

**Middle School  
Student Handbook  
2024-2025**



Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools  
**INSPIRING LEARNERS  
BUILDING FUTURES**

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## WELCOME

Welcome to the 2024-2025 academic year in Gahanna-Jefferson middle schools. Our staff is excited to start the new school year, and we cannot wait to meet, reconnect with and develop strong partnerships with the entire school community!

This handbook has been prepared for the purpose of answering questions that are frequently asked by students, parents, and families. It contains essential details about our Gahanna-Jefferson middle schools. Please take time to read this information, review it with your child/ren, and keep it for your reference throughout the school year. Should you have any questions that are not answered, please don't hesitate to contact your teacher or building principal.

Sincerely,  
The GJPS Middle School Principals

## DISTRICT CONTACTS

### Board of Education

Kara Coates, President  
Sue Horn, Vice President  
Megan Dimmerling, Board Member  
Daphne Moehring, Board Member  
Dion Manley, Board Member

### District Board Office

630 Morrison Road  
Gahanna, OH 43230  
614-471-7065

### District Office Leaders

Tracey R. Deagle, PHD, Superintendent  
Cliff Hetzel, Treasurer  
Jill Elliott, Assistant Superintendent  
Kevin Klingler, Chief Operating Officer  
Matt Blackwell, Director of Technology  
Tia Holliman, Director of Curriculum  
Shea Reed, Director of Human Resources  
Erick Starkey, Public Information Coordinator  
Sue Wieging, Director of Special Education

## DISTRICT WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA

*For more information about our district, please visit us:*

On the Web - [www.GahannaSchools.org](http://www.GahannaSchools.org)

On Facebook - [www.facebook.com/GahannaJeffersonSchools](http://www.facebook.com/GahannaJeffersonSchools)

On Twitter - @GahannaJeffersn

On Instagram - @GahannaJeffersn

On YouTube - Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools

## **GJPS MIDDLE SCHOOLS & BUILDING ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT**

### **Gahanna Middle School East**

370 Clotts Rd.

Gahanna, Ohio 43230

614.478.5550

Principal: Megan Kirsten

Assistant Principal: Amy Hilbert

Secretary: Melissa Hinds

### **Gahanna Middle School South**

349 Shady Spring Dr.

Gahanna, Ohio 43230

614.337.3730

Principal: Robin Murdock

Assistant Principal: Andy Bonath

Secretary: Debbie Hensler

### **Gahanna Middle School West**

350 N. Stygler Rd.

Gahanna, Ohio 43230

614.478.5570

Principal: Kiev LaMarr

Assistant Principal:

Secretary: Andrea Davis

### **Gahanna Middle School Athletics**

Athletic Director: Garret Sendelbach

Athletic Secretary: Nikki Gervais

614.479.1631

GAHANNA-JEFFERSON PUBLIC SCHOOLS  
**INSPIRING LEARNERS  
BUILDING FUTURES**



**OUR  
VISION**

**IGNITE** a passion for lifelong learning  
**ENRICH** student experiences  
**CHAMPION** pathways to success for all



**OUR  
MISSION**

Empower students  
for **LIFELONG SUCCESS**  
by ensuring that  
**STUDENT LEARNING** is our  
top priority, preparing each student  
to **CONTINUALLY THRIVE** in an  
ever-changing world.

**OUR  
VALUES**

**INTEGRITY  
COLLABORATION  
INCLUSIVITY**

**STUDENTS FIRST  
EMPOWERMENT  
EXCELLENCE**

**SCHOOL CALENDAR**

**Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools  
2024-2025 School Calendar**

August 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15*	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

September 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

October 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18*	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

November 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

December 2024						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20*	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

August
12 - Convocation/PD Day
13 - PD Day/Staff Work Day
14 - Staff Work Day
15 - First Day of School

September
2 - Labor Day - No School
23 - PD Day - No School

October
18 - End of 1st Quarter
21 - Conference Comp Day - No School
22 - Staff Work Day - No School

November
8 - PD Day - No School
11 - Veteran's Day
27-29 - Thanksgiving Break

December
20 - End of 1st Semester (2nd Quarter)
12/23-1/3 - Winter Break - No School

January
1-2 - Winter Break/New Years Day - No School
3 - Staff Work Day - No School
20 - MLK Day - No School

February
14 - PD Day - No School
17 - President's Day - No School

March
7 - End of 3rd Quarter
10 - Staff Work Day - No School
31 - Spring Break - No School

April
1-4 - Spring Break - No School
18 - Conference Comp Day - No School

May
2 - PD Day - No School
23 - End 2nd Semester (4th Quarter)
23 - Last Day of School
24 - Graduation
26 - Memorial Day
27 - Staff Work Day

January 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

February 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

March 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7*	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

April 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

May 2025						
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23*	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

\* GJPS staff will be mindful of all religious holidays when planning instruction & assessment.

\*\* This calendar is subject to change.

## SCHOOL HOURS

9:05 - 3:50 PM

8:40 AM	Doors open for students eating breakfast
8:50 AM	Doors open for students not eating breakfast
9:05 AM	School starts & tardy bell rings
3:50 PM	Dismissal begins

## ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

### WALKING, BIKING, CAR RIDING

All students who choose to walk, ride a bike or be dropped off/picked up in a car are expected to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. In the morning, students should not arrive before 8:40 a.m. Students will not be permitted to enter the building until 8:40 a.m. for breakfast or 8:50 a.m. for all other students.
2. Students should cross the street only at corners after looking both ways and should obey basic traffic laws.
3. Students walking or biking to school should walk/ride only on sidewalks and respect private property.
4. Students who bike to school should follow the same safety guidelines as walkers. Bikes are permitted and must be secured in the bike racks outside the school.
5. Parents should take the time to review basic safety rules and encourage their student to use caution when walking or biking to school.
6. If a parent plans to drop off/pick up your student in a car, please check with your individual school to determine car line procedures.

### BUS TRANSPORTATION

Students are eligible for busing if they live 1.1 mile beyond the location of the student's elementary/middle school and live 1.3 mile beyond the student's high school. If a student is eligible for busing, the bus number, pickup/drop-off times, and the location of the bus stop will be detailed on the district's transportation app.

Students are not permitted to ride any bus other than the one assigned to them. For an emergency situation where guardians will not be home after school, a note must be sent by **both** families stating the student can go home with the friend. This must be approved in the building office.

Students riding the bus must follow the rules established by the Board of Education and ORC 3301-83-08 (C) for the safety of all concerned. Students not following the rules will be subject to written reprimands and could face possible dismissal and/or suspension from bus-riding privileges.

The following are prohibited on GJPS buses:

1. Changing seats, standing, walking around while bus is in motion
2. Noise at railroad crossings and other danger points
3. Excessive noise, loud talking or laughter at any time
4. Distracting the bus driver in any manner
5. Putting any part of body outside of bus
6. Scuffling or fighting on the bus
7. Spitting or throwing any object on, to or from the bus
8. Smoking, vaping or lighting matches/lighter on the bus
9. Eating, drinking, or littering
10. Failure to obey the driver
11. Transporting animals - dead or alive
12. Transporting any glass container on bus
13. Damaging or marking any part of the bus
14. Use of profane or unbecoming language
15. Taking photos or videos

A Bus Transfer Request form must be submitted to the school office if a parent wishes to have their student picked up or returned to an address other than his/her own on a regular basis. This form can be found in the school office.

Transportation questions can be addressed by calling 614-751-7581 (Transportation Department).

## **LUNCH & RECESS**

Students will have a minimum of 35 minutes to eat lunch and enjoy recess each day. Students will not have recess outdoors if the temperature or windchill are below 32 degrees and students should dress properly to stay warm outside. If a student needs to stay inside from recess, a doctor's note is required providing detailed restrictions and other arrangements will be made.

To support students who are allergic to peanuts, nuts and/or items made with them, we encourage all students to be mindful of what they bring and who they sit by. Each building will have a nut free table in the cafeteria as needed and will monitor individual situations.

Students are expected to follow building determined expectations and rules for the cafeteria as well as during indoor and outdoor recess. To make the lunch period pleasant and relaxing for all, students should do the following:

- a. Utilize a good standard of table manners while eating.
- b. Stay at your seat/table until dismissed.
- c. Leave the table clean and orderly. Do not drop food, wrappers, containers, etc. on



- the floor.
- d. Carry lunch trays to the dish return counter.
- e. Finish eating before leaving the cafeteria.
- f. Remain in the cafeteria until permission to leave is given..

Failure to follow these rules may result in disciplinary action.

## **DISTRICT BREAKFAST & LUNCH PROGRAM**

All school meals (breakfast and lunch) made by the district's Food Service Staff are based on USDA requirements and are available for purchase to all enrolled GJPS students through May 2025.

All meals include a variety of colorful fruits, vegetables, and proteins that are well-balanced, nutritious, and provide students the energy they need to thrive both in and out of the classroom.

### **MAKING A MEAL**

Each school breakfast offered includes the following components: an entrée with whole grains (which may also include a breakfast protein), a juice, fruit, or vegetable, and a selection of low-fat or fat-free milk. Students must select three out of the four components to constitute a reimbursable breakfast. At least one of the three components selected must be a serving of a fruit or a vegetable.

Each school lunch includes five food components: an entrée that is protein-packed and whole grain rich, a fruit, a vegetable, and a selection of low-fat or fat-free milk. Students must select three out of five components to constitute a reimbursable lunch. At least one out of the three components must be a serving of a fruit or a vegetable. K-8 students can select up to two servings of vegetables and one serving of fruit, and high school students can select up to two servings of both vegetables and fruits to meet age-based nutrition requirements.

### **MEAL CHARGE POLICY**

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools has reinstated a previously used meal charge procedure. Starting Sept. 5, 2023, any student with more than five (5) lunch charges in the school year will receive a substitute meal in the cafeteria. At the elementary level this means accounts with more than \$13.75 in negative charges, and at the middle and high school levels, this includes accounts that have accrued more than \$15 in debt. The substitute breakfast will consist of a breakfast bar, fruit and milk, and the substitute lunch will include a cheese (turkey for dairy substitute) sandwich, fruit and milk.

Families will receive a phone call and/or email starting with the second negative charge to alert you of the deficit in your student's account.

### **PAYMENT**

Plate lunch and breakfast menus are available online at [www.gahannaschools.org/departments/food-service](http://www.gahannaschools.org/departments/food-service). Elementary plate lunches cost \$2.75, middle and high school plate lunches cost \$3.00, and breakfast costs \$1.50 district-wide. For the 24-25 school year, reduced-price qualifying families will receive breakfast and lunch meals at no cost.

Additional entrées, beverages or a la carte items are also available for purchase. Charging of snacks, beverages or second entrees when a student account has a negative balance will not be permitted.

Students use their 6-digit student identification number as their PIN on the café Point-of-Sale system. Parents are encouraged to prepay for meals online through the Infinite Campus Parent Portal, by cash or by check. Checks may be made out to: *Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools - Food Service*. Please note: During the last 2 weeks of school students may not charge meals. They must have cash, check or funds on their account to purchase breakfast or lunch. Remaining balances will transfer to the next school year.

It is the responsibility of parents to provide lunch for their children while at school. It is important that children receive the nutrition they need to stay focused and learn during the school day. The Gahanna-Jefferson Food Service Department's goal is to provide healthy meals to students and support its self-funded account.

### **FREE AND REDUCED-PRICE MEAL APPLICATION**

As a part of the National School Lunch & Breakfast Program, GJPS offers a "Free & Reduced-Price School Meals Application," which, upon qualifying by household size and income, allows a student to receive one (1) plate breakfast and one (1) plate lunch per day for either a free or reduced-price cost.

To qualify, new families to the district, or current families who believe they may now qualify for the Free and Reduced-Price School Meals Program and/or Fee Waivers must:

1. Fill out the Free and Reduced Application
2. Qualify based on USDA Guidelines
3. Return the Fee Waiver Consent to Share Form

The Free and Reduced-Price Meal application can be filled out online and paper copies are also available in each school and at the administration office.

Families may apply for free or reduced-price meals any time during the school year. Students on the Free and Reduced-Price Meals program are eligible for a plate lunch and plate breakfast daily. The cafeteria POS system provides complete confidentiality.

### **ALLERGENS**

GJPS Food Service Department cannot guarantee the absence of trace amounts of potential allergens not listed on food labels for sensitive individuals, but will gladly work with families regarding any food allergies or special dietary concerns. Reasonable accommodations can be made after receiving a signed allergen form from a medical provider or as stated in a child's emergency care plan. The "Food Allergies, Special Diets, and Restrictions" form can be found online at [www.gahannaschools.org/departments/food-service](http://www.gahannaschools.org/departments/food-service) through the "Allergens" drop-down category under "Food Service Information."

Please contact the Kitchen Lead at your child's school or the Food Service Secretary, with questions and concerns about allergens. Each site has ingredient information for all foods sold by the cafeterias. We offer meal choices that accommodate allergies.

### **NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT**

In accordance with federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity.

Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication to obtain program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language), should contact the responsible state or local agency that administers the program or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339.

To file a program discrimination complaint, a Complainant should complete a Form AD-3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form which can be obtained online at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/civil-rights/usda-nondiscrimination-statement-other-fns-programs>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by:

1. Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; or
2. Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or
3. Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov) This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Questions can be directed to the Food Service Supervisor or the Food Service Secretary at 614-478-5531.

## **SCHOOL FEES**

All Gahanna-Jefferson students are required to pay an annual instructional fee of \$35 at the beginning of each school year. Additionally, there is a \$24 workbook fee for students taking the Chinese I course.

In addition to the standard instructional fee, students participating in extracurricular athletics are responsible for the following Pay-to-Participate fees:

- \$100 per athlete, per sport
- \$50 for second sport
- 3rd sport is free
- \$250 family cap

All fees can be paid in the Infinite Campus portal.

## **EMERGENCY MEDICAL AUTHORIZATION (EMA)**

Within 30 days from the beginning of the school year, All Gahanna-Jefferson families are required to complete and update each student’s Emergency Medical Authorization (EMA) form at the beginning of each school year. EMA information is critical to ensuring we are supporting each student appropriately and updates should be made in the Infinite Campus as a part of the annual parent portal update.

In the event emergency medical treatment for a student is necessary, the District will adhere to the instructions on the electronic authorization form. If a parent refuses to grant consent for emergency medical treatment, the parent may indicate on the EMA form (i.e., Part II) the procedure the parent wishes school authorities to follow for medical emergencies involving their child.

Failure to have updated an EMA may result in restrictions from school activities. Even if there are no changes to student EMA information, a parent/guardian must certify we have the current information each year through the Infinite Campus portal.

**COURSE OFFERINGS**

GRADE 6	GRADE 7	GRADE 8
Lang. Arts Social Studies Math 6 & ACE Math 6/7 Science	Lang. Arts & ACE Lang. Arts Social Studies Math 7 & ACE Math 7/8 Science	Lang. Arts & ACE Lang. Arts American History Math 8 & Algebra 1 & Geometry Science
Art Physical Education Health General Music Strings, Band, Choir Design & Modeling (7th only)		Art Physical Education Strings, Band, Choir Spanish, French, Chinese, German Medical Detectives Automation & Robotics

Note: Additional elective courses may be offered at different middle schools based on interest/need.

**GRADING SCALE, REPORT CARDS & FAMILY CONFERENCES**

To report academic progress, GJPS middle schools use the following grading scale:

- A = 90 - 100
- B = 80 - 89
- C = 70 - 79
- D = 60 - 69
- F = 0 - 59

All GJPS schools issue report cards on a quarterly basis (every 9 weeks). Reporting periods end on the following dates:

- End of 1st quarter - October 18, 2024
- End of 2nd quarter - December 20, 2024
- End of 3rd quarter - March 7, 2025
- End of 4th quarter - May 23, 2025

Middle school families can continually monitor the progress of students in each content by checking grades in the Infinite Campus portal. Students earning a letter grade of D or F will be notified by the teacher near the middle of each quarter so collaborative support can be provided for improved progress.

Family conferences will be held two times during the school year - once in the Fall and once in the Spring. Each building will identify and communicate family conference nights which will be held within the following windows:

- *1st Semester:*
  - All: September 30 - October 11
- *2nd Semester:*
  - PK/Elementary: February 18 - 28
  - Middle School/High School: February 3 - 13

## **HONOR ROLL & MAY AWARDS PROGRAM**

Honor roll recognition will be awarded quarterly for any student demonstrating a 3.5 GPA or higher.

Each Gahanna-Jefferson middle school hosts a May Award Program where students are recognized for various academic and leadership honors. May academic awards will be calculated using the GPA from the first three quarters of the school year. 6th, 7th, 8th graders can earn academic recognition by maintaining a 3.5 GPA for the first three quarters.

In addition, each middle school will honor students for citizenship, leadership, growth, academic club participation (i.e. spelling bee, Power of the Pen, Math Counts) as well as 8th grade content area awards.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips are academic activities that are held off school grounds. **In order to participate, students must turn in a permission form signed by a parent or guardian.** Field trips are supervised by teachers and may include a limited number of parents who volunteer to chaperone. Siblings are not permitted to attend field trips. Students will not be permitted to attend any off site field trips unless the Emergency Medical information has been updated in Infinite Campus.

All students should travel to and from the field trip on the school bus provided by the district. However, if a guardian intends to take their student home from a field trip, the student must be signed out with the teacher. When a student is signed out from a field trip, attendance will be marked accordingly in Infinite Campus. A parent/guardian may only take their own student and cannot transport other students.

Any parent serving as a chaperone on a school field trip where they are responsible for supervising students without district staff will be required to complete a background check following district procedures.

## **STUDENT ASSESSMENT AND ACADEMIC INTERVENTION SERVICES**

The District is required to assess student achievement and needs in all program areas in compliance with State law and the rules adopted by the State Board of Education. The purpose of such assessments will be to determine the progress of students and to assist them in attaining student performance objectives and the educational achievement goals of this District.

A parent may request policies regarding student participation in state mandated assessments as well as information on each assessment required by the state.

Please read the full assessment policy [here](#).

## **GIFTED EDUCATION**

### **Gifted Identification**

Ohio law sets criteria to be used by all districts for identifying students as gifted in the following areas:

- A. Superior cognitive ability
- B. Reading
- C. Math
- D. Science
- E. Social studies
- F. Creative thinking ability
- G. Visual and/or performing arts

Districts are required to select from a list of approved tests when evaluating students for potential gifted identification. Once a student is identified as gifted by an Ohio public school district, that identification remains for the duration of the student's academic career in Ohio regardless of future test scores. Additionally, gifted identifications from an Ohio public school district transfer throughout Ohio.

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools use multiple tests to screen, progress monitor, and benchmark student learning. Some of these tests have been approved by the State of Ohio for identifying giftedness (e.g., MAP) and are used for gifted identification in the district. Additionally, the Naglieri Nonverbal Test is administered to all students in grades 2 and 5 each fall. Teachers, parents/guardians, and students may also refer any student in grades Kindergarten through 12 for testing for potential gifted identification. Referrals for testing should be made using the appropriate *Referral for Gifted Testing* form and submitted to the Coordinator of Special Programs. Forms must be completed and received by September 10 for testing in the fall or April 10 for testing in the spring. Referrals received after the window will be processed during the next referral window. Gifted qualifying scores from whole grade screening and results from testing of individual referrals are communicated to parents/guardians within 30 days of receiving the results. These letters are sent to the parent/guardian email(s) listed in Infinite Campus.

Parents/guardians may appeal the outcomes of gifted assessment in writing to the Superintendent or designee within 30 days of receiving test results. Appeals will be reviewed in light of state laws and ethical testing procedures. Appeals requesting an exception to the identification score will not be granted since gifted identification scores are determined by Ohio law and may not be modified by Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools. A decision regarding the appeal will be made within 30 days of receipt of the written appeal.

## **Gifted Services**

The plan for the service of gifted students enrolled in the district is developed in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Sect. 3324.04. Ohio law requires districts to identify students who are gifted but does not require districts to serve all students with gifted identifications with special programming. Support for gifted learners starts within the general education classroom and comes from the classroom teacher. Classroom teachers adjust their overall curriculum and instructional practices to account for the needs of their students. While this does not always constitute formal gifted services per Ohio rules, it is a means to have the broadest impact on our gifted student population.

Services are offered across most grade levels. Criteria for placement in services vary. Students who participate in one or more formal gifted services in line with their area(s) of gifted identification will receive a Written Education Plan each year. Students will be placed in services for which they are eligible at the start of the school year. During the fall testing window, elementary and middle school students identified as gifted in an area that results in new service eligibility will be placed into gifted services immediately. Students identified as gifted after the fall testing window will be placed into gifted services, if eligible, at the start of the next school year. Students in middle and high school will be placed into gifted services during the course scheduling process for the following school year.

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools will send an annual notice to parents/guardians of all identified gifted students. This notice will include a listing of the student's areas of gifted identification along with any service eligibility for the following school year. In accordance with Ohio Administrative Code, these notices are sent even if a student is not eligible for formal gifted services. Students in grades 3 through 8 will automatically be placed into services for which they are eligible; a permission to participate form will be required if service placement would require a change in schools. However, parents/guardians may choose to decline gifted services. Families who wish to either decline or withdraw their student from gifted services must submit a signed gifted service withdrawal form to the Coordinator of Special Programs. Once a student declines or withdraws from a gifted service for the year, they may not return to that service that same year. However, the student may participate in any service for which they are eligible the next school year.

### Students New to GJPS

Gifted identification criteria are set by Ohio law and consistent across all Ohio public schools. However, gifted services vary district to district in terms of areas and grade levels served and the format of services. Students who were in gifted services in a previous district may or may not be eligible for services within Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools. Students new to Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools will have their gifted identification verified based on previous records or may be retested within 90 days of enrollment upon parent/guardian request. Once identification is confirmed, the student will be offered

placement for any GJPS gifted services for which they are eligible in accordance with the criteria outlined in the district's service plan.

*For more information about gifted identification and service criteria, please visit the district website.*

## **VISITORS & VOLUNTEERS**

In order to protect the educational environment of the school from undue disturbances, persons wishing to visit classrooms when school is in session must contact the principal to schedule an appointment. Formal conferences outside of the instructional time can be scheduled by contacting the individual teacher. We encourage parent volunteers. Parents and visitors will need to ring the bell and be identified by the secretary to enter the building. **All visitors will have to scan their driver's license or ID and must sign in and wear a visitor badge when inside the building.**

### **Volunteer Application and Background Check Required**

To increase safety and security protocols, all GJPS volunteers who may have the potential to interact with students in an **unsupervised setting** or may have access to confidential information will be required to complete an online application that includes a background check. The district will provide the background checks at no cost to the volunteer.

Examples of volunteer experiences include but are not limited to: cafeteria helpers, reading aides, mentors, hall monitors, field day volunteers, library helpers, office helpers, tutors, field trip chaperones, small group or individual student work in the hallway, party helpers, concession workers, fundraising volunteers, book fair volunteers, mobile dentist volunteers, etc.

### **Steps to Volunteer**

1. Contact your principal or teacher to express an interest in volunteering.
2. Your principal or teacher will send you a link to the Online Volunteer Application and background check.
3. Complete the Online Volunteer Application and Background Check **at least 5 days before** your initial volunteer experience.
4. Renew your Volunteer Application and Background Check yearly from the date of issuance.

The school visitor policy can be found [here](#).

## **STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools Code of Conduct seeks to maintain an appropriate educational atmosphere that fosters self-discipline in all students. The district is committed to implementing a system of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) to promote school safety, appropriate choices and exceptional citizenship within the school setting. All students are expected to be responsible and to conduct themselves properly and in accordance with Federal, State, and local laws, Board policies and Administrative Guidelines, and in a way that respects the rights and safety of others



(Policy 5500-Student Conduct). Further, the Board believes that students should assume responsibility for their behavior and the consequences of their actions.

It is the responsibility of students, teachers and administrators to maintain a school environment that:

- Allows teachers to communicate effectively with all students;
- Allows all students the opportunity to learn;
- Allows all students and staff to attend and participate in a safe manner;
- Has consequences that are fair and developmentally appropriate;
- Considers the student and the circumstances of the situation; and
- Enforces the Student Code of Conduct accordingly.

A student may be subject to disciplinary action for violation of the Student Code of Conduct even if the misconduct occurs on property not owned or controlled by the Board, but that is connected to activities or incidents that have occurred on property owned or controlled by the Board, or misconduct that, regardless of where it occurs, is directed at a Board official or employee, or the property of such official or employee, or otherwise impacts the educational environment. In addition, a student may be subject to discipline for misconduct that occurs as follows:

- A. On school grounds during school hours including the time immediately preceding and after school.
- B. On school grounds during a school-sponsored activity, event or function or on school grounds at any other time when the school is being used by any school group;
- C. Off school grounds at a school-sponsored activity, event or function;
- D. In transit to or from school;
- E. On a school bus;
- F. Off school grounds at any time for a violation (1) that involves assault upon, or damage or destruction to the property of a teacher, administrator or other school employee, or (2) that poses a danger to the security and well-being of teachers, administrators other school employees, or that would put a reasonable such person in fear of harm to personal security and well-being, or (3) that brings the District into ill repute (such as vandalism or the writing of graffiti that identifies the District or a school within the District), or (4) that impacts the educational environment.

Students are responsible for all contents of book bags and items in possession or on their person, whether known or unknown. Students are also responsible for all items they bring on school grounds, including the contents in vehicles, whether known or unknown.

### **Conduct Violations**

1. **Academic Misconduct** - A student shall not cheat or plagiarize on any tests or other school assignments. Further, a student shall not present work as their own when it is not a product of their own personal thoughts, understanding and effort.

2. **Alcohol** - A student shall not use, possess, sell, distribute, purchase, receive, conceal, or be under the influence of alcohol or a product containing a substance that can provide an intoxicating or mood-altering effect (Refer to Drug Prevention Policy).
3. **Alternative Substance Delivery Device/Inhalants** - A student shall not use, possess, sell, distribute, purchase, receive, conceal, or be under the influence of substances in an electronic delivery device or other substitute forms of nicotine or chemicals which release toxic vapors, including, but not limited to vapes, vaporizer instruments, electronic cigarettes or cartridges.
4. **Arson** - A student shall not engage in the deliberate act of setting fire or attempting to set fire to school or personal property that has the potential to endanger students and school staff.
5. **Assault** - A student shall not engage in an incident or physical attack that results in serious bodily injury to oneself or others. Serious bodily injury is defined as “A bodily injury that involves substantial risk of death; extreme physical pain; protracted and obvious disfigurement; or protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member, organ or faculty (18 U.S.C. § 1365(3)(h)). Additionally, a student shall not physically attack another person in a manner that is unexpected and involves one-way physical aggression.
6. **Attendance and Truancy** - A student shall not be absent from any portion or all of regularly scheduled classes or other mandatory activities without school authorization and/or parental consent. Leaving the school campus and presence in unauthorized areas without a pass or permission of authorized school personnel, and repeated tardiness shall be considered a violation of this provision (Refer to School Attendance Policy Guidelines).
7. **Bullying, Harassment, and Intimidation** - A student shall not bully, harass, intimidate or retaliate against other students, school employees, school guests or persons conducting business for the school. Bullying, harassment and intimidation include an intentional written, verbal, electronic or physical act that is exhibited toward another person more than once that causes both mental and/or physical harm and is sufficiently severe, persistent or pervasive in a way that it creates a hostile environment that interferes with or limits an individual’s ability to participate in or benefit from the school’s program.
8. **Disruption to School** - A student shall not cause a disturbance or obstruction to the normal operation of this school or any other school in the district.
9. **Dress and Appearance** - A student shall not violate district rules pertaining to dress and appearance. Students shall attend school and present themselves in a manner which is within the bounds of decency and good taste, is clean, not hazardous to their safety or to the safety of others, and which does not detract from the educational environment or cause health risk (Refer to Dress and Appearance Guidelines).

10. **Drugs Other Than Tobacco or Alcohol** - A student shall not use, possess, sell, distribute, purchase, receive, conceal, or be under the influence of drugs, including, but not limited to, marijuana, THC vapes or edibles, counterfeit drugs, look-alike drugs other than tobacco or alcohol.
11. **Explosives/Other Dangerous Substances** - A student shall not have any destructive device, which includes a bomb, a grenade, a rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, a missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce and a mine or any similar device. This definition would also include any weapon that will, or that may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant, and that has any barrel with a bore of more than one-half inch in diameter. Additionally, fireworks or any other substance that could explode are prohibited.
12. **False Alarms/Bomb Threat** - A student shall not make a threat (verbal, written, or electronic) to bomb or use other substances or devices for the purpose of exploding, burning, causing damage to a school building or school property, or to harm students or staff.
13. **Fighting** - A student shall not participate in any incident involving physical violence.
14. **Firearm** - A student shall not have a firearm. A firearm is any weapon which will, is designed to, or may readily be converted to expel a projectile; the frame or receiver of any such weapon; any firearm muffler or firearm silencer; or any machine gun. This includes firearm components, ammunition, zip guns, starter guns, and flare guns.
15. **Firearm Look-alike** - A student shall not have any item that resembles a firearm, even if it does not have the explosive characteristics of a firearm, but may use a spring loaded device or air pressure by which to propel an object or substance (i.e., toy guns, cap guns, bb guns, pellet guns).
16. **Forgery/Falsification/Misleading School Personnel** - A student shall not forge or falsify in verbal, written or electronic form the name of another person or times, dates, grades, addresses, or any other information.
17. **Gang Paraphernalia** - A student shall not wear, use or possess gang related content or symbolism.
18. **Hazing** - A student shall not engage in any act or plan to act in a way that is intended to initiate students and coerce them into becoming part of a group or activity that has a substantial risk of causing mental or physical harm to any person.
19. **Identification** - A student shall not refuse to identify themselves and must promptly, upon request, correctly identify themselves to school authorities.

20. **Inappropriate Behavior/Disrespect** - Students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that is conducive to the learning environment and educational process and is respectful toward all peers and school personnel. It is recognized that no list of prohibited conduct can specifically encompass every action which may become subject to discipline.
21. **Inappropriate or Discriminatory Language** - A student shall not use profane, vulgar, obscene, racially, religiously or sexually derogatory, or other improper/discriminatory language. Nor shall a student possess vulgar materials or use vulgar, profane or other improper gestures or signs.
22. **Inappropriate Use of Technology** - Students must follow appropriate use of technology policies. It is recognized that no list of prohibited use of technology can specifically encompass every action which may become subject to disciplinary action (Refer to Access to District Technology Resources and/or Information Resources From Personal Communication Devices and Student Education Technology Acceptable Use and Safety).
23. **Insubordination/Violation of School Discipline Procedures** - A student shall not refuse to comply with directives and/or assigned consequences given by school personnel.
24. **Intimidation and Threats** - A student shall not in verbal, written, electronic or any other means, make statements that suggest or indicate physical or emotional harm may come to another person or to an institution. Additionally, a student shall not coerce by any means, another student or any other person to use or make threats of intimidation relating to physical or non-physical aggression/violence.
25. **Knife/Other Dangerous Weapon** - A student shall not have a weapon, device, blade, instrument, material, or substance, animate or inanimate, that is used for, or is readily capable of causing death or serious bodily injury. This violation also includes, but is not limited to having and/or using lighters, mace, and tattoo/piercing equipment.
26. **Other Dangerous Weapon Look-alike** - A student shall not have any item that resembles a destructive device, such as a bomb, a grenade, a rocket having a propellant charge of more than four ounces, a missile having an explosive or incendiary charge of more than one-quarter ounce, a mine or any similar device. Additionally, a student shall not have any item that resembles or could be construed as a dangerous weapon, device, blade, instrument, material, or substance, that is used for causing fear or harm, or is readily capable of causing death or serious bodily injury. This definition would also include any weapon that will, or that may be readily converted to, expel a projectile by the action of an explosive or other propellant, and that has any barrel with a bore of more than one-half inch in diameter.
27. **Substance Paraphernalia (drug, alcohol and tobacco related)** - A student shall not possess drug, alcohol or tobacco paraphernalia or instruments such as lighters, pipes, roach clips, syringes, pacifiers, hypodermic needles, cocaine spoons or kits, nitrous oxide

items/containers, rolling papers, water pipes, bottles, wrappers, and any other items normally or actually used for the packaging, conveyance, dispensation or use of mood-altering substances. Possession of drug paraphernalia will be treated the same as possession of a mood-altering chemical. Addiction to an illegal substance shall not be used as an excuse for a violation.

28. **Physical Aggression** - A student shall not engage in unauthorized physical contact.
29. **Repeat Offenses** - A student shall refrain from repeat violations of the Code of Conduct. This includes multiple violations of the same rule or multiple violations of different rules.
30. **School Bus Violation** - A student shall not interfere with or disrupt the operation of a school bus by activities dangerous to its safe operation including, but not limited to, failing to remain seated, throwing objects out the window or at passengers or at the driver, shouting or other disorderly conduct which can cause physical harm, emotional stress or diversion of the driver's attention. Students shall conduct themselves in a safe and orderly manner and shall not trespass on nearby property while waiting to board the bus and after leaving the bus.
31. **Sexual Misconduct** - A student shall not engage in any sexual misconduct while on school premises, under school authority, or while attending any school-sponsored activities. "Sexual misconduct" includes public indecency, sexting, using sexually harassing comments or behavior and/or having sexual contact with another even with consent.
32. **Theft/Possession of Stolen Property** - A student shall not take, acquire, receive, retain, or possess the property of the school or any other person without authorization.
33. **Tobacco** - A student shall not use, possess, sell, distribute, purchase, receive, or conceal or be under the influence of tobacco, tobacco substitutes (including smokeless tobacco), counterfeit tobacco, or look-alike tobacco.
34. **Unauthorized Sales** - A student shall not sell, buy, offer to sell or buy, or exchange any service or product without prior authorization of the building principal.
35. **Unwelcome Sexual Misconduct** - A student shall not engage in unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, other physical or verbal conduct or communication of a sexual nature, including gender-based harassment that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive education or work environment (i.e., sexual assault, sexting, pinching, grabbing, suggestive comments, gestures or jokes or pressure to engage in sexual activity).
36. **Vandalism/Damage to School or Personal Property** - A student shall not cause or attempt to cause damage to or destruction of any school property or property belonging to another person. Disciplinary consequences may include restitution of cost where necessary.
37. **Other Violations** - Other conduct violations not defined in the rules above.

Violations of the Code of Conduct may result in discipline outcomes that include, but are not limited to:

- Verbal or written warning or reprimand
- Parental contact or conference
- After-school, morning, or lunch detention
- Referral to school counselor
- Referral for substance abuse counseling
- Saturday School
- In-School Suspension (ISS)
- Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)
- Emergency removal
- Referral to law enforcement agencies
- Recommendation for Expulsion
- Permanent Exclusion
- Compensatory payment of damages
- Loss of bus privileges
- Loss of other privileges
- Course/grade adjustments
- Community service
- Or any other outcome determined appropriate by administration

Repeated violations of the Student Code of Conduct may escalate the disciplinary action. District administrators will use a preponderance of evidence standard when implementing discipline.

Furthermore, participation in extra-curricular activities, including interscholastic sports, is a privilege and not a right. Students may be prohibited from all or part of their participation in such activities for offenses or violations of the Student Code of Conduct or Athletic Code of Conduct. Students prohibited from participation in all or part of any extra-curricular activity are not entitled to further notice, hearing and/or appeal rights (see Policies 2431-Interscholastic Athletics and 5610.05-Prohibition from Extra-Curricular Activities).

### **Additional Notices**

*Discipline of Students with Disabilities* - Students with disabilities are entitled to the rights and procedures afforded by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (I.D.E.I.A.), and, where applicable, the Americans with Disabilities Act (A.D.A.), and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Policy 5610).

*Discipline During Open Lunch* - School policies and code of conduct expectations are in effect during open lunch periods, even when off campus. Disciplinary consequences for not following open lunch expectations may result in the loss of open lunch or other discipline as determined by school administrators.

*Video Surveillance* - For student safety and welfare, video surveillance cameras are placed throughout the district in buildings, on school grounds, and on buses. Actions recorded on these cameras may be used as evidence in disciplinary action and these records will remain in the possession of the school/district.

## **DRUG, ALCOHOL, AND TOBACCO PREVENTION GUIDELINES**

The Board prohibits the use, possession, sale, distribution, purchase, receipt, concealment, or influence of any drug/alcohol/tobacco or any drug/alcohol/tobacco-related paraphernalia as defined by law, on school grounds, on school vehicles, or at any school-sponsored event. It further establishes a drug-free zone within 1,000 feet of any facility used by the district for educational purposes ([Policy 5530-Drug Prevention](#)).

It is the primary objective of Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools to assure that the education of all students proceeds in an efficient, orderly, and non-disruptive manner. Using, possessing, selling, distributing, purchasing, receiving, concealing, or being under the influence of mood-altering chemicals or look-alike substances or paraphernalia on school premises is an obstacle to that objective and an interference with the rights of other students to receive quality academic instruction.

While student drug, alcohol and tobacco education and referral to counseling resources will continue to be made available, such measures should be viewed as instructional or rehabilitative and will not ordinarily be considered as an alternative to disciplinary measures.

## **STATEMENT OF POLICY REGARDING STUDENTS**

Students of Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools, while on school property or at a school-sponsored activity, shall not, knowingly or unknowingly, use, possess, sell, distribute, purchase, receive, conceal, be under the influence of, or attempt to do so with a mood-altering chemical of any kind prior to or during the school day, at any school-sponsored activity or event or at any time while on school premises.

### **Definitions**

- a. "Possession" includes, but is not limited to holding in the student's hand, retention in purses, wallets, lockers, desks, school bags, any other personal items, or vehicles parked on school property or property used by the school district or at any school function, or on the student's person.
- b. "Mood-altering chemical" includes, but is not limited to alcohol, marijuana, inhalants, vapes, edibles, ecstasy or other drugs, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, narcotics, over-the-counter medications (including any over-the-counter pain medications containing aspirin, acetaminophen, ibuprofen, or any other pain relievers, any cough or cold medications, etc.), substances such as Betel Nuts, Wite-Out, glue, toxic markers and caffeine pills. Prescription drugs are included, unless authorized by a medical prescription from a licensed physician and kept in the original container that states the student's name and directions for proper use according to [Policy 5330-Use of Medications](#). See also the Medication section of the handbook. This list is intended for example only and not as a comprehensive list.
- c. "Use of mood-altering chemical" is defined as manifesting signs of chemical misuse such as staggering, reddened eyes, odor of chemicals, nervousness, restlessness, memory loss,

- abusive language, falling asleep in class or any other behavior not normal for that particular student, or a preponderance of evidence that a student has used a mood-altering chemical.
- d. "Tobacco" includes any product containing tobacco or nicotine that is smoked, chewed, inhaled, or placed against the gums.
  - e. "Counterfeit controlled substances" or look-alike drug is (Ohio Revised Code §2925.01(O)) means any of the following:
    1. Any drug that bears, or whose container or label bears a trademark, trade name or other identifying mark used without authorization of the owner of rights to that trademark, trade name or identifying mark.
    2. Any unmarked or unlabeled substance that is represented to be a controlled substance/mood-altering chemical, manufactured, processed, packed, or distributed by a person other than the person that manufactured, processed, packed, or distributed it.
    3. Any substance that is represented to be a controlled substance/mood-altering chemical but is not a controlled substance/mood-altering chemical or is a different controlled substance/mood-altering chemical.
    4. Any substance other than a controlled substance/mood-altering chemical that a reasonable person would believe to be a controlled substance/mood-altering chemical because of its similarity in shape, size and color or its markings, labeling, packaging, distribution, or the price for which it is sold or offered for sale.

## **Jurisdiction**

Enforcement of expectations extends to use of the above:

- a. On or in close proximity to any property owned, leased by or under the control of the Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools, including vehicles used for the transportation of students.
- b. During normal school hours, including recess, lunch and class changes, and summer school.
- c. At any school-sponsored or sanctioned activity or event away from or within the school district

## **STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY**

Students are responsible for understanding the Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco Prevention Guidelines and the counseling services available to them.

## **PARENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools Board of Education recognizes that parents are primarily responsible for their children. The link between school and parents is the child. The effectiveness of these Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Prevention Guidelines will be assisted by the cooperative effort of the family, school officials and the Board.



## **STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES**

All Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools staff members have the responsibility to report all suspected cases of drug, alcohol and/or tobacco use, misuse, or abuse by students to the appropriate school officials. Staff members must report to building administration the details of the alleged use, possession, actual or attempted transmitting, buying, selling, or supplying of mood-altering chemicals, counterfeit or look-alike substances or paraphernalia. Staff will also be required to submit a written report.

## **SCHOOL OFFICIALS RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the responsibility of the school officials to inform students, staff and parents about the drug and alcohol abuse policy of this school district and to share with these audiences any available, pertinent information regarding the extent of the drug and alcohol problem in the school.

Except for the persons directly involved in the students' education, and except as otherwise provided herein, all matters concerning reports of drug or alcohol abuse shall be and remain confidential.

When a school official has reason to believe that a student is in violation of the drug/alcohol/tobacco code of conduct, the following action will be taken:

- a. The student will be informed of the alleged offense, the evidence to support the allegations and the disciplinary action that may apply.
- b. If the student is in need of medical attention, the school nurse and/or the local emergency agency will be notified to give medical attention.
- c. The parent or guardian of the student will be notified and asked to meet with the school officials. Only in the case of a medical emergency or if the parent(s) cannot be reached will the person on the student's emergency call list be notified.
- d. School officials will cooperate fully with law enforcement agencies and report to them any information that would be considered beneficial in their efforts to stem the use of drugs and alcohol.
- e. Notification to the local law enforcement agency shall be in accordance with the provisions under each offense. When reported, a written record shall be made of the incident to the law enforcement official who, at their discretion, may conduct an investigation.

## **DRUG AND ALCOHOL PARAPHERNALIA**

Drug, alcohol or tobacco paraphernalia or instruments such as lighters, pipes, roach clips, syringes, pacifiers, hypodermic needles, cocaine spoons or kits, nitrous oxide items/containers, rolling papers,

water pipes, bottles, wrappers, and any other items normally or actually used for the packaging, conveyance, dispensation or use of mood-altering substances. Possession of drug paraphernalia will be treated the same as possession of a mood-altering chemical. Addiction to an illegal substance shall not be used as an excuse for a violation.

## **SEARCHES**

School authorities are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the safety and well-being of the students in their care. In the discharge of that responsibility, school authorities may search the person or property, including vehicles, of a student, with or without the student's consent, whenever they reasonably suspect that the search is required to discover evidence of a violation of law or of school rules. (See [Policy 5771-Search and Seizure](#)).

## **SELF-REFERRAL**

Students have the opportunity for a voluntary referral procedure to seek information, guidance, counseling and/or assessment in regard to the use or possession of alcohol, tobacco and other controlled or non-controlled substances. The student or their immediate family may make voluntary referrals.

A voluntary referral must occur **prior** to any report of violations. Involvement by law enforcement officials negates the option of voluntary referral. The student may use the option of voluntary referral once in their career at Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools. Any subsequent violations will be enforced as a second or subsequent violation.

For an alcohol and/or controlled substances/mood-altering chemicals referral, the student must have, within five days, an appointment for an assessment with a certified chemical dependency counselor and notify the principal or designee of the appointment. The student must participate in the assessment process (the cost of any and all assessment will be the responsibility of the student and/or parents) and follow the counselor's recommendations to completion. If treatment or counseling is recommended it must be with an Ohio-certified chemical dependency counselor. The student must waive their rights of confidentiality so that verification of this assessment and a written report can be given to the principal or designee.

For a tobacco referral, the student must, within five days, provide verification of enrollment in an out-of-school tobacco education/cessation program approved by the principal or designee. Parents must sign a release of information to the principal or designee so that the student's progress in the program can be followed and written verification of completion given to the principal or designee. The student must complete the program.

If the student requesting the voluntary referral opportunity does not complete the assessment recommendations by the established time schedule, the violation consequence will be put into effect immediately.

## STUDENT DRESS & APPEARANCE

All Gahanna schools are concerned for the health, safety and general well-being of each student in establishing dress/appearance guidelines. It is our goal to create an environment where every student can express themselves in a safe and appropriate manner. Therefore, we reserve the right to restrict or require dress, accessories, and/or other aspects of appearance that are necessary for safe and productive school operations. Consistent enforcement of the dress code is the responsibility of staff and administration and should be applied in a manner that does not discriminate against, marginalize, or oppress any student based on race, gender, gender expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, household income, or body type.

It is desired that these dress guidelines will assist students in making appropriate choices that reflect their pride in themselves and in their school. The following dress/appearance guidelines are in place to promote a common understanding and cooperation among students, parents, and schools.

### Dress and Appearance Guidelines:

1. Students must wear clothing appropriate for school. This includes, but is not limited to shirts, pants, jeans, shorts, skirts, dresses, rompers, sweatpants, leggings, pajama bottoms, etc. Clothing must fully cover private areas with opaque fabric.
  - Clothing or accessories that advertise alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs; contain gang-related symbolism; are suggestive, offensive, or profane; have sexual connotations; promote, put down, insult, threaten, or harass others based upon gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, or disabilities; create a hostile, intimidating, harassing, or offensive learning environment are unacceptable and cannot be worn.
  - Undergarments alone are not considered sufficient clothing and must be covered.
  - Swimwear alone is not considered sufficient clothing.
2. Footwear must be worn at all times. Footwear that may be harmful to the flooring or present a safety concern may not be worn in the building (examples include, but are not limited to shoes with wheels and athletic cleats).
3. Students may wear headwear as long as their face and ears are visible and no students' sight is obstructed. Allowable headwear includes, but is not limited to hats, durags, and hoods on sweatshirts. Religious and cultural headwear may be worn.
4. When activated to increase safety and mitigate the risk of exposure, policy *8450.01 Protective Facial Coverings During Pandemic/Epidemic Events* will require face coverings of students unless they are unable to do so for health or developmental reasons.

Administrators reserve the right to adjust the enforcement of the dress code when appropriate for specific school events and special activities.

Violations of the dress guidelines may result in the following actions:

- The student will be asked to correct any violation of the dress guidelines. If the violation is not corrected at school, the parents will then be contacted to assist in correcting the violation.

- Dress code violations will be addressed in private and will not call unnecessary attention to the student.
- At the discretion of the administration, students in violation of the dress/appearance guidelines may be subject to disciplinary action.

## **TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTABLE USE & PERSONAL COMMUNICATION DEVICE ACCESS POLICY**

Students must follow the district Acceptable Use Policy which can be found here:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/oh/gahanna/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=B2DFPF3E6972>

In accordance with the policy above, the following activities are not permitted. Students who engage in these activities are subject to disciplinary action and loss of privileges. No list of prohibited technology use can encompass every action which may be a violation of school rules, therefore students and families should read the complete policy above. Prohibited behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Bypassing, disabling, or avoiding district web filters.
- Bypassing, disabling, or avoiding classroom monitoring and control software.
- Unenrolling or otherwise modifying software or hardware of district devices to avoid filters or controls.
- Disassembling, intentionally damaging, or removing components from district devices.
- Logging into accounts that belong to someone else.

Student use of the district's networks and systems must follow the policies found here:

<https://go.boarddocs.com/oh/gahanna/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=B2DFPJ3E698A>

It is expected that academic activities that take place within the school and involve the use of an electronic device will utilize a district device. Personal devices may be connected to the network when appropriate and in accordance with the policy above. Personal devices are not to be used in place of school devices in the classroom, but can be used for special projects and circumstances at the teacher's discretion.

All students are expected to annually review and acknowledge notice of district policies pertaining to use of technology and personal devices at registration.

## **CELL PHONES & SMART WATCHES**

Cell phones are permitted to be at school, but they must remain powered off and put away at all times during the day. At the middle school level, this includes in class, at lunch/recess and the hallways. Students are permitted to use cell phones while riding the bus and they will have the opportunity to earn cell phone use during lunch and recess at the discretion of building administration.

Smart watches are also permitted, but should only be used as a clock while at school.

Students **are not** permitted to send or receive text messages or calls on cell phones or smart watches during the day. Additionally, photos may not be taken with cell phones or smart watches at school. On state testing days, smart watches are not permitted to be worn.

Infractions may result in a student's device being taken by building staff and kept in the office until the end of the day. If a parent/guardian needs to reach their student during the school day, they should call the school office.

The school is not responsible for cell phones or smart watches that are lost, stolen, or damaged.

## **DIGITAL HALL PASS**

Gahanna-Jefferson middle and high schools utilize a digital hall pass system. Students are required to have the digital hall pass application on their district-issued Chromebooks. High school students may also choose to have the application on their cell phone or other electronic devices.

In order to visit the office, counselor, library, restroom or any other area of the school during class, students must create a pass and receive administrator, counselor, teacher or support staff approval prior to leaving their designated space.

Only one student per class will be permitted out of class at any given time. Students may not use a digital hall pass to go to the cafeteria or vending machines for food or drinks. Students should note that the electronic system automatically monitors the frequency and duration of time out of the class away from learning and this will be monitored by school staff. Misuse of the digital hall pass can result in reduced or eliminated access to passes.

## **LOCKERS**

Lockers are available in all GJPS middle schools, however, each building will determine the level of use and how lockers are assigned. In the event a student utilizes a district-provided locker, it should be noted that lockers and their contents are subject to inspection by authorized school personnel at any time. Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools are NOT responsible for lost or stolen items and students are responsible for promptly reporting problems with lockers to the main office.

## **SCHOOL ATTENDANCE**

Regular attendance is an important factor in the establishment of strong learning behaviors and a good scholastic record. Work missed due to an absence from school is very difficult to make up. There is NO SUBSTITUTE for actual participation in daily classroom discussion, lessons and work, and it is imperative that students attend school when they are well and able.

Classes are in session as follows:

- Elementary School - 8:05 AM to 2:45 PM
- Middle School - 9:05 AM to 3:50 PM
- High School - 8:35 AM to 3:20 PM

Students are required to be in school on time for their first class to start and are not permitted in the building before or after school hours unless supervised by a member of the faculty. Students may not leave school between classes or before their last class without the permission of the office.

### **Call-Ins/Notification of Absences**

It is very important that both the school district and parent/guardian know where students are at all times. The school and the parent/guardian need to work together to keep each other informed when students are not in school.

- A. The parent/guardian should make every effort possible to notify the school in ALL cases of student absence. Calls should be made to the school office between the hours of:
  - Elementary School - 7:00 AM to 3:30 PM
  - Middle School - 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM
  - High School - 7:45 AM to 4:15 PM
- B. When possible, the parent/guardian should notify the school in advance of an absence. (e.g. A phone call or a note from a parent/guardian on Wednesday to notify the school of an absence on Friday)
- C. If a student is absent, and no notification was received from the parent/guardian, the school will attempt to contact the parent/guardian within two hours of the start of school. If no contact is made, an explanation from the parent/guardian will be necessary. If the school does not receive an explanation of the absence within three (3) school days, the absence will automatically be considered unexcused.
- D. Absences, late arrivals, and early dismissals will be calculated by minutes. Whether the absence from the time missed at school is considered excused or unexcused is dependent upon the reason given and to the discretion of the principal or his/her designee.

### **Excusable Reasons for Absence**

Even if an absence is excused, it still results in loss of educational opportunities that cannot be made up. Nonetheless, there are times when a student simply cannot be at school. ORC 3321.04 and OAC 3301-69-02 outline the situations in which an absence can be excused.

An excused absence will only be granted for the time missed at school for the following reasons:

- personal illness (a written physician's statement verifying the illness may be required)
- appointment with a health care provider
- illness in the family necessitating the presence of the child
- quarantine of the home
- death in the family
- necessary work at home due to absence or incapacity of parent(s)/guardian(s)
- observation or celebration of a bona fide religious holiday
- out-of-state travel (up to a maximum twenty-four (24) hours per school year that the student's school is open for instruction) to participate in a District-approved enrichment or extracurricular activity
  - Any classroom assignment missed due to the absence shall be completed by the student. If the student will be absent for twenty-four (24) or more consecutive hours when the student's school is open for instruction, a classroom teacher shall accompany the student during the travel period to provide the student with instructional assistance.

- such good cause as may be acceptable to the Superintendent
- medically necessary leave for a pregnant student in accordance with Policy 5751
- service as a precinct officer at a primary, special or general election in accordance with the program set forth in Policy 5725

### **Excessively Absent Students**

The Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education requires all students to attend school regularly in accordance with board policy and the laws of the State of Ohio. The educational program offered by the Gahanna-Jefferson Public School District is predicated upon the presence of the student and requires continuity of instruction and classroom participation. Arriving at school on time and maintaining a good attendance record correlate to strong student achievement. Our goal is to work with families to assure that every student receives a high quality education.

Pursuant to House Bill 410, student attendance is now calculated in hours. This includes absences that have been identified as both *excused* and *unexcused* by the school, as well as planned absences. Ohio law specifies that a student is excessively absent from the public school the child is supposed to attend for thirty-eight or more hours in one school month, or sixty-five or more hours in a school year, unless medically excused. When a student has met that threshold, which will be reported as required by law, the District Truancy Plan will then be initiated. The parent/guardian will receive notification of an excessively absent student along with a copy of the District Truancy Plan.

### **Medically Excused Absences**

Ohio Revised Code 3321.191(C)(1) states that when students are absent with or without an excuse for thirty-eight (38) hours in a month, or sixty-five hours in a year, they are considered to be **Excessively Absent** and must follow the District Truancy Plan. Once a student meets the excessively absent threshold, any absences from that point forward require medical documentation to be excused. A **medically excused** absence occurs any time a student is out of school due to illness or medical visit (physician, dentist, mental health, etc.). A medical excuse for personal illness will be accepted **in the form of a doctor's note within five (5) school days of the absence.**

- Planned absences will be considered unexcused which may cause the student to meet the threshold for **Habitual Truancy**. Students who are absent 30 consecutive hours, forty-two 42 hours in a month, or 72 hours in a year are considered **Habitually Truant**.
- Students are encouraged to work with their teachers to make up any coursework that has been missed.
- Parents/Guardians are encouraged to work with their student's school administrators and counselors to discuss preventative interventions for school avoidance and anxiety.

In an effort to encourage regular, on-time attendance and avoid habitual truancy, families are encouraged to:

- Make getting to school on time every day a high priority.
- Discuss the importance of regular school attendance and the negative impacts of excessive absences.

- Create a safe space for students to discuss what is keeping him/her/them from school.
- Develop a backup plan for getting your student to school when transportation challenges, illness, or other challenges arise.
- Schedule vacations during a time when school is not in session.
- Monitor your student's attendance records to identify any disruptions or patterns of change.
- Contact your student's school to discuss preventative services and supports available to promote regular attendance.

### **Tardiness**

Students late to school must report to the office to sign in before reporting to class. Parents/Guardians must provide an explanation for the tardiness. Excessive tardies that are unexcused will result in disciplinary action by the office. If the school does not receive an explanation of the tardiness within three (3) school days, the tardiness will automatically be considered unexcused.

### **Unexcused Absences, Tardies, and Early Dismissals**

The determination of whether or not the time missed from school is excused or unexcused will be at the discretion of the principal or his/her designee. Excessive absences, tardies, and early dismissals that are unexcused will result in disciplinary action by the office. Examples of unexcused absences, tardies, and early dismissals include, but are not limited to:

- A. Cutting classes or study halls
- B. Missing the bus or a ride
- C. Oversleeping
- D. Shopping
- E. Suspension
- F. Truancy
- G. Lice (may be unexcused if the absence related to lice is excessive)
- H. No parent contact with Attendance Office
- I. Tanning, portrait sitting, cosmetic appointments, baby-sitting, not returning from lunch, driving classes etc.
- J. Car trouble

No student shall leave school grounds without permission of the principal or an assistant principal.

### **Habitually Truant Students**

In ORC 2151.011(B)(18), a habitually truant student is "any child of compulsory school age who is absent without legitimate excuse for absence from the public school the child is supposed to attend for thirty (30) or more consecutive hours, forty-two (42) or more hours in one school month, or seventy-two (72) or more hours in one school year."

Habitual truancy only counts absences without a legitimate excuse. When a student meets the definition of habitually truant, the district is required to assign the student to an absence intervention



team to develop a plan with the family. Only when those interventions are unsuccessful does the school or district file a truancy complaint.

When a student is *Habitually Truant*, the following will occur:

Within seven (7) school days of the triggering absence, the district will:

- Select members of the absence intervention team (ORC 3321.19(C)(2)(e)); and
- Make three (3) meaningful attempts to secure the participation of the student's parent, guardian custodian, guardian ad litem, or temporary custodian on the absence intervention team (ORC 3321.191(C)(2)(e)).
- Parents/Guardians will be notified in writing via a *Habitually Truant Letter*

Within ten (10) calendar days of the triggering absence, the student will be assigned to the selected absence intervention team (ORC 3321.19 (D)(1));

Within fourteen (14) school days after the assignment of the team, the district will develop the student's absence intervention plan (ORC 3321.191(C)(2)(a));

Within seven (7) calendar days after the plan is developed, the district shall make reasonable efforts to provide written notification to the student's parent or guardian (ORC 3321.191(C)(2)(a)).

In the event that a student becomes habitually truant within thirty (30) school days prior to the last day of instruction of a school year, the Absence Intervention Team will notify the parent/guardian.

The absence intervention process shall commence upon the first day of instruction of the next school year.

### **Intervention Strategies**

In order to address the attendance practices of a student who is habitually truant, the intervention team may, as part of an intervention plan, take any of the following intervention actions:

- Include attendance data in teacher-based teams, PBIS teams, building leadership teams and district leadership teams
- Provide access to food, health and supports for other basic needs
- Regularly monitor attendance data to identify trends and address barriers
- Notify parent or guardian of student absences
- Use absenteeism data to identify students at-risk for reaching excessive attendance thresholds
- Provide parent and guardian educational based programs, interventions and supports
- Arrange conferences with families to identify attendance barriers and form solutions
- Tailor interventions to physical and mental health supports
- Provide academic and technical support to families and students
- Develop and implement an absence intervention plan
- Support counseling or mediation
- Provide coordinated case management with multiple tiers supporting students and families

- Connect to intervention programs available through juvenile authorities
- Refer for truancy charges, if applicable

### **Returning to School after an Absence**

All students should make arrangements to complete missed work. A student will have a minimum of one school day for each day of absence to make up assignments. If a student misses more than one (1) day of school, homework may be requested by calling the office. Work will be sent to the office by the end of the day for pick up. If the parent/guardian cannot arrive at school before the office is closed for the day to pick up the assignments, it is the parent's/guardian's responsibility to make arrangements to retrieve the work.

### **Steps for Absence by Permission**

Appointments with a doctor, dentist, court etc. should not be made during school time. Should this be necessary, however, the parent/guardian of the student must contact the school prior to the student's first scheduled period of absence. If the student is released, and it is learned that the excuse was NOT valid, the absence will be unexcused. Students leaving or returning to the school grounds during the school day MUST first report to the office. Failure to sign out may result in an unexcused absence.

### **Planned Absences**

Whenever a pre-planned absence for family travel is requested, the parent/guardian must discuss it with the principal and complete the Planned Absence Form. The length of absence should be made clear, and those involved should have an opportunity to express their views on the potential effects of the absence. During this time period, the student may be given approximate assignments to be completed. **We strongly discourage any planned absences during the last week of any grading period or during statewide testing.** The time missed will be counted as an authorized, unexcused absence but shall not be a factor in determining grades unless the make-up work is not completed.

Students who are absent 38 hours in a month or 65 hours in a school year with or without legitimate excuse are now considered *Excessively Absent*. These students will receive a letter from the District and will be required to follow the District Truancy Plan. These hours include approved planned absences. Planned absences will not be approved if your child has already met or will meet (based on this request) the absence threshold for Excessive Absence and/or Habitual Truancy. The school district may be obligated to report the parent/guardian to the Franklin County Juvenile Court System and file charges of lack of compliance with the compulsory education rules.

### **Absence on Extra-Curricular Days**

Students who are absent from school for a half day or longer may not be permitted to participate in any extracurricular activity on that day.

## **STUDENT HEALTH INFORMATION**

A part-time Registered Nurse is assigned to each elementary and middle school and a full-time Registered Nurse is assigned to the high school. There are also clinic aides available during school hours to take care of ill children, minor injuries and administration of specific medications. If your child is

complaining of being sick in the morning, please take their temperature before sending them to school. If the child is vomiting, has diarrhea or has a temperature of 100 degrees F or greater, the child must stay home from school until they are fever-free, vomit free or diarrhea free (without the use of medication) for 24 hours.

Gahanna-Jefferson students are excluded from school in accordance with the recommendations from the Ohio Department of Health. The Ohio Department of Health's Communicable Disease Chart can be viewed at: <http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/file.asp?id=1730&type=application/pdf>

## **MEDICATIONS**

With the exception of diabetes care covered under Board Policy 5336, the administration of prescribed medication and/or medically-prescribed treatments to a student during school hours will be permitted only when failure to do so would jeopardize the health of the student, the student would not be able to attend school if the medication or treatment were not made available during school hours, or if the child is disabled and requires medication to benefit from his/her educational program. Parents should determine with their licensed prescriber whether the medication schedule can be adjusted to avoid administering medication during school hours.

"Medication" shall include all medicines including those prescribed by a licensed health professional authorized to prescribe drugs and any non-prescribed (over-the-counter) drugs, preparations, and/or remedies. "Treatment" refers both to the manner in which a medication is administered and to health-care procedures which require special training, such as catheterization.

Before any medication (i.e., a drug) or treatment may be administered to any student during school hours, the Board shall require a Gahanna-Jefferson Public School prescription medication authorization form (or similar form containing the requirements specified in ORC 3313.713) completed and signed by a licensed health professional authorized to prescribe medication and the student's parent/legal guardian. Before any over-the-counter medication or treatment may be administered, the Board shall require a District over-the-counter medication form completed and signed by the student's parent/legal guardian. These documents shall be kept on file in the clinic and made available to the persons designated by this policy as authorized to administer medication or treatment. No student is allowed to provide or sell any type of over-the-counter medication to another student. Violations of this rule will be considered violations of Policy 5530 - Drug Prevention and of the Student Code of Conduct/Discipline Code.

In accordance with ORC 3313.713, the following information must be included on the medication forms:

- A. name and address of student;
- B. school and class in which student is enrolled;
- C. name of the medication and the dosage to be administered;
- D. times or intervals at which each dose of the medication is to be administered;
- E. date the administration of the medication is to begin;
- F. date the administration of the medication is to cease;
- G. any severe adverse reactions should be reported to the prescriber and one or more phone numbers at which the prescriber can be reached in an emergency;

- H. special instruction for administration of the medication, including sterile conditions and storage.

In addition, the medication must be brought to school, by a parent or other responsible adult, in the original container. The instructions on the medication label must match the information given by the prescriber on the medication form. Each medication must have a separate form. Any change in dosage will require a new form to be completed by the prescriber and parent before the new dosage can be given. A new prescription bottle with the correct pharmacy label must be provided to the school. If liquid medications are prescribed, the parent must provide an accurate measuring spoon. Other than self-possession and epinephrine autoinjectors, and students authorized to attend to their diabetes care and management pursuant to Policy 5336, all medication administration must take place in the presence of an authorized staff member or the student's parent.

Medication shall be stored in a locked location in the clinic, unless the medications require refrigeration in which case they shall be stored in the refrigerator in a place not commonly used by students, and unless the medication to be administered is diabetes medication, which must be kept in an easily accessible location pursuant to Policy 5336.

If the student is cognitively and developmentally capable of possessing and self-administering an asthma inhaler or epinephrine auto injector, their healthcare provider has provided the student with training regarding the proper use of said inhaler/autoinjector and a District Authorization for Student Possession and use of an Asthma Inhaler form or Authorization for Student Possession and Use of an Epinephrine Auto injector form completed and signed by a licensed health professional authorized to prescribe medication and the student's parent/legal guardian has been provided to the school nurse, students shall be permitted to carry and use, as necessary, an asthma inhaler or an epinephrine auto injector to treat anaphylaxis. This permission shall extend to any activity, or program sponsored by the school or in which the school participates. In the event epinephrine is administered by the student or a school employee or at any of the covered events, a school employee shall immediately request assistance from an emergency medical service provider (911). In the case of an epinephrine auto injector, the parent/guardian are encouraged to provide a back-up dose of the medication to the school nurse. In addition, students with diabetes may attend to their diabetic care and management in accordance with Policy 5336.

With the exception of diabetes care covered under Policy 5336, the Board shall permit the administration of any emergency requiring intravenous injection by a licensed nurse and the administration by a licensed nurse or other authorized staff member of any medication requiring intravenous or intramuscular injection or the insertion of a device into the body when both the medication and the procedure are prescribed by a licensed health professional authorized to prescribe medication and the nurse/staff member has completed any and all necessary training.

### **HOLIDAY/CLASSROOM PARTIES and BIRTHDAYS**

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools promotes good nutrition in school as one way for our students to receive a quality education and build healthy habits for life. Childhood obesity rates are on the rise, and because this issue can lead to chronic health problems, it is up to us as parents and educators to take

an active role in addressing this problem. Also on the rise are the number of severe food allergies. For this reason, students may not bring in any food treats as part of a birthday celebration.

Any food items provided during classroom parties must be chosen from the safe snack list provided by the school, however, non-food items are encouraged for these celebrations. Additionally, all food items must be nut free.

*Suggested alternatives to food treats include:*

- Party favors such as erasers, pencils, stickers, bracelets, keychains, etc.
- Parent/Guardian or guest visiting the classroom and reading a book to the students
- Donating an item to the classroom such as a book, game, plant, craft, etc.
- Providing an item classmates can sign such as a t-shirt, tote bag, autograph book, etc.
- Planning and having the students do an activity such as a craft, dance party, game, etc.

## **CAFETERIA**

In an effort to protect each child's safety, Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools will only permit peanuts and tree nuts in the cafeteria. All instructional spaces (classrooms) and common areas where students have access will be nut free. There may be a designated "nut free" table in the cafeteria. Peanuts and tree nuts will be monitored closely by trained staff and faculty. All school lunches prepared and purchased from the cafeteria are nut free. If your student is in a building/classroom that allows daily snacks, your student's snacks must meet allergy restrictions for all students in the class. This will be monitored by teachers. A letter will be sent to parents at the start of the school year with a list of safe snacks for that class/year. Teachers will plan ahead for community trips, field trips and class-wide activities or meals and will follow all allergy restrictions in order to allow all students to participate.

## **CLASSROOM SNACKS**

If your student is in a building/classroom that allows daily snacks, your student's snacks must meet allergy restrictions for all students in the class. Additionally, all snacks must be nut free. This will be monitored by teachers. A letter will be sent to parents at the start of the school year with a list of safe snacks for that class/year. Teachers will plan ahead for community trips, field trips and class-wide activities or meals and will follow all allergy restrictions in order to allow all students to participate.

## **WELLNESS POLICY**

As required by law, the Board of Education established a wellness policy for the Gahanna-Jefferson School District as a part of a comprehensive wellness initiative.

The Board recognizes that good nutrition and regular physical activity affect the health and well-being of the District's students. Furthermore, research suggests that there is a positive correlation between a student's health and well-being and his/her ability to learn. Moreover, schools can play an important role in the developmental process by which students establish their health and nutrition habits by providing

nutritious meals and snacks through the schools' meal programs, by supporting the development of good eating habits, and by promoting increased physical activity both in and out of school.

Please read the full Wellness policy [here](#).

### **FERPA DIRECTORY INFORMATION NOTIFICATION (Related to Student Records Policy 8330)**

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

1. The right to inspect and review the student's education records within 45 days after the day the district/school receives a request for access.

Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child's or their education records should submit to the school principal a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy rights under FERPA.

Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the school to amend their child's or their education record should write to the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. The criteria for determining who constitutes a school official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest must be set forth in the school's or school district's annual notification for FERPA rights. A school official typically includes a person employed by the school or school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of

PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.

4. Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student's enrollment or transfer. [NOTE: FERPA requires a school or school district to make a reasonable attempt to notify the parent or student of the records request unless it states in its annual notification that it intends to forward records on request or the disclosure is initiated by the parent or eligible student.]
5. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

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

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students' education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in § 99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, § 99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student –

- To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(3) are met. (§ 99.31(a)(1))
- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student's enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of § 99.34. (§ 99.31(a)(2))
- To authorized representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency (SEA) in the parent or eligible student's State. Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of § 99.35, in connection with an audit

or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf, if applicable requirements are met. (§§ 99.31(a)(3) and 99.35

- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary for such purposes as to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§ 99.31(a)(4))
- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system's ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to § 99.38. (§ 99.31(a)(5))
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction, if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(6))
- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§ 99.31(a)(7))
- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§ 99.31(a)(8))
- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(9))
- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to § 99.36. (§ 99.31(a)(10))
- Information the school has designated as "directory information" if applicable requirements under § 99.37 are met. (§ 99.31(a)(11))
- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student's case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(L))
- To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, under certain conditions. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(K))

If you do not want Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools to disclose any or all of the types of information designated below as directory information from your child's education records without your prior written consent, you must notify the Gahanna-Jefferson Local Schools in writing by September 15th. Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools has designated the following information as directory information:

- Student's name
- Address
- Telephone listing
- Electronic mail address
- Photograph



- Date and place of birth
- Major field of study
- Dates of attendance
- Grade level
- Date of graduation
- Participation in officially recognized activities and sports
- Weight and height of members of athletic teams
- Degrees, honors, and awards received

## PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

The Board of Education recognizes and values parents and families as children's first teachers and decision-makers in education. The Board believes that student learning is more likely to occur when there is an effective partnership between the school and the student's parents and family. Such a partnership between the home and school and greater involvement of parents and family members in the education of their children generally result in higher academic achievement, improved student behavior, and reduced absenteeism.

The Board establishes objectives aligned to the following areas to encourage meaningful parent and family engagement: Relationships with Families, Effective Communication, Volunteer Opportunities, Learning at Home, Engaging Families in Decision Making and Advocacy, and Collaborating with the Community.

Please read the full Parent and Family Engagement policy [here](#).

## MANDATED REPORTING

School employees are required by law to report any suspicion of abuse and/or neglect.

## SAFETY DRILLS

Schools are required to conduct rapid dismissal, tornado, and school safety drills. Beginning no later than the tenth day of school, rapid dismissal (fire) drills will be conducted at least six times, and in accordance with the local fire marshal. Tornado drills must be conducted once per month, while school is in session, between April 1- July 31. Schools must also conduct safety drills at least three times during the school year. Students are provided with instruction in the **Standard Response Protocol** procedures to follow in situations where they must be secured in the school building or rapidly evacuated in response to a threat to the school. Each safety drill is conducted in conjunction with the police chief or other similar chief law enforcement officer.

## SAFE FIREARM STORAGE - LETTER FROM SUPERINTENDENT

Dear GJPS Families:

All students and members of our school communities deserve to feel safe, welcomed, and included. It is on all of us to work together to prevent firearm violence and to avoid the harm and tragedy that shootings of any kind can cause in the spaces in which we live, learn, work, and play.

Safe firearm storage is one of many preventative actions that you can take in keeping our school community and school buildings and grounds safe. When firearms are stored safely, it can help prevent them from getting into the hands of children and teens, who may use them to, intentionally or unintentionally, harm themselves or others. Safe storage can go a long way in preventing lives from being lost or permanently altered. If you have firearms in your home or if your child spends time in a space where firearms are present, there are important steps that can be taken to keep firearms secured and out of reach of unintended users.

Firearm-related injuries and deaths are a public health crisis that communities across the nation face every day:

- Since 2018, there have been more than 100 school shooting incidents per year in our country and those numbers have steadily increased.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately three-quarters of perpetrators in school-based active shooter situations acquired their firearm from the home of a parent or close relative.<sup>2</sup> This illustrates the close connection between your role as families, caregivers, and guardians and the role of Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools in keeping students safe while on school grounds.
- However, this issue goes beyond school-based active shooter situations and includes a variety of firearm injury types, including interpersonal violence, suicide, and unintentional fatal and nonfatal firearm injuries.<sup>3</sup>

Safe firearm storage can help prevent and minimize the risk of firearm-related deaths and injuries. Everyone, both firearm owners and non-owners, has a role to play in building awareness of safe, responsible firearm storage. Below are simple, highly effective practices that can help to reduce firearm-related incidents in our community and help protect our kids. In addition to these practices, it is important to also engage children and adolescents in conversations about the dangers associated with using firearms and what to do and not do in the event they access a firearm, to prevent fatal or non-fatal injuries.

- **Safely Store Firearms:** Store firearms—always unloaded—in a tamper proof locked cabinet, box, safe, firearm vault, or storage case that children or other unauthorized adults cannot access.
- **Safely Store Ammunition:** Store ammunition in a separate, tamper-proof locked cabinet, safe, firearm vault, or storage case that children or other unauthorized adults cannot access.
- **Secure Firearms:** Use trigger locks or cable locks to prevent a firearm from firing. (More information can be found on the [Safe Firearm Storage Fact Sheet](#), developed by the U.S. Department of Justice.)
  - Trigger locks use a mechanism that clamps down around the trigger or trigger housing to prevent it from being pressed (Note: trigger locks should not be installed on loaded firearms).
  - In a cable lock, a cable is threaded through the barrel or action of a firearm to prevent it from firing.

Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools remains committed to helping ensure the safety of our students and school community. We can all work together to promote awareness about how we can protect our children and our whole school communities by safely storing firearms and prevent tragedies from ever occurring. Thank you for being a partner in these efforts, and for helping reduce firearm-related injury and deaths in our community.

Sincerely,



Tracey R. Deagle, Ph.D.  
Superintendent

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This letter was created by the REMS TA Center, which is operated by Synergy Enterprises, Inc. under Contract #GS-00F-115CA awarded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Supportive Schools. All materials created or disseminated by the REMS TA Center, including the contents of this letter, should not be presumed to reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or to imply endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.

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<sup>1</sup> Riedman, D. (2023). K-12 School Shooting Database. <https://k12ssdb.org/all-shootings>

<sup>2</sup> National Threat Assessment Center. (2019). Protecting America's Schools: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Targeted School Violence. U.S. Secret Service, Department of Homeland Security. <http://bit.ly/3SfmSgw>

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. (September 19, 2023). Fast Facts: Firearm Violence and Injury Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/firearms/fastfact.html>

## **SECURITY CAMERAS**

Video surveillance may be in use in any interior or exterior area of the school facility where privacy is not expected.

## **SEARCH AND SEIZURE**

The Board of Education recognizes that the privacy of students or their belongings may not be violated by unreasonable search and seizure and directs that no student be searched without reasonable suspicion or in an unreasonable manner.

The Board acknowledges the need for in-school storage of student possessions and shall provide storage places, including desks and lockers, for that purpose. Such spaces remain the property of the Board and, in accordance with law, may be the subject of random search. Where locks are provided for such places, students may lock them against incursion by other students, but in no such places shall

students have such an expectation of privacy as to prevent examination by a school official. The Board directs the school principals to conduct a routine inspection at least annually of all such storage places.

School authorities are charged with the responsibility of safeguarding the safety and well-being of the students in their care. In the discharge of that responsibility, school authorities may search the person or property, including vehicles, of a student, with or without the student's consent, whenever they reasonably suspect that the search is required to discover evidence of a violation of law or of school rules. The extent of the search will be governed by the seriousness of the alleged infraction and the student's age.

This authorization to search shall also apply to all situations in which the student is under the jurisdiction of the Board.

Administrators are permitted to conduct a random search of any student's locker and its contents at any time, providing proper notice has been posted in the locker areas of each building.

Search of a student's person or intimate personal belongings shall be conducted by a person of the same sex, in the presence of a second staff member who, if requested by the student, would be the same sex as the student being searched.

However, in exceptional circumstances when the health or safety of the student or of others is immediately threatened a search may be conducted by a person of the opposite sex in the presence of a second staff member of either sex.

Administrators are authorized to arrange for the use of a breath-test instrument for the purpose of determining if a student has consumed an alcoholic beverage. It is not necessary for the test to determine blood-alcohol level, since the Board has established a zero tolerance for alcohol use.

The Board also authorizes the use of canines, trained in detecting the presence of drugs or devices, when the Superintendent has reasonable suspicion that illegal drugs or devices may be present in a school. This means of detection shall be used only to determine the presence of drugs in locker areas and other places on school property where such substances could be concealed. Canine detection must be conducted in collaboration with law enforcement authorities or with organizations certified in canine detection and is not to be used to search individual students unless a warrant has been obtained prior to the search.

Except as provided below, a request for the search of a student or a student's possessions will be directed to the principal who shall seek the freely offered consent of the student to the inspection. Whenever possible, a search will be conducted by the principal in the presence of the student and a staff member other than the principal. A search prompted by the reasonable belief that health and safety are immediately threatened will be conducted with as much speed and dispatch as may be required to protect persons and property.

The principal shall be responsible for the prompt recording in writing of each student search, including the reasons for the search; information received that established the need for the search and the name of the informant, if any; the persons present when the search was conducted; any substances or objects found; and the disposition made of them. The principal shall be responsible for the custody, control, and disposition of any illegal or dangerous substance or object taken from a student.

The Superintendent shall prepare administrative guidelines to implement this policy.

## **POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION & SUPPORTS AND LIMITED USE OF RESTRAINT & SECLUSION**

All Gahanna-Jefferson Public Schools utilize the Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports (PBIS) framework to ensure we are maximizing the selection and use of evidence-based prevention and intervention practices along a multi-tiered continuum that supports the academic, social emotional and behavioral competence of all students. PBIS shall serve as the foundation for the creation of a learning environment with an emphasis placed on promoting positive interventions and solutions to potential crises. If a student's behavior, however, presents a threat of immediate physical harm to the student or others, staff may, as a last resort (i.e., there is no other safe and effective intervention available) and in accordance with the terms of this policy, use approved physical restraint or seclusion to maintain a safe environment.

All physical restraint and seclusion shall only be done in accordance with this policy, which is based on the standards adopted by the State Board of Education regarding the use of student restraint and seclusion.

The Superintendent shall monitor the implementation of A.C. 3301-35-15 and this policy, and annually conduct a review of A.C. 3301-35-15 and this policy related to the use of PBIS, physical restraint, and seclusion. Additionally, the administration will annually notify parents of the District's policy and procedures related to the requirements of PBIS, physical restraint, and seclusion, including the following complaint process.

Any parent of a child enrolled in school in the District may submit a written complaint to the Superintendent regarding an incident of restraint or seclusion. The Superintendent shall investigate each written complaint and respond in writing to the parent's complaint within thirty (30) days of receipt of the complaint. The Superintendent will make reasonable efforts to have an in-person follow-up meeting with the parent.

If the parent is not satisfied with the response provided, the parent may request to meet with the Board in executive session to address the situation.

A parent may also file a complaint with local law enforcement, the county department of job and family services, or the office of integrated student support within the Ohio Department of Education. The procedures and timeline for filing a complaint with the Ohio Department of Education are outlined in A.C. 3301-35-15(L).

A parent of a child with a disability (as defined by R.C. 3323.01) may file a complaint with the Ohio Department of Education, Office of Exceptional Children, in accordance with the complaint procedures available under A.C. 3301-51-05(K)(4)-(6).

Please read the full Positive Behavior Intervention & Supports and Limited Use of Restraint & Seclusion policy [here](#).

## **REMOVAL, SUSPENSION, EXPULSION, AND PERMANENT EXCLUSION OF STUDENTS**

The Board of Education recognizes that exclusion from the educational program of the schools, whether by emergency removal, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, or permanent exclusion, is the most severe sanction that can be imposed on a student in this District, and one (1) that cannot be imposed without due process. However, the Board has zero tolerance of violent, disruptive or inappropriate behavior by its students. Misconduct as specified in the Student Code of Conduct/Student Discipline Code may be subject to removal, suspension, expulsion and permanent exclusion and will follow details as defined in the District's Removal, Suspension, Expulsion and Permanent Exclusion of Students policy.

Please read the full Removal, Suspension, Expulsion and Permanent Exclusion of Students policy [here](#). Please also read the full Permanent Exclusion of Nondisabled students policy [here](#).

## **IN-SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**

It is the purpose of this policy to allow for an alternative to out-of-school suspension. The availability of in-school discipline options is dependent upon the financial ability of the Board of Education to support them.

In-school discipline will only be offered at the discretion of the principal for offenses found in the Student Code of Conduct/Student Discipline Code.

The Superintendent is to establish administrative guidelines for the proper operation of such programs. As long as the in-school disciplinary alternatives are served entirely in the school setting, they will not require any notice, hearing, or appeal rights. Any student who is issued an in-school disciplinary assignment shall serve such assignment in a supervised learning environment within the school setting and shall be permitted to complete any classroom assignments missed because of the in-school discipline.

## **ANTI-HARASSMENT**

It is the policy of the Board of Education to maintain an education and work environment that is free from all forms of unlawful harassment, including sexual harassment. This commitment applies to all School District operations, programs, and activities. All students, administrators, teachers, staff, and all other school personnel share responsibility for avoiding, discouraging, and reporting any form of unlawful harassment. This policy applies to unlawful conduct occurring on school property, or at another location if such conduct occurs during an activity sponsored by the Board.

The Board will vigorously enforce its prohibition against discriminatory harassment based on race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation and gender identity), disability, age (except as authorized by law), religion, ancestry, or genetic information (collectively, "Protected Classes") that are protected by Federal civil rights laws (hereinafter referred to as unlawful harassment), and encourages those within the School District community as well as Third Parties, who feel aggrieved to seek assistance to rectify such problems. The Board will investigate all allegations of unlawful harassment and in those cases where unlawful harassment is substantiated, the Board will take immediate steps to end the harassment, prevent its recurrence, and remedy its effects. Individuals who are found to have engaged in unlawful harassment will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action.

The District will offer counseling services to any person found to have been subjected to unlawful harassment, and, where appropriate, the person(s) who committed the unlawful harassment.

### **Other Violations of the Anti-Harassment Policy**

The Board will also take immediate steps to impose disciplinary action on individuals engaging in any of the following prohibited acts:

- A. Retaliating against a person who has made a report or filed a complaint alleging unlawful harassment, or who has participated as a witness in a harassment investigation.
- B. Filing a malicious or knowingly false report or complaint of unlawful harassment.
- C. Disregarding, failing to investigate adequately, or delaying investigation of allegations of unlawful harassment, when responsibility for reporting and/or investigating harassment charges comprises part of one's supervisory duties.

### **Definitions**

Words used in this policy shall have those meanings defined herein; words not defined herein shall be construed according to their plain and ordinary meanings.

**Complainant** is the individual who alleges, or is alleged, to have been subjected to unlawful harassment, regardless of whether the person files a formal complaint or is pursuing an informal resolution to the alleged harassment.

**Respondent** is the individual who has been alleged to have engaged in unlawful harassment, regardless of whether the Reporting Party files a formal complaint or is seeking an informal resolution to the alleged harassment.

**School District community** means students and Board employees (i.e., administrators, and professional and classified staff), as well as Board members, agents, volunteers, contractors, or other persons subject to the control and supervision of the Board.

**Third Parties** include, but are not limited to, guests and/or visitors on School District property (e.g., visiting speakers, participants on opposing athletic teams, parents), vendors doing business with, or seeking to do business with, the Board, and other individuals who come in contact with members of the School District community at school-related events/activities (whether on or off District property).

**Day(s):** Unless expressly stated otherwise, the term “day” or “days” as used in this policy means business day(s) (i.e., a day(s) that the Board office is open for normal operating hours, Monday – Friday, excluding State-recognized holidays).

## **Bullying**

Bullying rises to the level of unlawful harassment when one (1) or more persons systematically and chronically inflict physical hurt or psychological distress on one (1) or more students or employees and that bullying is based upon one (1) or more Protected Classes, that is, characteristics that are protected by Federal civil rights laws. It is defined as any unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student, that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational or work environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school or work performance or participation; and may involve:

- A. Teasing;
- B. Threats;
- C. Intimidation;
- D. Stalking;
- E. cyberstalking;
- F. Cyberbullying;
- G. physical violence;
- H. Theft;
- I. sexual, religious, or racial harassment;
- J. public humiliation; or
- K. destruction of property.

## **Harassment**

Harassment means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of technology, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

- A. places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property;
- B. has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits, or an employee's work performance; or
- C. has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

## **Sexual Harassment**

For purposes of this policy and consistent with Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, "sexual harassment" is defined as:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, when:

- A. Submission to such conduct is made either implicitly or explicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, or status in a class, educational program, or activity.



- B. Submission or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or educational decisions affecting such individual.
- C. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity.

Sexual harassment may involve the behavior of a person of any gender against a person of the same or another gender.

Sexual Harassment covered by Policy 2266 - Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex Education Programs or Activities is not included in this policy. Allegations of such conduct shall be addressed solely by Policy 2266.

Prohibited acts that constitute sexual harassment under this policy may take a variety of forms. Examples of the kinds of conduct that may constitute sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:

- A. Unwelcome sexual propositions, invitations, solicitations, and flirtations.
- B. Unwanted physical and/or sexual contact.
- C. Threats or insinuations that a person's employment, wages, academic grade, promotion, classroom work or assignments, academic status, participation in athletics or extra-curricular programs, activities, or events, or other conditions of employment or education may be adversely affected by not submitting to sexual advances.
- D. Unwelcome verbal expressions of a sexual nature, including graphic sexual commentaries about a person's body, dress, appearance, or sexual activities; the unwelcome use of sexually degrading language, profanity, jokes or innuendoes; unwelcome suggestive or insulting sounds or whistles; obscene telephone calls.
- E. Sexually suggestive objects, pictures, graffiti, videos, posters, audio recordings or literature, placed in the work or educational environment, that may reasonably embarrass or offend individuals.
- F. Unwelcome and inappropriate touching, patting, or pinching; obscene gestures.
- G. Asking about, or telling about, sexual fantasies, sexual preferences, or sexual activities.
- H. Speculations about a person's sexual activities or sexual history, or remarks about one's own sexual activities or sexual history.
- I. Giving unwelcome personal gifts such as lingerie that suggests the desire for a romantic relationship.
- J. Leering or staring at someone in a sexual way, such as staring at a person's breasts, buttocks, or groin.
- K. A pattern of conduct, which can be subtle in nature, that has sexual overtones and is intended to create or has the effect of creating discomfort and/or humiliation to another.
- L. Inappropriate boundary invasions by a District employee or other adult member of the School District community into a student's personal space and personal life.
- M. Verbal, nonverbal or physical aggression, intimidation, or hostility based on sex or sex-stereotyping that does not involve conduct of a sexual nature.

Not all behavior with sexual connotations constitutes unlawful sexual harassment. Sex-based or gender-based conduct must be sufficiently severe, pervasive, and persistent such that it adversely affects, limits, or denies an individual's employment or education, or such that it creates a hostile or abusive employment or educational environment, or such that it is intended to, or has the effect of, denying or limiting a student's ability to participate in or benefit from the educational program or activities.

### **Race/Color Harassment**

Prohibited racial harassment occurs when unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct is based upon an individual's race or color and when the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working, and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity. Such harassment may occur where conduct is directed at the characteristics of a person's race or color, such as racial slurs, nicknames implying stereotypes, epithets, and/or negative references relative to racial customs.

### **Religious (Creed) Harassment**

Prohibited religious harassment occurs when unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct is based upon an individual's religion or creed and when the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity. Such harassment may occur where conduct is directed at the characteristics of a person's religious tradition, clothing, or surnames, and/or involves religious slurs.

### **National Origin/Ancestry Harassment**

Prohibited national origin/ancestry harassment occurs when unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct is based upon an individual's national origin or ancestry and when the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity. Such harassment may occur where conduct is directed at the characteristics of a person's national origin or ancestry, such as negative comments regarding customs, manner of speaking, language, surnames, or ethnic slurs.

### **Disability Harassment**

Prohibited disability harassment occurs when unwelcome physical, verbal, or nonverbal conduct is based upon an individual's disability and when the conduct has the purpose or effect of interfering with the individual's work or educational performance; of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working and/or learning environment; or of interfering with one's ability to participate in or benefit from a class or an educational program or activity. Such harassment may occur where conduct is directed at the characteristics of a person's disability, such as negative comments about speech patterns, movement, physical impairments or defects/appearances, or the like.

### **Anti-Harassment Compliance Officers**

The following individual(s) shall serve as the District's Anti-Harassment Compliance Officer(s) (hereinafter, "the Compliance Officer(s)"):

Shea Reed - Human Resource Director  
614-471-7065  
630 Morrison Road  
Gahanna, OH 43230

Adam Kunkle - Human Resources Coordinator  
614-471-7065  
630 Morrison Road  
Gahanna, OH 43230

The names, titles, and contact information of these individuals will be published annually on the School District's web site and:

- A. in the parent and staff handbooks;
- B. on each individual school's web site.

The Compliance Officer(s) are responsible for coordinating the District's efforts to comply with applicable Federal and State laws and regulations, including the District's duty to address in a prompt and equitable manner any inquiries or complaints regarding harassment.

The Compliance Officer(s) will be available during regular school/work hours to discuss concerns related to unlawful harassment, to assist students, other members of the District community, and third parties who seek support or advice when informing another individual about "unwelcome" conduct, or to intercede informally on behalf of the individual in those instances where concerns have not resulted in the filing of a formal complaint and where all parties are in agreement to participate in an informal process.

Compliance Officers shall accept reports of unlawful harassment directly from any member of the School District community or a Third Party or receive reports that are initially filed with an administrator, supervisor, or other District-level official. Upon receipt of a report of alleged harassment, the Compliance Officer(s) will contact the Complainant and begin either an informal or formal complaint process (depending on the request of the Complainant or the nature of the alleged harassment), or the Compliance Officer(s) will designate a specific individual to conduct such a process. The Compliance Officer(s) will provide a copy of this policy to the Complainant and Respondent. In the case of a formal complaint, the Compliance Officer(s) will prepare recommendations for the Superintendent or will oversee the preparation of such recommendations by a designee. All Board employees must report incidents of harassment that are reported to them to the Compliance Officer within two (2) days of learning of the incident.

Any Board employee who directly observes unlawful harassment is obligated, in accordance with this policy, to report such observations to the Compliance Officer(s) within two (2) days. Additionally, any Board employee who observes an act of unlawful harassment is expected to intervene to stop the harassment, unless circumstances make such an intervention dangerous, in which case the staff member should immediately notify other Board employees and/or local law enforcement officials, as

necessary, to stop the harassment. Thereafter, the Compliance Officer(s) or designee must contact the Complainant, if age eighteen (18) or older, or Complainant's parents/guardians if the Complainant is under the age eighteen (18), within two (2) days to advise of the Board's intent to investigate the alleged wrongdoing.

### **Reports and Complaints of Harassing Conduct**

Students and all other members of the School District community along with Third Parties are encouraged to promptly report incidents of harassing conduct to a teacher, administrator, supervisor, or other District official so that the Board may address the conduct before it becomes severe, pervasive, or persistent. Any teacher, administrator, supervisor, or other District employee or official who receives such a report shall file it with the Compliance Officer within two (2) days of receiving the report of harassment.

Members of the School District community and Third Parties, which includes students, or third parties who believe they have been unlawfully harassed are entitled to utilize the Board's complaint process that is set forth below. Initiating a complaint, whether formally or informally, will not adversely affect the Complainant's employment or participation in educational or extra-curricular programs. While there are no time limits for initiating complaints of harassment under this policy, individuals should make every effort to file a complaint as soon as possible after the conduct occurs while the facts are known and potential witnesses are available.

If, during an investigation of alleged bullying, aggressive behavior and/or harassment in accordance with Policy 5517.01 - Bullying and Other Forms of Aggressive Behavior, the Principal believes that the reported misconduct may have created a hostile work environment and may have constituted unlawful discriminatory harassment based on a Protected Class, the Principal shall report the act of bullying, aggressive behavior and/or harassment to the Compliance Officers who shall investigate the allegation in accordance with this policy. If the alleged harassment involves Sexual Harassment as defined by Policy 2266, the matter will be handled in accordance with the grievance process and procedures outlined in Policy 2266. While the Compliance Officer investigates the allegation, or the matter is being addressed pursuant to Policy 2266, the Principal shall suspend the Policy 5517.01 investigation to await the Compliance Officer's written report or the determination of responsibility pursuant to Policy 2266. The Compliance Officer shall keep the Principal informed of the status of the Policy 5517 investigation and provide the Principal with a copy of the resulting written report. Likewise, the Title IX Coordinator will provide the Principal with the determination of responsibility that results from the Policy 2266 grievance process.

### **Investigation and Complaint Procedure**

Except for Sexual Harassment that is covered by Policy 2266 - Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Sex in Education Programs or Activities, any student who believes that they have been subjected to unlawful harassment may seek resolution of the complaint through the procedures described below. The formal complaint process involves an investigation of the Complainant's claims of harassment or retaliation and a process for rendering a decision regarding whether the charges are substantiated.

Due to the sensitivity surrounding complaints of unlawful harassment or retaliation, timelines are flexible for initiating the complaint process; however, individuals should make every effort to file a complaint

within thirty (30) days after the conduct occurs while the facts are known and potential witnesses are available. Once the formal complaint process is begun, the investigation will be completed in a timely manner (ordinarily, within fifteen (15) business days of the complaint being received).

The procedures set forth below are not intended to interfere with the rights of a student to pursue a complaint of unlawful harassment or retaliation with the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights.

### **Informal Complaint Procedure**

The goal of the informal complaint procedure is promptly to stop inappropriate behavior and to facilitate resolution through informal means, if possible. The informal complaint procedure is provided as a less formal option for a student who believes s/he has been unlawfully harassed or retaliated against. This informal procedure is not required as a precursor to the filing of a formal complaint. The informal process is only available in those circumstances where the Complainant and the Respondent mutually agree to participate in it.

Students who believe that they have been unlawfully harassed may initiate their complaint through this informal complaint process, but are not required to do so. The informal process is only available in those circumstances where the parties (alleged target of harassment and alleged harasser(s)) agree to participate in the informal process.

The Complainant may proceed immediately to the formal complaint process and individuals who seek resolution through the informal procedure may request that the informal process be terminated at any time to move to the formal complaint process.

All complainants involving a District employee, any other adult member of the School District community, or a Third Party and a student will be formally investigated.

As an initial course of action, if a Complainant feels comfortable and safe in doing so, the individual should tell or otherwise inform the Respondent that the alleged harassing conduct is unwelcome and must stop. The Complainant should address the allegedly harassing conduct as soon after it occurs as possible. The Compliance Officers are available to support and counsel individuals when taking this initial step or to intervene on behalf of the Complainant if requested to do so. A Complainant who is uncomfortable or unwilling to directly approach the Respondent about the alleged inappropriate conduct may file an informal or a formal complaint. In addition, with regard to certain types of unlawful harassment, such as sexual harassment, the Compliance Officer may advise against the use of the informal complaint process.

A Complainant may make an informal complaint, either orally or in writing: 1) to a teacher, other employee, or building administrator in the school the student attends; 2) to the Superintendent or other District-level employee; and/or 3) directly to one of the Compliance Officers.

All informal complaints must be reported to one of the Compliance Officers who will either facilitate an informal resolution as described below, or appoint another individual to facilitate an informal resolution.

The Board's informal complaint procedure is designed to provide students who believe they are being unlawfully harassed with a range of options designed to bring about a resolution of their concerns.

Depending upon the nature of the complaint and the wishes of the Complainant, informal resolution may involve, but not be limited to, one or more of the following:

- A. Advising the Complainant about how to communicate the unwelcome nature of the behavior to the Respondent.
- B. Distributing a copy of this anti-harassment policy as a reminder to the individuals in the school building or office where the Respondent works or attends.
- C. If both parties agree, the Compliance Officer may arrange and facilitate a meeting or mediation between the Complainant and the Respondent to work out a mutual resolution.

While there are no set time limits within which an informal complaint must be resolved, the Compliance Officer/designee is directed to attempt to resolve all informal complaints within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the informal complaint. If the Complainant is dissatisfied with the informal complaint process, the Complainant may proceed to file a formal complaint. And, as stated above, either party may request that the informal process be terminated at any time to move to the formal complaint process.

### **Formal Complaint Procedure**

If a complaint is not resolved through the informal complaint process, if one of the parties has requested that the informal complaint process be terminated to move to the formal complaint process, or the Complainant, from the outset, elects to file a formal complaint, or the CO determines the allegations are not appropriate for resolution through the informal process, the formal complaint process shall be implemented.

The Complainant may file a formal complaint, either orally or in writing, with a teacher, principal, or other District employee at the student's school, the Compliance Officer, Superintendent, or another District official who works at another school or at the district level. Due to the sensitivity surrounding complaints of unlawful harassment, timelines are flexible for initiating the complaint process; however, individuals should make every effort to file a formal complaint within thirty (30) days after the conduct occurs while the facts are known and potential witnesses are available. If a Complainant informs a teacher, principal, or other District employee at the student's school, Superintendent, or other District official, either orally or in writing, about any complaint of harassment, that employee must report such information to the Compliance Officer within two (2) business days.

Throughout the course of the process, the Compliance Officer should keep the parties reasonably informed of the status of the investigation and the decision-making process.

All formal complaints must include the following information to the extent known: the identity of the Respondent; a detailed description of the facts upon which the complaint is based (i.e., when, where, and what occurred); a list of potential witnesses; and the resolution sought by the Complainant.

If the Complainant is unwilling or unable to provide a written statement including the information set forth above, the Compliance Officer shall ask for such details in an oral interview. Thereafter, the Compliance Officer will prepare a written summary of the oral interview, and the Complainant will be asked to verify the accuracy of the reported charge by signing the document.

Upon receiving a formal complaint, the Compliance Officer will consider whether any action should be taken in the investigatory phase to protect the Complainant from further harassment or retaliation, including, but not limited to, a change of work assignment or schedule for the Complainant and/or the Respondent. In making such a determination, the Compliance Officer should consult the Complainant to assess whether the individual agrees with the proposed action. If the Complainant is unwilling to consent to the proposed change, the Compliance Officer may still take whatever actions deemed appropriate in consultation with the Superintendent.

Within two (2) business days of receiving the complaint, the Compliance Officer/designee will initiate a formal investigation to determine whether the Complainant has been subjected to offensive conduct/harassment/retaliation. The Principal will not conduct an investigation unless directed to do so by the Compliance Officer.

Simultaneously, the Compliance Officer will inform the Respondent that a formal complaint has been received. The Respondent will be informed about the nature of the allegations and provided with a copy of any relevant policies and/or administrative guidelines, including the Board's Anti-Harassment policy. The Respondent must also be informed of the opportunity to submit a written response to the complaint within five (5) business days.

Although certain cases may require additional time, the Compliance Officer/designee will attempt to complete an investigation into the allegations of harassment/retaliation within fifteen (15) business days of receiving the formal complaint. The investigation will include:

- A. interviews with the Complainant;
- B. interviews with the Respondent;
- C. interviews with any other witnesses who may reasonably be expected to have any information relevant to the allegations;
- D. consideration of any documentation or other information presented by the Complainant, Respondent, or any other witness that is reasonably believed to be relevant to the allegations.

At the conclusion of the investigation, the Compliance Officer or the designee shall prepare and deliver a written report to the Superintendent that summarizes the evidence gathered during the investigation and provides recommendations based on the evidence and the definition of unlawful harassment as provided in Board policy and State and Federal law as to whether the Complainant has been subjected to unlawful harassment. The Compliance Officer's recommendations must be based upon the totality of the circumstances, including the ages and maturity levels of those involved. In determining if discriminatory harassment or retaliation occurred, a preponderance of evidence standard will be used. The Compliance Officer may consult with the Board's legal counsel before finalizing the report to the Superintendent.

Absent extenuating circumstances, within ten (10) school days of receiving the report of the Compliance Officer/designee, the Superintendent must either issue a written decision regarding whether the complaint of harassment has been substantiated or request further investigation. A copy of the Superintendent's final decision will be delivered to both the Complainant and the Respondent.

If the Superintendent requests additional investigation, the Superintendent must specify the additional information that is to be gathered, and such additional investigation must be completed within ten (10) school days. At the conclusion of the additional investigation, the Superintendent shall issue a written decision as described above.

A Complainant or Respondent who is dissatisfied with the final decision of the Superintendent may appeal through a signed written statement to the Board within five (5) business days of the party's receipt of the Superintendent's decision. The written statement of appeal must be submitted to the Treasurer/CFO.

In an attempt to resolve the complaint, the Board shall meet with the concerned parties and their representatives within twenty (20) business days of the receipt of such an appeal. A copy of the Board's disposition of the appeal shall be sent to each party within ten (10) business days of this meeting. The decision of the Board will be final.

The Board reserves the right to investigate and resolve a complaint or report of unlawful harassment/retaliation regardless of whether the student alleging the unlawful harassment/retaliation pursues the complaint. The Board also reserves the right to have the formal complaint investigation conducted by an external person in accordance with this policy or in such other manner as deemed appropriate by the Board or its designee.

The parties may be represented, at their own cost, at any of the above-described meetings/hearings.

The right of a person to a prompt and equitable resolution of the complaint shall not be impaired by the person's pursuit of other remedies such as the filing of a complaint with the Office for Civil Rights, the filing of charges with local law enforcement, or the filing of a civil action in court. Use of this internal complaint process is not a prerequisite to the pursuit of other remedies.

### **Privacy/Confidentiality**

The District will employ all reasonable efforts to protect the rights of the Complainant, the Respondent, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the Board's legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to conform with any discovery or disclosure obligations. All records generated under the terms of this policy and related administrative guidelines shall be maintained as confidential to the extent permitted by law. Confidentiality, however, cannot be guaranteed. Additionally, the Respondent must be provided the Complainant's identity.

During the course of a formal investigation, the Compliance Officer/designee will instruct all members of the School District community and third parties who are interviewed about the importance of maintaining confidentiality. Any individual who is interviewed as part of a harassment investigation is expected not to disclose any information that is learned or provided during the course of the investigation.

### **Sanctions and Monitoring**

The Board shall vigorously enforce its prohibitions against unlawful harassment/retaliation by taking appropriate action reasonably calculated to stop the harassment and prevent further such harassment. While observing the principles of due process, a violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including the discharge of an employee or the suspension/expulsion of a student. All



disciplinary action will be taken in accordance with applicable State law and the terms of the relevant collective bargaining agreement(s). When imposing discipline, the Superintendent shall consider the totality of the circumstances involved in the matter, including the ages and maturity levels of those involved. In those cases where unlawful harassment is not substantiated, the Board may consider whether the alleged conduct nevertheless warrants discipline in accordance with other Board policies, consistent with the terms of the relevant collective bargaining agreement(s).

Where the Board becomes aware that a prior remedial action has been taken against a member of the School District community, all subsequent sanctions imposed by the Board and/or Superintendent shall be reasonably calculated to end such conduct, prevent its reoccurrence, and remedy its effects.

### **Retaliation**

Retaliation against a person who makes a report or files a complaint alleging unlawful harassment/retaliation or participates as a witness in an investigation is prohibited. Neither the Board nor any other person may intimidate, threaten, coerce or interfere with any individual because the person opposed any act or practice made unlawful by any Federal or State civil rights law, or because that individual made a report, formal complaint testified, assisted or participated or refused to participate in any manner in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing under those laws and/or this policy, or because that individual exercised, enjoyed, aided or encouraged any other person in the exercise or enjoyment of any right granted or protected by those laws and/or this policy.

Retaliation against a person from making a report of discrimination, filing a formal complaint, or participating in an investigation or meeting is a serious violation of this policy that can result in imposition of disciplinary sanction/consequences and/or other appropriate remedies.

Formal complaints alleging retaliation may be filed according to the internal complaint process set forth above.

The exercise of rights protected under the First Amendment of the United States Constitution does not constitute retaliation prohibited under this policy.

### **Allegations Constituting Criminal Conduct: Child Abuse/Sexual Misconduct**

State law requires any school teacher or school employee who knows or suspects that a child with a disability under the age of twenty-one (21) or that a child under the age of eighteen (18) has suffered or faces a threat of suffering a physical or mental wound, disability or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of a child to immediately report that knowledge or suspicion to the county children's services agency. If, during the course of a harassment investigation, the Compliance Officer or a designee has reason to believe or suspect that the alleged conduct reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the Complainant, a report of such knowledge must be made in accordance with State law and Board Policy.

State law defines certain contact between a teacher and a student as "sexual battery." If the Compliance Officer or a designee has reason to believe that the Complainant has been the victim of criminal conduct as defined in Ohio's Criminal Code, such knowledge should be immediately reported to local law enforcement.

Any reports made to a county children's services agency or to local law enforcement shall not terminate the Compliance Officer or a designee's obligation and responsibility to continue to investigate a complaint of harassment. While the Compliance Officer or a designee may work cooperatively with outside agencies to conduct concurrent investigations, in no event shall the harassment investigation be inhibited by the involvement of outside agencies without good cause after consultation with the Superintendent.

### **Allegations Involving Conduct Unbecoming the Teaching Profession/Suspension**

The Superintendent will report to the Ohio Department of Education, on forms provided for that purpose, matters of misconduct on the part of licensed professional staff members convicted of sexual battery, and will, in accordance with Policy 8141, suspend such employee from all duties that concern or involve the care, custody, or control of a child during the pendency of any criminal action for which that person has been arrested, summoned and/or indicted in that regard.

### **Education and Training**

In support of this Anti-Harassment Policy, the Board promotes preventative educational measures to create greater awareness of unlawful discriminatory practices. The Superintendent shall provide appropriate information to all members of the School District community related to the implementation of this policy and shall provide training for District students and staff where appropriate. All training, as well as all information, provided regarding the Board's policy and harassment in general, will be age and content appropriate.

### **Retention of Investigatory Records and Materials**

The Compliance Officer(s) is responsible for overseeing retention of all records that must be maintained pursuant to this policy. All individuals charged with conducting investigations under this policy shall retain all documents, electronically stored information ("ESI"), and electronic media (as defined in Policy 8315) created and/or received as part of an investigation, which may include but not be limited to:

- A. all written reports/allegations/complaints/grievances/statements/responses pertaining to an alleged violation of this policy;
- B. any narratives that memorialize oral reports/allegations/complaints/grievances/statements/responses pertaining to an alleged violation of this policy;
- C. any documentation that memorializes the actions taken by District personnel or individuals contracted or appointed by the Board to fulfill its responsibilities related to the investigation and/or the District's response to the alleged violation of this policy;
- D. written witness statements;
- E. narratives, notes from, or audio, video, or digital recordings of witness interviews/statements;
- F. e-mails, texts, or social media posts that directly relate to or constitute evidence pertaining to an alleged violation of this policy (i.e., not after-the-fact commentary about or media coverage of the incident);

- G. notes or summaries prepared contemporaneously by the investigator in whatever form made (e.g., handwritten, keyed into a computer or tablet, etc.), but not including transitory notes whose content is otherwise memorialized in other documents;
- H. written disciplinary sanctions issued to students or employees and other documentation that memorializes oral disciplinary sanctions issued to students or employees for violations of this policy;
- I. dated written determinations/reports (including summaries of relevant exculpatory and inculpatory evidence) and other documentation that memorializes oral notifications to the parties concerning the outcome of the investigation, including any consequences imposed as a result of a violation of this policy;
- J. documentation of any supportive measures offered and/or provided to the Complainant and/or the Respondent, including no contact orders issued to both parties, the dates the no contact orders were issued, and the dates the parties acknowledged receipt of the no contact orders;
- K. documentation of all actions taken, both individual and systemic, to stop the discrimination or harassment, prevent its recurrence, eliminate any hostile environment, and remedy its discriminatory effects;
- L. copies of the Board policy and/or procedures/guidelines used by the District to conduct the investigation, and any documents used by the District at the time of the alleged violation to communicate the Board's expectations to students and staff with respect to the subject of this policy (e.g., Student Code of Conduct and/or Employee Handbooks);
- M. copies of any documentation that memorializes any formal or informal resolutions to the alleged discrimination or harassment;
- N. documentation of any training provided to District personnel related to this policy, including but not limited to, notification of the prohibitions and expectations of staff set forth in this policy and the role and responsibility of all District personnel involved in enforcing this policy, including their duty to report alleged violations of this policy and/or conducting an investigation of an alleged violation of this policy.

The documents, ESI, and electronic media (as defined in Policy 8315) retained may include public records and records exempt from disclosure under Federal (e.g., FERPA, ADA) and/or State law (e.g., R.C. 3319.321) – e.g., student records and confidential medical records.

The documents, ESI, and electronic media (as defined in Policy 8315) created or received as part of an investigation shall be retained in accordance with Policy 8310, Policy 8315, Policy 8320, and Policy 8330 for not less than three (3) years, but longer if required by the District's records retention schedule.

## **BULLYING AND OTHER FORMS OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR**

The Board of Education is committed to providing a safe, positive, productive, and nurturing educational environment for all of its students. The Board encourages the promotion of positive interpersonal relations between members of the school community.

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying toward a student, whether by other students, staff, or third parties is strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. This prohibition includes aggressive behavior, physical,

verbal, and psychological abuse, and violence within a dating relationship. The Board will not tolerate any gestures, comments, threats, or actions which cause or threaten to cause bodily harm or personal degradation. This policy applies to all activities in the District, including activities on school property, on a school bus, or while enroute to or from school, and those occurring off school property if the student or employee is at any school-sponsored, school- approved or school-related activity or function, such as field trips or athletic events where students are under the school's control, in a school vehicle, or where an employee is engaged in school business.

This policy has been developed in consultation with parents, District employees, volunteers, students, and community members as prescribed in R.C. 3313.666 and the State Board of Education's Model Policy.

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying means:

- A. any intentional written, verbal, electronic, or physical act that a student or group of students exhibits toward another particular student(s) more than once and the behavior both causes mental or physical harm to the other student(s) and is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for the other student(s); or
- B. violence within a dating relationship.

"Electronic act" means an act committed through the use of a cellular telephone, computer, pager, personal communication device, or other electronic communication device.

Aggressive behavior is defined as inappropriate conduct that is repeated enough, or serious enough, to negatively impact a student's educational, physical, or emotional well being. This type of behavior is a form of intimidation and harassment, although it need not be based on any of the legally protected characteristics, such as sex, race, color, national origin, marital status, or disability. It would include, but not be limited to, such behaviors as stalking, bullying/cyberbullying, intimidating, menacing, coercion, name calling, taunting, making threats, and hazing.

Harassment, intimidation, or bullying also means cyberbullying through electronically transmitted acts (i.e., internet, e-mail, cellular telephone, personal digital assistant (PDA), or wireless hand-held device) that a student(s) or a group of students exhibits toward another particular student(s) more than once and the behavior both causes mental and physical harm to the other student and is sufficiently severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating, threatening, or abusive educational environment for the other student(s).

Any student or student's parent/guardian who believes s/he has been or is the victim of aggressive behavior should immediately report the situation to the Building Principal or assistant principal, or the Superintendent. The student may also report concerns to teachers and other school staff who will be responsible for notifying the appropriate administrator or Board official. Complaints against the Building Principal should be filed with the Superintendent. Complaints against the Superintendent should be filed with the Board President.

Every student is encouraged, and every staff member is required, to report any situation that they believe to be aggressive behavior directed toward a student. Reports may be made to those identified above.

All complaints about aggressive behavior that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated. The Building Principal or appropriate administrator shall prepare a written report of the investigation upon completion. Such a report shall include findings of fact, a determination of whether acts of harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying were verified, and, when prohibited acts are verified, a recommendation for intervention, including disciplinary action shall be included in the report. Where appropriate, written witness statements shall be attached to the report.

If the investigation finds an instance of harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying/cyberbullying by an electronic act or otherwise, has occurred, it will result in prompt and appropriate remedial and/or disciplinary action. This may include suspension or up to expulsion for students, up to discharge for employees, exclusion for parents, guests, volunteers, and contractors, and removal from any official position and/or a request to resign for Board members. Individuals may also be referred to law enforcement officials.

If, during an investigation of a reported act of harassment, intimidation and/or bullying/cyberbullying, the Principal or appropriate administrator believes that the reported misconduct may have created a hostile learning environment and may have constituted unlawful discriminatory harassment based on a Protected Class, the Principal will report the act of bullying and/or harassment to one of the Anti-Harassment Compliance Officers so that it may be investigated in accordance with the procedures set forth in Policy 5517 - Anti-Harassment.

Retaliation against any person who reports, is thought to have reported, files a complaint, or otherwise participates in an investigation or inquiry concerning allegations of aggressive behavior is prohibited and will not be tolerated. Such retaliation shall be considered a serious violation of Board policy and independent of whether a complaint is substantiated. Suspected retaliation should be reported in the same manner as aggressive behavior. Retaliation may result in disciplinary action as indicated above.

Deliberately making false reports about harassment, intimidation, bullying and/or other aggressive behavior for the purpose of getting someone in trouble is similarly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Deliberately making false reports may result in disciplinary action as indicated above.

If a student or other individual believes there has been aggressive behavior, regardless of whether it fits a particular definition, s/he should report it and allow the administration to determine the appropriate course of action.

The District shall implement intervention strategies (AG 5517.01) to protect a victim or other person from new or additional harassment, intimidation, or bullying and from retaliation following such a report.

This policy shall not be interpreted to infringe upon the First Amendment rights of students (i.e., to prohibit a reasoned and civil exchange of opinions, or debate, that is conducted at appropriate times and places during the school day and is protected by State or Federal law).

The complainant shall be notified of the findings of the investigation, and as appropriate, that remedial action has been taken. If after investigation, acts of bullying against a specific student are verified, the Building Director or appropriate administrator shall notify the custodial parent/guardian of the victim of such finding. In providing such notification care shall be taken to respect the statutory privacy rights of the perpetrator of such harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying.

If after investigation, acts of harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying by a specific student are verified, the Building Director or appropriate administrator shall notify in writing the custodial parent/guardian of the perpetrator of that finding. If disciplinary consequences are imposed against a student, a description of such discipline shall be included in the notification.

### **Complaints**

Students and/or their parents/guardians may file reports regarding suspected harassment, intimidation, or bullying. Such reports shall be reasonably specific including the person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of suspected harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. Such reports may be filed with any school staff member or administrator, and they shall be promptly forwarded to the Building Director for review, investigation, and action.

Students, parents/guardians, and school personnel may make informal or anonymous complaints of conduct that they consider to be harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying by verbal report to a teacher, school administrator, or other school personnel. Such complaints shall be reasonably specific including the person(s) involved, number of times and places of the alleged conduct, the target of suspected harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying, and the names of any potential student or staff witnesses. A school staff member or administrator who receives an informal or anonymous complaint shall promptly document the complaint in writing, including the information provided. This written report shall be promptly forwarded by the school staff member and/or administrator to the Building Director for review, investigation, and appropriate action.

Individuals who make informal complaints as provided above may request that their name be maintained in confidence by the school staff member(s) and administrator(s) who receive the complaint. Anonymous complaints shall be reviewed and reasonable action shall be taken to address the situation, to the extent such action may be taken that (1) does not disclose the source of the complaint, and (2) is consistent with the due process rights of the student(s) alleged to have committed acts of harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying.

When an individual making an informal complaint has requested anonymity, the investigation of such complaint shall be limited as is appropriate in view of the anonymity of the complaint. Such limitation of investigation may include restricting action to a simple review of the complaint subject to receipt of

further information and/or the withdrawal by the complaining student of the condition that his/her report be anonymous.

### **Privacy/Confidentiality**

The School District will respect the privacy of the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the Board's legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to conform with any discovery or disclosure obligations. All records generated under this policy and its related administrative guidelines shall be maintained as confidential to the extent permitted by law.

### **Reporting Requirement**

At least semi-annually, the Superintendent shall provide to the President of the Board a written summary of all reported incidents and post the summary on the District web site (if one exists). The list shall be limited to the number of verified acts of harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying, whether in the classroom, on school property, to and from school, or at school-sponsored events.

Allegations of criminal misconduct and suspected child abuse will be reported to the appropriate law enforcement agency and/or to Child Protective Services in accordance with statute. District personnel shall cooperate with investigations by such agencies.

### **Immunity**

A School District employee, student, or volunteer shall be individually immune from liability in a civil action for damages arising from reporting an incident in accordance with this policy and R.C. 3313.666 if that person reports an incident of harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying promptly, in good faith, and in compliance with the procedures specified in this policy. Such immunity from liability shall not apply to an employee, student, or volunteer determined to have made an intentionally false report about harassment, intimidation, and/or bullying.

### **Notification**

Notice of this policy will be **annually** circulated to and posted in conspicuous locations in all school buildings and departments within the District and discussed with students, as well as incorporated into the teacher, student, and parent/guardian handbooks. At least once each school year a written statement describing the policy and consequences for violations of the policy shall be sent to each student's custodial parent or guardian.

The statement may be sent with regular student report cards or may be delivered electronically.

The policy and an explanation of the seriousness of bullying by electronic means shall be made available to students in the District and to their custodial parents or guardians.

State and Federal rights posters on discrimination and harassment shall also be posted at each building. All new hires will be required to review and sign off on this policy and the related complaint procedures.

## **Education and Training**

In support of this policy, the Board promotes preventative educational measures to create greater awareness of aggressive behavior, including bullying and violence within a dating relationship. The Superintendent or designee shall provide appropriate training to all members of the School District community related to the implementation of this policy and its accompanying administrative guidelines. All training regarding the Board's policy and administrative guidelines about aggressive behavior and bullying in general, will be age and content appropriate.

Annually, the District shall provide all students enrolled in the District with age-appropriate instruction regarding the Board's policy, including a written or verbal discussion of the consequences for violations of the policy to the extent that State or Federal funds are appropriated for this purpose.

Students in grades seven (7) through twelve (12) shall receive age-appropriate instruction in dating violence prevention education, including instruction in recognizing dating violence warning signs and characteristics of healthy relationships. Parents, who submit a written request to the Building Director to examine the dating violence prevention instruction materials used in the school, will be afforded an opportunity to review the materials within a reasonable period of time.

The District shall provide training, workshops, and/or courses on this policy for school employees and volunteers who have direct contact with students, to the extent that State or Federal funds are appropriated for these purposes. Time spent by school staff in these training programs shall apply toward mandated continuing education requirements.

In accordance with Board Policy 8462, the Superintendent shall include a review of this policy on bullying and other forms of harassment in the required training in the prevention of child abuse, violence, and substance abuse and the promotion of positive youth development.

The Superintendent shall develop administrative guidelines to implement this policy. Guidelines shall include reporting and investigative procedures, as needed. The complaint procedure established by the Superintendent shall be followed.

## **NONDISCRIMINATION AND ACCESS TO EQUAL EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY**

The Gahanna-Jefferson Board of Education prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex (including sexual orientation or transgender identity), pregnancy, disability, age, religion, military status, ancestry, or genetic information (collectively, "Protected Classes") in its educational programs or activities, and does not tolerate harassment of any kind. Equal educational opportunities shall be available to all students and shall be designed to meet the varying needs of all students. Further, the District provides equal access to the Boy Scouts and other designated youth groups.

The Board designates the following individuals to serve as the District's "Compliance Officers" (also known as "Civil Rights Coordinators") (hereinafter referred to as the "COs").



Shea Reed - Human Resource Director  
614-471-7065  
630 Morrison Road  
Gahanna, OH 43230

Adam Kunkle - Human Resources Coordinator  
614-471-7065  
630 Morrison Road  
Gahanna, OH 43230

Other Designated Administrator  
630 Morrison Road  
Gahanna, OH 43230  
614-471-7065

The names, titles, and contact information of these individuals will be published annually on the School District's web site and:

- A. in the parent/student and staff handbooks;
- B. on each individual school's web site.

Please read the full NonDiscrimination and Access to Equal Educational Opportunity policy [here](#).

## **ADA/504 COMPLAINT AND DUE PROCESS PROCEDURES**

If a person believes that s/he has been discriminated against on the basis of his/her disability, the person may utilize the following complaint procedures as a means of reaching, at the lowest possible administrative level, a prompt and equitable resolution of the matter.

In accordance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and its implementing regulations ("Section 504"), parents, students, and employees will be notified of their right to file an internal complaint regarding an alleged violation, misinterpretation or misapplication of Section 504. In addition, employees, students and their parents will be notified of their right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. Finally, students and parents will be advised of their right to request a due process hearing before an Impartial Hearing Officer (IHO) regarding the identification, evaluation or educational placement of persons with disabilities, and their right to examine relevant education records.

The District's Section 504/ADA Compliance Officer(s) ("District's Compliance Officer(s)"):

Coordinator of Mental Health & Well-Being  
614-471-7065  
630 Morrison Road  
Gahanna, OH 43230

Building principals shall serve as Building Section 504/ADA Compliance Officer(s) ("Building Compliance Officers").

Internal complaints and requests for due process hearings must be put in writing and must identify the specific circumstances or areas of dispute that have given rise to the complaint or the request for a hearing, and offer possible solutions to the dispute. The complaint or request for due process hearing must be filed with a District Compliance Officer within the time limits specified below. The District's Compliance Officer is available to assist individuals in filing a complaint or request.

## **ANNUAL MEDICAID NOTIFICATION**

The Gahanna-Jefferson Public School District is eligible to receive federal Medicaid reimbursement for medically necessary services provided to their special education students when the services meet the requirements of the state's School-Based Medicaid Program and are provided in accordance with the students' IEPs (§300.154(d)(2)(i)-(iii)).

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) require schools to notify parents that the district participates in this program. The district utilizes services ordered in the IEP and the Medicaid identification number, in conjunction with the state Medicaid Agency and our Medicaid billing agent, to receive reimbursement for these services from the School-Based Medicaid Program.

The district's participation in this program in no way impacts the services being provided to the student nor impacts the family's Medicaid benefits. In the event parents no longer want the district to access student information for the purposes of seeking reimbursements through this program, they can notify the district Special Education department by calling 614-337-3777. This annual notification is being provided to you in accordance with program requirements.

## **CHILD FIND**

As required by *Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973* and the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (IDEA), the Gahanna-Jefferson Special Education Office conducts ongoing Child Find practices to locate and evaluate all children with disabilities - from birth through age 21 - residing within the school district, who may be homeless, wards of the state, or attending nonpublic schools. Special Education services are available through the public schools for children ages 3 to 21 who are identified with a disability.

If you have a child or know of a child you suspect may have a disability, please contact the GJPS Office of Special Education at 614-337-3777.

## **ASBESTOS MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Information regarding the District's asbestos management plan is available by contacting:

Kevin Klingler  
Chief Operating Officer

[Klinglerk@gjps.org](mailto:Klinglerk@gjps.org)

***Note: Updates are made to district policies in an ongoing manner throughout the school year. Please be sure to check the district website to view any updates that may be made to the policies shared in this handbook.***