FERPA. In accordance with the regulations, disclosures will be made to comply with state law, Internal Revenue Service laws and regulations, judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, in which case a reasonable effort will be made to notify parents or students in advance of such disclosures, unless otherwise required by a judicial order or federal grand jury subpoena; to accrediting institutions to carry out their accrediting functions; to organizations conducting studies on behalf of the school system; or in connection with a health or safety emergency.

The Board of Education designates the following information as "directory information." Unless a parent or eligible student makes a timely request to the principal of the school where the student is enrolled that such information not be designated directory information on the individual student, such information will not be considered confidential and may be disclosed upon request.

- a. Student's name, address and telephone number;
- b. Student's date and place of birth;
- c. Student's participation in official school clubs and sports;
- d. Weight and height of student if he/she is a member of an athletic team;
- e. Dates of attendance at schools within the school district;
- f. Honors and awards received during the time enrolled in the district's schools;
- g. Photograph; and
- h. Grade level.

Procedures for Obtaining Access to Student Records

Any eligible student or any parent whose parental rights have not been specifically revoked by court order, any guardian, or any individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or guardian may inspect the education records of his or her child. Generally, a parent will be permitted to obtain a copy of the education records of his child upon reasonable notice and payment of reasonable copying costs.

Each records custodian in the school district shall maintain a record of each request for access to and each disclosure of personally identifiable information from the educational records of a student in accordance with FERPA regulations.

A parent or eligible student who believes the student's record contains an error may request its correction by submitting a written explanation of the error and the basis for believing it to be in error to the principal or designee, who shall investigate and determine whether or not to amend the record. If the matter cannot be thus resolved, a parent or eligible student may request a hearing pursuant to federal regulations at 34 C.F.R. 99.21-99.22, as well as applicable state regulations. If the hearing results in a determination that the record contained erroneous information, it shall be corrected and the parent or eligible student shall be informed in writing of the correction; if the information contained in the record is determined not to be erroneous, the parent may place a statement in the record commenting on the contested information and stating the basis for disagreement. The statement shall thereafter be disclosed whenever the portion to which it relates is disclosed.

PROTECTION OF PUPIL RIGHTS Amendment (PPRA)

Definition of Terms Used in PPRA:

"Instructional Material" - Instructional material that is provided to a student, regardless of format, including printed or representational materials, audio-visual materials, and materials in electronic or digital formats (such as materials accessible through the Internet). The term does not include academic tests or academic assessments.

"Invasive Physical Examination" - Any medical examination that involves the exposure of private body parts, or any act during such examination that includes incision, insertion, or injection into the body, but does not include a hearing, vision, or scoliosis screening.

"Personal Information" - Individually identifiable information including: (1) a student or parent's first and last name; (2) home address; (3) telephone number; or (4) social security number.

Requirements:

No student shall be required to submit to a survey, analysis, or evaluation that reveals information concerning:

1. Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent;
2. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family;
3. Sex behavior or attitudes;
4. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior;
5. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships;
6. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers;
7. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or student's parent; or
8. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program), without prior written consent of the parent or eligible student.

A parent of a student may, upon request, inspect any survey created by a third party containing one or more of the items listed as (1) through (8) above before the survey is administered or distributed by a school to a student and may choose to opt the student out of participation in the survey. The Superintendent shall develop procedures for: (1) granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to such survey within a reasonable period of time after the request is received, and (2) making arrangements to protect student privacy in the event of the administration or distribution of a survey to a student containing one or more of the items listed as (1) through (8). The requirements of PPRA do not apply to a survey administered to a student in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

A parent of a student may, upon request, inspect any instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum for the student. The Superintendent shall develop procedures for granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to instructional material within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.

Parents shall be notified prior to the administration of physical examinations or screenings that the school may administer to students. This notice shall offer the parent the opportunity to opt the student out of any non-emergency, invasive physical examination or screening that is (1) required as a condition of attendance; (2) administered by the school and scheduled by the school in advance; and (3) not necessary to protect the immediate health and safety of the student, or of other students.

The parent of a student shall be notified prior to the commencement of activities involving the collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the purpose of marketing or for selling that information (or otherwise providing that information to others for that purpose). Such notice shall offer the parent the opportunity to inspect, upon request, any instrument used in the collection of such information before the instrument is administered or distributed to a student and to opt the student out of such activities. The Superintendent shall develop procedures that: (1) make arrangements to protect student privacy in the event of such collection, disclosure, or use, and (2) grant a request by a parent for reasonable access to such instrument within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

STUDENT ACCOUNTABILITY FOR ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Promotion and Retention of Students

Stephens County Schools believes that all students can learn when the following are present: engaging work, quality instruction, relevant content, and intrinsic motivation. The Stephens County Board of Education holds high expectations for staff, students, parents, and community and believes accountability must be shared by all.

The Board of Education ("the Board") shall require all schools governed by its authority to abide by the State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-.11, which specifies how the state-adopted assessments administered in grades 3, 5, and 8 will be used in making promotion, placement and retention decisions for students once the Georgia Milestones Assessment Program is fully implemented by the State Board of Education.

The Board hereby authorizes each school cluster (high school, middle school, elementary schools-grade levels should be consistent) to develop procedures or regulations that specify how the state-adopted assessments and what local promotion

criteria will be used in making decisions concerning promotion, placement or retention of students in Grades 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7, (and for students in grades 3, 5, and 8 in years when reliance on state-adopted assessments has been waived). Such procedures or regulations must be approved by the Superintendent or designee(s) and shall provide for the following:

1. Each teacher shall be responsible for determining through a variety of assessments whether a student appears to be on grade level or achieving at a level which, with accelerated, differentiated, or additional instruction or interventions, would allow the student to perform at grade level by the conclusion of the subsequent school year.
2. Where the teacher believes the student is not performing at such a level, the teacher must implement remediation efforts as set forth in regulations or procedures.
3. A mechanism shall be established whereby a school level team will review a student's performance prior to any decision to retain the student.
4. Prior to a student's retention, the student's parents must be notified of the possibility of retention and given the opportunity to attend a meeting to discuss the matter.
5. School level promotion and retention decisions may be appealed to a district level committee, whose decision shall be final.

ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Stephens County Schools AHERA/Management Plan is available for public inspection upon request at the Stephens County Board of Education office located at 134 Industrial BLVD Ellijay, GA. This notification is provided to fulfill the requirement of section 763.93 (4) of the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, 40 CFR Part 763, October 30, 1987. All interested parents, teachers, employees or other persons are invited to review the plan which includes the following items:

1. Location, amounts and types of asbestos-contained materials in all schools and support buildings.
2. Response actions to the asbestos-contained materials, selected by the Stephens County School System.
3. Plans for re-inspection, periodic surveillance and operation and maintenance programs.
4. Public Notification procedures.

Anyone interested in reviewing this plan should contact the Stephens County Board of Education at 706-886-9415.

PARENT'S RIGHT TO KNOW PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS OF TEACHERS AND PARAPROS

In compliance with the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act the **principal, Mr. Paul DeFoor**, would like to inform you that you may request information about the professional qualifications of your student's teacher(s). The following information may be requested:

- 1) Whether the teacher has met the Georgia Professional Standards Commission's requirements for certification for the grade level and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
- 2) Whether the teacher is teaching under an emergency or other provisional status through which Georgia qualifications or certification criteria have been waived;
- 3) The college major and any graduate certification or degree held by the teacher;
- 4) Whether the student is provided services by paraprofessionals, and if so, their qualifications.

If you wish to request information concerning your child's teacher's qualification, please contact SCMS at **706-886-2880**.

BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES AND SCHOOL PROCEDURES

The Stephens County Board of Education policies noted in this handbook may be amended by the Stephens County Board of Education as necessary. The Stephens County Middle School procedures noted in this handbook may be amended by school administration as necessary.