



Staff Handbook 2026-2027

Rock Spring Elementary School

372 GA-95

Rock Spring, Georgia 30739

(706) 764-1383 phone

(762) 296-1002 fax

#COMMITTED

**Brooke Murphy, Principal
Ali Parker, Assistant Principal**

Preface

This handbook is a guide for faculty and staff members to use in handling situations that may arise daily at Rock Spring Elementary. As needed, special situations will be explained in future communications. For the sake of consistency, all staff members are expected to observe these guidelines.

The policies and procedures outlined in this handbook are school specific and do not supersede any state or local board policies and/or procedures. It is important for all employees to be familiar with state, system, and school policies. Each employee has access to the Walker County School Board Policy Manual as well as the Georgia Code by accessing the following link:

[Board Members/Board Policies](#)

The policies established by the Board of Education will provide you with the necessary information, guidelines, and controls to function as an effective teacher. As an employee of the Board of Education, and as a professional, you are expected to read and become familiar with its contents. If you do not understand a policy or procedure, please ask an administrator for clarification.

It is important to have this teacher handbook accessible at all times and to ensure that it is updated when amendments, additions, and deletions.

It is the policy of the Walker County Board of Education not to discriminate on the basis of sex, age, race, disability, religion, color, or national origin in employment practices.

Rock Spring Elementary

Mission Essential Task List

All members of the Rock Spring Elementary faculty and staff are expected to support, in word and deed, the Walker County Schools mission statement: “Ensuring ALL students graduate...ready for college, ready for work, ready for life!” To support the district mission, RSE staff members are committed to:

- providing students with instruction in differentiated classrooms that observe the “Workshop Model” of instruction
- Ensure students’ classrooms are Standards Based in instruction, following the guidelines set forth by the district and school administration.
- ensuring that students receive collateral learning experiences that provide standards-based enrichment or remediation according to their needs.
- providing all students with an appropriate education in the least restrictive environment possible.
- an approach to behavior management that emphasizes appropriate behaviors, respect for all people, and an understanding of the importance of appropriate decision making.
- a system of incentives to acknowledge and reward achievement, appropriate behavior, good citizenship, and school spirit.
- providing students with opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities that will permit students to learn new skills, showcase them, and improve upon them.
- a school climate characterized by collaboration, teamwork, continuous professional and organizational improvement, and community partnership.

Each of the above tasks are essential to ensuring that RSE successfully does its part to support the district mission. These tasks embody the heart of the RSE philosophy of education, instruction, and classroom management. The following rules, guidelines, and procedures are extensions of the RSE philosophy and applications of these mission essential tasks.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 – Professional Guidelines & Expectations

- [1. Classroom Care](#)
- [2. Confidentiality](#)
- [3. Copyright Laws](#)
- [4. Drug-Free Workplace](#)
- [5. Ethics](#)
- [6. Hours for Faculty and Staff](#)
- [7. Duty Responsibilities](#)
- [8. Profanity/Sarcasm](#)
- [9. Resignation](#)
- [10. Sexual Harassment](#)
- [11. Professional Presentation and Attire](#)
- [12. Tobacco Products](#)
- [13. Welfare of Students - Court Mandated Reporting](#)
- [14. Professional Learning Communities Expectations](#)

Chapter 2 – Standard Operating Procedures

- [15. Acceptable Use Policy \(AUP\) for the Internet](#)
- [16. Audio-Visual Materials](#)
- [17. Chain-of-Command & Points of Contact](#)
- [18. Classroom Communication and Call Buttons](#)
- [19. Security](#)
- [20. Emergency Procedures](#)
- [21. Energy Conservation](#)
- [22. Faculty Meetings](#)
- [23. Fees, Donations, and Fundraisers](#)
- [24. Fiscal Policies](#)
- [25. Keys](#)
- [26. Leaves & Absences for Staff](#)
- [27. Media Center](#)
- [28. Medicines](#)
- [29. Parent Communication](#)
- [30. Permanent Records](#)
- [31. Phone Calls](#)
- [32. Property Inventory](#)
- [33. Tardies](#)
- [34. Teacher Evaluations](#)
- [35. Technology Requests](#)
- [36. Visitors/Deliveries](#)

Chapter 3 – Classroom Instruction.....

- [37. Elementary Classroom Standards of Excellence](#)
- [38. Georgia State Standards](#)
- [39. PLCs & Meetings During School Hours](#)
- [40. Emergency Lesson Plans & Classroom Rosters](#)
- [41. Grading & Assessment Philosophy and Procedures](#)
- [42. Hospital/Homebound and Home-Based Services](#)
- [43. Instructional Expectations for Standards-Based Classrooms](#)
- [44. Lesson Plans](#)
- [45. Required Reading Materials](#)
- [46. Special Education Provisions in Regular Education Classrooms](#)

Chapter 4 – Classroom Management & Discipline.....

- [47. Absence Notifications for Students](#)
- [48. Attendance Regulations](#)
- [49. Corporal Punishment](#)
- [50. Discipline](#)
- [51. Discipline Log](#)
- [52. Enforcement of School Rules and Procedures](#)
- [53. Food/Drinks](#)
- [54. Hall Duty](#)
- [55. Restroom Policy](#)
- [56. Suspension \(In-School Suspension\)](#)
- [57. Suspension \(Out-of-School Suspension\)](#)
- [58. Supervision of Students](#)

Chapter 5 – Student Life.....

- [59. Assemblies / Class Activities](#)
- [60. Checking Out \(Students\)](#)
- [61. Field Trips](#)

Appendix.....

Appendix A Code Of Ethics

All other forms on Rock Spring Dashboard OR In your Back to School Folder

Chapter 1

Professional Guidelines & Expectations

1. Classroom Care

Teachers are responsible for the reasonable care of their classroom. Teachers should have their students remove paper and trash from their desks and surrounding area before leaving their class each block. Teachers who conduct activities that may create spills or other unusual messes should plan to allow time for clean up before the end of the block.

Nothing should be attached to the walls or fixtures that cannot be completely removed. No nails may be driven into walls or fixtures without prior approval of an administrator. No tacks or staples should be used except in tackboards/strips designed specifically for such. All drawings and/or paintings on the walls should be approved by the principal.

At the end of each day, chairs should be stacked and placed nicely in (1) the hallway or (2) positioned in your classroom out of the way. The custodians will be cleaning your classroom floors daily. In order to help the custodians move quickly and efficiently, please set both classroom trash cans at the door. Custodians will not be able to clean effectively if the chairs are not stacked properly.

2. Confidentiality

All matters regarding students and personnel are strictly confidential. Do not discuss any confidential matters in the presence of students or allow confidential material to be left where it can be accessed. Discussing fellow faculty members, internal administrative matters, or other students in class is strictly forbidden. Grade books are strictly confidential and will be kept away from students and secured at all times.

The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits the disclosure of any “personally identifiable” information related to a student to anyone except the student, parent, and/or legal guardian. Therefore, all such personal information such as grades, attendance, discipline, special education, etc. is confidential and should not be posted, shared, or publicly announced.

Before publishing a student’s name or image in a form of media accessible to the public, confirm with the office or in Infinite Campus that the student has not been placed on a media restriction. In certain circumstances, families request that their student’s name or image be withheld from use in the school’s printed publications, the school’s social media platforms, or in general media outlets. Typically, students under this type of media restriction will be identified in Infinite Campus with a flag.

Confidentiality Handout

As an employee of a school district, you may have the opportunity to have access to information about students with special needs and their families. It is essential that every member of the educational team have a clear and firm understanding of the legal responsibilities to keep this information confidential and private. It is disrespectful and illegal to share any information with those who do not need to have access to this information.

Suggested Guidelines to Follow

1. Never discuss information about a student in a public place (e.g., faculty lounge, hallway, grocery store, etc.).
2. Never discuss information about one student with the parents of another student.
3. Never discuss information about one student with another student. (NOTE: If students with and without disabilities are engaged in a cooperative activity or peer tutoring situation, students may need to know some specific information about each other in order to be mutually supportive. In such situations, it is important for them – including the student's parents – to discuss what information is appropriate to share. For example, it may be helpful for a student without disabilities to know how to push his friend's wheelchair. It might also be important for a student to know that his friend has a short temper.
4. Never discuss information about a student with school personnel who are not considered members of that student's educational team.
5. Go through the proper channels in order to obtain a student's records or other personal information if you need to know.
6. Do not create personal files on a student or family.
7. If you have questions regarding any procedure concerning confidentiality, or about what constitutes or is covered by confidentiality, speak to your supervisor immediately and before doing anything.
8. Remember that e-mail messages must also maintain confidentiality.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF CONFIDENTIALITY

❖ *Individualized Education Program (IEP)*

❖ IEP Meetings

All documents pertaining to a student in special education are covered by confidentiality. The IEP will contain information about cognitive ability, academic achievement, social and emotional status, health issues, etc. that cannot be discussed with anyone but those who need and have access to this information.

The IEP is placed in a separate file, not in the student's permanent file. There is no indication in the student's permanent file that he/she receives services from special education. When this separate file is viewed, the IEP must be signed out-using the Access Sheet-on the front of the file. The sheet must document the date, the person's name, who is viewing the file, and the reason it needs to be viewed.

You may be asked to attend an IEP meeting to share information regarding the student. At these meetings, parents may share personal information which may or may not be documented in the IEP. Any information shared that will assist in developing an appropriate IEP should be documented in the IEP. **All information shared during these meetings is confidential.**

❖ *The Special Education Classroom*

Most schools do not have the luxury of private conference rooms, so consultations and conversations between teachers, paraprofessionals, parents, and related service providers frequently occur in special education classrooms. All comments and conversations are considered confidential and should not be shared or discussed with others.

❖ *The General Education Classroom*

Some personnel may work in one or several general education classrooms or be involved in activities in the general education classroom. It is imperative that one not discuss any teacher or student with others. You may observe an idea or an activity that you think would benefit another teacher or student, but before sharing the idea or activity, get permission from that teacher to share it, etc.

❖ ***Parents***

As an employee of the school district, you will have frequent contact with parents in the school setting and in the community. Remember that confidentiality applies also to the community. In the past lawsuits have been initiated on behalf of students when conversations about specific students have been overheard in public places. The only way to avoid this breach is to respect the confidentiality of each student. Remember that conversations regarding specific students should be confined to the school setting and occur only with adults who are directly involved with that student.

3. Copyright Laws

All teachers are required to comply with the copyright law, whether audio-visual or printed. Rock Spring Administration can answer any questions or concerns you may encounter.

4. Drug-Free Workplace

In accordance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, the Board of Education declares that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance or alcohol is prohibited in the workplace for all system employees. Violation of this policy could result in termination of employment and referral for prosecution.

5. Ethics

The Professional Standards Commission (PSC) has established a Code of Ethics for educators that all educators are expected to follow. [See Appendix A](#)

6. Hours for Faculty and Staff

Teachers are professionals. They are expected to be at their place of duty at the appropriate time. The school principal will establish duty hours at the beginning of each academic year (these hours may fluctuate depending upon the length of the instructional day prescribed at the district or state level). The contracted hours for teachers and staff are 7:00 am - 3:00 pm.

Sign-In/Out sheets will be placed in the mailroom. While exceptions may occur (e.g., chronic illnesses, family emergencies, etc.), excessive absences or routine failures to report to work on time are considered breaches of one's professional duties and responsibilities.

Leaving Early Procedure

Needing to leave before 2:00 pm requires half-day absence with sub

- See [26. Leaves & Absences for Staff](#)

Needing to leave after 2:00 pm requires the following:

- Email Ms. Murphy and Christa Johnson
- Find coverage if needed (i.e. you have students until 2:30)
- Sign-out in the notebook in Christa's office upon leaving

Leaving Campus During the School Day

Any staff member needing to leave campus during the school day must do the following:

- Email Ms. Murphy and Christa Johnson
- Sign-out and sign-in in the notebook in Christa's office upon leaving and returning

7. Duty Responsibilities

Duty rosters will be given to teachers at the beginning of the year. Teachers are responsible for being at assigned duty posts on time and until the assigned duty is completed. Teachers are expected to make arrangements to have another teacher cover their duty if they know, in advance, that they will be absent.

[2026-2027 Duty Roster](#)

8. Profanity/Sarcasm

The use of profanity or sarcasm toward or in the presence of students is strictly prohibited.

9. Resignation

Since teachers are employed by contract for one year, a teacher cannot resign without breaching the contract unless the Board of Education agrees to a release. If a teacher abandons a contract in a manner considered to be unprofessional conduct, the Professional Standards Commission could suspend that individual's teaching certificate.

10. Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interference with an individual's work performance or of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. Sexual harassment will, under no circumstances, be tolerated.

11. Professional Presentation & Attire

As representatives of our school and role models for our students, staff members are expected to maintain a professional appearance that reflects pride, respect, and

commitment to our school community.

- **General Expectation:** Daily attire should be professional, neat, and appropriate for an instructional environment. Athletic/loungewear (e.g., sweatpants, leggings as pants, joggers) is not considered standard professional attire.
- **Jeans:** Jeans are permitted on **Wednesdays and Fridays**, and on other days specifically designated by administration.
- **Role-Specific & Activity Exception:** Staff whose daily duties require specific attire (i.e. PE/AG) or staff participating in special activity days (field trips, workdays) may adjust their attire appropriately for safety and practicality while maintaining a neat, professional appearance.

12. Tobacco Products

The use of tobacco products by school employees is strictly prohibited on any Walker County Schools campus. No employee should use tobacco in the presence of any student on campus or at school events at ANY time. No employee should allow a student to use tobacco at any time while on campus or at school events at any time.

13. Welfare of Students - Court Mandated Reporting

The Walker County Board of Education adheres to the Georgia State Board of Education procedural policy of reporting child abuse and neglect in accordance with the legal mandate (Georgia Code Section 74-111) which requires Georgia educators to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the appropriate authorities.

The following guidelines shall be observed:

- a) Any child under eighteen (18) years of age who is believed to have had physical injury or injuries inflicted upon him/her other than by accidental means, by a parent or caretaker, or has been neglected or exploited by a parent or caretaker, or has been sexually assaulted, shall be identified to a child welfare agency providing protective services where the child lives, having been designated to be the County Department of Family and Children Services and the Department of Human Resources, or in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority.
- b) All school personnel suspecting child abuse and/or neglect shall make their report to a school guidance counselor or administrator. Persons making such reports in good faith are entitled to immunity.

14. Professional Learning Communities Expectations

Teachers must be in attendance for professional learning communities weekly. The PLC day will be set for Wednesdays. The second Wednesday of every month will be a PLC designated with administration in a faculty meeting setting. There are to be no **(IEP, MTSS, Parent)**

meetings planned during the grade-level PLC time. This time is set aside for you all to hear district-wide, important curriculum updates, participate in Professional Learning to support our School Improvement Plan, and analyze data to inform our instructional decisions. If you miss your PLC time; you will need to make it up with the academic coach. You are expected to contact the academic coach.

Chapter 2

Standard Operating Procedures

15. Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for the Internet

Teachers must be in compliance with the Walker County Acceptable Use Policy (AUP) for the Internet. Teachers are required to read the board policy and comply with its conditions.

16. Audio-Visual Materials

The use of movies or videos (including streaming media – e.g., YouTube, Netflix, etc.) in the classroom must be stated clearly in the week at a glance and should include the title of the video, rating, length, and most importantly, how it relates to the lesson and the performance standards it addresses. The use of brief clips (10 minutes or less) of streaming media from educational (e.g., United Streaming, GPB, etc.) or news (e.g., Fox News, CNN, C-SPAN) are allowed. Teachers are expected to use their professional discretion in ensuring that media shown from any site or media source are age appropriate, directly relevant to the instructional content, and brief/moderate in length.

Teachers are expected to be aware of copyright laws and regulations. When in doubt, they are expected to consult with an RSE administrator.

The two major concerns in using AV materials in the classroom are that:

- they support instruction.
- they use appropriate language and visuals.

AV materials that do not directly reinforce instruction are not to be used in the classroom. The use of AV materials for reward or entertainment purposes must be pre-approved by the principal.

17. Chain-of-Command & Points of Contact

It is important that questions, concerns, problems, or grievances be handled at the lowest possible level. All staff members are, therefore, expected to observe the school's chain-of-command and to encourage parents and students to observe the chain-of-command as well. Matters should be addressed to the next higher level only when they cannot be satisfactorily addressed.

The chain of command for RSE is as follows:

Student > Teacher > Assistant Principal > Principal > Superintendent > Board of Education.

[Points of Contact](#) - This is a document to ensure that teachers and staff members are contacting the correct person about questions that arise throughout the year.

18. Classroom Communication and Call Buttons

Classrooms are equipped with a wall-mounted panel and a classroom phone for office communication.

- **White Button (Quick Intercom Calls):** Push the **white button** to connect to the main office via intercom for quick, non-confidential requests or general assistance.
- **Classroom Phone (Confidential/Behavioral):** Please use your classroom phone for sensitive information, confidential student matters, or detailed conversations with the front office rather than the intercom. Behavior concerns.
 - Cochran and Underwood are the first line of response for behavioral issues.
 - Administration response is only for dangerous behaviors or requested by the Behavior Support Team (Cochran and Underwood).
- **Red Wall Button (Retired):** The red wall button is no longer used for emergencies.
- **Emergency Response:** All medical and behavioral emergencies must be initiated using your **CENTEGIX CrisisAlert badge (3 presses)** for staff/medical support).

19. Security

Building

The safety of our staff and students is our highest priority. Classroom doors, exterior doors, and windows are expected to remain closed & locked at all times.

Centegix is our emergency management system. As part of our campus security protocol, all staff members are required to wear their CENTEGIX CrisisAlert badge at all times while on school grounds.

- **Daily Expectation:** Badges must be worn on a lanyard around your neck or clipped to your clothing above the waist so they are immediately accessible. Do not leave your badge unattended.
- **3 Presses = Admin Need/Medical Alert:** Pressing the button **3 times** alerts building administration and medical responders to your exact location for situations requiring localized help, such as medical emergencies or severe behavioral issues.
- **Continuous Presses = Campus Lockdown:** Repeatedly and continuously pressing the button triggers an immediate **full campus-wide lockdown** for critical active threats. Emergency personnel are responding. The building is going into a level 3 lockdown immediately.

Cyber

Under no circumstances should Infinite Campus, or another school network passwords be shared with a student.

Under no circumstances should a student's grades, disciplinary record (including consequences), medical information, testing data, or other confidential information be

shared with other students, other parents, the media (including social network platforms), or any other outlet.

20. Emergency Procedures

See Site Safety Plan, Fire Drill Procedures, Severe Weather Drill Procedures, and Lockdown Procedures/Intruder Drill. Classroom doors and outside doors should remain closed and locked at all times. All of these materials can be found on the [Site Safety Page of the Launch Pad](#).

Every staff member should wear their Centegix badge daily.

21. Energy Conservation

All staff and faculty members are expected to be proactive at conserving energy. When a classroom is not in use, lights, SmartBoards, etc. should be turned off. Classroom doors and outside doors should remain closed at all times.

22. Faculty Meetings

Administration will host one grade-level faculty meeting on the **second Wednesday of every month**. Staff who do not have a regularly scheduled planning period during the day will meet on that same Wednesday at **2:45 PM**. In the event that an after school faculty meeting is needed, all certified staff are expected to attend. If a conflict arises it is the professional expectation of the staff member to notify Ms. Murphy.

23. Fees, Donations, and Fundraisers

State standards ensure a free education for students. Fees or other monies cannot usually be required; however, monies can be solicited from students under the following guidelines:

- Any solicitations must be in writing to the parent requesting those funds.
- The letter must state that the contributions are purely voluntary, what the donations will be used to purchase, and that no student will be penalized or denied full participation for failure to contribute.
- All such requests must be cleared through the principal and a copy of the letter must be kept on file.
- Receipts must be given for all monies received and monies must be handled according to school policy.

Staff members, parents, and students will occasionally be asked to participate in fundraisers to support the school. Prior to starting any fundraising project, the project must be approved using the Walker County Schools Fundraising Form. All fundraisers must be approved by the principal and the superintendent. In certain situations, the principal may

advise the fundraiser sponsor that the fundraiser requires board approval.

24. Fiscal Policies

All monies for clubs, organizations, and other financial matters pertaining to Rock Spring Elementary shall be handled through the principal's office. No petty cash funds or special funds will be allowed. All monies must be deposited with the bookkeeper prior to the completion of business each day. Each deposit must be accompanied with a RSE Deposit Slip.

Without exception, no purchases should be made without a pre-approved purchase order.

Any school organization that has an activity account for deposit or withdrawal of student activity funds must follow these procedures.

- All fundraising projects must request the principal's and superintendent's approval, using the Walker County Schools Fundraising Project Tracking Form (see Appendix E), and receive approval *prior* to implementing the project.
- Neither advertisement nor collection of monies should begin prior to receiving final approval from the superintendent.
- Fund-raising activities should be planned and submitted at the beginning of the school year, or as early as possible. This will allow better organization and less competition among organizations for funds.
- Organizations are strictly prohibited from conducting fundraising activities during class time.
- All monies received from students must have a written receipt by the individual teacher.
- At the completion of a fundraising event/project, the reconciliation portion of the project tracking form must be completed in order to account for all monies. Records from vendors and all other supporting documentation must be submitted to the school secretary along with the completed Fundraising Project Tracking Form.

All purchases of materials using state/local funds must be made with local or county purchase orders and must receive prior approval.

25. Keys

Keys are a very important security item. Teachers are expected to maintain control of their keys at all times. Under no circumstance should school keys be given to a student. The cost to replace lost keys is \$10 per key. The cost for rekeying a classroom door is \$125. The cost for rekeying the building is approximately \$5000. Security Badges must be maintained and kept in good condition. Please keep up with the badge and make sure that you are using the security badge given to you by the WCS Facilities Department. .

26. Leaves & Absences for Staff

Preplanned Sick Absence

If you know of an absence prior to the date (i.e planned doctor's appointments, etc.):

1. Complete the staff absence form at least 48 hours in advance
 - a. Please make sure you have a sub secured and noted on the form
2. Turn in the form to Ms. Murphy's box for signature
3. Ms. Murphy will submit to Christa for processing

Personal Day

When you are requesting a personal day:

1. Complete the staff absence form **at least 7 days in advance with reason** and name of secured sub
2. Turn in the completed form to Ms. Murphy's box for approval
3. If approved:
 - a. Ms. Murphy will submit to Christa for processing
 - b. Christa will return a signed copy of form to your box
4. If not approved:
 - a. Ms. Murphy will write why on the form and return to your box

Day of Absence

In the event that you are sick the morning of or a personal emergency happens:

1. Notify Ms. Murphy **and** Christa Johnson via email immediately.
2. Call the approved sub list and secure a sub. **IF** a sub cannot be obtained from calling by 7:00, call the school to notify Christa.
3. **A sick-leave form must be completed upon your return to school.** Christa will place the form in your box.

If a teacher is absent for personal reasons, the Report of Absence form must be completed and submitted to Christa Johnson with Ms. Murphy's approval at least 5 days in advance.

If a teacher is absent due to participation in a professional event, a Request for Professional Participation form must be completed and submitted to Christa Johnson.

27. Media Center

All Media Center materials must be checked out through the media center specialist. No materials or equipment may be removed without the media center specialist's approval. Teachers may reserve the Media Center for classroom use after coordinating with the media specialist. *Teachers must be in the Media Center with their classes at all times.*

28. Medicines

Students are not permitted to use, possess, or distribute any drugs, prescription or otherwise, while they are at school (with the exception of cough drops). Students are required to surrender all medications to the nurse or the receptionist immediately upon their arrival at school so they can be stored and subsequently dispensed. All medications must be in the original container. The school nurse or receptionist may administer drugs to a student under the following guidelines:

- a) All medicine shall be in a container labeled with the student's name, the medicine name, the doctor's name, etc.
- b) Parents must provide a written request for the school to administer medicine as well as written instructions from a doctor as to how to administer the medication (i.e. time, dosage, etc.).

29. Parent Communication

Communication is one of the most important ways we build strong relationships between home and school. We are committed to maintaining timely, respectful, and professional communication that supports students while also honoring the time and responsibilities of our teachers and staff. The following expectations have been established to ensure communication remains productive, respectful, and effective for everyone.

Communication Hours:

- Teachers will respond between
 - Monday - Friday
 - Before school - 7:00 AM - 7:30 AM
 - After school - 2:30 PM - 4:30 PM (2:30-3:00 PM - required, 3:00-4:30 - optional)
 - During planning period (varies depending on grade level)
- Messages received after hours are considered received the next school day.
- No expectation exists that teachers respond during evenings, weekends, holidays, or school breaks.

Response Time:

- Teachers have up to one school day to respond.
 - An immediate response is not necessary or expected.
- Communication received over the weekend or on a break will be addressed within one school day of returning

Urgent Issues:

- Dojo is **NOT** monitored continuously

- Transportation changes, emergencies, or attendance concerns should always be communicated by calling the school office.

Tone:

- Messages should remain respectful and professional
- If a conversation becomes emotional or complex, the teacher may request a phone call or conference instead of continuing through the dojo.

Communication Options:

- Phone call - preferred
- Email - chain of documentation (more official)
- Dojo - pictures, announcements, celebrations, updates, quick messages

Communication Documentation:

- Any time a phone call is made, it is the expectation of the teacher to document the phone call in the Contact Log within Infinite Campus
 1. Login to Infinite Campus
 2. Search for the Student:
 - Click the magnifying glass
 - Type the student's last name
 - Select the student
 3. Click the Contact Log
 4. Click "New"
 5. Complete the Contact Log
 - Module: "General"
 - Complete the required fields
 - Enter a brief description
 - In no one answers, document the attempt
 6. Click "Save"

DOJO:

- **Appropriate Uses**
 - Quick Questions
 - Reminders
 - Sharing classroom pictures
 - Classroom celebrations
 - Simple communication
 - Student discipline resulting in a minor incident
- **NOT Appropriate:**
 - Lengthy concerns
 - Student discipline resulting in a major office referral
 - Medical issues
 - Personal concerns

- ANYTHING confidential

30. Permanent Records

All students are required to have a permanent record on file. Records are stored and maintained by the school Registrar. Teachers are expected to take time to review and record student information concerning progress, test scores, etc.

31. Phone Calls

Telephones are provided for teachers to use for school related business. Personal calls should be limited, kept to a short duration, and should not occur during instructional time. Teachers should not be on their cell phones during times they should be supervising students and/or instruction should be taking place.

32. Property Inventory

Property inventory will be kept by individual teachers, administrators, academic coaches, custodians and office staff.

33. Tardies

Students tardy to homeroom will report to the school receptionist. Students must have a tardy slip from the office in order to enter homeroom or any class thereafter. If a student reports to homeroom or any other class without a tardy slip, the teacher is expected to send the student to sign in and obtain a slip.

34. Teacher Evaluations

All teachers will be evaluated annually, by the school's administrators, using the state-approved evaluation system.

35. Technology Requests

In the event that technological difficulties, malfunctions, or breakages are experienced with classroom technology (e.g. laptops, ViewSonics, white boards, iPads, etc.), teachers are to contact Stacy Wallin and she will complete the form provided by the district and notify Ms. Murphy, if necessary.

36. Visitors/Deliveries

Visitors are not permitted on campus without first reporting to the office, signing in with the receptionist, and receiving an identification badge. Persons needing to see a student or teacher must make the request in the main office. Teachers must not have visitors during instructional time under any circumstance. Parents are not permitted in the building to drop off their child after the first five days of school. If a parent requests to observe a classroom for any reason, there is a process. Please notify Ms. Murphy if this request is made by a parent.

Deliveries such as doordash, flowers, etc. are permitted as long as it does not interfere with or disrupt the learning environment. Doordash can be delivered and left up front. The teacher may come and retrieve it during their planning period and/or lunch period. If this becomes a distraction or disruption to the learning environment at any point, it will not be allowed.

Chapter 3

Classroom Instruction

37. Elementary Classroom Standards of Excellence

[Elementary Classroom Standards of Excellence](#) are expected to be implemented with fidelity.

38. Georgia State Standards

Teachers are expected to consistently and thoroughly implement the Georgia State Standards in their classrooms, ensuring instruction is aligned with state expectations and promotes high levels of student learning.

39. PLCs & Meetings During School Hours

To facilitate the observance of state and district curriculum maps, and to ensure that classrooms maintain a focus on standards-based teaching, best practices, and peer mentorship, Rock Spring Elementary places tremendous value on grade-level, departmental (content-area), vertical and horizontal team planning.

To ensure building-wide consistency, teachers are expected to observe, in general, the following planning schedule:

Meeting Schedule

Monday - IEP/504/MTSS/Parent Meetings

Tuesday - IEP/504/MTSS/Parent Meetings

Wednesday - Grade Level PL

Thursday - *SDI Coach Meetings/504/MTSS/Parent Meetings

Friday - Individual Classroom Planning

It is the mission of RSE administrators to first protect instructional time, but to also protect teacher's planning. It is understood that this schedule may need to be modified on occasion to accommodate special circumstances with parents and meetings, but every effort should be made to stick to this schedule to allow for maximum planning time.

IEP Meetings

To ensure compliance, secure administrative coverage, and respect everyone's schedule, all IEP meetings must be scheduled using the [SPED Google Calendar Booking Page](#).

- **Advance Booking:** Because we have limited LEA availability in the building, calendar slots fill up fast. Case managers should plan ahead and book meeting times at least one month in advance.
- **10-Day Notice Requirement:** Please keep the mandatory 10-day prior written

notice requirement in mind when selecting your meeting dates on the booking calendar.

- **Securing Times & Flexibility:** Selecting an available slot on the booking page automatically reserves your meeting time and secures your LEA (Ms. Murphy or Mrs. Parker). Please offer multiple time options when coordinating with your team beforehand, as flexibility is essential to avoiding scheduling conflicts.
- **Meeting Windows:** Every effort should be made to hold IEP meetings during the teacher's designated planning period. Meetings may occasionally occur before or after school if all required team members agree and are available.
- **Required Attendance:** Every IEP meeting requires the SPED Teacher/Case Manager, an LEA, and at least one General Education Teacher. Case managers should distribute General Education invitations equitably across teams while taking into consideration which teacher best supports the student's specific needs.

MTSS Tier 3 Meetings

MTSS meetings will be scheduled based on recommendations from the Academic Student Intervention Team and our school psychologist. Once the recommendation is made, homeroom teachers should set up a meeting and invite all administrators via Google Calendar. Meetings should only be scheduled on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays (if needed).

40. Emergency Lesson Plans & Classroom Rosters (3 Days Worth)

Three days worth of lesson plans should be accessible by a teammate in the event you are unexpectedly absent. The following should be in your emergency binder/folder located in an accessible place.

- Seating Chart
- Classroom Rosters
- Classroom Schedule
- Connections Schedule
- Duty Schedule
- Lunch Information (times, assigned tables, etc.)
- Split List

*In the event a substitute teacher is unavailable, your classroom will be split into the other classrooms on the hallway or we will have a sub rotation. You will need to have a work packet available for your students in the event a split/rotation is necessary.

41. Grading & Assessment Philosophy and Procedures

Progress Report Schedule 2026-2027

	October 23, 2026
	January 15, 2027
	March 12, 2027
	May 21, 2027

Elementary Grade Scale

90 - 100	Distinguished Learner
80 - 89	Proficient Learner
70 - 79	Developing Learner
0 - 69	Beginning Learner
100% = Standards Mastery	
0% = Formative Assessments	

42. Hospital/Homebound and Home-Based Services

Parents applying for hospital/homebound instruction for their child must have their applications approved by the superintendent. When necessary, instructor(s) will be recruited by the school's administrative team. Students who qualify for homebound services are to be counted present beginning the day that a certified physician states that the student requires these services. The homebound teacher is responsible for contacting classroom teachers for assignments for the student, and teachers are expected to be responsive and prompt in providing these materials.

Homebound services are not to be confused with home-based services. Home-based services refer to instructional services for special education students who have been removed from a school setting for disciplinary or other reasons. These students are referred to the program through the IEP process. When a student is assigned to home-based services, the procedures are similar to those for homebound services. The administrative team will recruit an instructor and the instructor will coordinate with the classroom teacher(s) to collect assignments.

If homebound or home based education is mentioned as a need by a parent, please contact Ms. Cochran accordingly.

43. Instructional Expectations for Standards-Based Classrooms

Rock Spring Elementary is a standards-based school. In addition to the instructional guidelines outlined elsewhere in this handbook *every* teacher is expected to observe the following guidelines:

- Instruction begins when the students walk in the door. Minimize the amount of time used for administrative matters (i.e., roll call, warm ups, announcements, etc.), and maximize instructional time. As a general rule, teachers are expected to use all of their instructional time. If free time or class celebrations are occasionally planned, they should be written into the week at a glance and should be strictly regulated.
- State performance standards and active classroom artifacts shall be posted. (i.e. standards posted; relevant anchor charts; classroom schedule)

- Student artifacts shall be posted.
- **Workshop Model:**
 - Walker County has adopted the Workshop Model as the district-wide instructional model. While teachers are expected to deviate from this model occasionally, classroom practices should generally reflect the following:
 - An introduction/mini-lesson to the content
 - Independent Learning with Small Groups
 - Closing with a check for understanding
- Teachers are expected to use a variety of differentiation strategies.
- Teachers are expected to teach every student (e.g., direct instruction, formal & informal conferencing, remediation, enrichment, accommodations, or modifications)
- Regardless of the co-teaching model used in an inclusion classroom, both the general education teacher and the inclusion teacher are considered equal partners in the instruction of every student. Co-teachers are not to be treated as secretaries and are not to be sent on errands during the instructional period. Co-teachers and regular education teachers are, furthermore, expected to collaborate in planning, and class accommodations and modifications are to be reflected in lesson plans. Specially designed instruction is expected and should be evident.
- Teachers are expected to use the instructional period for direct instruction, small groups, conferencing, enrichment, and remediation.
- Teachers are expected to provide students with formal and informal feedback (i.e., conferences, assessments, practice assignments, etc.) as well as occasions for students to engage in reflective self-feedback.
- Teachers are expected to be alert to any unusual behaviors exhibited by students. These should be promptly reported to the office.

44. Lesson Plans

Teachers are required to submit a Week-at-a-Glance lesson plan for each subject area. Plans should include:

- The **topic/unit**
- Each teacher will include a [Focus Statement](#) in their lesson plans.
 - Reading and Math - daily
 - Science, Social Studies, OG, and Writing - weekly
- Relevant **standards** (with full code and wording)
- Planned **assessments**
- Notes on **differentiation** strategies

Lesson plans are due **by Monday morning** for the upcoming week and must be uploaded to your designated **Lesson Plan Drive Folder**.

Please label files clearly using the format:

Week [#] – [Month Day–Day] (e.g., *Week 1 – August 6–9*).

45. Required Reading Material

Required reading materials including textbooks are to be approved by the Board of Education and purchased with Local Board of Education or school funds only. Teachers may not require students to purchase reading materials required for classes in the Walker County Schools.

46. Special Education Provisions in Regular Education Classrooms

Special education teachers will provide all teachers with access to IEPs of students with disabilities. IEPs can be found in SLDS (accessed through Infinite Campus). Special Education teachers will provide a list of special education students to each grade-level and connections teacher.

Chapter 4

Classroom Management & Discipline

47. Absence Notification for Students

Homeroom teachers will contact counselor and attendance clerk if a student has been absent 3 consecutive days without any contact from the family. The attendance clerk will be the main point of contact for absences. Counselors (for their specific grade-levels) and Mrs. Cherie' Tinklepaugh will be the main point of contact when students are absent.

48. Attendance Regulations

Student safety and accountability is the teacher's most fundamental obligation. In most cases, student accountability can be ensured by observing proper attendance procedures in every class and by promptly reporting any discrepancies to the office. Parents must submit a hand-written attendance note, an email to rseattendance@walkerschools.org and/or a phone call to the front office. We are no longer accepting attendance excuses through DOJO. The only expectation of a teacher in that situation is to reply: *"Please send this to rseattendance@walkerschools.org."*

- a) **Homeroom Attendance:** Homeroom teachers must submit attendance in Infinite Campus each morning, **no later than 8:00am.**
- b) **Content Attendance:** For our departmentalized grade levels, you must take attendance in Infinite Campus at each class change. This is imperative as it is required to be reported to the state. You will be taking attendance 4 times during the day: homeroom, for class 1, at the change for class 2, and at the change for class 3.
 - 3rd and 4th Grade attendance periods: ELA, Reading, Math, HR.
 - 5th Grade attendance periods: Reading, Math, Science

49. Corporal Punishment

Under no circumstances will corporal punishment be administered by a classroom teacher as part of a classroom management plan.

50. Discipline

Behavior Philosophy

At Rock Spring Elementary, every student will be treated with dignity and respect.

Rock Spring Elementary believes that authentic relationships are essential to effective classroom management. Individuals typically become educators because they care about children. When a student is convinced that a teacher genuinely cares about them, the teacher becomes, essentially, a living, breathing classroom management plan.

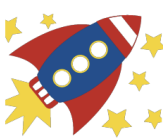
Classroom Behavior Plan

- A classroom behavior plan should be in place and expectations posted in your classroom.
- At the beginning of the year, parents should be notified of your classroom behavior plan, and any criteria for incentives/rewards should be clearly communicated in advance
- A copy of the behavior plan will be submitted by each classroom and/or grade level team at the beginning of each year to administration.
- Behavior expectations should be set for all students based on our Rock Spring SOAR Behavior Matrix .
- All teachers will have their own Positive Behavior Rules posted in their classrooms, as well as follow the positive school-wide rules and enforce the rules developed by all of our staff.

Rewards/Incentives

- **Any criteria for incentives/rewards will be emailed to the Principal for approval prior to communicating criteria to parents.**
- Monthly or more regular positive behavior celebrations are permitted and encouraged. These can be determined by each grade level based on the SOAR matrix, positive dojo points, and other factors and/or criteria set by each grade level and clearly communicated to both students and parents.

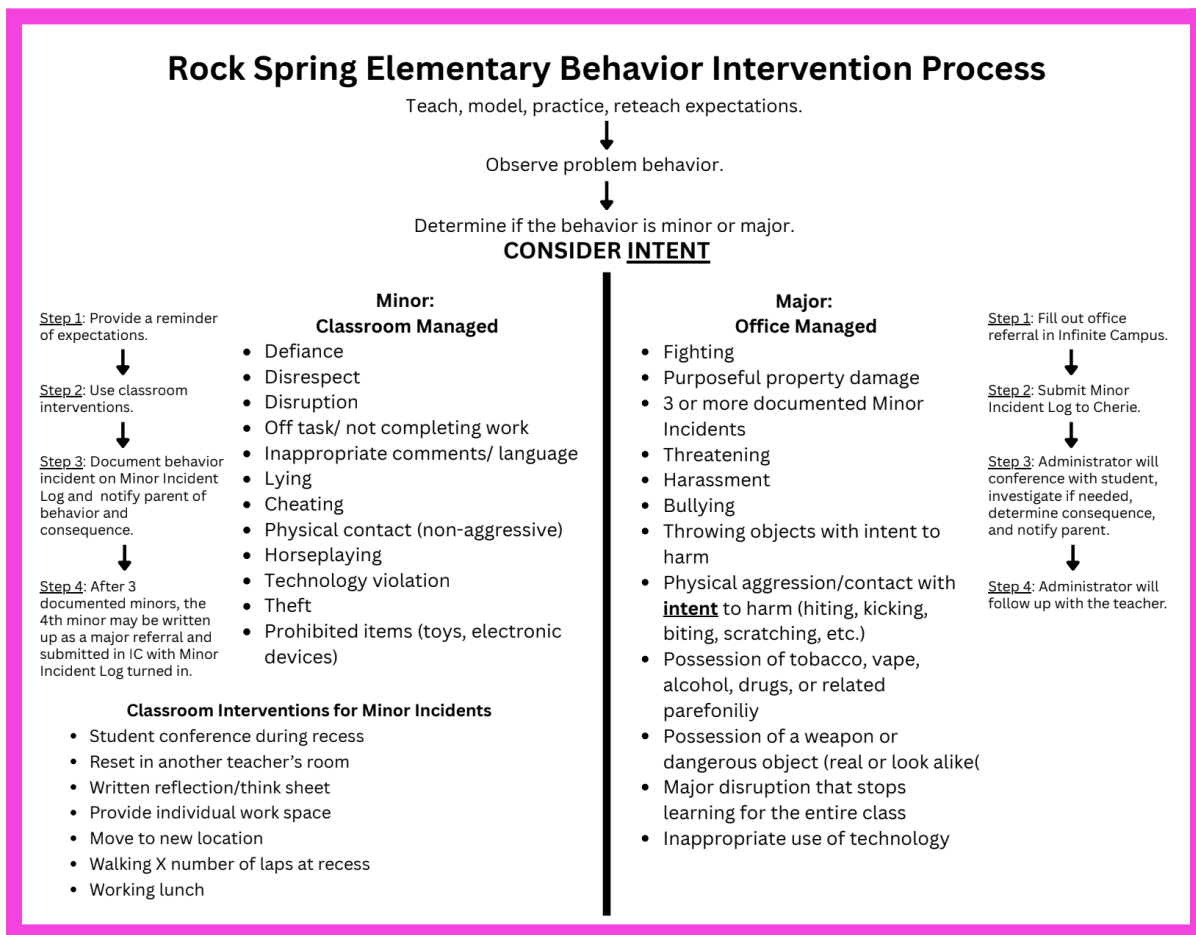
SOAR Behavior Matrix:



	Bus	Hallway	Playground	Bathroom	Lunch Room	Public Area
S tay Safe	- Hands/feet to self - Listen to the driver	- Walk on track - Face the front	- Use equipment properly	- Wash hands - Feet on floor - Water in sink	- Stay seated - Walking feet	- Stay with your group - Listen for your teacher
O wn your behavior	- Keep bus clean - Bottom to Bottom - Back to Back	- Hands at your side - Walking feet	- Listen for teacher's voice - Leave mulch on the ground	- Go - Flush - Wash - Leave	- Clean up - Use good manners - Hands/feet to self	- Hands/feet to yourself - Be a good listener
A lways work together	- Remind others of bus rules	- Show others hallway rules	- Remind others of playground rules	- Remind others of bathroom rules	- Lead by example	- Rockets Represent - Be awesome
R espect for all	- Voice level 1 - Use cotton words	- Voice level 0	- Use good sportsmanship	- Respect privacy - Keep bathrooms clean - Voice level 0	- Voice level 1	- Use good manners - quiet signal

Classroom Management/Disciplinary Protocols:

- Teachers are expected to differentiate between *rules* and *procedures*. Violations of procedures result in teaching/coaching/re-training, while violations of rules result in disciplinary consequences (e.g., a student should not be referred to the office for failing to bring a pencil or for walking on the wrong side of the hallway, but should be pulled aside for individual conferencing or coaching). Students are *not* to be referred to the office for procedural violations.
- The task of classroom management is part of a teacher's obligations and responsibilities. Teachers are expected to resolve *most* of their own discipline issues at the classroom level, understanding that there are no shortages of teachable/coachable moments with students and that often, behavioral infractions can be resolved through private, individual conferencing with that student and their parents.
- Minor behaviors are relatively minor violations of school rules that are normally expected to be addressed at the classroom or team level. Major behaviors are violations of school rules that are extraordinary and pose a clear and immediate threat to the safety of others or to the orderliness of the learning environment. These behaviors ought to be immediately referred to the office. They include, but are not limited to:



[Behavior Intervention Process Flow Chart](#)
[Minor Behavior Log](#)

Discipline Referral Procedures:

Minor/Classroom Managed:

1. Provide a reminder of expectations
2. Use classroom interventions
3. Document behavior incident on Minor Incident Log and notify parent of behavior and consequence
4. After 3 documented minors, the 4th minor may be written up as a major referral and submitted in IC with Minor Incident Log turned in

Major/Office Managed - Falls Under 2 Categories:

Track A: Immediate Major (Removal Required)

Examples: Physical fights, weapons, active safety threats, severe destruction of property, or extreme safety risks requiring immediate admin presence or removal.

1. **Teacher Action (Immediate Safety):**
 - **Press Centegix Badge (3 presses)** or call the main office for immediate assistance/escort.

- Focus on maintaining classroom safety and supervising remaining students.
- 2. **Admin Action:**
 - An admin responds immediately to escort the student to the office.
 - Begins immediate safety intervention.
- 3. **Teacher Follow-Up:**
 - Completes the Infinite Campus referral and submits any documentation **by the end of the school day.**
- 4. **Admin Follow-Up:**
 - Conducts initial investigation, contacts parents regarding immediate safety/disciplinary steps, and follows up with the teacher.

Track B: Standard/Investigative Major (*Managed via Referral Process — Student Stays in Routine*)

Examples: Refusal to follow directions, defiance, foul language, situation that has settled.

1. **Teacher Action:**
 - Address the immediate behavior using classroom management strategies.
 - Contact Underwood/Cochran if deescalation support is needed.
 - Complete the **Office Referral in Infinite Campus** and attach the Minor Incident Log (if applicable).
 - **Teacher Parent Contact:** Give the parent a brief heads-up via email/phone: *"I submitted an office referral today regarding [behavior]. Admin will be in touch once they review and process the referral."*
2. **Admin Action:**
 - Reviews the referral as part of daily administrative workflow.
 - Investigates the incident, conferences with the student at an appropriate time, and determines consequences.
 - Contacts the parent with the official administrative resolution once the investigation is complete.
3. **Admin Follow-Up:**
 - Updates the teacher on the referral status/outcome in Infinite Campus or via email.

51. Discipline Log

Teachers are to keep documentation with dates and descriptions of student behaviors and corrective action taken on the RSE minor behavior form. Any parent contact made by phone or email should be made using the contact log in Infinite Campus.

1. Login to Infinite Campus
2. Search for the Student:
 - Click the magnifying glass
 - Type the student's last name
 - Select the student
3. Click the Contact Log
4. Click "New"

5. Complete the Contact Log
 - Module: “General”
 - Complete the required fields
 - Enter a brief description
 - In no one answers, document the attempt
6. Click “Save”

52. Enforcement of School Rules and Procedures

All faculty and staff share the responsibility of upholding and reinforcing school rules and procedures. Teachers are expected to explicitly teach these expectations starting on the first day of school, after extended breaks, and as often as needed to ensure consistency and clarity.

Classroom teachers serve as the primary point of contact for communicating with families regarding student behavior. Maintaining open and proactive communication helps build strong school-home partnerships and supports positive student outcomes.

53. Food/Drinks

Teachers are expected to exercise their own discretion regarding the consumption of beverages, food, gum, or candy in their classrooms.

54. Hall Duty

All teachers are expected to monitor the hallways during class changes, before and after school.

55. Restroom Policy

Students should go to the bathroom with their class during a planned restroom break. Students should be allotted a certain amount of extra bathroom breaks each week (unless documented medical needs). This alleviates students trying to get out of class and avoid work. Parents shall be contacted if the students abuse bathroom privileges.

56. Suspension (In-school Suspension-ISS)

Students assigned ISS are considered present. Teachers are expected to provide ISS students with appropriate assignments, and the students are to be given full credit for assignments completed.

Students assigned to ISS may not participate in any after-school activity (track, cross country, clubs, etc.) *until after their ISS is over (they may participate on the day ISS ends).*

Please remember that teachers CANNOT assign ISS.

57. Suspension (Out-of-School Suspension)

Students assigned to OSS are prohibited from being on any Walker County School grounds or participating in any extra-curricular activity from the time of the assignment until the day after their final assigned day.

Students may request make-up work and receive full credit for all completed assignments.

58. Supervision of Students

The supervision of students is a responsibility shared by all staff members. Teachers are expected to avoid being distracted by conversation and remain alert for potential problems when serving duties.

Students are not to be left unsupervised in any classroom for any reason. If a teacher must leave class for any emergency, they are expected to secure the help of an administrator or a fellow teacher who is unencumbered.

All teachers are expected to be on duty outside their classrooms during class changes. All teachers are technically "on duty" all the time, and are expected to monitor all students even if they are not currently in their classroom or on their grade level.

Students are in the school's care until a parent relieves the school. Any teacher supervising students after school is responsible for their supervision until a parent picks them up.

Suppose a student is involved in an accident where an injury (major or minor) occurs. In that case, the supervising teacher must submit a Walker County Schools Student Accident Report to Cherie' Tinklepaugh.

Chapter 5

Student Life

59. Assemblies/Class Activities

Teachers are responsible for escorting their classes to assemblies and other activities. This will be done in an orderly manner. Teachers will be expected to stay with their classes during these activities and assist in monitoring student behavior, and ensure that all students return to class when the activity is completed.

60. Checking Out (Students)

Students may only be checked out in the front office by authorized individuals listed on their student emergency card. The latest a student can check out is 2:00 PM.

61. Field Trips

Each grade level can go on ONE big field trip per semester. All field trips must be planned at least three (3) weeks ahead and receive approval from the principal.

To plan instructional field trips, teachers must follow the protocol outlined in the Field Trip Protocol Information Form and complete all relevant forms outlined in the protocol. Typically, instructional field trips must support standards-based instructional goals. Teachers are expected to incorporate the instructional field trip into the lesson plan. If Walker County bus transportation is going to be used, the request must be made with the front office and the Walker County Schools Transportation Coordinator at the time that the field trip request is approved, but no less than two weeks before the scheduled field trip date.

If a student loses their form or otherwise fails to complete the form by the day of the field trip, the school may receive permission through a written letter from the parent or through a telephone conference (all parents and guardians are required to complete and sign a Walker County Schools Student Information Card/Emergency Card which contains a section for parents to grant or decline blanket permission for their students to participate in school field trips).

Students are strictly prohibited from participating in field trips until their parents or guardians have completed the Walker County Schools Student Information Card through Infinite Campus.

Field trip sponsors are responsible for coordinating with homeroom teachers to complete the Request Bag Lunch form. These forms are to be submitted to the school's cafeteria manager no later than three weeks before the day of the field trip.

Appendix

A. Code of Ethics

Effective January 1, 2018

505-6-.01 THE CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS

(1) Introduction. The Code of Ethics for Educators defines the professional behavior of educators in Georgia and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Georgia Professional Standards Commission has adopted standards that represent the conduct generally accepted by the education profession. The code defines unethical conduct justifying disciplinary sanction and provides guidance for protecting the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators, and assuring the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.

(2) Definitions

(a) “Breach of contract” occurs when an educator fails to honor a signed contract for employment with a school/school system by resigning in a manner that does not meet the guidelines established by the Georgia Professional Standards Commission.

(b) “Certificate” refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate, license, or permit issued by authority of the Professional Standards Commission.

(c) “Child endangerment” occurs when an educator disregards a substantial and/or unjustifiable risk of bodily harm to the student.

(d) “Educator” is a teacher, school or school system administrator, or other education personnel who holds a certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission and persons who have applied for but have not yet received a certificate. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, “educator” also refers to paraprofessionals, aides, and substitute teachers.

(e) “Student” is any individual enrolled in the state’s public or private schools from preschool through grade 12 or any individual under the age of 18. For the purposes of the Code of Ethics for Educators, the enrollment period for a graduating student ends on August 31 of the year of graduation.

(f) “Complaint” is any written and signed statement from a local board, the state board, or one or more individual residents of this state filed with the Professional Standards Commission alleging that an educator has breached one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators. A “complaint” will be deemed a request to investigate.

(g) “Revocation” is the invalidation of any certificate held by the educator.

(h) “Denial” is the refusal to grant initial certification to an applicant for a certificate.

(i) “Suspension” is the temporary invalidation of any certificate for a period of time specified by the Professional Standards Commission.

(j) “Reprimand” admonishes the certificate holder for his or her conduct. The reprimand cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action.

(k) “Warning” warns the certificate holder that his or her conduct is unethical. The warning cautions that further unethical conduct will lead to a more severe action.

(l) “Monitoring” is the quarterly appraisal of the educator’s conduct by the Professional Standards Commission through contact with the educator and his or her employer. As a condition of monitoring, an educator may be required to submit a criminal background check (GCIC). The Commission specifies the length of the monitoring period. 505-6-.01 Page 2

(m) “No Probable Cause” is a determination by the Professional Standards Commission that, after a preliminary

investigation, either no further action need be taken or no cause exists to recommend disciplinary action.

(3) Standards

(a) Standard 1: **Legal Compliance** - An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the commission or conviction of a felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude; of any other criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, trafficking, sale, or possession of a controlled substance or marijuana as provided for in Chapter 13 of Title 16; or of any other sexual offense as provided for in Code Section 16-6-1 through 16-6-17, 16-6-20, 16-6-22.2, or 16-12-100; or any other laws applicable to the profession. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought; a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted; and a situation where an adjudication of guilt or sentence was otherwise withheld or not entered on the charge or the charge was otherwise disposed of in a similar manner in any jurisdiction.

(b) Standard 2: **Conduct with Students** - An educator shall always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. committing any act of child abuse, including physical and verbal abuse;
2. committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment;
3. committing any sexual act with a student or soliciting such from a student;
4. engaging in or permitting harassment of or misconduct toward a student that would violate a state or federal law;
5. soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, or physical relationship with a student;
6. furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student; or
7. failing to prevent the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs by students under the educator's supervision (including but not limited to at the educator's residence or any other private setting).

(c) Standard 3: **Alcohol or Drugs** - An educator shall refrain from the use of alcohol or illegal or unauthorized drugs during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. being on school or Local Unit of Administration (LUA)/school district premises or at a school or a LUA/school district-related activity while under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs; and
2. being on school or LUA/school district premises or at a school-related activity involving students while under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcohol. A school-related activity includes, but is not limited to, any activity sponsored by the school or school system (booster clubs, parent-teacher organizations, or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum i.e. Foreign Language trips, etc). 505-6-.01 Page 3

(d) Standard 4: **Honesty** - An educator shall exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to, falsifying, misrepresenting, or omitting:

1. professional qualifications, criminal history, college or staff development credit and/or degrees, academic award, and employment history;
2. information submitted to federal, state, local school districts and other governmental agencies;
3. information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel;
4. reasons for absences or leaves; 5. information submitted in the course of an official inquiry/investigation; and 6.

information submitted in the course of professional practice.

(e) Standard 5: **Public Funds and Property** - An educator entrusted with public funds and property shall honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. misusing public or school-related funds;
2. failing to account for funds collected from students or parents;
3. submitting fraudulent requests or documentation for reimbursement of expenses or for pay (including fraudulent or purchased degrees, documents, or coursework);
4. co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts; and
5. using school or school district property without the approval of the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee.

(f) Standard 6: **Remunerative Conduct** - An educator shall maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. soliciting students or parents of students, or school or LUA/school district personnel, to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee;
2. accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there may be the appearance of a conflict of interest;
3. tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee; and
4. coaching, instructing, promoting athletic camps, summer leagues, etc. that involves students in an educator's school system and from whom the educator receives remuneration unless approved by the local board of education/governing board or authorized designee. These types of activities must be in compliance with all rules and regulations of the Georgia High School Association.

(g) Standard 7: **Confidential Information** - An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and state school board policies relating to the confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material and other information. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to: 505-6-.01 Page 4

1. sharing of confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status and/or income, and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law; 2. sharing of confidential information restricted by state or federal law;
3. violation of confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items, etc.; and
4. violation of other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

(h) Standard 8: **Required Reports** - An educator shall file reports of a breach of one or more of the standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators, child abuse (O.C.G.A. §19-7-5), or any other required report. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. failure to report all requested information on documents required by the Commission when applying for or renewing any certificate with the Commission;
2. failure to make a required report of a violation of one or more standards of the Code of Ethics for educators of which they have personal knowledge as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner; and

3. failure to make a required report of any violation of state or federal law soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. These reports include but are not limited to: murder, voluntary manslaughter, aggravated assault, aggravated battery, kidnapping, any sexual offense, any sexual exploitation of a minor, any offense involving a controlled substance and any abuse of a child if an educator has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused.

(i) Standard 9: **Professional Conduct** - An educator shall demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards and preserves the dignity and integrity of the education profession. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to a resignation that would equate to a breach of contract; any conduct that impairs and/or diminishes the certificate holder's ability to function professionally in his or her employment position; or behavior or conduct that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students

. (j) Standard 10: **Testing** - An educator shall administer state-mandated assessments fairly and ethically. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to:

1. committing any act that breaches Test Security; and
2. compromising the integrity of the assessment.

(4) Reporting

(a) Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Code of Ethics for Educators as soon as possible but no later than ninety (90) days from the date the educator became aware of an alleged breach unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of legal requirements and local policies and procedures for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission must be in writing and must be signed by the complainant (parent, educator, or other LUA/school district employee, etc.). 505-6-.01 Page 5

(b) The Commission notifies local and state officials of all disciplinary actions. In addition, suspensions and revocations are reported to national officials, including the NASDTEC Clearinghouse.

(5) Disciplinary Action

(a) The Georgia Professional Standards Commission is authorized to suspend, revoke, or deny certificates, to issue a reprimand or warning, or to monitor the educator's conduct and performance after an investigation is held and notice and opportunity for a hearing are provided to the certificate holder. Any of the following grounds shall be considered cause for disciplinary action against the holder of a certificate:

1. unethical conduct as outlined in The Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 -10 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
2. disciplinary action against a certificate in another state on grounds consistent with those specified in the Code of Ethics for Educators, Standards 1-11 -10 (GaPSC Rule 505-6-.01);
3. order from a court of competent jurisdiction or a request from the Department of Human Resources that the certificate should be suspended or the application for certification should be denied for non-payment of child support (O.C.G.A. §19-6-28.1 and §19-11-9.3);
4. notification from the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation that the educator is in default and not in satisfactory repayment status on a student loan guaranteed by the Georgia Higher Education Assistance Corporation (O.C.G.A. §20-3-295);
5. suspension or revocation of any professional license or certificate
6. violation of any other laws and rules applicable to the profession (O.C.G.A. §16-13-111); and
7. any other good and sufficient cause that renders an educator unfit for employment as an educator.

(b) An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not serve as a volunteer or be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, substitute teacher or, in any other position during the period of his

or her revocation, suspension or denial for a violation of The Code of Ethics. The superintendent and the educator designated by the superintendent/Local Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that an individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Both the superintendent and the superintendent's designee must hold GaPSC certification. Should the superintendent's certificate be revoked, suspended, or denied, the Board of Education shall be responsible for assuring that the superintendent whose certificate has been revoked, suspended, or denied is not employed or serving in any capacity in their district. Authority O.C.G.A. § 20-2-200; 20-2-981 through 20-2-984.5

Moral Turpitude

It has been stated that the term "moral turpitude" is so clear that there is no duty on the trial judge to define it in the absence of a request.

The term has been defined in Georgia as follows:

"Turpitude in its ordinary sense involves the idea of inherent baseness or vileness, shameful wickedness, depravity.... In its legal sense it includes everything contrary to justice, honesty, modesty or good morals.... The word 'moral,' which so often precedes the word turpitude, does not seem to add anything to the meaning of the term, other than that emphasis which often results from a tautological expression. All crimes embraced within the Roman's conception of the *crimen falsi* involve turpitude; but it is not safe to declare that such crimes are the only ones involving turpitude." In *Ramsey v. State*, the court said that a crime involving moral turpitude is one which is *malum in se* rather than *malum prohibitum*. In Georgia, the test for whether a felony is one involving moral turpitude is "does the [crime], disregarding its felony punishment, meet the test as being contrary to justice, honesty, modesty, good morals or man's duty to man?"

It has been held that the following offenses are crimes involving moral turpitude:

- Fraud or false pretenses in obtaining something of value
- Larceny or a misdemeanor theft by taking
- Larceny after trust
- Murder
- Soliciting for prostitutes
- Voluntary manslaughter
- Sale of narcotics or other illegal drugs
- Pattern of failure to file federal tax returns in years in which taxes are due
- Criminal Issuance of a bad check
- Making a false report of a crime

The following have been held to be offenses which are not crimes involving moral turpitude:

- Public drunkenness
- Driving under the influence
- Carrying a concealed weapon
- Unlawful sale of liquor
- Fighting
- Simple Battery
- Simple Assault
- Misdemeanor criminal trespass
- Child abandonment
- Misdemeanor offense of escape
- Misdemeanor offense of obstructing a law enforcement officer
- The federal misdemeanor offense of Conspiracy in Restraint of Interstate Trade and Commerce
- Possession of less than one ounce of marijuana

[This is taken from Handbook of Criminal Evidence by Davis, 2000 edition.]