Forsyth County Schools Substitute Employee Handbook 2026-2027



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PURPOSE

This handbook is intended to serve as a guide to address frequently asked questions regarding policies, procedures, benefits, services, work rules, and other topics relevant to employees. While it aims to be as comprehensive as possible, it may not cover every situation. All district employees are expected to be familiar with and adhere to all Forsyth County Board of Education policies, administrative procedures, and operating guidelines.

FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS AT A GLANCE

FCS serves 54,000+ students and is the largest employer in the county with over 9,000 full and part-time employees and substitutes. For 2026-2027, we are home to 42 schools (23 elementary, 11 middle, 8 high) and 1 Academy of Creative Education.

FCS' VISION, MISSION, BELIEFS & GOALS

Forsyth County Schools (FCS) is proud to be one of the top districts in Georgia and the United States. This success has been accomplished with a long-standing commitment to strategic planning with staff, parents/guardians, citizens, and businesses, working to support the primary customer, the individual student.

The FCS 2022-2027 Strategic Plan is focused around five goals: (1) The Learner Experience, (2) Staff Recruitment and Development, (3) Social and Emotional Health, (4) Culture, Climate, and Community, and (5) Operational Excellence.

BOARD MEMBER INFORMATION & MEETING SCHEDULE

The Forsyth County Board of Education (FCBOE) is the governing body of Forsyth County Schools. The primary role of the Board is the legislation of school district policies, which are executed under the direction of the School Superintendent.

The FCBOE consists of five members who are elected by district to staggered four-year terms. They meet monthly at the Forsyth County Board of Education and Professional Development Center at 1120 Dahlonega Highway, Cumming.

- District #1: Wes McCall– Vice Chairperson
- District #2: Trisha Hoyes
- District #3: Dorian Usherwood
- District #4: Chris Grimes
- District #5: Mike Valdes - Chairperson

FORSYTH COUNTY SCHOOLS

STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2027



GOAL AREAS

THE LEARNER EXPERIENCE

- Increase student achievement and growth
- Increase student engagement
- Develop and sustain consistent assessment and grading practices

STAFF RECRUITMENT & DEVELOPMENT

- Acquire and retain excellent staff
- Build and develop individual staff capacity

CULTURE, CLIMATE, & COMMUNITY

- Increase meaningful home, school, and community partnerships
- Work collaboratively with all people to promote inclusivity, school pride, & belonging

SOCIAL & EMOTIONAL HEALTH

- Foster healthy digital interactions
- Expand access to mental health resources and strategies
- Promote respect, wellness, and balance for staff and students

OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE

- Plan and adapt for growth
- Manage financial resources
- Plan and allocate resources

VISION

A safe, connected, and thriving community for all

MISSION

To provide an unparalleled education for all to succeed

BELIEF STATEMENTS

- Respect and empathy are vital to building trust.
- All students and staff must be connected and supported.
- All students and staff must have a strong sense of purpose.
- All students and staff must be challenged to think critically and creatively.
- Family and community engagement are essential to continuous improvement.

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FCS EMPLOYMENT POLICIES, PRACTICES, & PROCEDURES

Any policies that are referenced in this handbook may be modified or discontinued due to legislative updates or the implementation of Board approved policies. FCS reserves the right to modify or discontinue this information at any time. The most current FCS Board policies can be found on the FCS website.

It is important to note that this employee handbook is intended to provide general information only. This handbook is not a contract between FCS and its employees. Further, the contents of this Handbook shall not be construed as promises from FCS to its employees or as guaranteeing any fixed terms and conditions of employment. Employment with FCS is governed by the specific terms outlined in each employee's contract, and if there are no specific contractual terms specifying the duration of employment, FCS employees are considered "at-will" employees. "At-will" employees may have their employment terminated at the will of either party, for any reason, or no reason at all. O.C.G.A. 34-7-1.

Given that this handbook is intended to provide general information only, any questions about the specific applicability of certain provisions should be addressed to the employee's immediate supervisor/principal, or a member of the FCS Human Resources Department.

Any information contained in this handbook supersedes department and/or school-level guidance.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY DISCRIMINATORY COMPLAINTS

Board Policy Reference: GAAA

The Forsyth County Board of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, disability, or sex in its employment practices. It is the policy of the Board of Education to comply fully with the requirements of Title VI, Title VII, Title IX, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) and all accompanying regulations.

Discriminatory Complaints Procedures

Complaints made to the School District regarding alleged discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color or national origin in violation of Title VI; religion or sex in violation of Title VII; sex in violation of Title IX; disability in violation of Section 504 or the ADA, or on the basis of age in violation of the ADEA, will be processed in accordance with GAAA-R(1), except as otherwise provided therein:.

Applicability

This policy is not intended to deprive any employee of any right they may have to file a grievance pursuant to any other policy of the local Board of Education, specifically the policy designed to implement Official Code of Georgia Annotated 20-2-989.5, where appropriate. This policy is not intended to provide an alternative process for resolving evaluation and employment disputes where there already exists a due process procedure

mandated by state law or State Department of Education regulations, specifically including, but not limited to, hearings to be conducted pursuant to the Fair Dismissal Act of Georgia. The complainant retains at all times the right to contact the Office of Civil Rights, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or any other appropriate state or federal agency with regard to any allegations that the system has violated the statutes described above.

CODE OF ETHICS FOR EDUCATORS

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 assures the citizens of Georgia a degree of accountability within the education profession.

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK

Board Policy Reference: GAK (1)

A criminal record check will be conducted at or prior to employment on every person who is employed by the Board of Education.

For initial hiring purposes, the employee shall be fingerprinted, have a criminal record check performed, and, where applicable, provide a Clearance Certificate issued by the Professional Standards Commission.

Subsequent criminal record checks shall be conducted on all personnel in accordance with state laws, state board rules, and rules of the Professional Standards Commission. All certified personnel whose employment is continued with this School District shall have a criminal record check made upon any certificate renewal application to the Professional Standards Commission. All classified employees whose employment is continued with this School District shall have subsequent criminal record checks on a periodic basis, not to exceed every five years, using procedures and schedules to be determined by the Superintendent or designee.

Any cost of such record checks for all personnel shall be paid by the applicant, employee, or the Board.

Criminal record check information shall be used by the school district and its officials and employees only for the purpose of determining whether to grant regular employment, and in any administrative or judicial proceeding calling such employment into question. Such information shall be stored, restricted, and disposed of in such manner as may be required by federal and state authorities. A breach of confidentiality or the inappropriate use of criminal background check information may constitute a workplace violation and may be grounds for disciplinary action including, but not limited to, termination of employment and/or reporting to the Professional Standards Commission.

The Superintendent or designee shall establish such procedures, fees and regulations needed to administer this policy.

CRIMINAL CHARGES/SELF-REPORTING

As a condition of continued employment, each employee must immediately notify their building principal or their district department supervisor of any arrest other than a minor traffic offense. Employees are also required to disclose any convictions. Failure to report criminal charges, arrests, and/or convictions may result in personnel corrective action up to termination of employment.

RE-EMPLOYMENT/RIGHT TO NOT RE-EMPLOY

The District, in its sole discretion, reserves the right to re-employ or not re-employ any individual previously employed by the District.

SECLUSION OR RESTRAINT OF STUDENTS

Board Policy Reference: JGF2

The Forsyth County Board of Education shall require that all schools and programs within the district comply with State Board of Education Rule 160-5-1-.35 concerning "seclusion" and "restraint", as those terms are defined within the rule.

This policy is not intended to prevent the use of physical restraint in limited circumstances where a student exhibits behaviors that place the student or others in imminent danger and the student is not responsive to verbal directives or less intensive de-escalation techniques. The Forsyth County Board of Education recognizes that in determining when and how to implement this policy and any procedures related to it, educators will have to exercise their professional judgment and discretion. Therefore, the policy is not to be construed as imposing ministerial duties on individual employees. Further, it is not intended to interfere with the duties of law enforcement or emergency medical personnel.

For schools and programs within the district that use physical restraint as defined within the SBOE rule, the Superintendent or designee shall develop and implement written procedures governing its use, which shall include the following provisions:

1. Staff and faculty training on the use of physical restraint;

2. Written parental notification within a reasonable time, not to exceed one school day from the use of restraint, when physical restraint is used to restrain a student.

3. Procedures for observing and monitoring the use of physical restraint;

4. Documentation by staff or faculty participating in or supervising the restraint for each student in each instance in which the student is restrained;

5. Periodic review of the use of restraint and the documentation described in item 4.

State Rule 160-5-1-.35

Administrative Procedure JGF(2)

CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT POLICY

Board Policy Reference: JGI

All school system personnel and volunteers who have reason or cause to believe that suspected child abuse or neglect has occurred shall report that abuse or neglect to the principal or designee. The principal or designee must report any case of suspected child abuse and/or neglect to the appropriate child welfare agencies providing protective services in Forsyth County. A report must be made immediately to the Department of Family and Children Services, but in no case later than twenty-four (24) hours from the time the reporter has reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred.

Under no circumstances may the principal or designee to whom a notification of child abuse has been made "exercise any control, restraint, modification or make other change to the information provided by the reporter, although each of the aforementioned persons (mandated reporters) may be consulted prior to the making of a report and may provide any additional, relevant, and necessary information when making the report."

School employees and volunteers are not responsible for contacting the child's family or any other person(s) to determine the cause of the suspected abuse or neglect.

It is not the responsibility of the school employee or volunteer to prove that the child has been abused or neglected, or to determine whether the child is in need of protection.

Failure to report may result in disciplinary action against the employee.

Any person or official required by O.C.G.A. §19-7-5 to report a suspected case of child abuse who knowingly and willfully fails to do so shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and may be punished. Reports covered by this policy should be made in accordance with the Child Abuse Protocol for Forsyth County.

MANDATORY REPORTING OF STUDENT CRIMES

Under the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) § 20-2-1184, all school employees are required to report suspected student crimes occurring on school property or at school-sponsored events to the principal or site supervisor. These offenses include, but are not limited to, aggravated battery and possession of a weapon within a school safety zone or at a school function.

If the principal or site supervisor has reasonable cause to believe the report is valid, they must immediately notify the Superintendent, the appropriate law enforcement authority, and the district attorney.

HARASSMENT OF EMPLOYEES

Board Policy Reference: GAEB

SEXUAL, RACIAL AND OTHER HARASSMENT PROHIBITED

It is the policy of the Forsyth County Board of Education to prohibit any act of harassment of employees by other employees based upon race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability or pregnancy related conditions, genetic information, military service, veteran status, or any other applicable legally protected status in employment opportunities, education programs or activities, and at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event. Any such act shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment.

Harassment and discrimination may include any conduct which has the effect of unreasonably interfering with an employee's work based upon a protected characteristic, including conduct by school employees, students or others or as otherwise defined by law and other Board Policies.

Any employee or applicant for employment who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination as prohibited by this policy should promptly report the same to the principal of their school or to the appropriate coordinator designated in policy GAE, who will implement the board's discriminatory complaints procedures as specified in that policy. Employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination.

It is the duty of all employees to promptly report harassment forbidden by this policy. The District shall provide information through handbooks, training materials, other resources and verbally that such harassment is strictly forbidden, how it is to be reported and the consequences for violating this policy.

DISCRIMINATION/HARASSMENT REPORTING

The Forsyth County School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability, or gender in employment decisions or educational programs and activities, including its athletic programs. Any student, employee, applicant for employment, parent, or other individual who believes they have been subjected to harassment or discrimination by other students or employees of the School District based upon any of the factors listed above should promptly report the same to the principal of the school or the appropriate Coordinator as listed below, who will implement the board's discriminatory complaints or harassment procedures. Students may also report harassment or discrimination to their school counselor.

Equity Coordinators for the school system are:

Title VI

- Mr. Todd Shirley (Students)
- Mr. Derrick Hershey (Personnel)

Title IX
- Mr. Todd Shirley (Students)
- Mr. Derrick Hershey (Personnel)

ADA and 504
- Ms. Kara Hudspeth (Students)
- Mr. Derrick Hershey (Personnel)

Sports Equity
- Dr. Cindy Salloum (Students)

Equity Coordinators may be contacted at:

Forsyth County Board of Education and Professional Development Center
1120 Dahlonega Highway
Cumming, Georgia 30040
770-887-2461

Students and employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting such harassment or discrimination. A copy of the discriminatory complaints procedure under Forsyth County School District Policy GAAA/JAA (Equal Opportunity/Discriminatory Complaints) or under Policy IDFA (Gender Equity in Sports) are located in the school district policy manual on the FCS website.

COMPLAINTS & GRIEVANCES

Board Policy Reference: GAE

I.

PURPOSE; INFORMAL RESOLUTION PREFERRED

In accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-2-989.5, it is the policy of the Forsyth County Board of Education that certificated personnel shall have the right to present and resolve complaints relating to certain matters affecting the employment relationship at the lowest organizational level possible. The Board of Education encourages all employees to resolve their complaints informally in a spirit of collegiality whenever possible. The procedures outlined in GAE-R(1) are available when such efforts do not succeed or, where for any other reason, the certificated employee desires to pursue this policy and its procedures.

II.

SCOPE OF COMPLAINT: EXCLUSIONS

a. Scope. Unless excluded by paragraph (b) hereof, this complaint and grievance procedure is applicable to any claim by any professional employee certificated by the Professional Standards Commission who is affected in his or her employment relationship by an alleged violation,

misinterpretation, or misapplication of statutes, policies, rules, regulations, or written agreements of this school district or with which the district is required to comply.

b. Exclusions. This procedure shall not apply to:
    1. Performance ratings contained in personnel evaluation and professional development plans pursuant to Code Section 20-2-210; Procedural deficiencies on the part of the district are not excluded in the scope of complaint.
    2. Job performance;
    3. Termination, non-renewal, demotion, suspension, or reprimand of any employee, as set forth in Code Section 20-2-940;
    4. The revocation, suspension, or denial of certificates of any employee, as set forth in Code Section 20-2-790.
c. Barred Complaints. A certificated employee who chooses to appeal under Code Section 20-2-1160, shall be barred from pursuing the same complaint under this policy.

DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

Board Policy Reference: GAMA

The Forsyth County Board of Education declares that its workforce must be absolutely free of any person who would knowingly manufacture, distribute, sell, or possess a controlled substance, marijuana, or a dangerous drug in an unlawful manner. This prohibition specifically includes, but is not limited to, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance in the employee's workplace.

Any employee who is convicted for the first time, under the laws of this state, the United States, or any other state, of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of a controlled substance, marijuana, or a dangerous drug shall be subject to disciplinary action. At a minimum, such an employee shall be suspended for a period of not less than two months and shall be required to complete a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the Board. At a maximum, such an employee may be terminated from their employment with the school system.

As a condition of employment, each employee must abide by the terms of this policy and must notify the Board within five (5) days after any arrest on any drug-related criminal charge and further notify the board within five (5) days of any conviction of a drug-related offense. More details about this policy may be found on the FCS website under Board Policy GAMA.

ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES FOR A DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE

Personal cars brought on campus, employee desks, and other personal or school property shall be subject to search and inspection by school authorities at all times without further notice.

EMPLOYEE TOBACCO USE

Board Policy Reference: GAN

In compliance with the Pro-Children Act of 1994, smoking and use of other tobacco products, including the use of E-Cigarettes and other electronic tools and devices, shall be prohibited in any school or building used for the instruction of students.

Employees of the board of education and visitors shall be prohibited from being in possession of, smoking, or using tobacco products on school district property at any time, or while supervising students after school hours, or while operating a vehicle owned by the school district.

DISTRACTION-FREE EDUCATION POLICY

Board Policy Reference: JCDAF

Purpose

By creating environments free from the distractions of cell phones and personal electronic communication devices, Forsyth County Schools is committed to ensuring that students are provided with every opportunity to focus on learning and engage in positive interactions to support their well-being.

Guidelines

1. Elementary and Middle Schools
    - All cell phones and personal electronic devices must be turned off and stored away during the bell-to-bell school day.
    - These restrictions do not apply to school buses, bus stops, or school grounds before and after the bell-to-bell day.
2. High Schools
    - All cell phones and personal electronic devices must be turned off and stored away during the bell-to-bell school day; however, students may access cell phones and personal electronic devices during assigned lunch periods.
    - These restrictions do not apply to school buses, bus stops, or school grounds before and after the bell-to-bell day.

Expectations

1. Students must comply with staff directives and the provisions of this policy to avoid disruption of the educational environment, or they may be subject to disciplinary actions in compliance with the Code of Conduct.
2. When personal electronic devices are allowed, students should respect the privacy of others. Taking photos or videos of classmates, peers, and staff without the prior approval of an administrator or staff member is strictly prohibited on school property, including school buses, or while involved in school-related activities.
3. FCS employees will be expected to model responsible use of cell phones and personal

electronic devices.

Disability and Other Accommodations
A student whose Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 plan, or medical plan explicitly mandates the use of a personal electronic device for medical or educational purposes shall be permitted to access the device as necessary to fulfill the requirements of the respective program or plan.

Notifications
Parents, guardians, and students will be informed of the policies and procedures associated with the Forsyth County Schools Distraction-Free Education policy.

The district or individual schools within the district shall not assume any responsibility or liability for the theft, loss, or damage to a personal electronic device.

INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE

Board Policy Reference: IFBG

It is the belief of the Forsyth County Board of Education that the use of technology for the purpose of instruction and operation is an important part of preparing children to thrive in the 21st century and in providing a modern and efficient workplace for staff. The Board further believes that a technology rich environment can significantly enhance both the teaching and learning process. This technology includes, but is not limited to, computer hardware, software, wired and wireless network connectivity, and access to the internet. Due to the complex nature of these systems and the magnitude of information available via the internet, the Forsyth County Board of Education believes guidelines regarding responsible use are warranted in order to serve the educational needs of students and workplace needs of staff.

It shall be the policy of the Forsyth County Board of Education that the school system shall be compliant with the "Protecting Georgia's Children on Social Media Act of 2024" (The Act) and have in continuous operation, with respect to any devices using district-provided network resources have:

1.A qualifying "technology protection measure," as that term is defined in Section 1703(b)(1) of the Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000 (CIPA) and is compliant with The Act; and

2.Procedures or guidelines developed by the superintendent, administrators and/or other appropriate personnel which provide for monitoring the online activities of users and the use of the chosen technology protection measure to protect against access through such computers to visual depictions that are (i) obscene, (ii) child pornography, or (iii) harmful to minors, as those terms are defined in Section 1703(b)(1) and (2) of the Children's Internet Protection Act of

2000 and The Act. Additionally, those measures will also include staff behavior on district-provided devices and services. Such procedures or guidelines shall be reasonably designed to:

a. Provide for monitoring the online activities of users to prevent, to the extent practicable, access by minors to inappropriate matter on the internet and the World Wide Web;

b. Promote the safety and security of minors when using electronic mail, chat rooms, and other forms of direct electronic communications;

c. Prevent unauthorized access, including hacking, denial-of-service, credential theft, and other unauthorized activities by minors and staff;

d. Prevent the unauthorized disclosure, use and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors and staff; and

e. Restrict minors' access to materials "harmful to minors," as that term is defined in Section 1703(b)(2) of the Children's Internet Protection Act of 2000 and The Act.

f. Provide reasonable opportunities and procedures for parents/guardians of students to confer and collaborate with school administrators and teachers regarding appropriate internet access for such students;

g. Provide for students age-appropriate instruction regarding safe and appropriate behavior on social networking sites, chat rooms, and other internet services, behaviors that may constitute cyber bullying, and how to respond when subjected to cyber bullying.

h. Establish appropriate enforcement measures in response to:

1.Students against students and school employees who willfully intentionally violate the acceptable-use policy, whether or not such student or school employee was, at the time of such violation, on school property, on a school bus or other school vehicle, at a school related function, or elsewhere, provided that such measures include disciplinary measures; and

2.A person who is not a student or school employee who violates the acceptable-use policy, whether or not such person was, at the time of such violation, on school property, on a school bus or other school vehicle, at a school related function, or elsewhere;

i. Provide for administrative procedures to: enforce the acceptable-use policy; for administrative procedures to address complaints regarding possible violations of the acceptable-use policy which, at a minimum, require that each complaint is responded to in writing by an appropriate school or local school system official; and provide for expedited review and resolution of a claim that the application of the acceptable-use policy is denying a student or school employee access to material that is not within the prohibition prohibitions of the acceptable-use policy.

Upon written request, each parent/guardian shall be provided a copy of the school district's acceptable use policy, as well as the student Code of Conduct addressing its enforcement and related consequences, information regarding the administrative

procedures in effect to enforce the acceptable use policy, and to address complaints about such enforcement.

Social Media

In accordance with the Protecting Georgia's Children on Social Media Act, the District prohibits students from accessing social media platforms through the use of computer equipment, communications services, or internet access that is operated, owned, leased, and made available to students by the Board and District. "Social media platform" means an online forum that allows an account holder to create a profile, upload posts, view and listen to posts, form mutual connections, and interact publicly and privately with other account holders and users, and as otherwise set out in O.C.G.A. § 39-6-1.

Students may be permitted to access social media platforms:

- As directed by school personnel;
- For the exclusive purpose of accessing and utilizing age-appropriate educational resources;
- Under the supervision of school personnel; and
- During the course of a school related activity.

The Superintendent or his or her designee is authorized to establish procedures for parents and legal guardians to:

- Request information from school personnel about what social media platforms have been or are intended to be accessed with permission from the school; and
- Prohibit their child from accessing one or more social media platforms otherwise permitted by school personnel.

The District shall take steps as it deems appropriate to implement and enforce this policy, including use of software programs or other technologies reasonably designed and intended to block and monitor access to social media platforms and selection of online servers that block and monitor access to social media platforms.

The Superintendent or his or her designee is further authorized and directed to establish regulations or guidelines establishing standards for the acceptable use of School District technology resources and social media, including penalties and disciplinary action for violations of those standards.

The district's technology resources are provided for educational and instructional purposes that promote and are consistent with the instructional goals of the Forsyth County School System or are for the business operations/use by FCS staff. Use of computers and network resources outside the scope of these purposes is strictly prohibited. Students and employees accessing network services or any device utilizing those services shall comply with the district's responsible use guidelines. The district reserves the right to monitor, access, and disclose the contents of any user's files, activities, or communications without the consent of the user.

It must also be understood that the internet is a global, fluid community, which remains largely unregulated. While it is an extremely valuable tool for instructional and operational uses, there are sections that are not commensurate with community, school, or family standards. It is the belief of the Board that the internet's advantages far outweigh its disadvantages.

Additionally, access to the internet and computer resources is a privilege, not a right. Therefore, users violating the Forsyth County Board of Education's responsible use guidelines shall be subject to revocation of these privileges and potential disciplinary action.

As a guiding framework for this, the Forsyth County Board of Education will adopt and maintain a procedure manual that outlines and mandates the operation of a reliable, safe, and secure network for all students, teachers, and staff.

INTERNET SAFETY

Board Policy Reference: IFBGE

It is the policy of Forsyth County Schools to: (a) prevent user access over its computer network to, or transmission of, inappropriate material via Internet, electronic mail, or other forms of direct electronic communications; (b) prevent unauthorized access and other unlawful online activity; (c) prevent unauthorized online disclosure, use, or dissemination of personal identification information of minors; and (d) comply with the Children's Internet Protection Act [Pub. L. No. 106-554 and 47 USC 254(h)].

Supervision & Monitoring

It shall be the responsibility of all members of the Forsyth County Schools staff to supervise and monitor usage of the online computer network and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy and the Children's Internet Protection Act.
As required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, Forsyth County Schools will educate minors about appropriate online behavior, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms, and cyber-bullying awareness and response.

Procedures for disabling or otherwise modifying any technology protection measures shall be the responsibility of the Chief Technology and Information Officer or designated representatives.

It is the policy of FCS to supervise and monitor usage of the online computer network and access to the Internet to prevent access to inappropriate material and inappropriate network usage.

RESPONSIBLE USE GUIDELINES

The district provides ongoing student instruction that develops graduated digital citizenship using technology as a tool. Information and communication technology is an

integral part of FCS' curriculum across subjects and grades in developmentally appropriate ways, and it is aligned to the competencies listed in the district's Learner Profile which includes pursuing continuous learning, exhibiting strong personal qualities, utilizing creative and critical thinking, engage and contribute, and interact effectively.

It is important that FCS employees understand that using digital devices (whether personal or school owned) and the FCS network is a privilege and should use them according to the Responsible Use Guidelines.

Employees must:

- Use digital devices, networks, and software in school for educational purposes and activities.
- Keep personal information (including home/mobile phone number, mailing address, and user password) and that of others private.
- Show respect for self and others when using technology including social media.
- Give acknowledgement to others for their ideas and work.
- Immediately report any inappropriate use of technology by staff or students.
- Protect private and confidential information in a manner supported by the FCS Technology Department.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) GUIDELINES

AI is a powerful tool to augment - not replace - our professional expertise. Every AI-driven resource or support should involve a "human in the loop" (Greyling, 2024), ensuring educators and staff maintain and continue to develop agency over instructional decisions and maintain accountability for student learning. FCS believes thoughtfully incorporating AI means teachers are better able to streamline work-related tasks in support of high-quality instruction.

Educators should:

- Demonstrate consistency and clarity when it comes to the use of AI
- Model responsible use of AI for educational purposes only and prioritize safety and respect for all
- Review output of AI data for bias, misinformation, and sources
- Use FCS-approved AI tools
- Continue to grow your professional expertise as AI continues to be a growing presence in the work of teaching and learning

Below is additional guidance if needed and outlines specific promoted practices that expand on the five bullet points noted above. For brevity, we could also include/link the following URL as other examples of promoted practices.

https://www.forsyth.k12.ga.us/district-services/technology-information-services/educational-technology-and-media/fcsai

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AI Practices

- Strategic, Grade-Appropriate AI: Use AI tools with consistency to ensure clarity and grade-level appropriateness
- AI for Enhance Instruction: Use AI in service of generating ideas and examples, lesson planning, communication, question prompts, assessment design, and rubric templates
- Clear AI Routines: Establish and communicate clear routines and expectations for AI use in your classroom.
- Transparent AI Use: Be transparent with students about when and why AI is being used.
- Vetted AI Tools and App Usage: All AI tools must be vetted through Trusted Apps. As teachers and staff discover new AI tools, please submit them for approval.
- Protect Student Data in AI: In compliance with FERPA, confidential student information should never be shared in AI platforms.
- Review AI Outputs: AI-generated content should be thoroughly vetted for bias before use. If there is any question or doubt, staff should have school administration review AI-generated content before using with students or parents.
- Educator Guidance: AI-generated content should not be used to replace professional judgment in grading, feedback, or instructional decision-making. Apply your expertise as an educator to ensure students receive thoughtful feedback.
- Reflective AI Integration: Regularly reflect on, plan for, and adjust the need for AI use based on student learning goals, engagement, and effectiveness.

SOCIAL MEDIA EXPECTATIONS

FCS has clear expectations for employees when communicating not only amongst ourselves but particularly with students and parents. Educators are strongly cautioned to keep their personal information out of public view and password protected. Never allow or encourage students or parents to access personal sites and information. It is not appropriate to "friend" or otherwise personally communicate with, share information, texts, photographs, etc. with a student on any digital platform or device. The following guidelines should be followed:

- Post nothing you would not be completely comfortable sharing with your students, their parents, or your professional colleagues.
- Never use language which may be deemed to be defamatory, obscene, proprietary, libelous, and/or as derogatory remarks or characterizations.
- Do not discuss students, parents, or coworkers or publicly criticize school system policies or personnel.
- Do not post images on District-approved sites that include students without checking for media release notices on all students.

- With every post, consider whether it puts your effectiveness as an educator at risk.

EMPLOYEE CAMPAIGNING

Under Georgia Code Section 21-5-30 et al, it is a violation of the Ethics in Government Act for state agencies to contribute, directly or indirectly, to a campaign committee, political action committee, or political organization or to any candidate. The government may educate voters about an issue, but it may not contribute to a campaign committee that is promoting (or opposing) the issue or a candidate or attempting to influence the voters.
A state agency includes a school district. A contribution includes gifts, subscriptions, membership, loans, forgiveness of debts, advances or deposits of money, or anything of value conveyed or transferred by or on behalf of any agency to a campaign committee, political action committee, political organization, or any candidate for campaign purposes. A campaign committee includes an issue-oriented campaign committee or a candidate for political office. The following guidelines are recommended for school districts and school employees:

1. **Employees may only work to promote (or oppose) a SPLOST/Bond Referendum, issue, or candidate for political office as private citizens on their own time.** The First Amendment absolutely guarantees each individual the right to engage in political speech. However, employees may never campaign during school hours or in their capacity as an employee after hours.

2. **Only private resources can be used to promote (or oppose) a SPLOST/Bond Referendum, issue, or candidate for political office.** No public fund or resources can be used to promote (or oppose) the SPLOST/Bond referendum, issue, or candidate for political office. School resources include facilities, copying machines, paper, stationary, phones, audio visual equipment, computers, vehicles, and employee time.

3. **School Districts may only provide the public with objective, factual information about a SPLOST/Bond referendum or issue.** It is very important that the educational material **is factual and does not endorse a particular view.**

4. **No campaign posters, literature or signs may be displayed or distributed on school property.** Employees may not wear campaign pins or stickers on school grounds or distribute campaign materials on school premises. This would include the distribution of PTA/O newsletters containing promotional (as opposed to educational) articles that are sent home with students.

MOVIE GUIDELINES

If a student or parent/guardian objects to viewing a particular video/DVD, a meaningful alternative or related activity should be assigned without penalty or embarrassment to the student. Alternative assignments must be useful, related to valid instructional goals, and non-punitive.

To ensure we are following copyright law, FCS has obtained a public performance license from Swank Motion Pictures, Inc. If you show a movie that:

- is not part of the essential curriculum,
- is being shown outside of a classroom, OR
- is being shown outside of school hours,

consult your school media specialist to confirm the content is covered under our license.

STAFF PROFESSIONAL DRESS CODE

Employees This dress code is designed to support a professional, respectful, safe, and productive learning environment.

All employees are required to wear their district-issued identification badge and Centegix badge while on campus. Badges must be worn above the waist on an appropriate lanyard worn around the neck or securely clipped to a collar and must always remain clearly visible. Lanyards are to be used for badges only and should not include additional items such as keys, face shields, or other accessories. Badges may not be altered, defaced, or decorated with stickers, writing, or any other additions.
Clothing must be appropriate for a school setting. Appropriate dress for school is business casual, except for spirit days approved by the principal. Clothing should allow staff to safely and effectively perform their job responsibilities throughout the school day.

Business casual includes slacks, khakis, professional jeans, dresses, skirts, blouses, collared shirts, sweaters, and appropriate footwear.

The following items are not acceptable in the school environment:

- Clothing with offensive, disruptive, or inappropriate designs, logos, or text.
- Torn clothing or any clothing with holes.
- Casual t-shirts that are not school-issued or spirit wear.
- Leggings worn as standalone attire.
- Shorts, flip flops, tank tops, and hats inside the building.
- Athletic clothing, except for physical education staff during their scheduled classes or approved activities.

Exceptions may be made for staff working in specialized instruction classes or for approved spirit days and designated school activities.

Administration reserves the right to determine the appropriateness of attire and to address situations not specifically outlined in this policy. These guidelines represent the minimum requirements; school leaders and administrators may establish additional expectations as appropriate for their campus.

SOCIAL SECURITY INFORMATION

For employees of the Forsyth County School System, Social Security taxes are withheld from your paycheck, and you are earning credits toward federal retirement, disability, or survivor benefits under Title II of the Social Security Act.