

THE  
**GAB**  
WAY

**Give it your best**  
**Achieve your goals**  
**Be respectful**

**Georgia Academy for the Blind**

**2021-2022**

Student Handbook

2895 Vineville Ave., Macon, GA 31204

478-751-6083

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Richard Woods, Georgia's School Superintendent  
"Educating Georgia's Future"



DIVISION OF  
State Schools

**Dr. Cindy Gibson, Superintendent**

**Georgia Academy for the Blind**

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Dear GAB families,

Thank you for the pleasure of serving your child and family. This Student Handbook is provided to you in effort to communicate what we provide and expect at the Georgia Academy for the Blind (GAB) and the myriad services available to eligible students which make this State School a unique and quality educational option on the special education continuum.

As you assimilate into the GAB family, we hope you will feel invited and appreciated for participating in making this school the best possible school for your child and all children in Georgia who are eligible for services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In addition to participation in the Individualized Education Program (IEP) process, please consider serving on a school-wide committee as the School Council or Better Seeking Team. Take advantage of information shared in the weekly Panther Press, the GAB website and TalkingPoints. Let us know when you have questions or concerns or other information for the good of the order!

Truly our students make GAB the grand environment that it is, but we could not have this collegial and familial environment without stellar staff and support from the Georgia Department of Education. Families and practitioners working together provide wraparound services for students to develop their highest potential for academic, social-emotional, and independent advocacy and achievement. This is the GAB Way!

Welcome to the 2021-2022 school year at the Georgia Academy for the Blind, where it's ALL about the children and about ALL of the children.

Sincerely,

Cindy B. Gibson, Ed.D., T.V.I.

Superintendent

## STAFF CONTACT LIST

### Contact Information for GAB's Administrative Staff

Main contact phone number for GAB: 478-751-6083

Dr. Cindy B. Gibson, Superintendent

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Tyrene Neil, Student Services Coordinator

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Dawn Day, Curriculum Director

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Frank Reynolds Living and Learning Services Coordinator

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### **STUDENTS 18 YEARS OR OLDER**

Please note that a student that is eighteen (18) years or older and has his/her educational rights transferred to him/her as outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may make educational decisions without legal parent/guardian consent as the student is understood to be an adult. Per the guidance in this student handbook, certain information can still be shared with legal parents/guardian after a student's educational rights have transferred to him/her at age eighteen (18) as reflected in IDEA and in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

### **ABSENCES, ATTENDANCE, AND TARDIES**

Legal parents/guardians who encourage regular attendance are instilling a sense of responsibility and demonstrating their belief in the importance of education. Research studies prove that students that attend school consistently experience better academic success than students that miss school. Whenever students are absent, for any reason, at least one legal parent/guardian must submit a signed and dated written explanation of the absence(s) upon the student's return to school in accordance with the written protocols shared by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee with students and their legal parents/guardians. If a student has a legal parent who is in the military and is being deployed or is home on leave, that student is allowed five (5) days of excused absences per year. Legal documentation of the military deployment of the legal parent or the legal parent being home on leave must be provided to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee in accordance with written school attendance protocols. Georgia law allows for student absences to be excused only for the following reasons:

1. Personal illness
2. Illness in immediate family
3. Death in the family
4. Recognized religious holidays
5. Absences mandated by other government agencies such as a court order
6. Serving as a legislative page (excused and counted as present)
7. Military situations as mentioned above

Unexcused absences will be subject to attendance investigation and can result in penalty as imposed by Georgia's Compulsory Education Law and the school's Attendance Protocol Committee. The school will notify by first class mail the legal parents/guardians of students up to age 16 who have accumulated five (5) unexcused absences per semester and will include a copy of the summary of consequences. The school will copy the local education agency in which the student resides in the letter and will mail a copy of the letter to the special education director of the local education agency. The school will notify by first class mail legal parents/guardians of students ages fourteen through seventeen (14-17) who have accumulated seven (7) unexcused absences per school year and will include a copy of the Georgia attendance driver's license law and a summary of consequences. The school will copy the local education agency in which the student resides in the letter and will mail a copy of the letter to the special education director of the local education agency. Additional information regarding absences is in this handbook. It is the responsibility of the local education agency in which the student resides to follow the judicial process as reflected in Georgia law when a student reaches the number of absences written into Georgia law in which the judicial system must be notified. At a minimum, copies of any attendance letters must be kept in the student's official school file at the State School and the local education agency in which the student resides.

A written excuse must contain the following information:

1. Name of student
2. Date of written excuse
3. Date(s) of absence
4. Reason for absence(s)
5. At least one legal parent/guardian's signature
6. Phone number of the legal parent/guardian that signed the excuse

A student will have 3-5 days, at the teacher's discretion, to make up missed school assignments for an excused absence or absences with the superintendent of the school or his/her designee taking into consideration any extenuating circumstances. The school may offer credit recovery, Extended Learning Time, or other options as a means to complete missed assignments for excused absences. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will determine what options a student has to make up missed assignments. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will share in writing to the student and his/her legal parents/guardians about the options to make up missed school assignments for excused absences.

#### DAILY PROCEDURES AND OTHER PROTOCOLS RELATED TO ABCENSES, ATTENDANCE, AND TARDIES

- All students will report to first (1<sup>st</sup>) period at 8:10 a.m. Attendance and homeroom responsibilities will occur during the first few minutes of the period. Attendance, tardies, and absences must be entered into Infinite Campus no later than 9:15 a.m. by all first period teachers.
- Students that do not stay at a State School with a residential component and arrive before 7:30 a.m. should report to the Assistant Principal.
- Students arriving to first (1<sup>st</sup>) period after 8:15 a.m. must have an admittance pass from the school secretary. Students that arrive to class without such a pass must be sent to the school secretary.
- When a student arrives to school on a late school bus, the school secretary, will count the student tardy with the reason for being late because of the school bus. Tardies because of a late school bus are not counted against the student.
- When a student comes late because of riding in a private car or other vehicle that are not provided by the local education agency in which the student resides, the school secretary, will count the student tardy.
- If the superintendent or his/her designee recognizes a pattern of late vehicles provided by the local education agency in which the student resides to either drop off and/or pick up students, the superintendent or his/her designee will contact the local education agency's special education director and inform him/her of the pattern of late vehicles.
- As stated previously, in order to be counted as an excused absence, the aforementioned documentation must be provided. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will issue written protocols for the handling of the documentation (e.g., who should get the documentation) and actions to be taken by designated staff members that receives the documentation.
- If a legal parent/guardian of student checks a student out of school early, the legal parent/guardian and the student must follow the protocols established by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee. Legal parents/guardians must wait in the designated area indicated by a staff member for the student.
- The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will issue protocols for the issuance of daily attendance reports for staff (e.g., email).
- Daily attendance information for students and staff must be emailed to the Central Office.

- Staff must report students they see on campus whose names appear on the absentee list to the school secretary, immediately via email or through another means that is approved by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.
- To the most practical extent possible and to be proactive, legal parents/guardians should inform the school counselor, of any upcoming student events requiring a student to be absent (e.g., doctor's appointments).
- The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will verify attendance records at a minimum of once each month to confirm that Infinite Campus attendance records are accurate.
- To be counted present, students must attend the required number of hours each day. Students who are tardy or leave before the end of the day must be present for at least one half of the instructional day, excluding lunch, to be counted as present for the instructional day.

Below is guidance on how communication to legal parents/guardians, local education agency in which the student resides, and the State Schools Director are to be handled.

#### TARDIES/ARRIVAL AFTER SCHOOL START TIME

Note: The first and second tardy occurrences initiate at a minimum a verbal warning to the student with any other actions required by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.

TARDIES	COMMUNICATION THAT MUST OCCUR
Third Occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The superintendent of the school or his/her designee requires the first period teacher to contact the legal parents/guardians and to document the contact by logging contact into Infinite Campus.</li> </ul>
Fourth Occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The superintendent of the school or his/her designee requires the counselor to contact the legal parents/guardians and to document the contact by logging contact into Infinite Campus.</li> </ul>
Fifth Occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide a letter to the legal parents/guardians and copy the special education director of the local education agency in which the student resides.</li> <li>• A copy of the letter must be sent to the special education director of the local education agency in which the student resides.</li> <li>• The letters will be sent by first-class mail.</li> <li>• A copy of the letters must be kept in the student's official school file at the State Schools and the local education agency</li> <li>• The local education agency in which the student resides must take action per their student attendance policy.</li> </ul>
Tenth Occurrence and All Tardies after the Tenth Tardy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide a letter to the legal parents/guardians and copy the special education director of the local education agency in which the student resides.</li> <li>• A copy of the letter must be sent to the special education director of the local education agency in which the student resides.</li> <li>• The letters will be sent by first-class mail.</li> <li>• A copy of the letters must be kept in the student's official school file at the State School and the local education agency.</li> <li>• The local education agency in which the student resides must take action per their student attendance policy.</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The superintendent of the school or his/her designee must inform the State Schools Director for additional guidance.</li> </ul>
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#### ABSENCE(S) FROM SCHOOL

Note: The first and second absences require at a minimum a written legal parent/guardian excuse that includes the required information included in this student handbook. The superintendent or his/her designee will provide written protocols regarding how to handle the written excuses and where they are to be kept.

ABSENCES	COMMUNICATION THAT MUST OCCUR
Third Occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When three (3) unexcused absences are accumulated during one (1) semester, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide the student, legal parents/guardians, and the local school district special education director in which the student resides with a warning letter regarding the possible denial of credit.</li> <li>The letters will be sent by first-class mail.</li> <li>A copy of the letter must be maintained in the student's official school file.</li> </ul>
Fourth Occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When four (4) unexcused absences are accumulated during one (1) semester, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide the student, legal parents/guardians, and the local school district special education director in which the student resides with a warning letter regarding the possible denial of credit.</li> <li>The letters will be sent by first-class mail.</li> <li>A copy of the letter must be kept in the student's official school file.</li> </ul>
Fifth Occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When five (5) unexcused absences are accumulated during one (1) semester, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide the student, legal parents/guardians, and the local school district special education director in which the student resides with a warning letter regarding the possible denial of credit.</li> <li>The letter must also explain that unexcused absences of five (5) days and more shall constitute a separate offense of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law. A violation of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law shall be referred to the Juvenile Court by the local school district in which the student resides.</li> <li>The letters will be sent by first-class mail.</li> <li>A copy of the letter must be kept in the student's official school file.</li> <li>The local school district must take action per their student attendance policy.</li> <li>The State Schools Attendance Protocol Committee must meet to discuss the absences, their effect on the student's learning, supports and interventions, and potentially a request for an IEP meeting to be held. If the Attendance Protocol Committee decides an IEP meeting</li> </ul>

	<p>should be held, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must inform the State Schools Director.</p>
Seventh Occurrence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When seven (7) unexcused absences during one (1) semester, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide the student, legal parents/guardians, and the local school district special education director in which the student resides with a warning letter regarding the possible denial of credit.</li> <li>• The letter must also explain that unexcused absences of five (5) days and more shall constitute a separate offense of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law. A violation of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law shall be referred to the Juvenile Court by the local school district in which the student resides.</li> <li>• The letter must include a copy of Georgia's attendance driver's license law and a summary of consequences.</li> <li>• The letters will be sent by first-class mail.</li> <li>• A copy of the letter must be kept in the student's official school file.</li> <li>• The local school district must take action per their student attendance policy.</li> <li>• The State Schools Attendance Protocol Committee must meet to discuss the absences, their effect on the student's learning, supports and interventions, and potentially a request for an IEP meeting to be held. If the Attendance Protocol Committee decides an IEP meeting should be held, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must inform the State Schools Director.</li> </ul>
Tenth Occurrence and all Recurring Absences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When ten (10) unexcused absences and all subsequent unexcused absences are accumulated during one (1) semester, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide the student, legal parents/guardians, and the local school district special education director in which the student resides with a warning letter regarding the possible denial of credit.</li> <li>• The letter must also explain that unexcused absences of five (5) days and more shall constitute a separate offense of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law. A violation of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law shall be referred to the Juvenile Court by the local school district in which the student resides.</li> <li>• The letter must include a copy of Georgia's attendance driver's license law and a summary of consequences.</li> <li>• The letters will be sent by first-class mail.</li> <li>• A copy of the letter must be kept in the student's official school file.</li> <li>• The local school district must take action per their student attendance policy.</li> <li>• The State Schools Attendance Protocol Committee must meet to discuss the absences, their effect on the student's learning, supports and interventions, and potentially a request for an IEP meeting to be held. If the Attendance Protocol Committee decides an IEP meeting should be held, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must inform the State Schools Director.</li> </ul>

### AFTER-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

The superintendent or his/her designee must approve any after-school activity/event in writing to the sponsoring staff member or members that is/are organizing and/or leading the activity/event. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee has the discretion to decide which after-school activities/events are approved giving due consideration to federal law Title IX ensuring that equitable access of opportunities be provided to girls as they are to boys. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee and the sponsoring staff member(s) must keep a copy of the written approval of the activity/event on file for no less than one (1) calendar school year.

The sponsoring staff member or members has/have the responsibility to make sure the internal school protocols established by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee are followed including but not limited to obtaining written approval from at least one (1) legal parent/guardian for a student to participate in the activity/event, requesting any needed meals, requesting and using buses or other transportation, the completion of out of state travel forms signed by at least one legal parent/guardian of any students participating in a school activity/event requiring out of state travel, etc. The sponsoring staff member or members of the activity/event must ensure there is appropriate staff supervision of students at all times. The superintendent or his/her designee must give approval regarding any chaperones or non-school employees that will be helping during the after-school activity/event. Only chaperones or non-school employees that are in compliance with the volunteer policy may help during any activity/event. Only students, state employees, and approved volunteers in accordance with the volunteer policy are allowed to ride a bus or other transportation provided by the school.

If an overnight stay is involved as part of the after-school activity/event, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must approve in advance any accommodations including where students are staying and any students that will be staying the night in the same room. At no time, will students share beds or will girls be allowed to stay in rooms with boys or vice versa. Staff/chaperones must complete regular bed checks every fifteen (15) minutes.

Descriptive information of the after-school activity/event must be sent to legal parents/guardians prior to the actual date of the after-school activity/event. This should occur at minimum of ten (10) school days before the activity/event. The descriptive information of the activity/event must include any activity fees or permission slips to be signed by the legal parents/guardians. The superintendent or his/her designee will establish a deadline date for returning signed permission slips and any payment for the activity/event. Signed permission slips and any money received after the deadline will be returned to the legal parents/guardians. The same process is to be followed if the student is eighteen (18) or older and has legal educational rights transferred to him/her. No one will be permitted to sign up after the deadline date unless approved by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee under extenuating circumstances. The deadline date is necessary in order to provide proper supervision and resources such as food, transportation, etc.

If the student is late being picked up by the legal parents/guardians or other parentally approved individual, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee has the discretion to not permit a student to participate in other planned after-school activities/events based on relevant facts (e.g., a pattern of late pick up). The superintendent or his/her designee must inform the student and legal parents/guardians of the decision in writing. A copy of such determinations must be kept on file at the school per the protocols established by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.

### APPOINTMENTS FOR STUDENTS

While appointments are necessary, they often present a problem for student attendance. When scheduling appointments, please try and schedule them during school holidays or after school. If this is not possible, please keep in mind that attending school prior to and after the appointment is critical. The lack of transportation is not an excused absence.

### ATTENDANCE/HOME SCHOOL ZONE

The State Schools comply with the local education agency in which a student resides in establishing an attendance zone for students. Students must maintain a primary residence with their legal parents/guardians. If a student's address changes, the legal parents/guardians must notify Ms. Ezell at the school by emailing her at [Dezell@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Dezell@doe.k12.ga.us) or calling her at 478-751-6083 ext. 1270 for directions on what to do next. The legal parent/guardian is required to inform the special education director of the local education agency in which the student resides regarding any moves. If a student moves to a different local education agency, an IEP meeting must be held.

### BULLYING

The State Schools expressly prohibit the bullying of any person, by any means or method, at school, on school property, or at school related functions. The State Schools have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance, and acceptance among students, staff, and any other individual. Behavior that infringes on the safety of any individual will not be tolerated. A student shall not bully, harass, or intimidate another student through words or actions. Such behavior includes but is not limited to: direct physical contact such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults such as teasing or name-calling; and the use of electronic methods to harass, threaten or humiliate and social isolation and/or manipulation. Any student who engages in bullying shall be subject to disciplinary action.

- Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to a staff member.
- Students can rely on staff members to promptly investigate each complaint of bullying in a thorough and confidential manner.
- Staff members are expected to immediately intervene when they see a bullying incident occur.
- If the complainant student or the legal parents/guardians of a student think that appropriate resolution of the investigation or complaint has not been reached after consulting the superintendent of the school, the student or the legal parents/guardians may contact Dr. Kenney Moore, State Schools Director, at [kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us) or call 404-656-7552. If Dr. Moore is unavailable, the legal parents/guardians may contact Ms. Jan Stevenson, State Schools Assistant Director, at [jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us) or call 404-232-1503.
- The State Schools prohibit retaliatory behavior against any complainant or any participant in the complaint and investigation process.

Disciplinary action will be taken after each incident of bullying and upon a finding of guilt. Disciplinary action after an incident of bullying may include but is not limited to the following:

- Loss of a privilege
- Reassignment of seats in the classroom, cafeteria, or school bus
- Reassignment of classes
- Legal parent/guardian conference
- Response to Intervention referral
- Completion of a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA)
- Implementation of a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)

- In-school suspension
- Out-of-school suspension
- Detention
- Conduct an IEP meeting
- Contact local authorities

Counseling and other interventions should be provided to address the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic needs of students who are victims of bullying and students who commit an offense of bullying. Students, legal parents/guardians, and other stakeholders may report incidents of bullying to a school administrator, teacher, counselor, or any other staff member or by calling the Georgia Department of Education's 1-877 SAY-STOP (1-877-729-7867) School Safety Hotline.

#### **CAR RIDERS AT THE END OF A SCHOOL DAY THAT GO HOME**

Car riders are to be picked up Monday through Friday per the directives provided by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee. They should be picked up in front of the gym. The superintendent or his/her designee has the authority to assign a different departure from campus time related to an after-school activity/event. Such information will be shared with students and their legal parents/guardians.

#### **CAR RIDERS THAT STAY AFTER THE END OF THE SCHOOL DAY TO PARTICIPATE IN AFTER SCHOOL ACTIVITIES/EVENTS SUCH AS TUTORING, SCHOOL ATHLETICS, AND CLUBS/ORGANIZATIONS**

The superintendent or his/her designee must inform students and their legal parents/guardians through permission forms signed by legal parents/guardians regarding what time students must be picked up by when a student is involved in after-school activities/events including but not limited to: tutoring, school athletics games/practices, clubs, and organizations. Each after-school activity/event such as tutoring, school athletics games/practices, clubs, and organization meetings might have different deadline times for the pickup of students depending upon the time the after-school activity/event ends. It is the responsibility of the superintendent of the school or his/her designee to inform students and their legal parents/guardians in writing (e.g., permission form for the activity/event, school website, school newsletter, etc.) regarding when students must be picked up by after an after-school activity/event ends.

#### **CHANGE OF PLACEMENT FOR A STUDENT**

Only the IEP team can make a change in placement for a student attending a State Schools.

#### **CLASS/COURSE SYLLABUS**

Students will be provided with class syllabus at the beginning of the school year explaining classroom procedures, expectations, and course content such as curriculum standards to be learned in the class(es).

#### **CLASSROOM PARTIES/CELEBRATIONS**

Classroom parties are at the discretion of the superintendent of the school or his/her designee. The impact of parties on instructional time and student learning must be considered before the superintendent of the school or his/her designee gives approval.

### **CLINIC/HEALTH CENTERS**

The purpose of the Clinic/Health Center is to provide treatment of minor injuries and acute illness (i.e., severe symptoms, usually of rapid onset and short duration) of students. The Clinic/Health Center staff will provide healthcare services but should never be construed to take the place of the student's doctor or medical provider. Legal parents/guardians will be informed anytime a student goes to the Clinic/Health Center. If a student is injured or ill, legal parents/guardians will be requested to come to the school to pick up their child and seek medical attention through their family doctor. Once the doctor has treated the illness/injury, the student may return to school with a doctor's note/excuse.

If the school nurse, superintendent of the school, or any staff member approved by the superintendent of the school deems that a student needs emergency medical services, the staff member has the authority to call for an ambulance. Legal parents/guardians must be contacted immediately. The superintendent of the school will require the completion of a form for a referral to the Clinic/Health Center by a staff member. The completion of the form should be a secondary concern to that of getting immediate medical attention by the school nurse or other medical providers. The school nurse will inform relevant school staff on a need to know basis if a student is being kept in the Clinic/Health Center. The school nurse will also notify relevant staff when students either return to class or are going home on a need to know basis. Pictures of injuries will be taken by assigned staff keeping in mind confidentiality. The local school district's special education director will be informed of any injuries.

### **COMPLAINT PROCEDURES FOR THE EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT (ESSA) AND FEDERAL FUNDS**

Any individual, organization, or agency ("complainant") may file a complaint if that individual, organization or agency believes and alleges that there is a violation of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to any program under ESSA or federal funds. These federal funds include:

1. Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies
2. Title I, Part B, Subpart 3: Even Start Family Literacy
3. Title I, Part C: Education of Migrant Children
4. Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs
5. Title I, Part F: Comprehensive School Reform
6. Title II, Part A: Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund
7. Title II, Part D: Enhancing Education Through Technology
8. Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement
9. Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1: Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities
10. Title IV, Part A, Subpart 2: Community Service Grants
11. Title IV, Part B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers
12. Title V, Part A: Innovative Programs
13. Title VI, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 6111: State Assessment Program
14. Title VI, Part A, Subpart 1, Section 6112: Enhanced Assessment Instruments Competitive Grant Program
15. Title VI, Part B, Subpart 2: Rural and Low-Income Schools
16. Title IX, Part E, Subpart 1, Section 9503: Complaint Process for Participation of Private School Children

### **Filing a Complaint**

A complaint must be made in writing and signed by the complainant. The complaint must include the following:

1. A statement that the school, agency or consortium of agencies has violated a requirement of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to an applicable program.
2. The date on which the violation occurred.
3. The facts on which the statement is based and the specific requirement allegedly violated (include citation to the Federal statute or regulation).
4. A list of the names and telephone numbers of individuals who can provide additional information.
5. Whether a complaint has been filed with any other government agency, and if so, which agency.
6. Copies of all applicable documents related to the complaint.
7. Contact information for the complainant including home address, email, and telephone number.

**Level I Investigation:**

The complaint shall be given in writing to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee. Within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee will issue a Letter of Acknowledgement to the complainant that contains the following information:

1. The date the complaint was received.
2. How the complainant may provide additional information if applicable.
3. A statement of the ways in which the staff may investigate or address the complaint.

Within sixty (60) days, a Letter of Findings will be mailed to the complainant at the address provided by the complainant. A copy of the letter will be mailed to the Central Office and GaDOE Office of Legal Services.

If a complainant is not comfortable informing school level staff of the complaint, then the complaint can be handled as a Level II Investigation.

**Level II Investigation:**

A complainant dissatisfied with the decision of the superintendent of the school or his/her designee or is not comfortable filing the complaint with school staff may appeal a decision or send the original complaint to Dr. Kenney Moore, the GaDOE State Schools Director, by contacting him at:

Dr. Kenney Moore  
State Schools Director  
Georgia Department of Education  
Division of State Schools, Suite 1566  
205 Jesse Hill Junior Drive SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
[kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us)  
404-656-7552

If Dr. Moore is unavailable, an individual may contact Ms. Jan Stevenson, the GaDOE State Schools Assistant Director, by contacting her at:

Ms. Jan Stevenson  
State Schools Assistant Director  
Georgia Department of Education  
Division of State Schools, Suite 1566  
205 Jesse Hill Junior Drive SE  
Atlanta, Georgia 30334  
[jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us)  
404-232-1503

The complaint shall be given in writing to the State Schools Director or State Schools Assistant Director. Within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint, the State Schools Director or State Schools Assistant Director will issue a Letter of Acknowledgement to the complainant that contains the following information:

1. The date the complaint was received.
2. How the complainant may provide additional information if applicable.
3. A statement of the ways in which the staff may investigate or address the complaint.

Within sixty (60) days, a Letter of Findings will be mailed to the complainant at the address provided by the complainant. A copy of the letter will be mailed to the superintendent of the school and GaDOE Office of Legal Services.

#### Level III Investigation:

A complainant dissatisfied with the decision of the State Schools Director or State Schools Assistant Director may appeal to the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) by filing a written complaint to the GaDOE Office of Legal Services. The complaint should be mailed to:

Georgia Department of Education  
Office of Legal Services  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE  
2052 Twin Tower East  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Within ten (10) days of receipt of the complaint, the GaDOE General Council or his/her designee will issue a Letter of Acknowledgement to the complainant that contains the following information:

1. The date the complaint was received.



2. How the complainant may provide additional information if applicable.
3. A statement of the ways in which the staff may investigate or address the complaint.

Within sixty (60) days, a Letter of Findings will be mailed to the complainant at the address provided by the complainant, the superintendent of the school, State Schools Director, and State Schools Assistant Director.

### **Right of Appeal**

If an individual, organization, or agency is aggrieved by the final decision of any of the aforementioned GaDOE staff, that individual, organization, or agency has the right to request review of the decision by the United States Secretary of Education. The review is at the Secretary's discretion. A complainant may appeal the GaDOE staff's decision to the United States Secretary of Education no later than thirty (30) days from the date on which the complainant receives the Letter of Findings. The appeal must be accompanied by a copy of the Letter of Findings and include a complete statement of the reasons supporting the appeal.

### **COMPULSORY ATTENDANCE LAW**

Every legal parent/guardian of any child between the ages of six (6) and sixteen (16) shall enroll the child in school. All children enrolled for twenty (20) calendar days or more in public school prior to their seventh (7<sup>th</sup>) birthday shall become subject to the provisions of the compulsory attendance law. The Georgia State Board of Education's rule defines the school year as one hundred and eighty (180) days.

Any legal parent/guardian of a child shall be guilty of a misdemeanor for a violation of the Compulsory Attendance Law upon conviction. The legal parent/guardian of a child shall be subject to a fine not less than \$25 and not greater than \$100, imprisonment not to exceed thirty (30) days, community service, or any combination of the penalties at the discretion of a court/judge.

Each absence from school in excess of five (5) unexcused days requires that the school provides a written notice to the legal parents/guardians of a child explaining that such absences shall constitute a separate offense of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law. A violation of Georgia's Compulsory School Attendance Law shall be referred to the Juvenile Court by the local education agency in which the student resides.

### **COURSE CHANGES**

The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will provide information to students and legal parents/guardians regarding course schedules. All schedule changes must be completed during the first (ten) 10 days of a new semester. After registration, schedules will only be changed for the following reasons unless approved by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee:

1. A student is in a class for which he/she has already received credit
2. A student is taking a class that is not appropriate for his/her program of study
3. A decision made by the IEP Team
4. The superintendent of the school approves a course change given extenuating circumstances

### **COUNSELING & GUIDANCE SERVICES**

The State Schools make a good faith effort to provide counseling to students through the use of a school social worker, guidance counselor, outside counseling agency, etc.

## DAILY EXPECTATIONS/PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS

The same expectations and consequences apply to behavior in class, the residential component if applicable to the school, off campus activities/events, or any on campus activity/event at any time.

### Behavior Before and After School

1. Students are not allowed to roam the campus. Students are to be only in designated and supervised areas.

### Changing Classes

1. Students should walk on the right side of the hall.
2. Students should not linger to carry on conversations.
3. Students should keep an appropriate distance from the person in front of them.
4. Electronic devices are not to be used unless in accordance with school protocols.
5. Students are responsible for taking their belongings, including instructional materials, from class to class.
6. Instructional time should not be used to retrieve belongings.

### Cafeteria Behavior

1. Students are to remain at their table until dismissed.
2. Students are not to engage in roughhousing or throwing of food items.
3. Students are to clean the area around them before they leave.
4. Students are not allowed to remove drinks or food from the cafeteria.

### Breaks if Scheduled

1. There should be no roughhousing or running.
2. There should be no throwing of items.
3. Trash items should be discarded properly.
4. Students should not reenter the school building without staff permission.
5. Students may wear hats during break, as long as they are outside, if approved by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.
6. Electronic devices can only be used following the protocols established by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.

### At All Times

1. Students must employ good manners and proper etiquette while on school property and during after-school activities/events.
2. Public displays of affection are prohibited. This is defined but not limited to kissing, inappropriate touching, and hugs that are last longer than appropriate.
3. Students will be respectful of others' rights, including fellow students and staff. Disrespectful behavior will be addressed according to school disciplinary protocols.

## DETENTION

Staff members should follow protocols for detention as established by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee. The detention will be recorded in hardcopy or electronic format. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will notify legal parents/guardians about their child being assigned detention as a consequence.

## DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION TO THIRD PARTIES

The school is required to obtain the "Authorization to Release Information" form signed by legal parents/guardians before disclosure of information to anyone or in any manner other than prescribed by law including disclosure of information to third parties.

## DISCIPLINARY TRIBUNALS

Students attending the State Schools who allegedly commit a serious offense are afforded a Disciplinary Tribunal. Disciplinary Tribunals shall be convened as an evidentiary hearing to render a decision and impose disciplinary action. The State Schools Director must approve a school to evoke a Disciplinary Tribunal.

1. A Disciplinary Tribunal may be considered to convene in the following cases:
  - Where a student has committed an alleged assault or battery upon a teacher, other school official, or employee.
  - Where a student has committed an alleged assault or battery upon another student.
  - Where a student is alleged to have violated any school rule or engaged in any act of misconduct for which the superintendent of the school recommends suspension longer than ten school days.
2. Disciplinary Tribunals for students attending the State Schools shall include one administrative faculty member from the school, one representative from GaDOE, and a representative from the school district in which the student resides. The State Schools Director shall appoint the Student Disciplinary Tribunal members. No member shall be a member of the staff at the school that the student attends.
3. The school shall send a letter by certified mail to the student's legal parents/guardians and copy the student and State Schools Director containing a statement of the time, place and nature of the Disciplinary Tribunal, a statement of the matters asserted and charges against the student, a list of potential witnesses, a statement setting forth the right of the student to present evidence, cross-examine witnesses, and if legal counsel will be present. The Disciplinary Tribunal shall be held no later than ten (10) school days after the beginning of the out of school suspension.
4. School staff shall be responsible for presenting evidence in support of the charges against the student and all parties shall be afforded an opportunity to present and respond to evidence and to examine and cross-examine witnesses on any and all issues. Any staff member who is called, as a witness by the school, shall be given notice no later than three (3) days prior to the Disciplinary Tribunal. A verbatim, electronic, or written record of the Disciplinary Tribunal. This record shall be available to all parties, but the cost of transcribing such record shall be borne by the party requesting the transcript.
5. The Disciplinary Tribunal shall render a decision finding whether the student committed the offense and, if so, the appropriate consequence. The decision of the Disciplinary Tribunal shall be based solely on the evidence received at the Disciplinary Tribunal, including evidence presented by either party relevant to the appropriate punishment to be imposed. The Disciplinary Tribunal shall render a decision in writing within ten (10) days of the close of the record and shall furnish a copy of the decision to the student, his/her legal parents/guardians, and the student's home school district in which he/she resides. The decision of the Disciplinary Tribunal shall be final unless either party should appeal the decision to the Board of Education.
6. In the event a student or his/her parent/guardian does not wish to contest the charge(s) of violation(s) of the discipline rules of the student code of conduct for which a Disciplinary Tribunal has been required, the student and parent/guardian may voluntarily accept the consequences prescribed by the IEP Team by signing a Waiver of Disciplinary Tribunal Hearing form. Such waiver shall specify the rule violation, the date and description of the incident, the prescribed consequences, an agreement to waive the opportunity to participate in a hearing, present evidence, cross examine witnesses, and be represented by an attorney. The decision to

waive the Disciplinary Tribunal shall be final and cannot be appealed by the school or family. The student, a legal parent/guardian, a school administrator, and the superintendent of the school must sign and date the waiver. The State Schools Director shall appoint a hearing officer with the authority to approve the disciplinary consequences set forth in the waiver.

7. Any party may appeal the decision of the Disciplinary Tribunal to the State Board of Education by filing an appeal with the GaDOE Office of Legal Services. A written notice of appeal decision shall be rendered within twenty (20) days after the State Board of Education meets.
8. The State Board of Education shall review the record of the Disciplinary Tribunal, the decision of the Disciplinary Tribunal, and the notice of appeal. The decision of the State Board of Education shall be based solely on the record before the Disciplinary Tribunal and shall not consider any other evidence in ruling on the appeal. The State Board of Education may find the facts to be different than those found by the Disciplinary Tribunal and may change the consequence in accordance with state law.
9. Any student subject to a Disciplinary Tribunal who withdraws from the State School prior to the hearing must appear before a Disciplinary Hearing Tribunal to determine the student's eligibility to return to a State School in the event the student ever seeks to return.

#### **DISRUPTION OF PUBLIC SCHOOL**

It shall be unlawful for any person to disrupt or interfere with the operation of any public school, public school bus, or public school bus stop.

#### **EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN**

Student safety is the school's number one priority. The school's Emergency Preparedness Plan includes specific instructions and detailed procedures in the event of tornado, fire, lockdown, or any other emergency. During an actual lockdown, no one will be allowed to leave or enter the campus until the area is declared safe. Parents/legal guardians will be notified of an emergency that occurs through an approved means as established by the superintendent of the school and the State Schools Director or State Schools Assistant Director.

If a school closing becomes necessary due to inclement weather, including an expectation that travel may become hazardous, legal parents/guardians and transportation departments of the local education agency in which the students reside will be contacted and appropriate procedures will be followed to ensure the safety of the students to be transported home. Parents/legal guardians will be notified of a school closing that occurs through an approved means as established by the superintendent of the school and the State Schools Director or State Schools Assistant Director.

The superintendent of the school and the State Schools Director or State Schools Assistant Director will approve any means to provide status updates to legal parents/guardians in the case of any emergency as soon as it is safe to do so.

#### **ESSENTIAL RULES FOR STUDENTS TO FOLLOW**

1. Respond to a staff member's directions immediately.
2. Move quickly and quietly to destination and stay with your group and supervising adult.
3. Stay in assigned position (protective, seated, standing, etc.) until further instructions and remain quiet.

### **EXPULSION**

Under no circumstances is a student allowed to be expelled. Changes in placement are the decision of the IEP team.

### **FAILURE TO LEAVE CAMPUS**

Any person who fails to leave the campus when requested and/or returns to campus after being instructed by staff or law enforcement to leave the campus is considered trespassing and can face criminal prosecution of a misdemeanor of a high and aggravated nature in accordance with state law.

### **FAMILY EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS AND PRIVACY ACT**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. Under FERPA, a school may not generally disclose personally identifiable information from a minor student's education records to a third party unless the student's parent has provided written consent. One of the exceptions to the prior written consent requirement in FERPA allows "school officials," including teachers, within a school to obtain access to personally identifiable information contained in education records provided the school has determined that they have "legitimate educational interest" in the information. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/parents.html>

**Question:** Can a local school post signage outside of the classroom to indicate that special education services are provided in this setting such as resource teacher, self-contained teacher, or MOID/SID Classroom?

**Answer:** No, there is not a legitimate educational interest to support public awareness and transparency that students with disabilities are receiving services in a particular classroom. The public classification of the teacher's roll indirectly shares private identifiable information, which should not be a public display.

**Question:** The local school committee is currently planning for the end of the school year awards program. Is it appropriate to announce that Mrs. Smith will share awards for her Self Contained Class during the program?

**Answer:** No, you should consider the rationale from the previous guidance and how this procedure will impact the sharing of private identifiable information.

### **FOOD ALLERGIES AND SPECIAL DIETS**

Legal parents/guardians must obtain and submit a statement from their child's doctor clearly listing any food allergies. The statement from the child's doctor must be submitted to the Clinic/Health Services. When possible, the School Nutrition Department will prepare substitutions; however, the parent must prepare and provide food for students on special diets if the student needs a food supplement beyond the regularly served meals.

### **FORGERY**

Forgery or attempted forgery of electronic messages or other documentation is prohibited. Attempts to read, delete, copy, or modify the electronic mail of other system users or deliberate interference with the ability of other system users to send/receive electronic mail is prohibited. A student

bringing prohibited materials into the school's electronic environment will be subject to a suspension and/or a revocation of privileges on the system and will be subject to disciplinary action. This includes falsifying signatures of others.

### **GEORGIA EDUCATIONAL LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS**

Georgia has a long history as a leader in promoting early learning and development outcomes for children. Georgia has high-quality, research-based early learning standards for children birth to age five called the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). The GELDS promote quality learning experiences for children and addresses the question, "What should children from birth to age five know and be able to do?" They are a set of appropriate, attainable standards that are flexible enough to support children's individual rates of development, approaches to learning, and cultural context. The GELDS are a continuum of skills, behavior, and concepts that children develop throughout this time of life. They are divided into age groups and serve as a framework for learning. The GELDS are aligned with the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework, The Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) for K-12 and the Work Sampling System. The following link provides more information:

<http://gelds.dec.state.ga.us>

### **GEORGIA STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE**

The State Schools use the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) which are taught in all grades and subjects. The GSE requires students to gain a deeper understanding of the subject content. Common Core Performance Standards (CCGPS) are a model curriculum of the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) consortium. GSE are taught in all grades for Language Arts and Math. CCGPS literacy standards are taught in all grades and subjects. Note: Georgia withdrew from the PARCC consortium in July 2013, but the curriculum is still required.

For the Georgia Academy for the Blind only (GAB), the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) is implemented and is designed to go beyond the core component of math, reading, writing, and address the essential areas and experiences that are unique only to persons who are visually impaired. These areas are unique and should be taught in addition to the GSE because they are specific to the disability of blindness. The theme of the Expanded Core Curriculum program is Ready for the World, and comprises nine areas of the ECC:

1. Compensatory Academic Skills – Content Development, Communication Modes (Braille, print, other), Development of Organizational Skills
2. Orientation & Mobility – Spatial Awareness, Body Image, Safety, and Independent Travel
3. Social Interaction Skills – Physical Skills, Assertiveness Training, and Social Concepts
4. Independent Living Skills – Eating Skills, Food Preparation/Retrieval, Hygiene, Dressing, and Money
5. Recreation & Leisure Skills – Physical Fitness, Adaptive Sports, Travel, Enjoyable Activities, and Hobbies
6. Career Education – Explore Interests, Areas of Strength, Job Variations, and Work Ethics
7. Technology (Assistive) – Technical Concepts, Selection of Appropriate Assistive Devices, and Accessibility to Information
8. Sensory Efficiency Skills – Personal Attributes, Visual Attributes, and Efficient Use of Functional Vision
9. Self-Determination – Self-Awareness, Self-Advocacy, Choice Making, Independent Performance, and Self-Evaluation

For the GAB, the Extended Expanded Core Curriculum (EECC) is designed to offer specialized activities to reinforce independence and personal responsibility skills which can be applied to the students' everyday lives and to their lives beyond high school. Additional focus is given to social skill development through recreation and leisure activities. EECC is offered after the academic day is completed.

## GRADING

The school mails progress reports home to legal parents/guardians at four weeks into a quarter, and report cards and other assessment results every nine weeks.

Report cards:

- The following grading scale will be used for **PreK** based on how Bright From the Start (Georgia PreK) uses "Worksampling" as their formative assessment tool for all 70,000+ students. The rating categories for determining progress are **Proficient, Not Yet, and In Progress**.
- The following academic letter grading scale will be used **Kindergarten through First Grade**  
S = Satisfactory    N = Needs Improvement    U = Unsatisfactory
- The following academic letter grading scale will be used in **Second Grade through Grade Twelve**:  
A = 90 and above    B = 80-89    C = 70-79    F = Below 70
- Grade Point Average (GPA) for high school students will be calculated on a four-point scale:  
A = 4.0    B = 3.0    C = 2.0    F = 0.0 Unit credit shall be awarded only for courses that include concepts and skills based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for grades 9-12 or those approved by the State Board of Education. Unit credit may be awarded for courses offered in the middle grades that meet 9-12 GPS requirements. The IEP shall specify whether core courses taken as part of an IEP shall receive core unit credit.

## Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Students with significant intellectual disabilities or intellectual disabilities concurrent with motor, sensory or emotional/behavioral disabilities who require substantial adaptations and support to access the general curriculum and require additional instruction focused on relevant life skills and participate in the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 2.0). Students with significant cognitive abilities may graduate and receive a regular high school diploma when the student's IEP team determines that the student has:

- I. Completed an integrated curriculum based on the GPS that includes instruction in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies as well as career preparation, self-determination, independent living and personal care to equal a minimum of 23 units of instruction;
- II. Participated in the GAA during middle school and high school and earned a proficient score on the high school GAA in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies; and
- III. Reached the 22nd birthday OR has transitioned to an employment/education/training setting in which the supports needed are provided by an entity other than the local education agency.

## GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

Students Entering 9<sup>th</sup> Grade in 2011-2012 and beyond:

- The Georgia High School Graduation Test (GHS GT) is no longer required to earn a high school diploma for students entering grade nine for the first time during the 2011-2012 school year and beyond.



- To earn a high school diploma, students entering grade nine for the first time in the 2011-2012 school year and beyond will be required to pass the course with the increased weight of 20% for the Georgia Milestones End of Course Test applied to the course (for those core courses in which a Georgia Milestones End of Course Test is mandated).

Students with disabilities and English Language Learners may receive appropriate standard accommodations based on their needs and the specifications of their IEP, their Individual Accommodation Plan, or their ELL Testing Participation Committee Plan.

Students must meet diploma requirements in two areas: courses and credits.

- Courses: Students must complete specific course requirements as outlined by the graduation rule.
- Credits: Students must earn 23 units as a minimum state requirement for graduation.

All students will be required to complete a total of 23 units for graduation. Students will take:

- 4 units of English
- 4 units of Science
- 4 units of Mathematics
- 3 units of Social Studies
- 3 units required from: CTAE and/or Modern Language/ Latin\* and/or Fine Arts
- 1 Health/Physical Education course
- 4 additional electives

*\*Students planning to enter or transfer into a University System of Georgia institution must take two units of the same foreign language.*

These students will be eligible for one of the following types of secondary school credentials:

- High School Diploma – The document awarded to students certifying that they have satisfied attendance requirements and unit requirements as referenced in Rule 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs – Student Assessment.
- Certificate of Performance Diploma – The document awarded to students who do not complete all the criteria for a diploma as referenced in Rule 160-3-1-.07 Testing Programs – Student Assessment, but they have earned 23 units and meet all local board requirements.

### Units

Unit credit shall be awarded only for courses that include concepts and skills based on the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS) for grades 9-12 or those approved by the State Board of Education. Unit credit may be awarded for courses offered in the middle grades that meet 9-12 GPS requirements. The IEP shall specify whether core courses taken as part of an IEP shall receive core unit credit.

### Students with Significant Cognitive Disabilities

Students with significant intellectual disabilities or intellectual disabilities concurrent with motor, sensory or emotional/behavioral disabilities who require substantial adaptations and support to access the general curriculum and require additional instruction focused on relevant life skills and participate in the Georgia Alternate Assessment (GAA 2.0). Students with significant cognitive abilities may graduate and receive a regular high school diploma when the student's IEP team determines that the student has:



- (I) completed an integrated curriculum based on the GPS that includes instruction in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science and Social Studies as well as career preparation, self-determination, independent living and personal care to equal a minimum of 23 units of instruction, and
- (II) participated in the GAA during middle school and high school and earned a proficient score on the high school GAA in Mathematics, English/Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies, and
- (III) reached the 22nd birthday OR has transitioned to an employment/education/training setting in which the supports needed are provided by an entity other than the local school system.

#### **Georgia Milestones End-of-Course Tests (EOC):**

State Board of Education Rules mandates that any student, regardless of grade level, enrolled in a course for which there is a Georgia Milestones End of Course Test should participate in the assessment. The score contributes 20% to the student's final course grade with the remaining 80% comprised of classroom performance for students who enter the 9<sup>th</sup> grade during or after the 2011-2012 school year.

#### **HEALTH SCREENINGS**

The Clinic/Health Services may provide vision, dental, height, and weight screenings. Trained staff members also coordinate or administer scoliosis screening, nutrition evaluation, and other health related tests for specific age groups during the school year. The school will notify legal parents/guardians of scheduled screenings and screening results.

#### **HIGH SCHOOL DENIAL OF CREDIT**

The below items are in addition to the things that must occur regarding attendance and tardiness as otherwise indicated in this student handbook.

- After three (3) unexcused absences are accumulated during one (1) semester, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide the student, his/her legal parents/guardians, and the local education agency with a warning letter regarding the possible denial of credit. The letter will be sent by first-class mail. A copy of the letter must be maintained in the student's official school file at the State School and local education agency.
- After a student accumulates 15 unexcused tardies, they will become equal to one unexcused absence.
- When ten (10) unexcused absences are accumulated during a semester, credit can be denied with the written approval of the superintendent of the school. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee must provide the student, his/her legal parents/guardians, and the special education director at the local education agency in which the student resides with a letter explaining the denial of credit including the appeals procedure. The letter will be sent by first-class mail.
- A copy of the letter must be maintained in the student's official school file at the State Schools and the local education agency

#### **HOMELESS CHILDREN**

**(1)** In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et. seq.), the State Schools shall provide an educational environment that treats homeless students with dignity and

respect. Homeless students are provided with equal access to educational programs provided to other students, have an opportunity to meet state and district academic achievement standards to which all students are held and are not segregated or discriminated against on the basis of their homeless status. This commitment to the educational rights of homeless children and youth applies to all services, programs, and activities provided or made available.

## **(2) Definition of Homeless Children and Youth**

Under McKinney-Vento (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. ss11431-11436, sec. 25), homeless children and youth are defined as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The term includes children and youth who:

- (a) are living with other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason, including children and youth living doubled-up with family or friends;
- (b) are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative, adequate accommodations;
- (c) are living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- (d) are abandoned in hospitals;
- (e) are temporarily housed while awaiting foster care placement;
- (f) have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- (g) are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and/or
- (h) are migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

## **(3) RIGHTS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS**

- a) Unaccompanied youth must also be immediately enrolled in school. They may either enroll themselves or be enrolled by a non-parent caretaker, older sibling, or district liaison/designee. If the youth is enrolled by an adult other than a legal parent/guardian, a legal parent/guardian must sign the Caretaker Authorization Form.
- b) The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" are defined to mean receiving a school assignment, attending school, and participating fully in school activities. The school selected for enrollment must immediately (within one school day) enroll any homeless child or youth. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment.
- c) Once permanent housing is found, the family has a choice to stay in the school of origin until the end of the school year or attend the public school for which they are eligible where they have found housing. Out of region and cross-district, transportation services will not be available once the family is in stable housing.
- d) Be allowed access to books and school supplies.
- e) Be able to participate in all school-related activities (e.g., tutorial, instructional support, Community Learning Centers, etc.)
- f) obtain information regarding how to get fee waivers, free uniforms, and referrals to low-cost or free medical services.

### **Acknowledgement and Assignment**

- A. Information regarding the Homeless Children and Youth, McKinney-Vento Assistance Act, including services available to homeless students and how to obtain these services, will be posted throughout the school and Administration offices. Information will be placed in the Student Handbook and on school's website.
- B. School staff will identify homeless children and youth.
- C. The superintendent of the school shall identify a full-time staff member to serve as the Homeless Contact. The name of the school's Homeless Liaison Coordinator shall be given to the Homeless Education Program (HEP) staff at GaDOE annually. The Homeless Liaison Coordinator will coordinate their schools' compliance with this policy along with the System Federal Grants Coordinator and will receive training annually. The role of the Homeless Liaison Coordinator is to;
  - i. Ensure students who are eligible for Homeless Children and Youth services are identified by school personnel.
  - ii. Ensure that the student has an equal opportunity to succeed in school by receiving educational services for which they are eligible.
  - iii. Receive other support services as needed.
  - iv. Referred to School Social Worker or other trained staff member; if the Homeless Liaison Coordinator is not the school social worker.
  - v. The Homeless Liaison Coordinator will determine if the child or youth qualifies as homeless. All students identified as homeless must have a Homeless Education Program Enrollment (HEP) Form on file in the school's Homeless Liaison Coordinator's office at the school. The superintendent of the school will be for designating someone responsible for entering the information into the student database.
- D. Homeless status continues until the student is in stable housing. If the student continues to be homeless the following school year, he/she must reapply for the Homeless Education Program.
- E. A referral to the Homeless Liaison Coordinator does not and will not automatically place the student into classification as Homeless. This information should be shared only for identification purposes and is confidential information.

#### **(4) Identification**

- A. The enrollment/registration form will be updated to include identifiers that will alert staff if a student may be eligible for Homeless Children and Youth Services. As families complete the Enrollment/Registration form process at the beginning of the year and throughout the year, any identifier that has been indicated on the Enrollment/Registration form should be noted to prompt next steps. Identifiers will be questions such as Place of Residence and/or Person(s) living in the home/residence with the student.
- B. Once identifier of possible homeless status has been noted either on the Enrollment/Registration form or by other method, the assigned staff member will complete a Homeless Education Program referral form and provide it to the Homeless Liaison Coordinator to investigate possible homeless status of new student.
- C. The Homeless Liaison Coordinator will meet with the family and/or student to determine status of eligibility.
- D. Other Methods of Identification:
  - 1) Returned Mail
  - 2) Reporting from Staff
  - 3) Reporting from others

## **(5) SCHOOL SERVICES**

School personnel must inform parents/caregivers of all educational and related opportunities available to homeless children and provide parents/caregivers with meaningful opportunities to participate in the homeless child's education. Services include but are not limited to:

- (a) free breakfast and lunch
- (b) school supplies and books
- (c) preschool programs
- (d) transportation services
- (e) educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria such as programs for English Language Learners, special education services, or programs for gifted and talented students
- (f) programs for "At Risk" students
- (g) vocational and technical education programs
- (h) Title I services
- (i) waiver of school fees
- (j) tutorial programs, before - and after-school programs
- (k) school uniforms (when applicable)
- (l) referrals to community based agencies and services

### **HOMEWORK/MAKE-UP WORK**

The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will provide information to students and their legal parents/guardians regarding homework and make-up work.

### **ILLNESS PREVENTION**

To limit the spread of contagious illnesses and to maintain the health of students, please report any contagious disease your child may have to your child's teacher or another staff member. Please do not send your child to school if he/she isn't well enough to function in class or to go outside. Students with a fever, rash, vomiting, or diarrhea should wait at least twenty-four (24) hours before returning to school.

### **LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS CONTACTS**

Legal parents/guardians contact is of vital importance at each State School. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will announce to staff the number of contacts he/she expects teachers to make with a student's legal parents/guardians including how to document the contacts. The contacts include, but are not limited to, phone or video phone conversations, voice mail messages, email, face-to-face conversations, letters, notes, information sent via mail, correspondence sent home with, etc. The superintendent or his/her designee will inform legal parents/guardians of the number of contacts he/she expects and through what means of communication.

### **LOCAL EDUCATION AGENCY TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation to and from school is the responsibility of the local education agency in which the student resides unless the travel is related to a State Schools' activity/event. In that case, transportation is the responsibility of the State School. The local education agency in which the student resides may require completing a transportation form to arrange transportation. Failure to complete a transportation form or notify the local education agency in which the student resides about an address change in a timely manner may result in a delay of transportation services for students.

## MEDIA CENTER

The purpose of the media center is to support school-wide instruction. The superintendent of the school will provide information regarding the use of the media center.

### **Borrowing Guidelines**

1. All fiction and nonfiction books (except reference and textbooks) may be checked out for 2 weeks. Textbooks may be checked out for a semester.
2. Books may be renewed once, if no one else has requested them.
3. All magazines are for use in the Media Center.
4. A limit on the number of books is not emphasized; instead the number of books needed and can be responsibly handled is more important.
5. If a student has overdue books, he/she may not check out additional books until all overdue books have been paid for or are returned.
6. A student will be charged the fees below for lost materials.
  - a. Paperback books- Cost to replace paperback book
  - b. Hardback books- Cost to replace hardback book
  - c. Textbooks- Cost to replace textbook
  - d. Scientific calculator- Cost to replace scientific calculator
  - e. Graphing calculator- Cost to replace graphing calculator

## MEDICATIONS AT SCHOOL

The Clinic/Health services staff at each of the State Schools will provide appropriate control and assistance with the administration of medication to students.

1. A health services employee or trained designee will be responsible for administration of medication or assistance to the student in self-administration of medication, documentation of administration of medication, and storage of all medications in a locked cabinet.
2. The legal parents/guardians must complete and sign an authorization for administration of any medication at school detailing the student's name, student's doctor, medication's name, dosage, and frequency. For a prescribed medication, a doctor must also sign the authorization detailing the medication's name, dosage, time of administration, and potential side effects. The medication will be administered only in accordance with the written instructions from the prescribing doctor. The legal parents/legal guardians shall authorize the staff member assisting with the administration of medication to correspond directly with the student's doctor in the event the staff member deems it appropriate or necessary. The legal parents/guardians should also be contacted as soon as possible if this should occur. Only medical information related to this instance shall be discussed.
3. Medications and corresponding authorizations must be brought to the school office or Clinic/Health Services by a legal

parent/guardian or other designated adult. In the event that a legal parent/guardian cannot bring the medication to school, it is the legal parent/guardian's responsibility to notify the school in order to plan alternative methods of transport.

4. Medications must be in their original containers which have unexpired dates and prescription medications must be clearly labeled with the doctor's name, medication's name, strength, dosage, date, time for administration, and dispensing pharmacy.
5. It is the legal parent/guardian's responsibility to notify school Clinic/Health Services staff of medication side effects.
6. Under certain circumstances, a student who has a life-threatening condition (i.e. asthma, diabetes, or allergic reaction) may be granted permission by health services staff to carry medication (such as inhaler, glucose tablet, Epi-pen, or internal insulin pump) on his or her person as approved by the student's doctor. Such permission will only be granted in response to a written statement from the student's doctor that such a need exists based on a life-threatening condition and a completed and signed authorization from the legal parent/guardian. The documentation will be kept on file in the student's official file and the Clinic/Health Services. School staff will be informed on a need to know basis.
7. All medications (prescription and over-the-counter medications) require appropriate authorization (legal parent/guardian and/or doctor) for each new school year or whenever there are changes in the student's medication to be administered at school.
8. Any student not complying with this guidance and possessing any medication (prescription or over-the-counter medications) on the school campus shall be subject to disciplinary action.
9. Legal parents/guardians are responsible for unused medication at the end of the school year or when the student withdraws from a State School.
10. Medical consent forms must be signed by the legal parents/guardians in order for medical services to be given. These forms will be updated each school year. It is important that staff have an up-to-date phone number for work and home or a relative or friend's number where we can contact parents. For residential State Schools, in the event medications need to be ordered for your child, a local pharmacy is given your medical, billing, and insurance information to open an account. If the pharmacy does not accept the student's insurance, the medication will be ordered from the pharmacy of the parent's choice. Except in emergencies, medications will not be ordered until legal parental/guardian consent is obtained. The medical form will be provided for completion. The documentation will be kept on file in the student's official file and the Clinic/Health Services.

### **NONDISCRIMINATION**

The Atlanta Area School for the Deaf, the Georgia Academy for the Blind, and the Georgia School for the Deaf do 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 he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination by other students or employees of the school based on any of the factors listed above should promptly report the same to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee who will implement investigation procedures. Students may also report harassment or discrimination to any school staff member without fear of reprisal or retaliation. No person attending State Schools shall, on the basis or sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination in any education program or activity receiving financial assistance. If anyone is uncomfortable reporting discrimination to school level staff, he/she may contact Dr. Kenney Moore, State Schools Director, at [kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us) or call 404-656-7552. If Dr. Moore is unavailable, the individual may contact Ms. Jan Stevenson, State Schools Assistant Director, at [jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us) or call 404-232-1503.

### **OUT OF SCHOOL SUSPENSION**

Special education students may be removed to out of school suspension (OSS) for up to a total of ten (10) school days for violation of the student code of conduct or school rules. The ten (10) days can be consecutive or cumulative and can occur during one school year. It is not necessary for the IEP team to meet when this occurs. Likewise, it is not necessary for a manifestation determination to be completed, a functional behavior assessment to be conducted, a behavior intervention plan to be developed, or for any special education services to be provided if the removal is for ten (10) or fewer school days in the school year.

### **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES**

The State Schools strongly encourage legal parents/guardians involvement in their child's instructional program. Students are most successful when school and home work together. Legal parent/guardian conferences provide opportunities for the legal parents/guardians, teacher(s), and other instructional staff to discuss and plan to support student achievement and healthy behavioral development. Teachers and legal parents/guardians should try to meet at least once during the school year in addition to participation in the annual IEP conference. A State School might have an official legal parents/guardians conference day with instructional staff. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will inform legal parents/guardians if/when the school will have such a conference day and how to make an appointment.

### **PROMOTION/RETENTION**

The promotion or retention of a student into a grade, class, or program should be based on several factors to include an assessment of the academic achievement of the student and a determination of the education setting in which the student is most likely to receive the instruction and services needed in order to succeed and progress to the next higher level of academic achievement. The IEP shall establish standards for promotion in accordance with GaDOE State Board of Education rules.

### **REPORTS TO GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES**

All employees of the school are mandated reporters by law in the state regarding the safety of children. That said, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee will file confidential reports to the Georgia Department of Child Protective Services. It is against the law for the Georgia Department of Child Protective Services to divulge who submitted a report. It is also against the law

for school staff to inform parents that a report has been made to the Georgia Department of Child Protective Services. School staff will not discuss filed reports with legal parents/guardians.

### **RESTRICTED AREAS FOR STUDENTS**

The following areas are restricted to students unless accompanied by a staff member:

- Maintenance areas
- Construction areas
- School buildings where students are not attending classes and do not have permission to visit
- Wooded areas around the campus
- Other areas as announced by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee

### **RIGHT TO REQUEST TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS**

Legal parents/guardians have the right to request information regarding the professional qualifications of their child's classroom teacher(s). If a legal parent/guardian requests this information, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee will provide the legal parent/guardian with the following via mail within 5 business days. The information may include but is not limited to:

- a. If the teacher has met the state licensing requirements for the grade level and subjects in which the teacher is providing instruction
- b. If the teacher is teaching under an emergency status for which state licensing requirements have been waived
- c. The type of college degree major of the teacher and the field of discipline for any graduate degree or certificate
- d. If the legal parents/guardian's child is receiving Title 1 services from paraprofessionals, and, if so, his/her qualifications

### **SCHOOL BUS CODE OF CONDUCT**

All students are expected to obey the following rules of bus conduct if the student is on a school related field trip:

1. Students should report to the bus stop on time and conduct themselves in an orderly manner while waiting for the bus.
2. Students should board the bus and take a seat quickly, quietly, and safely.
3. The driver is in charge of the bus and is authorized to assign seats and set bus rules. The driver's instruction must be followed at all times.
4. Destruction of public property is forbidden and could result in restitution as determined by the administrators.
5. Language should be respectful.
6. Head, hands, and feet must be kept inside the bus at all times. Feet and legs should not be in the bus aisle.
7. Students must remain seated while riding on the bus.
8. Students should speak in a conversational tone.
9. Fighting is prohibited.
10. Possession of weapons, drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or any other prohibited item, will result in disciplinary action as determined by the administrators.
11. Female and male students should sit on opposite sides of the bus to the most feasible extent possible.

In accordance with school law (GaDOE Board Rule 160-5-3-.13), students will participate in emergency bus evacuation drills annually and participate in instruction for safe bus riding practices.



## **SCHOOL NUTRITION**

The State Schools are committed to serving healthy meals to children, with plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and fat-free and low-fat milk; moderate in sodium, low in saturated fat, and zero grams *trans*-fat per serving (nutrition label or manufacturer's specification); and to meet the nutrition needs of school children within their calorie requirements. The school meal programs aim to improve the diet and health of school children, help mitigate childhood obesity, model healthy eating to support the development of lifelong healthy eating patterns and support healthy choices while accommodating cultural food preferences and special dietary needs.

The three State Schools participate in USDA child nutrition programs, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP). All schools are committed to offering school meals through the NSLP and SBP programs, and other applicable Federal child nutrition programs that:

- Are accessible to all students;
- Are appealing and attractive to children;
- Are served in clean and pleasant settings;
- Meet or exceed current nutrition requirements established by local, state, and Federal statutes and regulations;
- The schools offer reimbursable school meals that meet [USDA nutrition standards](#);
- Promote healthy food and beverage choices;
- Menus will be posted on the individual website or individual school websites and will include nutrient content and ingredients;
- The school child nutrition program will accommodate students with special dietary needs;
- Students will be allowed at least 10 minutes to eat breakfast and at least 20 minutes to eat lunch counting from the time they have received their meal and are seated (meets HSP Gold level);
- Students are served lunch at a reasonable and appropriate time of day; and
- Participation in Federal child nutrition programs will be promoted among students and families to help ensure that families know what programs are available in their children's school

### **Campus Food Services**

**Infinite Campus** – Campus Food Service Point of Sale system helps to streamline cafeteria operations for establishing individual or family food service accounts, tracking food purchases, and designing flexible menu layouts. With this feature, all students and staff have a four-digit personal identification number (Pin) to be used as the cashier point of sale. The Pin number will remain exclusive for that student and will follow him/her through his/her school years at a State School. Staff and students are asked to memorize their Pin number for efficiency of service at the cashier line.

### **Payment**

Staff and guest/visitor payments for meals can be made at the cafeteria. Lunch payments for breakfast and lunch entrees are handled using established protocols approved by the superintendent of school or his/her designee. Payments can be made in advance through MySchoolBucks.com using your account.

Staff can use their four-digit Pin number at the cashier line to verify their account balance. Visitors and guests will be provided with a guest Pin number account code.

### **Pricing**

The school nutrition manager at your child's school will share information regarding meal pricing.

**USDA REGULATIONS 7 CFR 15 REQUIRE THAT SCHOOL FOOD AUTHORITIES PARTICIPATING IN THE NATIONAL SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM, NATIONAL SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM, OR SPECIAL MILK PROGRAM COMPLY WITH REQUIREMENTS RESPECTING NONDISCRIMINATION.**

"The program applicant hereby agrees that it will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq.), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. § 6101 et seq.); all provisions required by the implementing regulations of the Department of Agriculture; Department of Justice Enforcement Guidelines, 28 CFR Part 50.3 and 42; and FNS directives and guidelines, to the effect that, no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or otherwise be subject to discrimination under any program or activity for which the program applicant receives Federal financial assistance from FNS; and hereby gives assurance that it will immediately take measures necessary to effectuate this agreement."

"By accepting this assurance, the Program applicant agrees to compile data, maintain records, and submit reports as required, to permit effective enforcement of nondiscrimination laws and permit authorized USDA personnel during hours of program operation to review such records, books, and accounts as needed to ascertain compliance with the nondiscrimination laws. If there are any violations of this assurance, the Department of Agriculture, FNS, shall have the right to seek judicial enforcement of this assurance. This assurance is binding on the Program applicant, its successors, transferees, and assignees as long as it receives assistance or retains possession of any assistance from USDA. The person or persons whose signatures appear below are authorized to sign this assurance on the behalf of the Program applicant."

The following Civil Rights Assurance Language must be incorporated into all SNP contracts with retailers and vendors:

"The program applicant hereby agrees that it will comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.), Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 U.S.C. § 1681 et seq.), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975 (42 U.S.C. § 6101 et seq.); all provisions required by the implementing regulations of the Department of Agriculture; Department of Justice Enforcement Guidelines, 28 CFR Part 50.3 and 42; and FNS directives and guidelines, to the effect that, no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or otherwise be subject to discrimination under any program or activity for which the program applicant receives Federal financial assistance from FNS; and hereby gives assurance that it will immediately take measures necessary to effectuate this agreement."

**Positions Responsible for Policy, Regulation or Procedure:**

All School Nutrition Employees are responsible.

**Procedure, Regulation or Policy**

1. All complaints, either written or verbal, alleging discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, sex, or religion, which are filed at the school level must be forwarded to the **USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410** and to the **School and Community Nutrition Services Section, 1658 Twin Tower East, Atlanta, GA, 30334**. If the complaint is not received in writing, a certain form has to be completed by the person to whom the complaint was made and subsequently mailed.
2. The school system will report the complaint to the Department of Education. The Department of Education must then forward these complaints immediately to the Regional Office of the USDA, who in turn, forwards it to the Office of Minority Affairs (OMA). The OMA will then issue a letter of acknowledgement to the complainant.
3. A preliminary inquiry or an investigation will be conducted on all valid complaints to substantiate or refute the allegations.

**Civil Rights Complaints**

USDA prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. OASCR, through the Center for Civil Rights Enforcement, will investigate and resolve complaints of discrimination in programs operated or assisted by USDA.

USDA prohibits discrimination on the bases of race, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, familial status, disability, **limited English proficiency**, or because all or a part of an individual's income is derived from a public assistance program. In programs that receive Federal financial assistance from USDA, discrimination is prohibited on the bases of race, color, religious creed, sex, political beliefs, age, disability, national origin, or limited English proficiency. (Not all bases apply to all programs.) Reprisal is prohibited based on prior civil rights activity.

To file a program discrimination complaint, you may obtain a complaint form by sending an email to [SM.OASCR.Info](mailto:SM.OASCR.Info). You or your authorized representative must sign the complaint form. You are not required to use the complaint form. You may write a letter instead. If you write a letter, it must contain all of the information requested in the form and be signed by you or your authorized representative. Incomplete information will delay the processing of your complaint. Employment civil rights complaints will not be accepted through this email address.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotope, etc.), should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

Ask the superintendent of the school for a USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail, fax, or email.

**Here are the addresses, fax number, and email that can be used in filing a complaint:**

**Mail -**

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Director, Center for Civil Rights Enforcement  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20250-9410

**Fax –**

202-690-7442

**E-mail –**

[program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov)

**For help filling out the form, you may call any of these telephone numbers:**

- **202-260-1026 (Local)**
- **866-632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service)**
- **800-877-8339 (Local or Federal relay)**
- **866-377-8642 (Relay voice users)**

**Limited English Proficiency (LEP):**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities based on race, color, national origin, age, disability, and sex. The USDA regulations at 7 CFR 15 and 7 CFR 15b require school food authorities participating in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP) or Special Milk Program (SMP) to comply with requirements respecting nondiscrimination.

The State Schools is committed to taking reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to the School Nutrition Program for individuals with limited English proficiency (LEP). The State Schools also is committed to providing individuals with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in the School Nutrition Program.

**Special Meal Accommodations**

SFAs must make modification to accommodate disabilities. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Section 504) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability in programs and activities that receive Federal financial assistance, such as the Child Nutrition Programs. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as amended (ADA) prohibits discrimination based on disability in the provision of State and local government services, such as public schools. Title III of the ADA prohibits discrimination based on disability by private entities that provide public accommodations, including private schools. The ADA applies regardless of whether or not a school receives Federal financial assistance. Section 504, Title II, and Title III

require recipients of Federal financial assistance, such as SFAs, to make reasonable modifications to accommodate children with disabilities, including reasonable modifications to meals and the meal service.

USDA regulations at 7 CFR 15b, "Nondiscrimination on the Basis of Handicap in Programs and Activities receiving Federal Financial Assistance" implements Section 504's nondiscrimination requirements. 7 CFR 15b.26(d) requires recipients of Federal financial assistance, such as SFAs, to serve special meals at no extra charge to children with disabilities. In addition, Program regulations at 7 CFR 210.10(m) and 220.5(m) require SFAs to make substitutions to meals to accommodate children with disabilities that restrict their diet. Section 504, the ADA, and Departmental Regulations at 7 CFR part 15b define a person with disability as any person who has a physical or mental impairment which substantially limits one or more "major life activities," has a record of such impairment, or is regarded as having such impairment."

#### **Substitutions and other Reasonable Modifications**

1. School Food Authorities (SFA)s must make reasonable modifications to the meal, including providing special meals at no extra charge, to accommodate disabilities which restrict a child's diet.
2. SFAs must provide modifications for children with disabilities on a case-by-case basis only when requests are supported by a written statement from a State licensed healthcare professional, such as a physician or nurse practitioner (medical statement). See 7 CFR 210.10(m), and 220.5(m). In addition, meals that do not meet the Program meal pattern are not eligible for reimbursement unless supported by a medical statement.
3. SFAs may choose to accommodate requests related to a disability that are not supported by a medical statement if the requested modifications can be accomplished within the Program meal pattern.
4. SFAs may consider expense and efficiency in choosing an appropriate approach to accommodate a child's disability. SFAs are not required to provide the specific substitution or other modification requested but must offer a reasonable modification that effectively accommodates the child's disability and provides equal opportunity to participate in or benefit from the program.
5. SFAs must provide all meal services in the most integrated setting appropriate to the needs of the disabled child.

The State Schools are committed to:

- Following all USDA Safety and Health standards guidance and regulations
  - Ongoing professional development and training for the school nutrition staff
  - Quality customer service that exemplifies: Respect, Honesty, and Integrity in all that we do
- 

If you have difficulty communicating with staff or understanding this information because you do not speak English or have a disability, please contact:

Ms. Andrea Johnson

Email: [ajohnson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:ajohnson@doe.k12.ga.us), or mail:

Georgia Department of Education

Att: Ms. Andrea Johnson  
Suite 1566B Twin Towers East  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, S.E.  
Atlanta, GA 30334

Note: Free language assistance and services are available upon request.

### **SCHOOL SAFETY ZONES**

Georgia law designates that the area within 1,000 feet of school property is a “School Safety Zone.” This law makes it unlawful for any person to carry, possess, or have under his/her control any weapons or explosive compound in school buildings, on school property, within 1,000 feet of school property, at a school function, or on a bus furnished by the school. Violation is a felony punishable by a fine up to \$10,000, imprisonment for not less than two (2) years and not more than ten (10) years, or both.

### **SEARCH AND SEIZURE**

Staff are committed to having a safe school. Georgia public school law authorizes schools to conduct searches and seize materials that threaten the safety of the school. Whenever reasonable suspicion exists that a student possesses unauthorized materials, contraband, drugs, or other items deleterious to the safety and welfare of the school community, staff may conduct a search under the following guidelines:

- There is reason to suspect that the student(s) has violated school rules or that the health, safety, or welfare of students may be in danger. The school may conduct searches of individual students at any time when staff suspect the student may have violated a law or school rule. The school may conduct a search of personal items without the student being present.
- Staff have the authority to seize illegal items (firearms, weapons, and drugs) or other possessions reasonably determined to be a threat to the safety and security of others, or that might interfere with school purposes. Students should not pick up or handle any illegal items. Touching or handling any contraband constitutes possession, even though the student does not own the item and did not bring it on school property.
- Staff have the authority to remove from a student’s person items used to disrupt or interfere with the educational process.
- Student book bags, desks, lockers, and other school property may be subject to search without further notice to students or parents. The law authorizes schools to use “drug-sniffing” dogs or metal detectors to conduct such searches. Students are responsible for all items found in their book bags, lockers, vehicles and desks. Where applicable, students are required to submit to the school office a key or combination for locks on their lockers.
- This law also authorizes schools to use breathalyzers if reasonable suspicion of alcohol use exists or passive alcohol sensors to determine if a student is under the influence of alcohol.
- Upon entry into a school or program that uses restraints and monitored seclusion, a student’s legal parents/guardians should be notified in writing that these techniques may be used but are only used in situations in which the student is in immediate danger to himself/herself or others.

### **SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND SUPPORTS**

Each Sate Schools adhere to IDEA, as well as the GaDOE regulations regarding children with disabilities. The superintendent of the school has the ultimate responsibility to ensure that all IEP development, meetings, and implementation of services are done in accordance with the aforementioned law and regulations.

All stakeholders involved in the IEP process shall have the full rights given to them by IDEA and the GaDOE regulations. If any stakeholder thinks such rights have not been given, they can contact Dr. Kenney Moore, State Schools Director, at [kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us) or call 404-656-7552. If Dr. Moore is unavailable, the legal parents/guardians can contact Ms. Jan Stevenson, State Schools Assistant Director, at [jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us) or call 404-232-1503.

### **STATEWIDE ASSESSMENTS**

The State Schools follows the state's test administration procedures for state assessments as established by the GaDOE. Specific tests may vary each year depending on current state law and GaDOE requirements.

Because the educational program for each student is determined through an IEP, each IEP will include documentation of the state assessment appropriate for that student. The IEP team is responsible for determining which state test (e.g., GKIDS 2.0, Georgia Milestones, or the Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0) and the accommodations that are appropriate for a student. Accommodations during testing must be consistent with those used every day during a student's normal classroom instruction and assessment. The student's IEP must list the specific accommodations and the name of the test in order to be valid. Legal parents/guardians receive the written reports of the state assessment results each year.

All students enrolled in the State Schools will participate in state testing according to Georgia Law and Georgia State Board of Education policies and rules. The purpose of the Georgia Student Assessment Program is to measure the level of student achievement of a student's progress toward meeting state educational standards, to identify students failing to achieve mastery of the state educational standards, to provide teachers and other school staff with diagnostic information for a student, and to assist in identifying academic strengths and challenges a students has in order to establish priorities in planning educational programming that helps the student make progress.

### **Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) Grades 3- 12**

The Georgia Milestones Assessment System (Georgia Milestones) is designed to fulfill this requirement and to inform efforts to improve student achievement by assessing student performance on the standards specific to each course or subject/grade tested. Specifically, Georgia Milestones is designed to provide students and their parents with critical information about each student's achievement and, importantly, their preparedness for the next educational level.

Georgia Milestones represents a single system of summative assessments that span all three levels of the state's educational system – elementary, middle, and high school. Additionally, Georgia Milestones includes a representative sample of nationally norm-referenced items to provide a measure of how Georgia students are achieving relative to their peers across the nation.

The mode of administration for the Georgia Milestones program is online. Paper/pencil test materials, such as Braille forms, will be available for the small number of students who cannot interact with the computer due to their disability.

1. **Georgia Milestones End-of-Grade Test (EOG) Grades 3-8:**

Students enrolled in grades three through eight are required to participate in Georgia Milestones annually. Students in grade 5 test in the content areas of English /Language Arts, Mathematics, Science. Students in grade 8 test in the content areas of English /Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies; while students in grades 3, 4, 6, and 7 will test only in the content areas of English/ Language Arts and Mathematics. Students must be assessed in the grade level for which they are reported; no out-of-grade/off-grade testing is permitted. Systems and schools must have a process in place to ensure that students are being administered the correct test. Students must participate in all content areas identified for their grade level.

The EOG measures align with the Georgia's state-adopted content standards and include assessment of specific content knowledge and skills inherent in each grade. The tests provide information to help identify student strengths and areas of improvement in learning and provide data to evaluate the effectiveness of classroom instruction at the school and system levels. As such, the measures contribute to the state's accountability system – the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI).

2. **Georgia Milestones End-of-Course Tests (EOC) Grades 9-12:**

Any student enrolled in and/or receiving credit for a Georgia Milestones End of Course Test course, regardless of grade level, will be required to take the EOC upon completion of that course. Middle school students completing a Georgia EOC course must take the test regardless of whether they are receiving high school credit. Students enrolling from non-accredited programs are required to take and pass the End of Course Test prior to receiving credit for the course.

The Georgia Milestones End of Course tests are administered in four subject areas:

- American Literature
- Biology
- Algebra 1
- U.S. History

**Georgia Kindergarten Inventory of Developing Skills 2.0 (GKIDS 2.0):**

GKIDS 2.0 is a year-long, performance-based assessment. The goal of the assessment program is to provide teachers with information about the level of instructional support needed by individual students entering kindergarten and first grade. GKIDS 2.0 allows teachers to assess student performance during instruction, record student performance in an on-line database, and generate reports for instructional planning, progress reports, report cards, student support team, and/or parent conferences. Throughout the year, teachers may assess students and record GKIDS 2.0 data based on their system's curriculum map or report card schedule. At the end of the year, summary reports and



individual student reports will be generated based on the data the teacher has entered throughout the year.

The primary purpose of GKIDS 2.0 is to provide ongoing diagnostic information about kindergarten students' developing skills in English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Personal/Social Development, and Approaches to Learning. GKIDS 2.0 also provides a summary of student performance in English Language Arts and Mathematics at the end of the kindergarten school year. GKIDS 2.0 should serve as one indicator of first grade readiness. GKIDS 2.0 will serve both a formative and summative role in assessing kindergarten students.

### **Georgia Alternate Assessment 2.0 (GAA 2.0):**

The GAA 2.0 assessment is comprised of standardized performance tasks and is designed to provide tiered participation within the assessment for students working at various levels of complexity. Task sets are built with three levels of cognitive demand with Part A representing the least complex level of item and Part C representing the most complex level of items within the set.

The GAA 2.0 should be administered annually in the Spring to assess achievement of students in English language arts (grades K, 3-8, and 11), mathematics (grades K, 3-8, and 11), science (grades 5, 8, and 11), and social studies (grades 8, and 11). This assessment program promotes a vision of enhancing capacities and integrated life opportunities for students who experience significant cognitive disabilities.

Students with significant cognitive disabilities who entered 9<sup>th</sup> grade during the 2008-2009 school year and in subsequent years could graduate with a regular education diploma by completing required courses and by passing their Georgia Alternate Assessment during their 11<sup>th</sup> grade year and by meeting additional requirements.

For additional information, please see the assessment page on the Georgia Department of Education website ([https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/GAA\\_2.aspx](https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/GAA_2.aspx)).

### **STUDENTS BEING PICKED UP FROM SCHOOL EARLY**

The school may not release a student to any person other than legal parents/guardians or individuals the legal parents/guardians have authorized to pick up the student from school (e.g., a grandparent, other relative, childcare provider, etc.). The legal parent/guardian must notify the school in writing regarding permitting an individual to pick up a student. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee may have additional paperwork for the legal parents/guardians to complete. Notification that a student may be picked up by an individual as approved by the legal parents/guardians will be placed at a minimum in the student's official school file. A picture ID must be presented before the student will be released.

### **STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT**

#### **Purpose of the Student Code of Conduct:**

The State Schools have adopted a student code of conduct to support the creation of a safe learning environment for all members of the school community. The purpose of this student code of conduct is to state clearly the standards for acceptable conduct of students. The State Schools do not permit corporal punishment.

All students enrolled in the State Schools are protected by the Procedural Safeguards of IDEA. Disciplinary action for violations of the student code of conduct will comply with requirements of IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, and state law. The student code of conduct sets forth the discipline procedures for the students who have committed violations of the student code of conduct. The State Schools Central Office may amend this student code of conduct at any time.

The legal parents/guardians of a student shall be informed of any breach of the student code of conduct by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee within a reasonable timeframe taking into consideration ensuring the safety of the student(s) and any other individual(s). Each State School has the responsibility to:

- To ensure a safe teaching and learning environment that is protected from disruption and harassment
- To provide information to students and legal parents/guardians about the student code of conduct and the possible penalties for violations of the student code of conduct
- To provide administrative and disciplinary procedures for staff to follow regarding breaches of the student code of conduct

General Overview of the Student Code of Conduct:

All students shall:

1. **Participate fully in the learning process** - Students are to report to school and class on time, attend all regularly scheduled classes, remain in class until excused or dismissed, pay attention to instruction, complete assignments to the best of their ability, and ask for help when needed.
2. **Avoid behavior that impedes the student from learning or impedes the learning of other students** - Students should know and avoid the behaviors prohibited by the student code of conduct.
3. **Show respect for school staff and other individuals** - Students must follow directions of school staff, use acceptable and courteous language with other individuals, avoid being rude, avoid physical aggression towards others, and follow school rules and procedures.

The State Schools expect legal parents/guardians, staff, and other stakeholders to support school rules and the student code of conduct. Legal parents/guardians are encouraged to become familiar with the school rules and student code of conduct. Legal parents/guardians are encouraged to communicate their questions and/or concerns regarding the school rules and student code of conduct to their child's teacher and/or the superintendent of the school or his/her designee (e.g., assistant principal, department chair, etc.).

IDEA states that in the case of a child whose behavior impedes the child's learning or that of others, the use of positive behavior intervention and supports, and other strategies to address that behavior shall be considered. State Schools shall administer a Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) and develop and implement an individualized Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) for students who engage in continual acts of misconduct, as well as, those who engage in even a single act of more serious misconduct. The FBA is a process for gathering information about a student's challenging behavior(s). A team is established to identify the behaviors of concern, review the student's records, and plan for the implementation of the FBA. An FBA is a

data based, thoughtful, and organized process. A comprehensive assessment identifies the consequences that maintain behaviors and the contexts in which those behaviors reflect a pattern of antecedents and setting events. The team develops a hypothesis about the behavior based on this information, which is the foundation for developing the BIP. A BIP is a written, individualized, behavior intervention plan based on a functional assessment of a student's behavior. The plan incorporates positive behavioral interventions and supports designed to address identified academic and behavior concerns.

As said previously, students attending a State School have the Procedural Safeguards as included in IDEA. The superintendent of the school has the responsibility to ensure that requirements as established in IDEA are followed in regard to any disciplinary action taken. The State Schools are committed to creating a safe, positive environment for all students, staff, parents/guardians, stakeholders, and community partners. The State Schools believe that all students can thrive in a safe learning environment. The State Schools utilizes a range of activities to recognize, celebrate, and reward positive behavior.

In addition to this student code of conduct, the State Schools has various policies that govern student conduct in regard to school. A copy of those policies can be obtained at <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/State-Schools/Pages/State-Schools-Policies.aspx>.

#### **Scope of the Student Code of Conduct:**

All students and staff are entitled to a safe, secure, and orderly environment in which to learn and work. The rules and regulations in this student code of conduct are designed toward that end and are effective during the following times and places:

- On school grounds at any time
- At any school related activity/event regardless of the time and location
- When either the alleged perpetrator or the alleged victim is in route to or from school or to or from a school related activity/event that is not under the purview of a student's local education agency in which he/she resides
- Off school grounds when the behavior of a student: (1) could result in the student being criminally charged; (2) makes the student's continued presence at a school related activity/event a potential danger to the student or others; and/or (3) disrupts the educational process of the student or others

#### **Discrimination of Student(s) Based on Discipline Consequences**

The State Schools prohibit discrimination in assigned consequences related to breaches of the student code of conduct including but not limited to placement, grading, discipline, and any other activity based on race, creed, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, age, marital status, gender, handicap, or nationality.

#### **References to the Official Code of Georgia Annotated**

Title 16 of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated (O.C.G.A.) does not require that the elements of the specific criminal code section referenced be proved beyond a reasonable doubt before a school may punish a student for misconduct. Further, these code references do not impose any additional intent requirements upon a State School from pursuing disciplinary action against students for the violation of the student code of conduct. When a school rule is violated that may also be a violation of the law, the State School will notify local authorities in accordance with the State Schools Incident Reporting policy.

### **THE FOLLOWING IS GENERAL GUIDANCE REGARDING SCHOOL RULES AND CONSEQUENCES**

- 1) The superintendent of the school or his/her designee may suspend a student for violation of school rules or for any other act of misconduct for a period not exceeding ten (10) school days. Written notice and an opportunity to discuss the matter with the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must be given to the student and the legal parents/guardians if requested. The legal parents/guardians must be contacted by phone by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee as soon as possible in regard to any disciplinary incident and consequence. Written documentation of any disciplinary action must then be provided to the legal parents/guardians within 24 hours of the determination of the consequence if an investigation is concluded.
- 2) Students assigned out of school suspension (OSS) are not allowed on any State Schools campus or to attend any State Schools activity/event.
- 3) Students assigned to in-school suspension (ISS) are not allowed to participate in extracurricular activities for the duration the student is in ISS at the discretion of the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.
- 4) All dangerous weapons, instruments, or controlled substance confiscated by school authorities are to be turned in to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee and a contact must be made to the local authorities and to the Central Office.
- 5) A student is considered to be in possession of an illegal and/or banned item(s) or substance(s) when such item(s) or substance(s) is found on the person of the student, in his/her possession, in his/her locker, in a student's vehicle on school property, or in any vehicle a student brought on school property, or on property being used by the school.
- 6) Students are prohibited from engaging in gang/hate group or hazing related activities in school.
- 7) The superintendent of the school or his/her designee has the authority to conduct a reasonable search of students, their possessions, their lockers, and/or their vehicles when on school property if it is established there is reasonable suspicion that the search will reveal a violation of the law, the student code of conduct, or other applicable rules and/or regulations. This applies to students that are involved in school related activities/events that occur off campus.
- 8) A student may be considered a party to a violation of the student code of conduct and disciplined for the underlying offense where the student:
  - Directly violates the student code of conduct
  - Intentionally causes some other person to commit a violation of the student code of conduct
  - Intentionally aids or abets another in a violation of the student code of conduct
  - Intentionally advises, encourages, hires, counsels, or procures another to commit a violation of the student code of conduct
- 9) Certain violations of the student code of conduct may also be violations of state law and juvenile authorities or other law enforcement agencies may address the student's misconduct in accordance with state laws, in addition to the student code of conduct while adhering to any applicable language in IDEA regarding discipline.
- 10) Students are to notify an administrator or staff member when suspected illegal items, dangerous items, or other items banned from school are found in the school building, on the school campus, or on a school bus. Students are advised not to pick up or handle illegal, dangerous, banned, or unidentified items.
- 11) Students should recognize their responsibility to know the contents of this student handbook and to ask the school administration or staff for any clarification.
- 12) All students, regardless of age, are subject to the rules and regulations of the State Schools.
- 13) Each State School will review the contents of this student handbook with its students.

- 14) State law requires that certain criminal offenses committed by a student while on school property or at a school sponsored activity/event be reported to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee, appropriate law enforcement authorities, and others as indicated in the State Schools Incident Reporting policy.
- 15) Georgia law makes it unlawful for any person to manufacture, distribute, disperse, or possess with the intent to distribute a controlled substance or marijuana on or within 1,000 feet of any real property owned by or leased to any public or private elementary school, secondary school, or school board used for elementary or secondary education. Any person who violates or conspires to violate this code section shall be guilty of a felony.
- 16) Any Disciplinary Tribunals must have the approval of the State Schools Director, and the process for a Disciplinary Tribunal must be followed using protocols established by the Georgia Department of Education and the Division of State Schools.
- 17) The superintendent of the school or his/her designee must contact the State Schools Director regarding a serious breach of conduct as soon as the safety of individuals at school is ensured. If the State Schools Director cannot be reached, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must contact the Assistant Director for State Schools.

### **GENERAL SCHOOL RULES**

The following are general school rules that all students are expected to follow while on campus or off campus for a school related activity/event. Any serious breach of school rules or the student code of conduct must be reported following the Incident Reporting policy.

#### **Rule 1 – Disruption and Interference with School**

No student shall cause or attempt to cause directly or indirectly disruption or interference with school.

##### **Section A**

##### **Mandatory Reporting of Repeated and Substantial Class Interference**

Staff at the State Schools are required to report any student's violation of the student code of conduct as soon as possible to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee must contact the student's legal parents/guardians as soon as possible and also provide a copy of any disciplinary referrals. This includes information regarding how the superintendent of the school or his/her designee may be contacted.

##### **Section B**

##### **Student Removal from Class**

A teacher may remove or refer to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee a student from class if the student has exhibited behavior that repeatedly or substantially interferes with the teacher's ability to teach students in his/her class or the ability of other students to learn in the class.

#### **Rule 2 – Damage, Destruction, or Misuse of School Property or Equipment**

A student shall not cause or attempt to cause damage to school property or alter/misuse school technology or any other equipment, including but not limited to unauthorized use of a computer. A student shall not steal or attempt to steal school property. A student shall not possess, sell, use, buy or transmit stolen school property or attempt to possess, sell, use, buy or transmit stolen school property.

### **Rule 3 – Damage, Destruction, or Misuse of Private Property**

A student shall not cause or attempt to cause damage to private property, steal, or attempt to steal private property. A student shall not possess, sell, use, buy, or transmit stolen private property on school grounds. While off the school's grounds for a school related activity/event, a student shall not possess, sell, use, buy, or transmit stolen private property or cause or attempt to cause damage to private property.

### **Rule 4 – Abuse, Threats, Intimidation, Assault, or Battery on Another Student or School Employee**

Regardless of intent, a student shall not make oral or written communication, create a document, make a symbolic gesture, or make contact of a threatening, undermining, or provoking nature to or about another student or school employee. This includes, but is not limited to, disrespectful conduct such as: insults; use of profanity; use of ethnic, racial, sexual, disability, or religious slurs; and/or harassment that includes the development of a "hit list," "people to kill," "people to shoot," or a statement about bringing a weapon to school and injuring people.

### **Rule 5 – Weapons, Dangerous Instruments, and Explosive or Implosive Devices**

A student shall not solicit to buy, sell, possess, handle, transmit, or threaten anyone with the discharge/use of any object that can reasonably be considered or converted to and/or used as a weapon such as, but not limited to: knives, guns, pellet guns, brass knuckles, fireworks, lighters, tear gas, mace, explosives, pepper spray, bats, clubs, sticks (other than for school approved athletics or events), other instruments of a bludgeoning type, Chinese stars, razors, projectiles, and anything similarly dangerous. Possession of a weapon on school property or at school activities/events on or off campus will be reported to the local authorities, legal parents/guardians, and the State Schools Director.

### **Rule 6 – Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco**

#### **Section A**

A student shall not be involved in any substance, drug, alcohol, or tobacco transaction, including, without limitation to: buy, possess, sell, use, transmit, or solicit said items. A student cannot be under the influence of any narcotic drug, under the influence of a stimulant drug including without limitation caffeine pills, hallucinogenic drugs, anabolic steroids, amphetamines, barbiturates, marijuana, inhalants, alcoholic beverages, or intoxicant of any kind. A student shall not possess, sell, buy, or transmit, or attempt to sell, buy, or transmit any substance under the pretense that it is, in fact, a prohibited substance as described. The misuse or unauthorized possession of a prescription drug or nonprescription drug shall be considered a violation; however, this shall not apply to proper possession and/or use of a drug as authorized by a medical prescription from a registered doctor following the school's written protocols for the handling of the medication (e.g., keeping the medication in the Clinic/Health Services). Self-administration of asthma medication and prescription auto injectable epinephrine is permitted with written legal parent/guardian and a doctor. Documentation authorizing a student to have said medications on his/her person must be maintained in the Clinic/Health Services and the student's official school file.

#### **Section B**

A student shall not possess, sell, use, transmit, buy, or solicit any drug-related paraphernalia that includes, but is not limited to, pipes, matches, lighters, water pipes, clips, rolling papers, or any other items related to drug use.

### **Rule 7 – Disregard of Directions or Commands**

A student is expected to comply with reasonable directions or commands of staff members.

### **Rule 8 – Sexual Misconduct/Indecency**

A student shall not engage in any act of sexual harassment of others including but not limited to physical contact or communication. A student shall not perform any act of indecent exposure, lewd exposure, gesture or lewd caress, or indecent fondling/touching of the student's own body or the body of another person, or any act of sexual intercourse. A student shall not use any inappropriate gestures that mimic or imply sexual acts or engage in any acts of "streaking" or "mooning" as those terms are commonly understood. Such acts will not be regarded lightly or considered pranks. A student shall not possess, view, copy, sell, buy, or transmit printed or non-printed pornographic materials including any non-curricular sexually explicit printed or non-printed materials.

### **Rule 9 – Unexcused Absences**

A student shall not be absent from school except for excused illness or other providential causes as indicated in this student handbook.

### **Rule 10 – Other Conduct That is Subversive to Good Order**

A student shall not perform any other act that is subversive to good order on campus or during a school related activity/event off campus. This includes, but is not limited to: violation of school rules; violation of the student code of conduct; violation of state and federal law; involvement in criminal gang related behavior and/or criminal gang conduct as defined and prohibited by Georgia law; providing false information to school personnel; unauthorized possession or inappropriate use of technology; loitering or trespassing; providing false information about other students or school employees; or community misconduct that would be so serious as to pose a threat to the school community.

### **Rule 11 – School Bus Infractions**

No student shall cause or attempt to cause (either directly or indirectly) a disruption or interference with school bus operations by any means. Any disciplinary infraction that occurs on a local education agency bus is the sole responsibility of that local education agency to investigate and determine disciplinary consequences as well as inform the student's legal parents/guardians. If a disciplinary infraction occurs on State Schools' bus such as during a field trip, it is the responsibility of the superintendent of the school or his/her to address the infraction.

### **Student Misconduct: Range of Consequences**

The superintendent of the school or his/her designee taking into consideration IDEA requirements regarding the handling of disciplinary incidents shall assign a consequence for misconduct. The range of consequences for misconduct that can be assigned by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee varies by the type and severity of the misconduct. It is imperative that misconduct be treated on case-by-case basis taking into consideration the cognitive level of the student and other factors and not a one size fits all approach. Infractions typically fall in a Level I, II, or III disciplinary category with corresponding potential consequences. Consequences must be shared with the student, the student's legal parent/guardians, and others as indicated in this student handbook and in accordance with the Incident Reporting policy.

### **Level I: Minor Acts of Misconduct**

Level I offenses are minor acts of misconduct that interfere with the orderly operation the school including on and off campus school related activities/events but are not considered to endanger: the health of the student committing the misconduct, the health of others, public property, or the property of others. The staff member(s) involved should intervene in the misconduct. If further action is necessary, the staff member(s) should refer the student to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee for disciplinary action. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will decide on a disciplinary consequence for the misconduct. The legal parents/guardians of the student(s) involved will be notified as soon as possible regarding the misconduct and the consequence and will receive written documentation such as a discipline referral or letter in writing no later than one (1) day after the misconduct and the assignment of a consequence.

### **Level II: Moderate Acts of Misconduct**

Level II offenses are moderate acts of misconduct that may include repeated acts of misconduct from Level I. Level II offenses can include acts that interfere with the orderly operation the school including on and off campus school related activities/events but do not seriously endanger the safety of anyone or the destruction of property. For example, such misconduct might include minor fights. The staff member(s) involved should intervene in the misconduct. The staff member(s) should refer the student to the superintendent of the school or his/her designee for disciplinary action. After completing an investigation, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee will decide on a disciplinary consequence for the misconduct. Depending on the severity of the misconduct, the consequence can include disciplinary action up to out of school suspension. If an out of school suspension is involved, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must inform the State Schools Director. Level II offenses require that the Incident Reporting policy be followed. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will contact the student's legal parents/guardians regarding the misconduct and the consequence, and the legal parents/guardians will receive written documentation such as a discipline referral or letter in writing no later than one (1) day after the misconduct and the assignment of a consequence. The special education director of the local education agency in which the students resides will receive a copy of the written documentation given to legal parents/guardians.

### **Level III: Serious Acts of Misconduct**

Level III offenses are the most serious breaches of school rules and/or the student code of conduct. Such acts endanger: the health of the student committing the misconduct, the health of others, public property, and/or the property of others. Level III offenses place students and/or staff at serious risk of emotional or physical harm. The staff member(s) involved should intervene in the misconduct if it is safe to do so or call for the Emergency Response Team. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee may need to contact local authorities. Once student and staff safety is secured, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee must complete an investigation. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee in consultation with the State Schools Director and/or the State Schools Assistant Director will decide on a disciplinary consequence and adhere to the Incident Reporting policy including contacting the legal parents/guardians and the special education director of the local education agency in which the student resides as soon as reasonably possible. Level III offenses may be grounds for out of school suspension and/or Disciplinary Tribunal. Only the State Schools Director or if he is unavailable the Assistant Director for State Schools can approve for a



Disciplinary Tribunal to occur. The Central Office for the State Schools will provide guidance and oversight of the implementation of a Disciplinary Tribunal.

### **COMMON INFRACTIONS AND POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES**

The following are common infractions and potential consequences. The list is not intended to be exhaustive because schools cannot document every infraction a student can engage in that would violate school rules or the student code of conduct. The school must use Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports and Multi-Tiered System of Supports to be proactive so that student misconduct does not escalate.

- **Excessive Unexcused Absences or Tardies**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level II infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - notifications to legal parents/guardians and the local education agency in which the student resides
    - notifications to the Juvenile Court by the local education agency in which the student resides as required by state law
    - notifications to the Georgia Department of Motor Vehicle Safety as required by state law
    - an IEP meeting
- **Academic Dishonesty or Misrepresentation of Self or Others**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level II infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - receiving a zero on an assignment
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
- **Physical Violence against Another Student or Employee**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Verbal Assault/Threat against Another Student or Employee**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning

- a parent/guardian conference
  - in-school suspension
  - out of school suspension
  - restriction from school activities/events
  - an FBA and BIP
  - an IEP meeting
  - contacting local authorities
  - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Classroom Disturbance**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Computer Trespass**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - restriction from using school computers
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Drug Sell/Transmission/Solicitation and/or Drug Possession/Use/Under the Influence**
  - The infraction is a Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - out of school suspension
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Violations of the Medication Policy**
  - The infraction is a Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - out of school suspension
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities

- Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Possession of Drug-related Paraphernalia**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Failure to Accept Administrative Disciplinary Action**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - restriction from using school computers
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Gambling**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level II infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
- **Gang-related Activity**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal

- **Harassment**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Off Campus Misconduct and Criminal Law Violations**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Use of Profanity**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level II infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
- **Repeated Violations or Misbehavior**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Rude, Disrespectful Behavior or Refusal to Carry Out Instructions of Staff**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:

- a warning
  - a parent/guardian conference
  - in-school suspension
  - out of school suspension
  - restriction from school activities/events
  - an FBA and BIP
  - an IEP meeting
  - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Sexual Improprieties**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **School Disturbances**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Skipping Class or Required Activities.**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level II infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
- **Theft**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events

- an FBA and BIP
  - an IEP meeting
  - contacting local authorities
  - financial restitution
  - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Possession of Tobacco or Tobacco Paraphernalia**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
- **Vandalism or Misuse of Equipment**
  - The infraction may range from a Level II to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    - restricting the use of equipment
    - contacting local authorities
    - financial restitution
    - Disciplinary Tribunal
- **Violation of the Dress Code**
  - The infraction may range from a Level I to Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - a warning
    - a parent/guardian conference
    - in-school suspension
    - out of school suspension
    - restriction from school activities/events
    - an FBA and BIP
    - an IEP meeting
    -
- **Weapons**
  - The infraction is a Level III infraction.
  - The consequence may involve:
    - out of school suspension
    - contacting local authorities
    - Disciplinary Tribunal

### **Request for a Meeting Regarding Discipline Consequences**

At any time, a student, school staff, or legal parents/guardians may request a meeting with the superintendent of the school to discuss the misconduct and appeal a consequence. A student, school staff, or legal parents/guardians may appeal a consequence decision made by the superintendent of the school by contacting Dr. Kenney Moore, State Schools Director, at [kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:kemoore@doe.k12.ga.us) or call 404-656-7552. If Dr. Moore is unavailable, a student, school staff, or legal parents/guardians may contact Ms. Jan Stevenson, State Schools Assistant Director, at [jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:jstevenson@doe.k12.ga.us) or call 404-232-1503.

### **STUDENT DRESS CODE**

The dress code may be amended as needed by school officials with written approval by the State Schools Director. Exceptions to the dress code may be made for students with documented need for alternate clothing written into their IEP. Students attending job sites should dress according to the standards and/or dress policy of the employer.

Students will dress and groom themselves in such a way as to reflect neatness, cleanliness, and safety. Any apparel, which designates gangs or similar organizations, or any dress that is disruptive to the educational process is prohibited. Any school official can determine whether any particular mode of dress or grooming results in a violation of the spirit and/or intent of the dress code. Students in violation of the dress code will be given the opportunity to change into clothing they have or clothing provided by the school. Students who do not accept the opportunity to change clothes will be sent home. Consequences will increase for students who repeatedly violate the dress code.

The following garments are not permitted:

- Clothing with suggestive or obscene wording, pictures, graphics, or mention of drugs, alcoholic beverages, or tobacco
- Clothing with inflammatory racial, cultural, or religious wording, pictures, or graphics
- Clothing with pictures or wording involving violence or the suggestion of a violent action, weapons or the advertising of groups that by suggestion of the lyrics of their songs promote violent or inappropriate behavior
- Clothing with rips, tears, or holes in inappropriate areas
- Hats/caps, headscarves (except for religious reasons), bandannas, sweatbands, sunglasses and gloves may not be worn by either boys or girls in the school buildings
- Undergarments may not be exposed by boys or girls
- Shorts, dresses, and skirts must be no shorter than 3 inches above the knee
- See-through mesh shirts or see-through clothing of any kind
- Revealing clothing of any kind
- Spandex shorts or skirts
- Tank tops and tops with “spaghetti straps” and/or low armholes
- School officials may ask students to remove distracting piercing
- Additional items approved by the superintendent of the school

A student may appeal a decision by a staff member regarding a potential violation of the dress code by requesting to meet with the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.

### **STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS AND CLUBS**

All student clubs and organizations must follow guidelines and procedures governing the creation and operation of such clubs and organizations in accordance with the policies of the State Schools. State law requires that legal parents/guardians receive information regarding school clubs and organizations. Such information must include the club or organization name, mission and/or purpose of the club or organization, name of the staff advisor supervising the club or organization, and a description of planned activities for the club or organization. Each of the State Schools shall provide this information as a supplement to the student code of conduct. On the legal parents/guardian's signature page for student participation in the club or organization, the legal parents/guardians will have an opportunity to decline permission for his or her child to participate in the club or organization. A student will not be permitted to participate in any club or organization without the written approval of at least one legal parent/guardian except if the student is eighteen (18) years of age or older, and the student's educational rights have been transferred to him/her.

### **STUDENT SCHEDULES**

Students and legal parents/guardians will be provided with a student's course schedule for the day/week/semester as appropriate. The information will include but is not limited to: start time of the school day, start time of breakfast, start and end time of class(es), start time of lunch, end time for the school day.

### **SUSPENSION BEYOND 10 SCHOOL DAYS**

When frequent disciplinary actions add up to more than ten (10) school days in a school year and to the extent that IDEA allows, or when frequent disciplinary actions clearly indicate a pattern that may require the IEP team to consider a change in placement, the IEP team must determine appropriate services that allow the student to continue to participate in the general education curriculum and progress toward meeting the goals outlined in the student's IEP, although in another setting. If an out of school suspension makes a student suspended for more than ten (10) school days during the school year, the student's IEP team must meet to discuss including but not limited to: supports, interventions, and placement options. The use of Positive Behavioral Supports and Interventions and Multi-Tiered System of Supports are strongly encouraged to be proactive so that student misconduct does not escalate to the point a student might be suspended for more than ten (10) days.

### **TECHNOLOGY USE AT SCHOOL**

The State Schools provide technology resources to its students and staff for educational and administrative purposes. The goal in providing these resources is to promote educational excellence in the State Schools by facilitating resource sharing, innovation, and communication with the support and supervision of legal parents/guardians and school staff. The use of these technology resources is a privilege, not a right.

With access to computers and people all over the world comes the potential availability of material that may not be considered to be of educational value in the context of a school setting. The State Schools believe that the value of information, interaction, and research capabilities available through the use of technology outweighs the possibility, only with proper oversight, that users may obtain material that is not consistent with the educational goals of the State Schools.

Technology resources at school will be used only for learning, teaching, and administrative purposes consistent with the school's established mission and goals. Commercial use of any



technology system or devices is strictly prohibited. Training will be made available to all users in the proper use of technology while at school, and staff will make copies of the acceptable use guidelines available to all users and also legal parents/guardians.

Issues applicable to acceptable use are:

- Software or external data may not be placed on any computer, whether stand alone or networked to the school's system, without permission.
- Copyright: All users are expected to follow existing copyright laws.
- Supervision and permission: Student use of school computers is only allowed when supervised or granted permission by staff.
- Attempting to log on or logging on to a school computer or email system by using another's password is prohibited. Assisting others in violating this rule by sharing information or passwords is prohibited.
- Improper use of any school computer or the school's technology network is prohibited. This includes the following:
  - a. Using racist, profane, or obscene language or materials on a school computer or via the school's technology network
  - b. Using a school computer or the school's technology network for financial gain
  - c. Using a school computer or the school's technology network for personal political or commercial activity
  - d. Attempting to or harming school equipment, materials, or data
  - e. Attempting to or sending anonymous messages of any kind using a school computer or the school's technology network
  - f. Using a school computer or technology network to access inappropriate material
  - g. Knowingly placing a computer virus on a school computer or the school's technology network Using the school's technology network to provide addresses or other personal information that others may use inappropriately
  - h. Accessing information resources, files, and documents of another user without his/her permission

### **Filtering**

The Children's Internet Protection Act requires filtering for minors (1) visual depictions of obscenity, (2) visual depictions of child pornography, and (3) materials harmful to minors. The State Schools will use "firewall software" to implement filtering. The filter may be disabled by authorized staff to allow approved research or other lawful use on a case-by-case basis approved by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.

### **System Access**

1. Students will have access to technology resources for class assignments and research with their teacher's permission and/or supervision.
2. Teachers with school system accounts will be required to maintain password confidentiality by not sharing the password with students or others.
3. With the approval of the superintendent of the school or his/her designee, staff will be granted access to the school's technology network and/or system.
4. Any system user identified as a security risk or having violated the Acceptable Use Guidelines may be denied access to the system by the school superintendent or his/her designee. Other consequences may also be assigned.

### **Individual User Responsibilities**

1. The individual in whose name a system account is issued will be responsible at all times for its proper use.
2. The system may not be used for illegal purposes, in support of illegal activities, or for any other activity prohibited by guidelines, including accessing inappropriate material or confidential or protected information.
3. System users may not use another person's system account without written permission from the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.
4. System users are asked to purge electronic mail or outdated files on a regular basis.
5. System users are responsible for making sure they do not violate any copyright laws.

### **Termination/Revocation of System User Account**

A system user's access to the system may be revoked or suspended by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee upon violation of policy and/or administrative regulations regarding acceptable use. Termination of a student's access to the school's technology network and/or resources will be effective at the discretion of the superintendent of the school or his/her designee.

### **Consequences of Improper Use**

Improper, unauthorized, or unethical use of the school's technology resources may result in disciplinary actions consistent with existing policy, and/or other state, and federal laws. This may also require restitution for costs associated with system restoration, hardware, or software.

### **TEENAGE/ADULT DRIVERS RESPONSIBILITY ACT (TAADRA)**

According to the Teenage Driver Responsibility Act which is a state law, students must obtain a Certificate of Attendance from the State School he/she attends in order to obtain a driver's license in Georgia. During the school year, Certificates of Attendance are issued by Ms. T. Neil, in the Hendricks Office. During the summer months, Certificates of Attendance are issued by Ms. T. Neil, in the

Hendricks Office. The Certificate of Attendance shall be signed by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee and must be notarized. The Certificate of Attendance is valid for thirty (30) days from the signed date by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee and notary.

A Certificate of Attendance will not be issued for a student under the age of 18 who drops out of school without graduating, a student that has remained out of school for ten (10) consecutive school days, a student that has more than ten (10) school days of unexcused absences in the current academic year, or a student that has ten (10) or more school days of unexcused absences in the previous school year. Notice will be given by superintendent of the school or his/her designee to the Georgia Department of Motor Vehicle Safety by state law, and a student's driver's license or ability to receive a driver's license or learner's permit will be suspended for one (1) year if the student encounters any of the aforementioned attendance issues.

If a student has been found in violation by a hearing officer, panel, or tribunal of one of the following offenses, has received a change in placement for committing one of the following offenses, or has waived his or her right to a hearing and pleaded guilty to one of the following offenses, a violation of TAADRA will be considered to have occurred. The superintendent of the school or his/her designee will report the following violations to the Georgia Department of Motor Vehicle Safety:

- Threatening, striking, or causing bodily harm to a teacher or other school personnel
- Possession or sale of drugs or alcohol on school property or at a school sponsored event
- Possession or use of a weapon in accordance with Georgia law on school property or at a school sponsored event
- Any sexual offense prohibited under Georgia law
- Causing substantial physical or visible bodily harm to or seriously disfiguring another person per Georgia law

A student can reapply for his or her learner's permit or driver's license after a period of one (1) year or when the student becomes 18 years old, whichever comes first, if there is a violation of TAADRA.

### **TRANSITION PLANS**

The successful transition of students beyond graduation should be the priority of every IEP Team for students starting at age 14 or before entering high school. Students in 8<sup>th</sup> grade will begin the development of the Individual Graduation Plan (IGP). The IGP will guide the student through their high school years and help the student obtain their post-secondary goals. Also at this time, the annual IEP meeting includes the development of the Individual Transition Plan (ITP). The IGP provides the essential requirements needed to obtain a high school diploma while the ITP outlines what supports and additional skills are needed for the student to become successful in achieving their goal. The ITP includes:

1. Appropriate measurable goals for the student after graduation and based upon age appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and independent living skills.
2. The transition services needed to assist the child in reaching those goals. The ITP will include "Desired Measurable Post-Secondary Outcome/Completion Goals" based upon what the student wants to achieve after graduation. The Individual Transition Plan is critical to student success after graduation. Therefore, parent participation in the annual IEP/IGP/ITP is extremely important for students entering high school.

## **VANDALISM**

Any malicious attempt to harm or destroy equipment or materials, data of another user of the system, any of the schools or other networks to which the system has access, or the physical campus is prohibited. Deliberate attempts to degrade or disrupt system performance may be viewed as violations of guidelines and, possibly, as criminal activity under applicable state and federal laws. This includes but is not limited to the uploading or creation of computer viruses. Vandalism as defined above will result in the cancellation of system use privileges, possible prosecution, and will require restitution for costs associated with system restoration, hardware, software, and facility repairs.

Students who are issued school property (library books, textbooks, magnifiers, calculators, laptops, electronic devices, etc.) shall be personally responsible for the well-being and return of all school property assigned to them. Failure to return the property or damage to the property can result in the student being required to make restitution, which shall be determined by the administrators.

## **VISITOR ACCESS TO CAMPUS**

### **LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

Legal parents/guardians are welcome on campus in accordance with the State Schools Visitor policy that limits visits to no more than 30 minutes two times a week. The superintendent or his/her designee may adjust the visitation time limit based upon extenuating circumstances. During school hours, legal parents/guardians must have prior approval from the superintendent of the school or his/her designee to meet with a staff member or members. Legal parents/guardians must sign in at either the Administration Building or the Hendricks Classroom Building. Once signed in and a visitor's pass is given, the individual(s) that a legal parent/guardian are visiting will be informed of your arrival.

### **CAMPUS TOUR BY INDIVIDUALS:**

If a person would like a campus tour, he/she must schedule it 5 days in advance by having your local Special Education Director contact the school's Special Education Director, Ms. T. Neil at [Tneil@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:Tneil@doe.k12.ga.us) or 478-751-6083 ext. 1134.

### **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS FOR VISITORS:**

Other visitors must adhere to the aforementioned visitor protocols unless a change to visit duration is approved by the superintendent of the school or his/her designee. At no time will such visitors be left alone with students unless there is legal documentation in place that would allow for it (memorandum of understanding, GaDOE approved agreement, clear background check, GaDOE approved contract, etc.) For example, the school might have an approved agreement for a college to provide student teachers with practicum placements that will allow student teachers to work alone with students.

If a visitor or visitors are on campus for more than one day, the visitation must be discussed in advance with the State Schools Director who will make a determination if additional documentation must be in place (e.g., memorandum of understanding, GaDOE approved agreement, clear background check, GaDOE approved contract, etc.) prior to the visit. Student safety must always be the number one priority of the school; therefore, sometimes additional documentation is required for visitors that might be alone with students or have the potential to be alone with students.

Georgia law requires that visitors, with the exception of students, school employees, law enforcement officers or other public safety officials in the performance of an emergency call, shall sign in at the

designated location, as stated on posted signs of any school building, between the official starting and dismissal times and provide a reason for their presence at the school.

Any staff member shall have the authority to ask any visitor to explain his or her presence on campus at any time if the person is unaccompanied by another staff member or is not wearing a visitor badge. Any person who does not have legitimate need or cause to be on school property and/or who fails to sign-in at the designated location may be in violation of Georgia law and may face criminal prosecution.

#### **WITHDRAWAL FROM A STATE SCHOOL**

- If a student does not report to school for ten (10) consecutive school days, he/she will be withdrawn from the roll in accordance with the Georgia Department of Education approved State School policy titled SS-6022 JBC. Please refer to that policy if you have any questions about the withdraw process.
- The State School should make every reasonable effort to get in touch with the student and his/her legal parents/guardians long before the student misses ten (10) consecutive school days using the protocols included in this handbook. This can include but is not limited to sending letters, phone calls, home visits, and involvement of the local education agency in which the student resides, etc.
- Even though the State School follows the requirements as denoted in this handbook of sending copies of attendance issue letters to the special education director of the local education agency in which the student resides, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee should speak to the special education director or his/her designee by phone prior to the 10<sup>th</sup> absence to alert the local education agency verbally of attendance issues.
- The superintendent of the school or his/her designee should convene an IEP meeting if a student misses seven (7) days of school to discuss supports and interventions.
- If a student or his/her legal parents/guardians have verbally told school staff or submitted something in writing stating the student will be withdrawn from the school, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee should contact the State Schools Director by phone immediately.
- The superintendent of the school or his/her designee should explain to the student and his/her legal parents/guardians about the potential ramifications of withdrawing from the State School without having an IEP meeting to discuss placement and potential unintended consequences related to a withdrawal from school.

#### **PARENT INFORMATION FACT SHEETS RELATED TO INFORMATION IN THE SPECIAL EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL**

The GaDOE has a Special Education Implementation Manual that serves as a guide for implementing IDEA and its regulations. It is not intended to state new law or supplant any federal or state laws, regulations, or requirements. Nothing in the manual should be seen as having the force of law. The manual should not be cited as law or as imposing any additional requirements or obligations outside the requirements of existing law. Districts, schools, and parents are not required to adhere to the manual, but only to the requirements of the IDEA as codified in 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq., its regulations promulgated in 34 C.F.R Parts 300 and 301, and the rules of the State of Georgia promulgated by the State Board of Education. The implementation manual can be found at <https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Implementation-Manual.aspx>.

The Parent Information Fact Sheets are related to topics in the Special Education Implementation Manual and are included in this student handbook starting below. The fact sheets are easy to read information, protocols, tips, etc., for legal parents/guardians to help them and students understand the educational process in Georgia and their rights under IDEA. In regard to State Schools, when the words local education agency or LEA are used, they refer to the school district in which the student resides.

### **ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

What are Assistive Technology (AT) Devices?

AT devices are items, pieces of equipment or products that are used to increase, maintain or improve the functional capabilities of students with disabilities. AT devices can be standard “off the shelf” items or modified/customized to meet the individual needs of the student. Many AT devices are “no tech” or “low tech” and require little accommodation and minimal expense. Some examples of “no or low tech” devices include magnifiers, raised line paper, pencil grips, an adapted cup with large handles, or colored reading filters. These easy to obtain items can help students with visual and physical difficulties be more independent. There are also many other low-tech options that can help students who have other disabilities. AT devices can also be very high-tech. High tech items can be things such as electronic communication aids, screen reading software, or mobility devices. Whatever the technology (no, low, or high tech), the need for AT devices should be documented in a student’s IEP.

What are AT Services?

AT services are the services that need to be provided so that a child with a disability is able to use an AT device. Services can include an evaluation to determine if AT is needed, acquiring the device, adapting it to the individual needs of the student, coordinating the use of the device, and providing necessary training to the student, family, and school staff.

#### **The Facts You Should Know:**

- Students may require more than one type of AT device depending upon their individual needs.
- AT must be considered during the IEP process for each student.
- If an IEP team determines that AT devices are necessary to provide the student a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE), the AT devices and services must be provided at no cost to the family.
- If an IEP team determines that AT devices are necessary to provide the student FAPE, the devices and services must be documented in his/her IEP.
- If an IEP team determines that a student needs an AT device or devices to participate in district or state testing, the need for the AT device or devices must be included in his/her IEP.
- IEP teams are not required to identify a specific name brand of AT in an IEP.
- AT devices supplied by the school may be taken home and used in the community if the IEP team determines that it is necessary for the student to receive FAPE.
- AT devices are available in many categories, including:
  - Academic and learning devices include but are not limited to calculators, spell checkers, word processors, computer software, aids for daily living, and devices to help with eating, bathing, cooking, dressing, and toileting.
  - Assistive listening devices include but are not limited to amplification devices, close captioning systems, and environmental alert systems.
  - Augmentative communication devices include but are not limited to electronic and non-electronic tools that help students communicate computer access such as modified keyboards, switches, special software, switches, adapted appliances, and environmental control units.

- Mobility devices include but are not limited to wheelchairs, walkers, scooters, and other devices that help the student move around.
- Work devices include but are not limited to adapted timers and watches, adapted knobs, and picture-based instructions for how to do a job.
- Recreation and leisure devices include but are not limited to adapted books, switch-operated toys, and leisure computer software.
- Seating and positioning devices include but are not limited to corner chairs, wedges, prone standers, wedge seats, and adapted/alternative chairs.
- Visual aid devices include but are not limited to magnifiers, talking calculators, Braille writers, screen reading software, and Braille note-taking devices.

#### **TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Talk with your child's teacher if you have questions about an AT device for your child.
- Share ideas about AT devices that you may use at home and think could be useful at school.
- Think about the following questions when preparing to talk about AT devices with your child's IEP team:
  - What does your child need to do but cannot do because of his/her disability?
  - What are your child's biggest educational challenges?
  - Can your child communicate effectively?
  - Can your child sit, stand, and walk independently?
  - Is your child able to feed himself/herself?
  - Be sure to think about your child's physical, communication, cognitive, social/emotional, academic strengths, and needs.
  - What AT devices are available that might help your child rise above these challenges?
  - Will an AT device help your child become more independent?
  - Can an AT device help your child to more fully participate in school?
  - Can your child achieve his/her IEP goals without the use of an AT device?
  - How will legal parents/guardians and staff members know if an AT device has helped a child in his/her educational program?
- If you think your child could benefit from an AT device, you can ask the school to evaluate your child's AT needs.
- You may know what type of AT device you want your child to use, but it is important to be willing to try out different AT devices at school and at home before deciding on one AT device.
- As much as possible, include your child in discussions and decisions about using AT devices. Your child may not want to use an AT device because he/she thinks it makes him/her look different from the other students in class. School staff can work with the legal parents/guardians and student to overcome concerns a student might have about using an AT device.
- If your child brings his/her AT device home, the superintendent of the school or his/her designee will show you how to use it in a general manner that is thorough enough for you to understand the AT device's purpose and usage.
- It could happen that you disagree with the IEP team's decision about an AT device for your child or that you learn that your child's school is not providing the AT device or services that are written in his/her IEP. If you cannot solve the disagreement or problem by

speaking to your child's teacher or the superintendent of the school, you can ask for mediation, a due process hearing, or file a formal complaint.

- Remember that your child's AT device needs may change as he/she grows older.

#### **Where to Go for More Information:**

Parent to Parent of Georgia  
770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038  
[www.p2pga.org](http://www.p2pga.org)

Georgia Department of Education, Divisions for Special Education Services and Supports  
404-656-3963 or 800-311-3627  
[http://www.gadoe.org/ci\\_exceptional.aspx](http://www.gadoe.org/ci_exceptional.aspx)

Special Education Implementation Manual  
<https://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Special-Education-Services/Pages/Implementation-Manual.aspx>

Georgia Project for Assistive Technology  
[www.gpat.org](http://www.gpat.org)

Family Center on Technology and Disabilities  
[www.fctd.info](http://www.fctd.info)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

#### **CHILD FIND**

**What is Child Find?** Child Find refers to the policies and procedures in each state that ensure that all children with disabilities, birth through age 21, who live in the state and are in need of special education and related services or early intervention services are identified, located, and evaluated.

#### **Facts You Should Know:**

- Child Find procedures may include but are not limited to public announcements through the newspaper, television, and/or radio; meetings with private and home school representatives/organizations; use of websites; and events sponsored by public agencies.
- Local education agencies are responsible for all children within their jurisdiction suspected of having disabilities including:
  - Preschool children, ages three (3) through five (5), including those in private preschools or childcare programs
  - Children enrolled in a public school within the local education agency, including any public charter schools
  - Children attending private schools within the local education agency
  - Children who live within the jurisdiction of the local education agency and are home-schooled



- Highly mobile children, including migrant, homeless, and children who are wards of the state
- Children who are served in community programs such as rehabilitation centers and childcare centers
- Children who are incarcerated in facilities operated by the local sheriff's office or other municipalities
- Children in Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) or Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities
- Any children suspected of having disabilities, even when those children may be progressing from grade to grade
- In Georgia, home-schooled children are treated as private school children in regard to special education and must be considered for proportionate share of federal funds for private school children.
- Public charter schools that are their own school district are responsible for Child Find for children enrolled in the charter school.
- Georgia DJJ and Georgia DOC are responsible for Child Find for children in their facilities.
- Local education agencies are responsible for Child Find for children in jails or other correctional facilities operated by local municipalities.

#### **Where to Go for More Information:**

Parent to Parent of Georgia  
770-451-5484 or 800-229-2038  
[www.p2pga.org](http://www.p2pga.org)

Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Supports  
404-657-9968 or 800-311-3627  
[spedhelpdesk@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:spedhelpdesk@doe.k12.ga.us)

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

### **DISCIPLINE**

What is the discipline procedure for a student with an IEP? The State Schools have general school rules and a student code of conduct to ensure the safety of students and staff and promote an environment for learning. The general school rules and student code of conduct are included in this handbook. Legal parents/guardians will be given a copy of the student handbook that includes a copy of the general school rules and student code of conduct at the start of the school year. The student handbook also details the appeal processes regarding student misconduct and consequences.

#### **The Facts You Should Know:**

The general school rules and student code of conduct applies to all students attending a State School. Just like any other student, a student in special education is expected to abide by rules. The general

school rules and student code of conduct outlines behavior expectations and potential consequences for misconduct.

Once a student has been suspended for more than ten (10) school days in a school year, several actions must occur:

- A manifestation determination must be conducted before the 11<sup>th</sup> day of out of school suspension. The manifestation determination is to decide if the behavior that got the student in trouble was related to his/her disability and/or whether the IEP, including the BIP, was implemented as written. If the IEP was not implemented appropriately or the behavior was related to the disability, then the behavior is found to be a manifestation of the disability.
- If the behavior was a manifestation of the child's disability, the student goes back to the placement where he/she was prior to the behavior.
- If the behavior was not a manifestation of the child's disability, the IEP team determines reviews the FBA, potential changes to the BIP, and the student's placement.
- When the behavior that gets the student in trouble is because of illegal drugs, weapons, or the infliction of serious bodily injury, the school district may send the student to an interim alternative education setting for up to 45 school days, no matter the outcome of the manifestation determination.
- When a student with an IEP is suspended for more than ten (10) days or placed in an alternative setting, he/she must continue to receive services. Students are still entitled to receive FAPE. Students must have access to the general curriculum and to the services outlined in their IEP.
- Sometimes the alternative settings include options such as an alternative program run by the school district, home-based services provided by the school district, virtual (online) courses, after school/night school programs, or other options.
- If the legal parent/guardian disagrees with either the results of the manifestation determination or the new placement decided by the IEP team, they can request a due process hearing to appeal the decision.
- In most circumstances, there will also be a Disciplinary Tribunal held by the State School. The purpose of the Disciplinary Tribunal is to present information and have a panel of school personnel determine the guilt or innocence of the student. Disciplinary Tribunals may be waived if the legal parents/guardians choose so. Disciplinary Tribunals are outside of the control of the IEP team unless the legal parents/guardians defer to the IEP team's decision regarding consequences as outlined in the Disciplinary Tribunal section of this student handbook. Sometimes Disciplinary Tribunals occur prior to the manifestation determination and sometimes after the manifestation determination. The decision of the Disciplinary Tribunal is a separate decision from the manifestation decision and separate from the placement decision.

**TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Attend IEP meetings with a list that includes strategies that are working well and areas of concern you want to discuss. Behavior and discipline are often emotionally charged topics, so it is helpful to have written notes.
- Prepare for meetings by asking yourself several questions about your child's behavior:
  - What are my child's problem behavior(s)?
  - Is there a relationship between my child's disability and his/her behavior?

- What has worked in the past to stop the problem behavior?
- What does my child find rewarding and/or motivating?
- What has not worked to stop the problem behavior?
- How does the environment (what's going on around him/her) affect my child's behavior?
- What school-based supports might my child need to learn new more appropriate behaviors?
- Does the IEP Team need any more information to address my child's behaviors appropriately?
- Does my child need an FBA to help determine why the behavior is occurring?
- Ask school staff to precisely describe the behavior that occurs in school. Be prepared to precisely describe the behaviors that occur at home. Talk about how these behaviors occur in each setting.
- Ask that an FBA of your child's behavior be completed and the results shared with you prior to the meeting. Be prepared to discuss the results of the FBA. Specifically, you want to know:
  - What happens before the behavior?
  - What happens after the behavior?
  - What has been the consequence or reward?
- Work with school staff to brainstorm strategies, rewards, and consequences that will be effective in changing your child's behavior at school.
- Work together with school personnel to address your child's behavior. By being intentional about teaching new skills and working with your child's school, you will increase your child's chance for behavioral success.

### **Where to Go for More Information:**

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 770 451-5484 or 800-229-2038  
[www.parenttoparentofga.org](http://www.parenttoparentofga.org)

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

### **DUE PROCESS HEARING**

**What is a Due Process Hearing?** A due process hearing is designed to resolve differences between parents and local education agencies regarding the identification, evaluation, placement, or provision of FAPE to a child with a disability. Compared to other dispute resolution methods, due process is a more formal proceeding. A due process hearing is an administrative proceeding where there are certain rules in place about what types of evidence may be introduced and how that evidence can be presented. These rules are in place to assure each party a fair hearing. An administrative law judge

(ALJ) presides over due process hearings and is responsible for making a final decision in each case. Parties not satisfied with the decision of the ALJ may file an appeal in court.

**Facts You Should Know:**

- Due process must be requested within two (2) years of the date the legal parents/guardians or local education agency knew or should have known about the problem.
  - This time limit does not apply to legal parents/guardians who have been prevented from filing due process by a school's specific misrepresentation that the problem was resolved or if a local education agency failed to provide required information to the legal parents/guardians.
- Due process is initiated by filing a due process hearing request that:
  - May be filed by the legal parents/guardians or the local education agency.
  - Is confidential.
  - Contains the student's name, home address, and name of the school as well as a description of the problem or dispute.
- Due process proposes a resolution to the problem.
- A due process hearing request is sent both to the opposing party and to the Georgia Department of Education.
- Within five (5) days of receiving the due process hearing request, the other party may challenge it if they think the request does not contain the required information. To challenge it, they must notify the ALJ in writing.
- Within ten (10) days of receiving the due process hearing request, the opposing party must send a response that addresses the issues in the request. If a legal parent/guardian requests due process, the local education agency must send prior written notice that explains why they want to or refuse to take action.
- Once a legal parent/guardian requests due process, the local education agency has fifteen (15) days to hold a meeting to try to resolve the dispute. This is known as a resolution meeting. The meeting must include the parents, relevant members of the IEP Team, and a representative of the school with decision-making authority.
- The resolution meeting can be waived if both the legal parents/guardians and local education agency agree to do so in writing. The meeting may also be waived if both agree to use mediation to try to solve the problem. A legal parents/guardians' failure to participate in the resolution process may delay the hearing or cause the ALJ to dismiss a legal parents/guardians' due process hearing request.
- A resolution period of thirty (30) days is required before a due process hearing may occur. Once the resolution period ends or the parties report that no agreement is possible, the ALJ has forty-five (45) days to issue a written decision.
- Five (5) business days before the due process hearing, both sides must exchange all evidence they want to present at the hearing. This must include a list of all potential witnesses that may be called to testify. Failure to share this information may affect the parties' ability to present the information at the hearing.
- The party who requested due process has the burden of proof at the hearing. This means they might have to present their evidence first.
- The due process hearing must be conducted at a time and place reasonably convenient to the legal parents/guardians. The legal parents/guardians may have the child present, open the hearing to the public, and have the hearing recorded at no cost.

- Within ninety (90) days of the decision of the ALJ, either party may appeal by filing a civil action in the appropriate court.
- For legal parents/guardians who win in court, attorneys' fees may be awarded. School districts can also be awarded attorney's fees if they win, and the ALJ finds a case to be frivolous or unreasonable.

#### **TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Due process is a formal legal proceeding.
- Due process should be filed only after the parties have tried to address their differences another way. You may be able to resolve a disagreement by talking to your child's teacher, leader of the school, or the special education director. You may want to try this before using a formal step such as due process.
- The timeframes for due process are set by law. From the date you file due process, there will be at least ten (10) weeks (and many times as much as 4 - 6 months) until an ALJ issues a decision.
- Both parties have the right to legal representation at a due process hearing.
- Due process hearings are provided at no cost. However, you will be responsible for the costs of your own attorney and any expert witnesses who may assist in your case.
- Drafting a due process hearing request should:
  - Be specific. You must include facts that support your position.
  - Be organized.
  - Outline your facts into a logical order. For example, the facts could be organized by date, by issue, or even by specific reference to the special education rules.
- Preparing for Due Process:
  - Make sure that you have evidence to present at the hearing. Evidence can be documents that you take to the hearing. Evidence can also be live witnesses who appear at the hearing.
  - Prior to the hearing, you can raise any issues in a pre-hearing conference with the ALJ. Any party can ask for a pre-hearing conference.
  - Write out your opening statement, the questions for your witnesses and the questions you want to ask the school's witnesses. Review all the records that you believe are relevant to the hearing. Be prepared to speak about these documents very specifically.
- Due process hearings are formal. You should dress and behave accordingly. Be respectful of the ALJ and the opposing party. All parties are entitled to their day in court. Be direct and to the point. The ALJ will appreciate a presentation that moves directly to the heart of the matter. Personality conflicts and arguments in a hearing will not be allowed by the ALJ.
- After the hearing, the order of the ALJ will be issued in writing and sent to you by mail. Check your mailbox. Make sure to note the date you receive the decision so that you know when your right to appeal expires. If you do not appeal a decision within the appropriate timeframe, you will be unable to take any further legal action.

#### **Where to Go for More Information:**

Parent to Parent of Georgia  
 770-451-5484 or 800-229-2038  
[www.p2pga.org](http://www.p2pga.org)

## **ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION**

**What is special education eligibility determination?** When a child is suspected of having a disability, a comprehensive evaluation must be provided. Eligibility determination occurs only after existing data, including data from a Multi-Tiered System of Supports, Response to Intervention (RTI), the Student Support Team (SST), and evaluations are reviewed. Eligibility determination must also document that one or more exclusionary factors is/are not the determinant factor(s) for the determination that a child is a child with a disability.

### **The Facts You Should Know:**

- All eligibility categories include the following exclusionary factors (a child may be found to be not eligible if one or more of these factors is present and a reason for the child's suspected disability):
  - Lack of appropriate instruction in reading
  - Lack of appropriate instruction in mathematics
  - Limited English proficiency
- Initial eligibility determination must include data from multiple sources including:
  - Achievement tests, aptitude/cognitive functioning, parent input, teacher recommendations, physical condition (medical, motor, vision, hearing), social/cultural background, adaptive behavior, communication/language and observations by teachers and related service providers
- A child must be assessed in all areas related to the suspected disability.
- It is possible to have multiple evaluation reports, including reports from various team members who conducted evaluations, or results from multiple evaluations may be compiled into one report.
- The local education agency will complete an eligibility report which documents the areas of your child's disability. The eligibility report will include statements about each component of your child's eligibility and may be comprehensive enough to also serve as the evaluation report.
- If the local education agency chooses to document the evaluation report using the eligibility report, the report must be completed within sixty (60) calendar days after receiving legal parent/guardian consent to complete the initial evaluation.
- Legal parents/guardians must be provided copies of evaluation report(s) and the eligibility report at no cost.
- Eligibility reports do not expire. This means that a child's eligibility for special education does not expire.

If a child is being considered to be potentially no longer eligible for special education services, the local education agency must first comprehensively evaluate the child. This does not apply to a child whose eligibility is ending due to graduation from high school with a regular education diploma or for a child who has exceeded the age of eligibility (22<sup>nd</sup> birthday) for FAPE.

## Where to Go for More Information:

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Georgia Department of Education, Division for Special Education Services and Supports  
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[spedhelpdesk@doe.k12.ga.us](mailto:spedhelpdesk@doe.k12.ga.us)

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

### **EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR**

**What is Extended School Year (ESY)?** For many students who receive special education services, the regular school year is enough to make sure they get a free appropriate public education. But that is not the case for all students. Some students may need more. Students learn at different rates and retain what they learned at different levels. ESY is special education and/or related services that are provided beyond the normal school year. ESY is a required part of IDEA. ESY is provided according to a student's IEP and is at no cost to the family. ESY can include academics, related services and extracurricular activities.

Each local education agency must provide ESY to students who need such services. All public schools except otherwise noted, including charter schools and alternative schools, must provide ESY when it is needed. The State Schools do not provide ESY. ESY is the responsibility of the local education agency in which the student resides.

#### **Facts You Should Know:**

- Each child's IEP team decides if a child needs ESY, and, if so, what services he/she will get.
- When the IEP team agrees that a student needs ESY, they must decide:
  - What services will be provided?
  - When and where services will be provided?
  - How often (frequency) services will be provided?
  - How long (duration) services will be provided?
- The IEP team must consider ESY for each student at least once per year. They must consider each student's individual needs.
- ESY can be made available until a student turns 22 or graduates with a regular high school diploma. Regression and recoupment should consider:
  - Will the student lose skills over a break?
  - Will the loss of skills be excessive?
  - Will the loss of skills be more that you would expect of other students?
  - Will the student be able to recover those lost skills and how long will that take?
  - Did the student make progress on his/her IEP goals?
  - Does the student need ESY to meet transition or vocation (work) goals?

- Does the student have any behaviors that are making progress slow?
- Students who receive ESY must be educated in the least restrictive environment in which the IEP can be implemented. Local education agencies do not have to create programs to provide a full range of placement options for ESY. They must make options available to the extent needed to implement a child's IEP.
- The discussion and decision about ESY must be documented in the IEP. This discussion is a new discussion each year. It doesn't matter if a student did or did not receive ESY in the past. ESY must be considered each year.

ESY is not:

- tutoring
- summer school
- childcare or enrichment programs
- limited to certain groups of students or activities
- limited to a specific time frame, such as summer
- decided by one person and instead of the IEP team
- determined by only one measure

#### **TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Remember, the decision about ESY is an IEP team decision. You are part of the team.
- Attend IEP meetings and other school-based meetings where your child's IEP goals will be discussed.
- Take written notes with you to all meetings so that you can remember what you want to talk about.
- Review data about your child's performance and progress toward IEP goals.
- Share your own data, documentation, and information about your child's progress.
- Document any changes in your child's behavior when there is a break in services, such as holidays and summer break.
- Offer ideas about community programs and services that might be options for your child's ESY. ESY can be provided at home, in a community setting, or in a school setting.
- Talk with the EP team about any behaviors that may interfere with your child learning new skills.
- If your child has missed a lot of school because of illness, or missed sessions because of a teacher or therapist who was absent, talk about that with the IEP team. Talk about how this has impacted learning and meeting goals.
- If your child is in high school, talk about ESY and how it can help with his or her goals related to transition, employment, community participation, and independent living.
- Look at the data and share your observations with the IEP team members such as:
  - Is your child making reasonable progress toward his/her IEP goals?
  - Is your child just learning a skill but isn't yet able to use it in various settings?
  - Does the data show that your child loses skills over breaks in school?
  - If your child loses skills, does it take a very long time to re-learn them?
  - Does the data show that your child isn't making enough progress during the school year to meet IEP goals?
- Talk to people who know your child's needs. Talk to teachers who know your child. Ask them how your child does after vacations and breaks in the school schedule. Share this with the IEP team members.



- Remember that even if your child received ESY in the past, that does not mean he/she will need or get it in the future. If your child did not get ESY in the past, he/she may need it now or in the future. That is why ESY has to be discussed each year.

ESY may not be right for every child, even if they are eligible. How will your child do? Will he/she benefit from ESY, or does he/she need more downtime?

If you disagree with the decision about ESY for your child, you may want to ask for mediation or another dispute resolution strategy to try to resolve the disagreement.

#### **Where to Go for More Information:**

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

### **INITIAL EVALUATIONS AND RE-EVALUATIONS**

**What is an initial evaluation?** An initial evaluation is a comprehensive, individual assessment of your child. Various testing tools and data collection are used by the local education agency to determine if your child requires specialized instruction and is eligible for special education services. Students are placed at a State Schools based upon a special education eligibility that has already been determined. Some of the information below regarding initial eligibility can be applicable if you or school staff think your child might have an additional special education eligibility that needs to be examined and discussed.

#### **Facts You Should Know:**

- Legal parents/guardians must give permission before the local education agency or State School will conduct an evaluation. There will be a form you will be asked to sign. The form will list the kinds of tests the school may conduct. Local education agencies or the State School are required to make sure the consent you sign is informed consent, meaning the district has told you about all the types of tests that may be administered, why they are being administered and what to expect. Writing a letter to request an evaluation does not mean you have given consent.
- The local education agency or State Schools has sixty (60) calendar days from the day they receive your signed consent to complete the initial evaluation. Completing the initial evaluation is defined as completion of the evaluation report(s). The evaluation report may include several

reports that are combined into one report, but the report with the latest date is the date that will be used as the end of the initial evaluation.

- The local education agency or State School must provide a copy of the evaluation report and documentation of determination of eligibility to parents at no cost.
- The local education agency or State School is not required to make the eligibility determination during the sixty (60) day initial evaluation timeline. As a matter of best practice, within ten (10) calendar days of completion of the evaluation report(s), an eligibility meeting should be held.
- If your child is eligible for a new special education eligibility, an IEP meeting must be held within thirty (30) calendar days to discuss the special education eligibility. This time period does not include exceptions for holidays or summer vacations.
- The same sixty (60) day timeline applies to all students, whether they are students enrolled in home school, private school, or public school.

#### **Re-evaluation Process:**

- The purpose of the re-evaluation is to determine if a child continues to have a disability and the educational needs of the child. Re-evaluations are just as important as initial evaluations. The re-evaluation process is what many students attending a State School go through.
- Eligibility for special education does not expire; however, data used in the last eligibility report may be outdated and no longer valid, in which case a comprehensive reevaluation is needed.
- The sixty (60) day timeline only applies to the initial evaluation. This timeline does not apply to re-evaluations.
- Re-evaluation can include only a review of existing evaluation data. Review of existing data may include evaluations and information provided by parents, classroom assessments, classroom observations, and observations by teachers and related service providers.
- Review of existing data may be done without a meeting if the parent and teacher agree not to hold a meeting.
- Re-evaluation must be conducted at least once every three (3) years, unless the parent and the school district agree that it is not necessary.
- Re-evaluation can be completed at any time if requested by the legal parents/guardians or if the school district thinks it is needed.
- Re-evaluation should not occur more than one (1) time per year unless the IEP team agrees.
- Before determining that a child is no longer eligible for special education services, the local education must comprehensively re-evaluate the child.
- Re-evaluation is not needed when a child graduates from high school with a regular education diploma or when the child has exceeded the age of eligibility (22<sup>nd</sup> birthday) for FAPE.

#### **TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Always put your request for an evaluation in writing. Give copies to your child's teacher, school leader, and the special education director.
- Share any reports or evaluations about your child that you have from other programs or professionals, if you are comfortable doing so.
- Ask how you will be involved or give input during the evaluation process.
- Ask questions to help you understand what to expect, such as:

- Why do you want to evaluate my child?
- What will happen if my child is not evaluated?
- Will he/she still get help for the problems that have been identified?
- What do you think you will learn from the evaluation?
- What kinds of test will be used?
- What areas will be tested?
- Will someone observe my child in the classroom and talk to my child's teachers?
- Who will evaluate my child?
- Has the evaluator had experience testing children who are similar to my child?
- Does my child need a translator or interpreter? (Testing must be done in a child's native language or sign language if needed.)
- When will I receive a written copy of the evaluation results?
- What can I do if I do not agree with the evaluation results?
- Ask for a copy of the evaluation report, if one is not provided.
- Ask to have the evaluation results explained if you do not understand them.

#### **Where to Go for More Information:**

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

### **FORMAL COMPLAINTS**

**What is a Formal Complaint?** Formal complaints are one of the types of dispute resolution processes that legal parents/guardians of children with disabilities can use to resolve issues or disagreements. Formal complaints can be filed by anyone. Complaints can be filed about any violation of IDEA. Complaints can be about a violation that affected one student or a group of students. Complaints can also be about system-wide violations of IDEA. Formal complaints must be in writing. Formal complaints must be signed by the person filing the complaint.

- Formal Complaints are investigated by the GaDOE.
- The formal complaint procedure will not replace either mediation or due process. When a complaint is filed, mediation will also be offered. If a due process hearing has also been requested on the same issue the complaint will be set aside pending a due process resolution. This can affect the timelines and how long it will take to get a written decision for a complaint.

**Facts You Should Know:**

- A formal complaint must be based on a violation that happened no more than one (1) calendar year before the date the complaint is filed.
- Formal complaints must contain:
  - A statement that the local education agency has violated IDEA Part B
  - Detailed facts that support the claim of IDEA violations
  - Your signature and contact information
  - If the complaint claims that violations are about a specific student, it must also include:
    - the name of the student
    - the student's home address
    - the name of the school the student is attending
    - a description of the problem
    - the facts related to the problem
    - a proposed resolution to the problem, if known

To file a formal complaint:

- Mail the signed, written complaint to:

Georgia Department of Education  
Director, Division for Special Education Supports and Services Georgia Department of Education  
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive, S.E.  
1870 Twin Towers East  
Atlanta, GA 30334-5010

- Or fax it to: 404-651-6457
- Send a copy of the complaint to the school district (superintendent or special education director) at the same time you file the formal complaint with the GaDOE.

**Formal Complaint Investigations:**

Complaints are investigated, and action is taken within sixty (60) calendar days of the GaDOE's receipt of the complaint. The local education agency is requested to provide a written response to the GaDOE and the complainant within ten (10) business days. This documentation should include their response to the allegations and any supporting documents. The GaDOE may require an independent investigation which could include witness interviews, document reviews, and/or a visit to the school district. GaDOE investigators will determine if IDEA has been violated. You and the school district will receive copies of all correspondence.

**Formal Complaint Written Decisions:**

A written decision will be sent to you and the local education agency and will address each allegation. These decisions will include findings and conclusions. If the local education agency is not in compliance, the decision will identify steps necessary to resolve the complaint. A copy of the decision should be provided to the State School.

**TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- The leader of the school will provide you with any requested Georgia Special Education State Rules and the GaDOE Formal Complaint Form. You do not have to quote the law or state rules in your complaint but being familiar with this information will help you as you write your complaint.
- Before filing a complaint, be sure you have spoken with the special education director of the local school district to explain your situation and seek assistance. Consider sending a complaint if there is an issue that must be resolved immediately. If your child is being kept from activities, this may be the fastest way to get a result or response from your local school district. If your child is in danger, you should notify appropriate authorities immediately.
- Writing the complaint and describing the problem:
  - Be specific. List the facts. The facts should describe what part of IDEA or Georgia state rules was violated.
  - Include the “who, what, when, and why” of the events that form the complaint.
  - Explain the timing of the events.
  - Include names of the people responsible for the violation.
  - Describe the damage resulting from the violation.
  - If possible, list documents that support your claims. Types of documents could include: Pyramid of Intervention data, Student Support Team (SST) forms, special education records, data and reports used to evaluate your child, or relevant correspondence including letters, emails, recorded phone conversations, or other communications between you and the school/local education agency.
  - Never send your original papers. Always send copies with the formal complaint.
  - Ask a friend to read the complaint and see if they can tell you the “who, what, when, and why” of the complaint. If the complaint is not clear to a friend, it won’t be clear to an investigator.

**Your Role in the Investigation:**

You may be asked to meet with the investigator and provide more information about the complaint. Be prepared and bring all relevant records with you. Have an outline of the key areas of your complaint. Provide the investigator with all of specific information you have. Remain calm and do not let anger or frustration affect your interaction with the investigator.

**Drafting a Proposed Solution:**

Make sure your proposed solution is student focused and educationally relevant. Do not ask for specific teachers, specific service providers, or experimental services. Be creative and focus on your child’s needs. Make suggestions to address any procedural issues that may have occurred.

**Where to Go for More Information:**

Parent to Parent of Georgia  
770-451-5484 or 800-229-2038  
[www.p2pga.org](http://www.p2pga.org)

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## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

### **FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIORAL ASSESSMENTS (FBA) AND BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLANS (BIP)**

Many students with disabilities exhibit inappropriate behaviors that interfere with learning. Some behaviors can cause harm to the student or others. There are many reasons why a student might exhibit problem behaviors. All behaviors, even inappropriate ones, serve a purpose. Some behaviors are a part of their disability. Some are behaviors they cannot control, and other behaviors can be changed or replaced with more acceptable ones. FBAs and BIPs can be used by families and professionals to understand the reason for the behavior and to manage or change the behaviors.

**What is an FBA?** An FBA involves gathering information in order to determine the cause or function of a behavior. In most circumstances, an FBA should be conducted before developing a BIP. There are many different tools that could be used for an FBA. Tools should be selected on a case-by-case basis for each individual student. The information that is collected in an FBA is used to help understand why and in what conditions problem behaviors occur. The information will help the IEP team develop a behavior intervention plan.

#### What Should an FBA Include?

- A definition of the behavior that needs to change
- What the student is doing that is interfering with learning or causing harm to the student or others
- What is the behavior that needs to change
- This behavior must be observable and measurable including but not limited to:
  - When does it happen?
  - Where does it happen?
  - How often does it happen?
  - How long does the behavior last?
  - Who is present when it happens?
  - What happens before the behavior is exhibited (antecedent)?
  - What happens after the behavior is exhibited (consequence)?
  - Does it happen only at certain times of the day?
- Data collection and assessment include but are not limited to:
  - Parent, student, and teacher interviews
  - Record reviews
  - Completing checklists or questionnaires
  - Observations of the student in different settings
- A summary (hypothesis): This means that the IEP team uses the information collected to try to understand the function or purpose of the behavior (why the student is exhibiting the behavior).

**What is a BIP?** A BIP includes positive interventions, strategies, and supports to address the target behavior. The BIP is created by a team of school staff and the parents. The BIP is used to teach or encourage new behavior. A BIP should address the problem behaviors identified in the FBA. If the team is presented with enough data and knowledge about the causes and circumstance of the child's behavior, an FBA may not have to be completed. The BIP should be modified as the student's behavior changes.

#### What Should a BIP Include?

- information from the FBA
- the target behavior
- the data that was collected
- the best ideas about the purpose or function of the behavior
- positive strategies to avoid or prevent the behavior such as changes in routines, changes in classroom instruction, and opportunities for choice
- new skills to replace the target behavior such as communication skills, social skills, self-management skills, and choice making
- ways to teach the new behaviors such as modeling, practice, social stories, prompts, and direct instruction
- consequences including what happens if the target behavior is exhibited and also what happens when the desired behavior is exhibited
- dates when the plan will be implemented
- names of people who will implement the plan
- materials, training, and support for persons implementing the plan
- collecting and reviewing data
- timelines for team meetings including reviewing the data and monitoring the plan

#### Facts You Should Know:

- FBAs and BIPs may be developed for any behaviors that affect learning or violate a student code of conduct.
- An FBA can be requested by a parent, State School, or local education agency at any time, or as part of an evaluation or re-evaluation process.
- Parental/guardian consent must be obtained before an FBA is done for the purpose of evaluation. The results of the FBA should be reviewed at an IEP meeting to help with IEP planning.
- IDEA allows parents/guardians to request an independent educational evaluation. When an FBA is for the purpose of evaluation and the parents disagree with the school's FBA, they may request an independent educational evaluation.
- If a student's behavior results in a disciplinary action that keeps him/her out of school for more than ten (10) days during any school year, the IEP Team must conduct an FBA and develop a BIP. If a BIP already exists, the IEP team must review the BIP and revise it, if needed, to address the new behavior.
- IDEA does not provide specific guidelines regarding the procedures for conducting an FBA or developing a BIP. These procedures for implementation are left up to each local education agency and State Schools. The GaDOE does provide districts with guidance for implementing FBAs and BIPs.

**TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- If your child often has frequent office referrals or suspensions and an FBA has not been done, or not done in at least three years, ask for a new one. Put your request in writing to the State School and local education agency.
- You may ask for an FBA at any time if your child's problem behaviors are becoming worse, or the team does not know why the problem behaviors are occurring.
- Review your child's disciplinary records or behavior data and talk to your child's teacher and other school staff about his or her behavior.
- Schools may use teachers and other staff to conduct FBAs. You can ask about the training, educational background and experience of the individual(s) conducting the FBA. If you disagree with the school's FBA conducted for the purpose of evaluation, you may request an independent evaluation by a professional outside of the school district.
- Make suggestions about how to define the target behavior on the FBA. The target behavior must be one that can be observed. Good examples of observable behavior are hitting, biting, running away, or putting one's head down on a desk. Behaviors such as being disrespectful, being lazy, or being disruptive are not observable and should not be identified as target behaviors.
- If your child's BIP only focuses on the problem or target behavior, ask the team to include objectives to increase new behaviors. A good BIP will have at least one objective to decrease the target behavior and one objective to increase the new behavior.
- Your child's BIP should include skills that he/she needs to work on and ways that teachers and staff will help. If the BIP only includes skills for your child to work on, ask how the staff will help your child learn those new skills.
- Make suggestions about strategies that might work with your child and could be included in the BIP.

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)



## **Helping your Child with Disabilities with Homework**

Research shows that when parents/guardians become involved in their children's schoolwork, the children do better in school. One way you can be involved is by helping your child with homework. Teachers have long used homework to provide additional learning time and to strengthen study and organizational skills. For students with disabilities, homework may be especially challenging. Your child may have significant attention or organization issues, or he/she may have difficulty with the way homework assignments are given. A lack of communication between home and school about the homework can be at the root of the problems or, sometimes, children need special assistance in order to complete the assignments. It is important for parents/guardians and teachers to work together to help build good habits and to develop a system that works for an individual child. The results will be good homework and study habits that will help your child have good work habits as an adult.

### **Special Homework Tips for Parents of Children with Disabilities:**

#### **Communication:**

Communication is an essential part of successful homework. Teachers and parents/guardians of students with disabilities should set up a clear and effective way of sharing information with one another and with the student about homework policies, expectations, and concerns.

#### **Organization:**

Many students need help with organizational skills to be successful with homework. The following are some suggestions that might help a student:

- Establish a daily routine and schedule. Be sure to give your child time for a snack and wind-down time after school before he/she starts on homework.
- Limit distractions (TV, phone, loud music, etc.) and arrange a quiet place for homework.
- Organize a consistent workspace with needed items (pencils, pens, paper, etc.) where homework is done each day.
- Use a calendar or day planner/assignment book that has been developed with input from the teacher to organize and keep track of daily assignments.
- Develop a homework schedule that allows enough time for completion of assignments.
- Supervise to make sure that completed work is put in the notebook or backpack when completed and that it leaves home the next morning. It is very common for students with learning issues to fail to turn in their finished work. It is very frustrating to know your child struggled to do the work but did not get credit. You may want to arrange, with the teacher, a system for collecting the work.

#### **Guidance:**

Some students only need help getting started on their assignments and some guidance to keep them on track. Some suggestions include:

- Read the directions together.
- Do the first items together.
- Observe as your child does the next problem/item on his or her own and then leave the room.
- Guide but don't correct. It is helpful to point out errors on the homework.
- If your child needs help, offer ideas that can help sort out the problem, but don't give the answers.

- Give breaks if needed. If the child has several sheets of homework or one sheet of a particular subject that causes your child stress, then break up the homework session.
- Have the child complete some of the homework and then let him/her take a break and engage in an activity that relaxes them.
- Set a timer and make sure the child knows how much free time she/he will have.

#### Accommodations:

If a child uses accommodations in the classroom, he/she may be needed for homework as well. The child might need scaffolded assignments or alternative response formats (e.g., allow the student to audiotape an assignment rather than handwriting it). Homework accommodations can be written in your child's IEP and be followed by all of your child's teachers.

#### Assistive Technology:

AT devices that are used at school may be needed at home. Talk with the IEP team about how best to accommodate your child's technology needs for homework. Parents/guardians should be trained on how to assist their children with the devices during homework time.

#### IEP Goals:

Include goals and objectives about homework completion in your child's IEP. Make sure that all AT, supplementary supports, accommodations etc., are included.

#### Possible Homework Adaptations and Accommodations:

Listed below are just some of the things that might be included on your child's IEP to assist him/her in becoming more successful and independent in doing homework. Discuss with the IEP team any other things that you think your child might need.

- Allow alternative response formats (e.g., audio taping rather than writing an assignment).
- Adjust the length of assignments by breaking longer assignments into manageable segments.
- Provide a peer tutor.
- Provide learning tools (e.g. calculators).
- Adjust grading standards.
- Give fewer assignments.
- Provide an extra set of textbooks for homework use.

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### **INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM**

**What is the Individualized Education Program (IEP)?** If your child receives special education and related services, it is required that he/she has an IEP. The IEP will address your child's unique abilities and needs and describe how he/she will access the general curriculum. The IEP should describe how your child learns, how your child best demonstrates what he or she is learning and what teachers and service providers will do to help your child learn more effectively. As a parent, you are a very important part of your child's IEP team. You, your child's teacher(s), and other school personnel will develop an IEP for your child that will be reviewed at least once a year.

#### **Facts You Should Know:**

- The IEP team includes the legal parents/guardians, local education agency staff, and State Schools' staff who have knowledge or expertise about the student and/or the curriculum. Parents/guardians and the school may also invite anyone they want who has special expertise or knowledge to offer.
- You will receive a written notice prior to the IEP meeting. This notice will include the proposed date, time and place of the meeting, the purpose of the meeting, and who is likely to be in attendance. The IEP meeting should be set up at a mutually convenient time and place. If the time offered does not work for you, suggest alternative times and dates.
- The IEP meeting will be conducted by school personnel, with your input, and will result in the development of the yearly plan for providing special education and related services to your child. IEP meetings must occur at least once per year but may occur more often if the parent/guardian or the school requests a meeting.
- The IEP has required components that will be discussed and included in your child's plan with the consensus of the team including: your child's present level of performance (including the results of recent state and local assessments or evaluations, the functional, developmental and academic needs of your child, and the disability's impact on the progress of your child in the general curriculum); a statement of measurable annual goals for your child (and objectives in some cases); how your child will participate in state and local assessments; the accommodations and supports that your child needs for instruction; how your child will participate in general and special education; the related services to be provided and the consideration of extended school year (ESY); for students entering high school or reaching age sixteen (16), a transition plan will include transition services to post-secondary activities. Once these components are completed, the IEP team will consider where and how the services can be provided. This will be documented as the placement for provision of services (also known as Least Restrictive Environment, LRE).
- The IEP form is designed to document the decisions of the IEP team; therefore, meeting minutes are not required. Some local education agencies do keep written minutes of the IEP meeting. If minutes are kept, they are a part of the IEP.
- Each year, an annual review of the IEP will be held in order to address your child's progress. The IEP team will review your child's goals and objectives and consider the progress in each area. Your child's education will then be directed by the developed IEP and will reflect any changes made during this annual review.

- Annual goals and objectives must be measurable so that the IEP team, including parents, can assess the progress of your child. The IEP will tell you when to expect progress reports and how often you will receive them. You should receive them at least as often as students without IEPs receive their report cards. Goals and objectives do not usually repeat the state standards of the curriculum but instead identify goals or skills a student needs to work toward in order to make progress in the curriculum and to meet the unique needs of his or her disability related to the functional, academic, behavioral, or developmental needs of the student.

#### **TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Plan before the meeting:
  - Write down what you are recommending for your child and share that with the school.
  - Talk to other parents about their IEP meetings. You will be more prepared when you have heard about other parents' experiences.
  - Write down your questions, so you do not forget them.
  - Talk to your child. Ask how school is going. Ask what he or she would like to change and what they would like to be different in school. Find out what they like and dislike. Ask what they want and need.
  - Consider when it's right to involve your child in the IEP meeting. Young children might only participate for part of the meeting while older children might attend the full meeting. When transition out of high school is being discussed, your child must be invited to attend.
  - Ask to reschedule the meeting if it is planned for a time when you cannot attend. Ask if you can participate by telephone if you cannot be there in person. Parent participation is an important part of every IEP meeting, and local education agencies are required to make every effort to include parents in them.
  - Review last year's records and IEP before the meeting.
  - Request copies of your child's records (in writing) so that you can review them beforehand.
  - Prepare a draft agenda for the IEP meeting to share your expectations with the school.
- During the IEP meeting:
  - Stay involved during the meeting.
  - Ask questions if you need to. If you don't understand what is being said, ask for clarification.
  - Control your emotions. You may not agree with the other members of the IEP team, but try to work together to get what's best for your child. Focus your energy on solving problems.
  - Focus on what you want for your child (your interests) and not the specifics on how to get there (your position). The rest of the team may have some great ideas you haven't thought of.
  - Ask to take a break during the meeting if you need to talk with anyone who came with you, gather your thoughts, or calm down.
  - If you don't agree with the IEP, you don't have to sign it. Services may begin in an IEP as indicated unless you request a due process hearing to "freeze" the process until the disagreement can be resolved. If you request a due process hearing, the previous IEP will still be in effect.
  - Remember, you can request another IEP meeting at any time if a change is needed or if you have questions about your child's progress. Make your request in writing.

#### **Where to Go for More Information:**

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

### **KEEPING YOUR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ON A PATH TO GRADUATION**

Keeping your child on a path to graduation is one of the most important things you can do as a parent/guardian working with school staff. High school is the critical time that students have to more fully discover their areas of interests for jobs or attending college after graduation. School staff are always happy to talk with you if you think your child might be getting off track from graduating. School staff will do the same with you if they notice a student is getting off track. Below are some things you can do to help.

- Make graduation a priority.
- Be aware of your children's attendance and encourage them to be on time and in school every day.
- Know who they are hanging out with as they are most likely to mimic the behaviors of their friends.
- Keep an eye on grades and make sure they are staying on track for graduation.
- Attend parent-teacher meetings and talk about goals and expectations for your child.
- Help your child explore careers and understand the necessary education and/or training.
- Teach your children to communicate for themselves and allow them to make choices and decisions.
- Attend and volunteer at school activities as a way to know what is happening at the school.
- Encourage your children to join clubs and/or play sports and they will be more likely to want to stay in school.
- Seek tutoring and extra academic assistance to help them through difficult classes.
- Look for signs of bullying, learning difficulties, or health concerns that may be reasons for your child's poor performance or unhappiness at school.
- Seek out resources and supports outside of the school when needed.
- Look for online resources to address specific concerns and questions.
- If your child has an IEP, make sure he or she is part of the IEP team and involved in the transition plan.
- Make sure your child's IEP goals align with the requirements for a high school diploma. Goals should focus on academics and include the supports and any accommodations needed in order to participate and pass the required coursework.
- Check that your child has access to and is using the necessary accommodations to be successful.
- Remember, students with IEPs can stay longer in high school and receive extra supports in order to help them complete the necessary coursework to graduate with a regular high school diploma.

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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Graduation Requirements  
<http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/State-Board-of-Education/SBOE%20Rules/160-4-2-.48.pdf>

Career, Technical and Agricultural Education  
<http://www.gadoe.org/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment/ctae/pages/default.aspx>

### **KEEPING YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENT ON A PATH TO GRADUATION**

Middle school experiences play an important role in a student's path to high school graduation. The middle school years are the launching pad for a high school education that enables all students to obtain the schooling and/or career training they will need to become successful adults. Below are some things you can do to help.

- Make sure your child attends school regularly and is on time and in school every day.
- Don't ignore misbehavior and poor conduct as these may be signs that your child is disengaging from school.
- Monitor grades and course performance and meet with your child's teacher if he/she needs help to be successful. Set high expectations for your child.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences. Work collaboratively with your child's teachers and talk to them about goals and expectations for your child.
- Talk to your child. Find out what he or she is doing in school and discuss what he or she has learned on a daily basis.
- Communicate with your child and teach them to advocate for themselves. Teach them to ask for help if needed.
- Stay involved with school. This is the best way to know how and what your child is doing at school.
- Encourage participation in extracurricular activities. Students that are involved in sports, clubs, and other school activities will be more likely to want to stay in school.
- Seek academic help. Some students may benefit from tutoring and extra academic assistance to help them.
- Be aware of signs that your child is unhappy. Look for signs of bullying, learning disabilities and/or health concerns as a possible reason for your child's poor performance or unhappiness at school.

- If your child has an IEP, make sure he/she has access to the general curriculum and that IEP goals are ones that will keep him/her on track for a high school diploma (taking the right courses, earning credits, etc.).
- Check that your child with an IEP has access to and is using the necessary accommodations to be successful.
- Encourage your child to take prescribed medications and live a healthy lifestyle that includes a healthy diet, plenty of exercise, and sleep.

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#### **MAKING SURE YOUR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CHILD STARTS ON A PATH TOWARDS HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**

The elementary school years are when students develop learning habits that will help them throughout their educational careers. During these important years, there is an emphasis on reading, writing, and math skills that are the foundation for learning in all subjects. Below are some things you can do to help.

- Encourage learning by communicating high, yet reasonable, expectations for your child's education.
- Be involved in your child's education by assisting with homework and knowing the curriculum.
- Make sure your child has regular attendance and is on time and in school every day.
- Don't ignore misbehavior and poor conduct as these can be signals that your child is having learning difficulties. Work with teachers/administrators to develop a plan to encourage positive behaviors.

- Monitor reading, writing and math Skills. Set high expectations but be aware that some children will need special interventions to develop these skills.
- Attend parent-teacher conferences and work with teachers to understand and support goals and expectations for your child.
- Talk to your child and find out what they are doing in school and discuss what they are learning on a daily basis.
- Stay involved by attending school activities and volunteering as these are good ways to get know your child and their school.
- Seek academic help for your child if needed, as some students benefit from tutoring and extra academic assistance.
- Be aware of signs of bullying, learning disabilities, or health concerns that might be the reason for your child's poor performance or unhappiness at school.
- Make sure your child with an IEP has academic goals that are in line with the general curriculum and is keeping pace with others in his/her grade level.
- Confirm your child with an IEP has access to and is using the necessary accommodations to be successful.
- Make sure your child takes medications that are prescribed and lives a healthy lifestyle that includes a healthy diet, plenty of exercise, and sleep.

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#### **MAKING SURE YOUR PRESCHOOL CHILD STARTS ON A PATH TOWARDS HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION**



The preschool years are the time when young children are developing social, cognitive and language skills that will prepare them for their educational careers. During these years, children gain an enthusiasm for learning, emotional security and self-confidence, language proficiency, and an ability to regulate their own behavior, setting them on a path to high school graduation. Below are some things you can do to help.

- Encourage independence by expecting more from your child.
- Resist doing for them when they can do for themselves. Allow them to do simple things like dress themselves or clean up after meals.
- Praise their efforts, even if their bed is not made perfectly or their clothing choices are not the same as yours.
- Encourage friendships through social, recreational, and sports activities.
- Develop predictable routines so that your child knows what to expect each day.
- Don't ignore misbehavior and poor conduct at preschool. Work with the school to develop a plan to encourage positive behaviors.
- Read to your child and with your child. Encourage their interest in books.
- Provide opportunities to play games, sing songs, and engage in science, math, art and writing activities.
- Encourage your child to experiment and discover, within limits.
- Establish a communication system with the preschool so that you know what is happening on a daily basis with your child.
- Speak in positive ways about school, teachers, and classmates.
- Talk to your child and find out what he/she is doing in school. Ask about friends and activities.
- Attend and volunteer at school activities. These are good ways to support your child's efforts.
- Be aware of signs of bullying, learning disabilities, or health concerns which might be the reason for your child's poor performance or unhappiness at school.
- Confirm your child with an IEP has access to and is using the necessary accommodations to be successful.
- Make sure your child takes medications that are prescribed and lives a healthy lifestyle that includes a healthy diet, plenty of exercise, and sleep.

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Special Education Implementation Manual  
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Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Graduation Requirements

<http://www.gadoe.org/External-Affairs-and-Policy/State-Board-of-Education/SBOE%20Rules/160-4-2-.48.pdf>

Career, Technical and Agricultural Education

<http://www.gadoe.org/curriculum-instruction-and-assessment/ctae/pages/default.aspx>

### MEDIATION

**What is mediation for a student receiving special education services?** Mediation is a process that can be used to resolve disagreements between a family of a child with a disability and the local education agency. Mediation is free and is often used when everyone wants to try to settle a conflict without an attorney. Mediation can be used to resolve disagreements related to the identification, evaluation, placement, or the provision of a Free Appropriate Public Education to a student who is receiving special education services.

Mediation is conducted by a neutral person called a mediator. Mediators receive training about special education law and are experienced in dispute resolution. The mediator helps everyone share their concerns, clarify the problems, discuss options and reach a solution that both parties can agree upon. The mediator does not tell either party how to resolve the problem and does not decide the outcome of the mediation.

Mediation must be offered whenever someone requests a due process hearing. Mediation can also be requested if a formal complaint is filed. Mediation can be requested without filing a complaint or a due process hearing as another avenue to resolve a disagreement.

#### **The Facts You Should Know:**

- Mediation is a required safeguard in IDEA as a safeguard. It is one option available to resolve disputes between parents/families and local education agencies.
- Mediation is available in all school systems in Georgia.
- Mediation is voluntary. Both parties (the parent/guardian and the school system) must agree to participate. If either party says “no” to mediation, the mediation will not be held.
- Mediation is free for parents/families and local school systems. A parent or guardian may request mediation by contacting the special education office in their local school system and asking for mediation to resolve a dispute.
- Attorneys are allowed to attend mediation; however, they do not attend most mediations. Other persons who are knowledgeable about the issue may attend if they have information to add to the discussions. Participants in mediation reach agreement regarding who will attend prior to the mediation.
- There is no time limit for requesting mediation. There is no timeline for resolving the issue.
- Mediation is confidential. Nothing that is talked about during mediation can be used as evidence in a due process hearing or lawsuit.
- If an agreement is reached, it will be put in writing and signed by all parties. The agreement is legally binding and can be enforced in court.
- There is no guarantee that mediation will lead to a written agreement. Some mediations will not result in an agreement. If an agreement cannot be reached, parents retain their full rights to request a due process hearing and to file a formal complaint.

**TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Put your request for mediation in writing.
- Mediation should be scheduled at a time and date that works for both parties. You can ask for another date or time, if what is offered doesn't work for you.
- Mediation can take several hours. You should plan your schedule so that you are able to be there the whole time. Make arrangements for childcare, work, etc.
- Organize your documents and paperwork. Request a copy of your child's IEP. Review your child's IEP and know what you agree and disagree with. Make notes on your documents and put dates on them. Take copies of your documents to the mediation. Keep one copy for yourself. Take a copy for the mediator and a copy for the school district.
- Decide if there is anyone you want to go to the mediation with you.
- Everyone participating in a mediation session will get to share their concerns and to offer possible solutions. Be prepared to identify and describe the issues or problems and to talk about your concerns. Ask questions. Make a list of your questions and take it with you to the mediation. Share information about your child that will help to clarify the problem. Listen and offer possible solutions.
- Some types of disagreements are more likely to be resolved through mediation than others. For example: disagreements over the need for more or different special education services, classroom or school placement, compensatory services, and eligibility decisions can often be negotiated through mediation. Disagreements about issues such as the assignment of a particular teacher or service provider, hiring or firing of school staff, and the assignment of a student to a particular school building (if that does involve a change of placement) are much less likely to be resolved through mediation.
- Remember that mediation is about compromise. Be prepared to keep an open mind. Consider all possible solutions to the problem. Be willing to brainstorm with the other parties and try to develop a creative solution to the problem.
- If you are unable to reach an agreement, you may proceed with a due process hearing (if you have already requested one). Make a request for a due process hearing, or look for another way to resolve the disagreement. Request a formal complaint.
- During the mediation, ask questions if there is anything you don't understand.

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### **PREPARING YOUR CHILD WITH DISABILITIES FOR KINDERGARTEN**

Preparation is important for all children who are going to kindergarten. Preparing for your child with disabilities requires some additional thought and consideration. Preparation begins with the IEP. Many children with disabilities will have received services from the public school district before kindergarten. The public school district may have provided services in a regular early childhood program, special education early childhood program, the child's home, or in a private setting. If so, your child already has an IEP and has been working on goals to prepare him/her for kindergarten. As your child gets ready to enter kindergarten, you may want to request an IEP meeting to discuss your child's needs prior to the beginning of the kindergarten school year.

Other children with disabilities may not be involved with the public school district until they are ready to enter kindergarten. If this is true of your child with a disability, or you suspect your child will be identified as having a disability when he/she is in kindergarten, you should call your school and request an evaluation for your child. This will help ensure that your child will be able to receive appropriate services when kindergarten begins.

How do I know if my child is ready?

- Children must be five (5) years old on or before September 1<sup>st</sup> to start kindergarten in Georgia.
- Many children entering kindergarten are not able to read, write, or do math. Kindergarten teachers will tell you that it is more important that children be able to follow directions, share and know how to take turns, pay attention, and get along with others. These skills and a good attitude will help make it easier for a child to learn in a kindergarten class.
- Many children with disabilities will have some of these skills. Others may still be developing them. You can use the following list to help identify some of your child's strengths and the areas in which he/she may need extra help.
  - Can my child listen to and follow instructions?
  - Is he/she able to put on his/her coat and go to the bathroom by himself/herself?
  - Can he/she recite the alphabet and count to 20?
  - Can he/she hold a pencil?
  - Can he/she cut with scissors?
  - Does he/she show an interest in books?
  - Is he/she receptive to learning new things?
  - Does he/she share and know how to take turns?

It's okay if you can't answer "yes" to all of these questions. Your child will have opportunities to learn these and many other skills throughout his/her time in kindergarten. Another tool you can use to look at your child's growth and development before he/she starts kindergarten is the Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards (GELDS). For more information about GELDS, you can visit <http://gelds.dec.state.ga.us>. These standards are aligned with Georgia's Standards of Excellence.

Before your child starts kindergarten, share information with your child's new teacher about:

- What he/she likes and dislikes, such as listening to stories, drawing and coloring, playing alone or with other children
- What your child does well and what things are harder for your child
- Your child's early learning experiences, including whether or not he/she was enrolled in a preschool or other program
- Special supports or services that your child previously received

What should I do to help my child adjust to kindergarten?

- Visit the new school and spend time with the teacher.
- Explore the classroom, see the cafeteria, and visit the playground.
- Talk about the bus ride or other transportation to and from school.
- Use pictures and/or stories to familiarize your child with the new classroom, school, and teacher.
- Check out children's books or videos from your local library about starting kindergarten.
- Reassure your child by letting your child know that you care about his/her feelings, by saying such things as "It's okay to feel sad, angry, scared, and excited."
- Let your child make choices about school clothes, food, and school supplies.

Once your child begins kindergarten:

- Your child may experience separation anxiety or shyness initially, but teachers should be trained to help with adjustment.
- If your child cries at drop off, remain calm and positive. Do not linger but rather reassure your child that he/she will be okay and that you will be back soon.
- Share information about how you think your child is adjusting to school. Ask the teacher to do the same.
- Develop a relationship with your child's teacher and other students by volunteering in the classroom.
- Check your child's backpack daily for notes and fliers. These include important information and communication from the school.
- Schedule a follow-up IEP meeting halfway through the school year, or sooner if needed, to evaluate how well the plan is working.

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Georgia Interagency Transition Council  
[www.gatrtransition.org](http://www.gatrtransition.org)

Bright from the Start: Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning

Pre-K Content Standards

[http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/Content\\_Standards.pdf](http://www.dec.state.ga.us/documents/attachments/Content_Standards.pdf)

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Georgia Early Learning and Development Standards

<http://gelds.dec.state.ga.us>

### **TRANSITION FROM EARLY INTERVENTION TO PUBLIC SCHOOL**

**What is transition for young children?** For children receiving services through Babies Can't Wait (BCW) early intervention program, the purpose of the transition planning process is to assist families in determining appropriate services for the child beyond the child's third birthday. Services, upon reaching age three (3), are provided by the school district where the child resides if the family chooses to select the school district and the child becomes eligible. Transition planning can begin as early as nine (9) months prior to but no later than ninety (90) days prior to your child's third birthday. The goal is to ensure no interruption of services for a child when turning three (3).

#### **Facts You Should Know:**

IDEA governs how states provide early intervention, special education, and related services to children with disabilities. At age three (3), supports and services change as eligible children move from part C (BCW/early intervention) to Part B (special education) of IDEA. IDEA requires:

- Part C (BCW) conducts a transition meeting. In addition to the public school district, participants can be invited from childcare centers, Head Start, private preschools, other agencies, or any other person you would like to have attend. Prior to your child's third (3<sup>rd</sup>) birthday, your BCW service coordinator will schedule one or more transition meetings to discuss your child's needs and early childhood special education program options.
- Eligibility for special education services may be determined for children who are preschool age whenever the parent, an early childhood service provider, or other community resource makes a referral. If you are a family already in BCW, your service coordinator should do this for you.
- Children ages three (3) through five (5), including two (2)-year-olds who will be turning three (3) during the school year, must receive a comprehensive evaluation to determine eligibility for preschool special education services. All children who transition from BCW to the school district must be evaluated and placed (if eligible) by the student's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday.
- When your child moves from BCW to special education, the IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan) is replaced by an IEP. The IFSP serves children from birth to three (3) years old and has a focus on family involvement. An IEP is an education document for children from three (3) to twenty-two (22) years of age. It focuses on special education and related services in schools.
- If your child is eligible for preschool special education, a meeting to develop an IEP will be scheduled. You are a member of the IEP team along with individuals from the school district who have knowledge or expertise about your child and/or the curriculum. Parents and the

school may also invite anyone they want who has expertise or knowledge, including your BCW service coordinator, other BCW service provider(s), or anyone else who has knowledge or expertise. This meeting is separate from the transition meeting.

- For children who turn three (3) years of age during the summer months, eligibility determination for Part B services and placement must be completed by the third (3<sup>rd</sup>) birthday. The IEP team, however, may determine to start services when the school year begins.
- As much as possible, special education services are to be provided in the Least Restrictive Environment. That means that your child should be alongside typically developing peers in settings such as preschool, childcare, or Head Start programs if the team agrees this is the appropriate setting.
- If you review your child's options and choose not to participate in preschool special education services, you can request services at a later date by contacting your school district.

### **TRANSITION TO LIFE AFTER HIGH SCHOOL**

**What is transition for young adults?** The purpose of the transition planning process is to assist youth who are currently receiving special education services and their families in planning life goals after high school. The school works with each student to develop a course of study and make a diploma choice. The transition plan is a tool used to prepare the student for independent living, employment, and further education once he/she leaves high school.

**What is a Transition Plan?** A Transition Plan will be part of your child's IEP when he/she enters high school. It is the guide for you, your child, and the professionals working with him/her. The Transition Plan is a long-range plan and a critical tool for developing future options for your child. This will prepare your child for employment and/or further education as well as independent living.

#### **Facts You Should Know:**

The transition planning process should include:

- An assessment of your child's skills and interests related to education, employment, training and independent living skills.
- Identification of agencies that may provide or pay for transition services. The school district must request permission from the legal parents/guardians to invite other agencies to be part of the transition planning meeting.
- The Transition Plan is part of the IEP and should be reviewed and revised at least once a year.
- The Transition Plan must be in place for your child by age sixteen (16) or the student's entry into high school, whichever comes first.
- The Transition Plan is required to contain goals for what your child will be doing after high school in the areas of employment, independent living skills, and education/training.
- Goals must be measurable and should be related to what your child wants to achieve after graduation.
- Students with disabilities are eligible to remain in public school until they turn twenty-two (22) or receive a regular high school diploma, whichever comes first. School districts must have a written policy stating what happens when a student reaches the age of twenty-two (22); each

school district decides whether to allow students to complete the semester, school year, or exit upon their twenty-second (22<sup>nd</sup>) birthday.

- When your child turns eighteen (18) years old, all rights, including educational rights, transfer to him/her. You and your child will be told about the transfer of educational rights at the IEP meeting before age eighteen (18).
- After your child turns eighteen (18), he/she will be the decision maker. You will still receive notice about any meetings, evaluations, placement changes, IEP changes, or eligibility changes.
- Your child must be invited to any IEP meeting where transition will be discussed. It is very important that he/she be a part of these meetings to be able to share his/her choices for the future as well as likes and dislikes and to better prepare him/her for becoming the decision-maker at age eighteen (18).
- When your child either graduates with a regular high school diploma or exits at age twenty-two (22), a Summary of Performance (SOP) will be provided by the school.
- This SOP includes current academic achievements and functional performance and recommendations for achieving life goals. This document is used to help pave the way to the next setting your child will be attending, such as work, college, or a technical college.

**TIPS for LEGAL PARENTS/GUARDIANS:**

- Begin planning for your child's transition to life after high school as early as possible. This includes making choices about and advocating for the types of classes your child will take so that he/she can get a regular high school diploma if possible. If you wait until your child is in middle school or high school to try to get "on track" for a regular diploma, it will be too late.
- Help build your child's self-determination and self-advocacy skills. Help your child learn how to talk about his/her disability and to ask for any support or accommodations that he/she needs.
- Help your child develop social relationships and opportunities for recreation. These are important to help connect your child with the community where he/she lives and can provide a wider network of people who can support your child after high school.
- Have a clear plan to address your child's healthcare needs once he/she reaches adulthood.
- You and your child should bring suggestions to the transition planning meeting about what your goals are for life after high school. Your vision and your child's vision for the future should help drive the IEP goals for your child.
- Consider what your child wants to do with his or her life. What are his/her dreams and goals? Does he/she want to go to college or to get a job? Where does he/she want to live and with whom?
- Make sure your child is learning skills that he/she will need for jobs and for life after high school. These might include things like asking for help, accepting directions and feedback from others, and dealing with conflict. He/she also needs to know how to be on time, the importance of good hygiene, and dressing appropriately for different settings such as work and social events.
- If your child plans to go to college, is he or she taking the courses needed to meet the college entrance requirements?
- If your child will go on to college or technical school, he/she will need to learn about what supports may be available from that school. Ask whom to contact for disability support services at the school your child will attend. Postsecondary programs are required to provide accommodations to students with disabilities, but they are not required to modify the coursework. Your child will have to provide documentation of his/her disability and will have to request the accommodations that are needed.



- Start to become knowledgeable about the protections provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, which will apply to your child after high school.

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Americans with Disabilities Act  
<https://www.ada.gov>

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act  
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>