

Gracewood Elementary School

Teacher Handbook 2026-2027



Empowering Minds through Purposeful Learning and Excellence.

Dr. Kathryn Herrington

INTRODUCTION

You will find vital information in this personnel handbook concerning the policies, procedures and guidelines to help in promoting effective, quality job performance.

Please read and become familiar with the information provided herein.

These policies and procedures serve as basic guidelines for Gracewood Elementary and shall be maintained by all personnel for future reference.

TEACHER ATTENDANCE

The secretary keeps an attendance folder on file for all Teachers and Educational Support Personnel. This folder is maintained to keep a record of absence and tardiness. **The school attendance secretary is not responsible for keeping up with the number of days absent or present or the kinds of days that were used.** Each Teacher must keep track of their own attendance record. This information is noted on all check stubs. We would hope that all personnel would be able to maintain perfect attendance for the year. **Good teacher attendance means a better instructional program and fewer discipline problems.** All staff members should strive for 95% attendance.

Arrivals and Departures

All staff are to **sign in and sign out** daily **to prevent zero days of pay.** Sign-in sheets and staff attendance folders include a record of tardies and absences. Board of Education employees are required to sign in and out upon arrival and departure. **Failure to sign in and out on any given day will be problematic. Avoid problems by forming the habit of signing in and out!**

All teachers are required to be at their door by 8:00 am to greet students.

Absences

When you know in advance that you will be absent, please fill out the appropriate paperwork and notify the principal. On mornings when you are ill or an emergency arises making it impossible for you to come to school, please enter your absence by 6:00 a.m. All absences will also be expected to be reported to **Mrs. Brown and/Dr. Herrington** via phone/text/ or email.

If you are absent for 3 or more days, a doctor's note must be presented. A doctor's note may be requested if absences become excessive.

A Certificate of Absence form must be completed accurately for each day absent. These forms are legal documents and must be signed by the employee and certified by the Principal. A Certificate of Absence must be filled out and signed within 24 hours of your return. Failure to do so will be documented in GALEADS Evaluation.

Subby/Aesop/Frontline: All absences must be entered into subby. During the first week of school make sure you can log into your Aesop account.

Lesson Plans:

It is your responsibility to ensure that lesson plans are easily accessible and available at all times. Lesson plans should include the following:

- Class Schedules
- Updated Seating Chart
- Updated Class List
- Ample Supply of Class Activities
- Practice/Review Assignments, Clearly Written
- A list of Students with Health Problems
- A list of Students Riding the Bus
- A list of Students Receiving Resource or Tutoring
- Discipline Plan
- Emergency Exit/Drill Plans

Excessive Absences and Tardiness may result in the lowering of job performance rating and documented in GALEADS Evaluation.

Personal days are not allowed in the first and last week of school or the day before or after a school holiday, unless you have written permission from the Superintendent of Schools. The principal must be provided with a copy of the approval letter. **All personal days must be approved at least 3 days in advance and a certificate of absence must be provided at the time of the request.**

Payroll information. Please see Mrs. Brown concerning all payroll issues.

PUPIL ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS

- **Once a student is absent contact parent and document in Infinite Campus call log. If not documented the call did not take place.**
- When a pupil is absent for three (3) days with no communication between you and the home, or you suspect truancy; inform the counselor/attendance team and/or fill out a Social Worker referral immediately. This form can be turned in to the data clerk, who will contact the school social worker who will process it and give you copies of this report. If you don't have a response within five (5) days, please inform Dr. Herrington.

Supervision

- **If we truly value discipline and an orderly environment, then we will not ignore inappropriate student behavior. High expectations for student behavior must be clearly communicated to all students by all staff members. All staff are expected to support and encourage a healthy, safe school climate. Teachers are expected to move their classes in a quiet and orderly fashion whenever they are in the hallway. This is the responsibility of each teacher. No one should hear disturbing or disruptive noise in the hallway.**

Teachers are responsible for maintaining discipline and order in their classrooms, hallways, and all other areas of the school. Mutual respect is to be displayed at all times.

- Each teacher should be at his/her door by 8:00 A.M. unless he/she has duty elsewhere.
- All children are to be supervised at all times.
- All teachers are asked to transition their classes in a quiet, orderly and efficient manner while passing through the halls. (NO TALKING!)
- **Teachers and/or Teaching Assistants** are to escort their classes to Gym, Library, Computer Lab, Art and/or Music and pick them up promptly at the end of those class periods.
- **Children are not to be kept after school without parental permission.** The safety of each child is the schools' responsibility. Teachers must also stay with students until all parents arrive.
- It is the **responsibility of all employees** to help to maintain the security and well-being of all of our children.
- Teachers should not be on their cell phones during instruction or while he/she is monitoring students.
- If any Teacher has an emergency and must leave his/her class, he/she may have an adjacent Teacher supervise his/her class. **THE OFFICE MUST BE INFORMED OF TEACHERS' ABSENCES FROM THE CLASSROOM AT ALL TIMES.**
- Students shall not be left unattended.

Parent and Teacher Communications

- Teachers are required to schedule parent/teacher conferences for every student each semester. These are to be either in-person, zoom/teams, or telephone conferences.
- All written communications to staff or students have to be approved by Dr. Herrington.

DISCIPLINE

Our **discipline procedures** will be based on the general guidelines established in the Richmond County Board of Education Uniform Discipline Code as follows:

- Teacher-Student Conference.
- Teacher-Student –Parent Conference
- Counselor-Administrative Staff-Teacher-Student Conference
- Counselor-Administrative Staff-Teacher-Student –Parent Conference
- Administrative Disciplinary Action.

All students are under the supervision of adult staff members. Please remind your pupils that they are to respect the authority of all teachers, teacher aides, and other Gracewood staff members. You, in turn, are responsible for the supervision of any child on the premises who misbehaves in your presence

- All Teachers are responsible **for their own classroom discipline and for the overall school discipline. Teachers should follow the grade level's discipline plan.**
- All Teachers should be familiar with the groups of misconduct codes established by the Board and the recommended action.
- All Teachers are required to establish classroom rules, consequences and incentives, and posted in classrooms. Copies of these and the school rules are to be sent home to the

parents. All students should have their own copy of these rules as well as a RCSS Code of Conduct Book

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

No EMPLOYEE of the Board of Education may inflict corporal punishment of any kind on persons attending the public schools of the Richmond County Board of Education.

CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION

An effective classroom requires careful organization and planning.

The classroom environment should be kept clean and well organized. Bulletin boards must display current, corrected and graded student work that reflects topics covered in regulations. Daily routines and positive classroom rules must be established, posted and clearly communicated to students.

Attendance Books, Emergency Cards, Registration Cards, and Folders should never leave the building.

Registration Cards are to be kept in the office. Teachers will need to keep their own copy. The office copy will be for office use only, as many of the forms have disappeared in the past. PLEASE bring the contact numbers you need with you. Also, please send any updated numbers to the office as you receive them during the year.

GRADING GUIDELINES

See RCSS Updated Grading Policy for 26-27 SY. K-Third Grade will use standards-based grading. Fourth and fifth grades will use the following grading system:

**A = 90-100
B = 80-89
C = 75-79
D = 70-74
F = 69 and below (Failing)
NC = 0 or No Credit**

RCSS GRADING UPDATES 2026–2027

— What Every Teacher Must Know —

A STANDARDS-BASED, MASTERY-FOCUSED APPROACH TO GRADING

RCSS grading practices are designed to accurately reflect student mastery of **Georgia Standards** and provide meaningful feedback that supports learning and growth.

1 GRADES REFLECT LEARNING ONLY  - Grades reflect mastery of standards. - Do NOT include behavior, participation, effort, attendance, work habits, or neatness. - Academic grades communicate only what students know and can do.	2 FORMATIVE VS. SUMMATIVE  - Formative assessments are for practice, feedback, and guiding instruction. - Formative assessments are NOT included in academic grades. - Only summative assessments count toward grades.	3 HOMEWORK EXPECTATIONS  - Practice homework is NOT graded. - Projects or major assignments completed at home may be graded. - Quality over quantity. - Elem. recommendation: 15–45 minutes total, Mon–Thurs.
4 RELEARN & REASSESS TO MASTER  - Students analyze mistakes and complete a relearning plan. - Teacher reteaches. - Students reassess. - The new score REPLACES the original score. - Scores are NOT averaged.	5 GRADEBOOK EXPECTATIONS  - Update gradebook weekly. - Enter grades within ~2 instructional days when practical (projects/essays may take longer). - Infinite Campus is the official gradebook. - Parents should never be surprised by report card grades.	6 ACADEMIC INTEGRITY MATTERS  - Unauthorized use of artificial intelligence (AI) is academic dishonesty. - Teach. Model. Monitor. Maintain integrity.

ADDITIONAL POLICY UPDATES TO KNOW			
LATE WORK  - Grades 6–12 only. - Up to a 5% deduction per school day, maximum 25%. - Teacher must document late penalties in Infinite Campus comments. (Not applicable to Elementary grades.)	MAKE-UP WORK  - Students are given reasonable time to complete make-up work after an absence. - Students should not take a test on their first day back if it was announced during the absence.	COMMUNICATION  - Communicate grading procedures, expectations, and criteria to students and parents. - Provide timely, meaningful feedback that supports growth.	TELLING OUR STORY  - Ensure grades are accurate and up to date. - Use grades to show progress toward mastery of standards. - Celebrate learning and growth!

STOP	START DOING	CONTINUE DOING
 - Grading practice or formative assessments - Grading homework for practice - Including behavior, participation, effort, attendance, or work habits in grades - Relying on one assessment to determine a grade - Averaging original and reassessment scores - Entering grades infrequently - Using AI without authorization	 - Use formative assessments for feedback and instruction - Grade only summative assessments aligned to standards - Provide multiple opportunities to learn and demonstrate mastery - Offer relearn and reassess opportunities - Keep gradebooks updated weekly - Enter grades within ~2 days - Communicate clearly with students and parents	 - Align instruction and assessments to Georgia Standards - Provide meaningful, timely feedback - Differentiate instruction to meet student needs - Communicate high expectations for all students - Partner with parents to support student success



CLEAR. CONSISTENT. FAIR. SUPPORTIVE OF LEARNING.

Every Student. Every Day.

The following items must have Administrative approval:

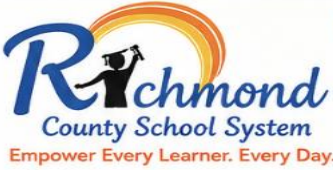
*All written communication disseminated to staff and/or students

- The rental and viewing of movies
- Classroom parties
- Purchase orders
- Fundraiser/collection of money (No outside fundraising is allowed)
- Field Trips

GEORGIA EARLY LITERACY LAW (HB 1193)

K–3 teachers are expected to understand the requirements of Georgia’s Early Literacy Law and how they impact literacy screening, intervention, progress monitoring, parent

communication, and student promotion. The following RCSS resource provides an overview of key changes beginning in the 2026–2027 school year.



WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW
NEW GEORGIA
EARLY LITERACY LAW (HB 1193)

CHANGES BEGINNING IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Georgia's new Early Literacy Law is designed to ensure every child becomes a successful reader.



PRE-K THROUGH KINDERGARTEN



★ **Full-Day Kindergarten**
All Georgia school systems are now required to offer a full-day kindergarten program.



★ **Pre-K to Kindergarten Transition**
Schools and districts will work more closely with Pre-K programs to support a smooth transition into kindergarten and ensure students are ready for school success.



★ **If your child turns 4 or 5 by September 1, they are eligible for Pre-K!**

KINDERGARTEN TO FIRST GRADE

New First Grade Readiness Requirements
Before a student is promoted to first grade, schools will review:

- ✓ Reading readiness assessments
- ✓ Universal literacy screening results
- ✓ Teacher recommendations
- ✓ Parent input



Students Needing Additional Support

- Parents will receive written notification.
- A Tiered Reading Intervention Plan will be developed.
- Additional reading support and progress monitoring will be provided.

Parent Involvement
Parents will be included in discussions regarding promotion decisions and intervention plans.

FIRST GRADE TO SECOND GRADE



New Promotion Requirements
Beginning with the 2027–2028 school year
Georgia is developing statewide literacy criteria for promotion from first grade to second grade. Students who are significantly at risk of not reading on grade level may:

- Receive intensive reading interventions
- Be closely monitored throughout the year
- Be considered for retention if promotion criteria are not met

Parents will be notified and involved throughout the process.

EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF READING NEEDS

Schools will use approved literacy screening tools to:

-  Monitor student reading progress
-  Identify students needing additional support
-  Provide interventions earlier
-  Help ensure all students become proficient readers



HOW PARENTS CAN HELP

AT HOME

- ♥ Read with your child every day
- ♥ Ask your child questions about what they read
- ♥ Encourage conversations and vocabulary development
- ♥ Attend parent conferences and literacy events

AT SCHOOL

- ♥ Review literacy progress reports
- ♥ Participate in intervention meetings if invited
- ♥ Communicate regularly with your child's teacher
- ♥ Ask questions about reading goals and progress

WHAT SHOULD PARENTS EXPECT?

Beginning in 2026–2027

- ★ Increased focus on reading proficiency in Kindergarten and First Grade
- ★ Additional literacy screening and progress monitoring
- ★ More communication regarding reading growth and intervention plans
- ★ Promotion decisions increasingly tied to reading readiness





★ **OUR GOAL:**
Every child reading on grade level and prepared for future success!

For questions, please contact your child's school principal or teacher.

LEARN MORE!
Scan the QR code for more information about HB 1193.



SCHOOL RECORDS

Attendance- Attendance should also be entered into Infinite Campus each day by 9:00 am.

Cumulative Records- should be kept up to date. Records should be checked in and out from the vault. Records cannot leave the building and must be placed in the vault at the end of the day.

Health Card- If any changes occur as to the child having any health problems, these should also be noted on the health card in the nurse's office.

Grade Books- All teachers are required to enter at least one grade per week into their Infinite Campus Grade Book. Grade books will be monitored on a regular basis. All report card grades must be given from grades recorded in grade books.

Lesson Plans-All Teachers are responsible for lesson plans and required to have them accessible in the classroom at all times. Lesson Plans are due each Thursday by 6:00 P.M. GALEADS will be reflective when these are not on time.

Report Card- Every child will be issued a report card. The Teacher is to fill in all necessary information and evaluate the child based primarily upon objective information for all academic areas. Subjective evaluations should be limited to effort, conduct, and Teacher comments. Teachers should make sure that all report cards are signed and returned within a week after distribution. If not returned, contact the parent. The classroom teacher for each student in grades K-5 will give progress reports as well.

Students not meeting promotion requirements-If a student is not meeting promotion requirements by the 2nd progress report (October 27th) or any progress/report cards after that date fill out an Appendix B, contact the parent, and document in the Infinite Campus contact log.

Student Data- All student Registration Cards, Emergency Cards, transfers, and enrollment forms must be kept current. If a child or parent notifies the Teacher of any changes in identifying information, the Teacher must see that new information is given to office staff.

ACCIDENT REPORTS

Please complete an accident report for any observable accidents to any student, visitor and/or any employee, and submit it to the office. The office staff will type up the appropriate forms for your report. If anyone receives an injury that you think might warrant medical attention, please refer that individual to the Nurse if she is available or to the office if she is not available.

1. **Employee:** Report the injury to your supervisor within 24 hours.
2. Complete an **EMPLOYEE ACCIDENT REPORT and a Worker's Compensation Acknowledgement Form.** (Can be obtained through the school nurse, the school secretary, the principal, or director in your facility)
3. If medical attention is needed, the nurse, principal, or Ms. Brown will call to make an appointment for you. **You must use the facilities that are current providers through the county.** That information will be provided to you.
4. **Student/Visitor:** In the event of an accident to a student or visitor while on school premises, or on the way to or from school, in an activity sponsored by the school, or as a passenger on an authorized bus, the Student/Visitor Accident Report must be completed within 24 hours (front and back) and submitted to the nurse or school secretary, in the absence of the nurse. Notification of the accident must be reported to the parent immediately. Please notify someone in the office if you are expecting a parent to call.

Visitors

For everyone's safety, all parents/guardians and visitors are to sign in at the front desk and receive a pass before visitation. The office staff member will contact you for permission to send the visitor to your class. Please ask to see the pass. **THIS INCLUDES FAMILY AND FRIENDS.**

Anyone who wishes to visit our school **must secure a pass from the office.** No Teacher is to meet with or admit any visitors into their classrooms **without an official pass from the office.** **Report all strangers in the building who are apparent intruders to the office using the P.A. system.**

STAFF PERSONAL VISITORS

Any staff member who wants to bring a personal visitor, including his/her own children, to school must get prior permission from the principal.

Staff visitors (friends and family) must sign in at the front office and receive a pass. ALL visitors must enter the building through the front door and present ID.

LUNCH

Teachers or teaching assistants are to escort their classes to and from the lunchroom. No classes will be allowed to roam about unsupervised.

The students' lunchtime is also considered a part of the instructional day; therefore, all students must be supervised during that time. Instruction should be provided in the lunchroom and the classroom on the proper etiquette and behavior.

Teachers will confine their classes to the designated tables in the lunchroom. This is not a time for inter-class socializing.

Teachers will adhere strictly to the time limit set for their classroom. Late arrivals will have to leave at the time indicated on the school lunch schedule. Teachers are to be on time retrieving their class from the cafeteria.

Teachers will create and maintain a seating chart for students in the lunchroom.

EDUCATIONAL FIELD TRIPS

Planning is the key to a successful trip. A well-planned trip will be an enjoyable experience for everyone.

All Educational Field Trips are to be planned as an integral part of the instructional program. Approval will be given only for trips directly related to concepts and content of the students' instructional program.

- **Teachers must complete the Request for Field Trip Form. This form must be submitted to the Principal at least four weeks before the proposed trip.**

The Teacher is responsible for making all arrangements including the site, date, time, collection of monies, transportation, tickets, and all lunch provisions whether at the school or at the site. The Teacher must also handle any other arrangements that might be unique to that trip.

Parents must also be informed of all arrangements in writing at least 10 days before the trip, and you must receive from the parent written approval for the child to participate at least a day before the trip.

No child will be permitted to go on the field trip **without written parental or guardian's consent.**

Careful consideration should be given to ensure that no child is excluded from classroom field trips, due to financial reasons or behavior problems. Those students, deemed behavior problems, may be required to have a parent or guardian attend the field trip.

The classroom teacher is responsible for arranging with their co-workers for children not attending the trip. The office will not assume this responsibility, but the **Principal must be notified of their placement.**

If bag lunches are needed for your trip, the lunchroom manager must be notified at least three (3) weeks before the trip and a reconfirming notice should be given no later than two days before the trip. The lunchroom must also be notified at least a day in advance, if your class will not be eating at school on the day of the trip or if your class will be eating late or early. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

Supervision will be required on a basis of 10 children to 1 adult. Parent volunteers should receive a list of the pupils that they will help supervise.

Parents wishing to chaperone on field trips must obtain attend the volunteer training and obtain a volunteer card.

On the day of the trip, before leaving, the Coordinating Teacher must turn in an Educational Field Trip Itinerary Form (with room numbers where children who are left behind) to the office, as well as the signed parental permission slips, **and a list of students not attending the field trip.**

Under normal circumstances, no trips will be taken during the last four weeks of school.

ORDERS, BOOKS, SUPPLIES

All personnel must complete a pre-approval form for ordering supplies, shipments arriving, and teachers are to notify the office as to what was received and/or missing. Any orders paid for with the teacher's own personal funds are exempt from the above requirement but must be approved if you want to be reimbursed.

TEACHERS' SUPPLY ACCOUNT

Staff will be notified when these funds become available. The guidelines for distribution of these funds are as follows:

Before the Teacher spends any of the supply money, they must present to the Principal or the Principal's designee and receive approval of a list of the desired items. If this approval is not granted before expenditures, the supply funds can be denied for that purchase.

COLLECTING FUNDS

All Teachers who collect funds from the students must write a receipt for each child who turns in money and they must check to see that the amounts collected are correct and accurate. This includes collecting for field trips, charities, special programs, etc. Individual receipts do not have to be written for daily lunches to the lunchroom or for collections sponsored by the PTA. In those cases, the teacher keeps a duplicate list of students and the amount that they paid. All expenditures of funds from the school accounts must have the advance approval of the Principal. **Teachers should receive a receipt for all monies turned into the office. Teachers should not keep money in the classroom. All monies must be turned into the office by 10:00 a.m. daily. If you are not able to leave the classroom to turn in money please contact Mrs. Brown to get the money for you.**

TEXTBOOKS

Teachers are responsible for all students' texts and Teacher Editions issued to them. Each set of books should be identified by a number system established by the Teacher. Books should be distributed to students as soon as possible and a duplicate list indicating the child's name and what numbered books he/she is responsible for should be maintained. All children who receive a new book will be responsible for the full price of the book, if it is lost or heavily damaged. Older books will be priced based on the original price depreciated.

If the child has lost or damaged his book, the teacher must notify the family of the cost of the book and receive payment for the book before issuing a new book or a report card at the end of the year. Notification of this policy will be sent home at the beginning of the year and at mid-year. At the end of the year, the teacher will collect and check all reusable textbooks and report their book inventory to the office.

If a new student needs books after the beginning of the year, please contact Mrs. Black via email.

Laptops and Devices

- Laptops are to be used for instructional use only.
- Students cannot use non-educational websites or apps.
- When devices are not being used for instructional purposes, they must remain in the laptop cart. **AT NOT TIME SHOULD THEY BE PLACED ON THE FLOOR**
- Classes that rotate must rotate the laptop cart that belongs to that homeroom class.
- Students must use the laptop assigned to them or one given to them by the Media Specialist.
- If a laptop is damaged/lost the student must bring it to the media specialist immediately.
- Students may not change display screens, write or mark laptops in any way.
- Teachers/Students may not remove the labels on the laptop/device.

FIRE DRILLS

Everyone must vacate the building immediately, and **silence must be maintained at all times.** Have children line up and quickly proceed to the closest exit through the designated room exit. If your children are not in the classroom, proceed directly to the nearest exit and leave the building. Once outside, walk away from the building and wait for further instructions or the re-entry bell. **Teachers are required to take attendance in the Navigate Preparedness app.** Remember; lead your class out of the building and once outside, count to make sure that you have all of your students.

DRESS CODE/CONDUCT

We are role models for our students. Staff members are expected to present a professional appearance at all times. We set the tone for students. Jeans, T-Shirts/Sweatshirts with writing logos or cartoon characters, sports team apparel or sweatpants, nylon jogging clothes are not appropriate for a regular workday. Extremely short or tight clothing, skirts with large slits, or torn clothing is not professional dress codes. **Spaghetti strap shirts will not be permitted unless a jacket or sweater is worn over the shirt at all times.**

Leggings are NOT appropriate attire unless you wear a dress/shirt with them that comes to the knee.

Jeans are permitted on designated days as prescribed by the Principal. Jeans cannot have tears, rips, or holes. No skinny jeans.

T-Shirts may only be worn on Fridays

Dresses/Skirts must be knee-length

EMPLOYEE DISCIPLINE CODE

The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Principal and Department Heads have authority and responsibility to take disciplinary action, in accordance with Board of Education policies against employees whose conduct does not further the efficiency and best interests of the Richmond County Board of Education

SMOKING

As per Board Report, **THERE IS NO SMOKING IN PUBLIC BUILDINGS.** Violators will be subject to the conditions of the Employee Discipline Code.

CELLULAR TELEPHONES

Cell phones are only to be used during appropriate times and for school related issues. Phones are to be off and out of sight during the instructional day and when students are to be monitored

which includes recess. It is acceptable to use your phone during your planning period, duty free lunch, before and after school, or in the event of an emergency.

TEACHER ACKNOWLEDGEMENT FORM

I, _____, have read and understand the teacher's handbook that has been reviewed. By signing this form, I adhere to the policies presented to me. By signing this form, I recognize that deliberate neglect of these policies may lead to further disciplinary action by the Principal.

Please print name

Signature

Date _____