

**Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District  
Employee Handbook  
2021-2022**



**401 Greensboro Street  
Starkville, Mississippi 39759  
(662) 324-4050  
Dr. Eddie Peasant, Superintendent**

*Approved by School Board 11/09/2021  
[www.starkvillesd.com](http://www.starkvillesd.com)*

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POLICIES CONTAINED WITHIN THIS HANDBOOK ARE SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION BY THE STARKVILLE OKTIBBEHA CONSOLIDATED (SOCSD) SCHOOL BOARD AS DEEMED NECESSARY.

*The SOCSD does not discriminate in its policies and practices with respect to compensation, terms or conditions of employment because of an individual's race, color, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, height, weight, age, marital status, political beliefs, disability, or handicap which does not impair an individual's ability to perform adequately in that individual's particular position or activity.*

*As provided under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, no person in the U.S. shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.*

#### **ASBESTOS / AHERA REGULATIONS**

*In accordance with AHERA regulations, school districts are required to perform several activities with regard to Asbestos in schools. One of these requirements is to provide notification to all parents, teachers, and employees of our ongoing management of asbestos containing materials (ACM's). To provide continuing management of the asbestos in our schools, all ACM's are inspected every six months by an environmental consulting firm from Jackson, Mississippi. Any changes in the ACM are being recorded in a surveillance report as part of the management plan. A copy of this surveillance report, along with a copy of the management plan and all supplementary information is located in the office at each school and at the central office. These documents are available for review at either of these locations.*

# STARKVILLE OKTIBBEHA CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL DISTRICT

GREENSBORO CENTER, 401 GREENSBORO STREET  
STARKVILLE, MS 39759



OFFICE OF THE  
SUPERINTENDENT

TELEPHONE (662) 324-4050  
FACSIMILE (662) 324-4068

## MESSAGE FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT

August 2021

Dear Faculty and Staff:

The 2021-22 school year brings a new set of challenges and opportunities as we to return to our schools and classrooms with a different version of the previous ones. Although we have learned a lot throughout this ordeal, we realize there is still much more to learn as we continue to navigate the pandemic. We are skeptical, yet excited to plan and prepare for excellence in our classrooms as we welcome our students back to school.

As an employee of SOCSO, you are a member of a team of dedicated professionals committed to the young people of this community. Each of us play a role in providing our students the instruction, guidance, and support needed to mature into the accomplished adults that will shape a better future for all of us. We are a district with a plan for success, even as we navigate uncharted territory of educating students in the midst of a pandemic. Through the hard work and dedication of our teachers, principals, and students we will improve student achievement. Through the same dedication of all employees, we will work with a common purpose and a focus on the needs of children. Starkville is a community that cares deeply about its schools, and our parents, clergy, and business leaders are our partners in success.

This handbook is provided as a “quick reference” to policies that guide the daily operations of the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District. This handbook will provide a general guide to job performance expectations and the district, state and federal guidelines associated with your job. It also highlights policies designed to protect the health of our employees. It is by no means a comprehensive collection of policies or practices. For additional information and a complete listing of the policies referred to in this handbook, consult the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School Board Policy Manual located on our district’s website at [www.starkvillesd.com](http://www.starkvillesd.com).

Thank you for being an integral part of the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District!

Sincerely,  
Eddie Peasant  
Superintendent

# **STRATEGIC PLAN**

## **BELIEFS**

- We believe excellent public schools are the heart of a thriving community.
- We believe excellent teachers are essential for student success.
- We believe diversity is a strength and shall be embraced, recognized, and celebrated.
- We believe problem solving, critical thinking, and creativity cultivate life-long learners.
- We believe quality education fosters leadership and develops good citizens.
- We believe our schools must be safe, welcoming, and respectful to all.
- We believe engaging our families and community is vital to ensuring each student's growth.

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The mission of the SOCSO is to achieve excellence by facilitating the discovery and development of each student's passion, purpose, and potential.

## **GOALS**

- Student Achievement
  - We will maximize growth of all students through rigorous and meaningful instruction.
- School Culture
  - We will foster and maintain inviting, equitable, healthy learning environments that promote safety, engagement, and excellence.
- Human Resources
  - We will recruit and retain a highly qualified, diverse workforce through an equitable process to ensure student achievement.
- Community Collaboration
  - We will engage and partner with community stakeholders to foster greater student opportunities and build a more vibrant quality of life.
- Operational Effectiveness
  - We will maximize resources to ensure operational effectiveness.

## **STRATEGIES**

- Student Achievement
  - We will maximize growth of all students through rigorous and meaningful instruction.
    - Kindergarten readiness
    - Internal and external communications and engagement
    - On-going professional development and learning opportunities for all
    - Collaboration with local, state, and national support organizations
    - Success of our low performing students
    - Improve students' social and emotional behavior
    - Standards alignment
    - Data driven decisions

- Health, Wellness, & School Culture
  - We will foster and maintain inviting, equitable, healthy learning environments that promote safety, engagement, and excellence.
    - Equity
    - Celebrate diversity
    - Adult behavior – collaborative responsibility
    - Customer service
    - Celebrations of excellence
    - Engaging school culture
    - Relationships
    - Seven habits infused into all of the above
    - Discipline and management (models, PBIS, etc.)
    - Classroom interruptions
    - Decrease time out of class
    - Safety procedures
    - Welcoming climate
    - Health and wellness promotion (students and staff)
    - Social emotional well-being
- Human Resources
  - We will recruit and retain a highly qualified, diverse workforce through an equitable process to ensure student achievement.
    - Recruit highly qualified, diverse employees
    - Selection process
    - Mentor employees
    - Provide professional development and coaching
    - Provide professional growth opportunities
    - Mid-term employee survey
    - Exit interview action plans
    - Employee recognition
- Community Collaboration
  - We will engage and partner with community stakeholders to foster greater student opportunities and build a more vibrant quality of life.
    - Effectively communicate district goals, successes and need to various community groups
    - Identify experiential education opportunities
    - Outreach to families
    - Develop mentors and student advocates
    - Match school/student needs with resources/businesses
    - Develop schools as community centers/get community members into schools
    - Help businesses embrace relationship between better educational outcomes and qualified workforce
- Operational Effectiveness
  - We will maximize resources to ensure operational effectiveness.
    - Fiscal responsibility
    - Facilities/physical plant
    - Transportation
    - Technology
    - Food Services



## **DISTRICT INFORMATION**

401 Greensboro Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Telephone: (662) 324-4050  
[www.starkvillesd.com](http://www.starkvillesd.com)

### **SOCSD Board of Trustees**

Sumner Davis, President  
Wes Gordon, Vice President  
Jamila Taylor, Secretary  
John Brown, Assistant Secretary  
Dr. Debra Prince, Member

### **ADMINISTRATION**

Dr. Eddie Peasant, Superintendent  
Anna Guntharp, Assistant Superintendent for Federal Programs and Student Support Services  
Dr. Christy Maulding, Deputy Superintendent for Curriculum/Instruction K-12  
Nicole Thomas, Public Information Officer  
Timothy Bourne, Director, Accountability, Accreditation, and Assessment  
Tammie McGarr, Chief Financial Officer  
Julie Jones, Director, Student Support Services  
Sha'Carla Petty, Director, Human Resource/Title IX Officer  
Dr. Leanne Long, Director, Instructional Technology and Distance Learning  
Greg Owen, Athletic Director  
Ginny Hill, Director, Child Nutrition  
Kelvin Gibson, Director, Transportation  
John Maulding, Director, Maintenance  
Dr. Brandi Burton, Director, Educational Enhancement and Innovative Research

## **SCHOOL AND DISTRICT CONTACT INFORMATION**

### **Sudduth Elementary School (grades PK-1)**

Morgan Abraham, Principal  
101 Greenfield Drive  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-324-4150  
Fax: 662-324-6137

### **Henderson Ward Stewart Elementary (grades 2-4)**

Julie Fancher, Principal  
200 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Drive West  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-324-4160  
Fax: 662-324-6957

### **Overstreet Elementary (grade 5)**

Julie Kennedy, Principal  
307 South Jackson Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-324-4193  
Fax: 662-324-6914

### **West Elementary (grades PK-5)**

Gabrielle Mills, Principal  
127 Sturgis-Maben Road  
Sturgis, MS 39769  
Phone: 662-465-7956  
Fax: 662-465-6470

### **Partnership Middle School (grades 6-7)**

Jorine Neal, Principal  
11200 MS Hwy 182  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-324-4181  
Fax: 662-324-4192

### **Armstrong Junior High School (grades 8-9)**

Ra'mon Forbes, Principal  
303 McKee Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-324-4070  
Fax: 662-324-4075

### **Starkville High School (grades 10-12)**

Dr. Howard Savage, Principal  
603 Yellow Jacket Drive  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-324-4130  
Fax: 662-324-4128

### **Millsaps Career & Technology Center**

Dr. Lenora Hogan, Director of Career & Technology,  
Academic Houses  
803 Louisville Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-324-4170  
Fax: 662-324-4103

### **The Learning Center**

Dr. Watress Harris, Principal  
2926 Sixteenth Section Road  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-323-1462  
Fax: 662-324-8463

### **Superintendent**

#### **Title VI Officer**

Dr. Eddie Peasant  
401 Greensboro Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-615-0013  
Fax: 662-324-4068

### **Assistant Superintendent, Federal Programs and Student Support Services**

Anna Guntharp  
401 Greensboro Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-615-0035  
Fax: 662-324-4068

### **Deputy Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction K-12**

Dr. Christy Maulding  
401 Greensboro Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-615-0045  
Fax: 662-324-4068

### **Director of Human Resources/Title IX Officer**

Sha'Carla Petty  
401 Greensboro Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-615-0051  
Fax: 662-324-4068

### **Director of Student Support Services/Section 504 Officer**

Julie Jones  
106 W. Main Street  
Starkville, MS 39759  
Phone: 662-615-0059

## CONTACT NUMBERS

Employees are requested to work with their principals in using the following district-level services and resources. For questions about individual schools, call the building principal. For additional assistance, phone the Greensboro Center (662) 324-4050.

Accounts Payable	615-0015
Activity Funds	615-0026
Athletics	615-0074
Child Nutrition	615-0027
Discipline	498-1737
Evaluation	615-0045
Field Trips	615-0045
Fixed Assets	615-0026
Gifted Education	615-0059
Human Resources	615-0019
Insurance	615-0020
Leave/Absences	615-0017
Maintenance	324-4127
National Board Certification	615-0019
Payroll	615-0017
Personnel	615-0019
Professional Development	615-0045
Public Relations	615-0021
Publications	615-0021
Recruitment	615-0045
Retirement	615-0019
Section 504	615-0059
Special Education	615-0059
Student Teachers	615-0045
Superintendent	615-0013
Teacher Certification	615-0019
Technology	615-0010
Testing	498-1737
Textbooks	615-0045
Title/Federal Programs	615-0035
Transportation	324-4190
Workers Compensation/FMLA/Insurance	615-0020

# CALENDAR

## 2021-2022

### Academic Year Calendar

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

	New Teacher Orientation, Schools
	Teacher days
	First day of semester for students
	80% days for students
	Inlement weather makeup day/holiday
	Holidays (all schools/offices closed)

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

September 21						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

October 21						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

November 21						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

December 21						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

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

February 22						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28					

March 22						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

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

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

June 22						
Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

Month	Student Days	Teacher Days
Aug	19	22
Sep	21	21
Oct	18	19
Nov	17	17
Dec	15	15
Jan	15	17
Feb	19	19
Mar	18	18
Apr	19	19
May	19	20
	180	187

187 days	8/2/21-5/27/22
186 days	7/23/21-8/1/22
200 days	7/28/21-8/8/22
210 days	7/18/21-8/18/22
220 days	7/12/21-8/23/22
240 days	7/1/21-8/30/22

### Notes

Jul 5	Independence Day holiday
Jul 29-30	New teacher orientation
Aug 2	First day for teachers
Aug 2-4	Professional Development
Aug 5	First day for students
Sep 2	Progress reports
Sep 6	Labor Day Holiday
Sep 30 - Oct 1	9 Week Tests
Oct 5	End of 1st 9-wks (43 days)
Oct 6	Conferences/Parent Learning Opportunities
Oct 7-8	Fall Break
Oct 11	Beginning of 2nd 9 weeks
Oct 14	Report Cards
Nov 11	Progress reports
Nov 22-26	Thanksgiving Holiday
Dec 16 - 21	9 Week Tests/Semester Brims
Dec 21	End of 2nd 9 wks (60% day) (47 days)
Dec 22 - Jan 1	Christmas/New Year's holidays
Jan 6 - 7	Staff return/Professional Development
Jan 10	Students return
Jan 13	Report Cards
Jan 17	Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday
Feb 3	Progress reports
Feb. 14	President's Day holiday
Mar 8-11	9 Week Tests
Mar 11	End 3rd nine weeks (43 days)
Mar 14-18	Spring Break
Mar. 21	Beginning of 4th 9-wks
Mar. 24	Report Cards
Apr 15	Good Friday holiday
Apr 18	ter Monday/inlement w eather makeup day
Apr 21	Progress reports
May 23-26	Final Brims
May 26	Last day students (60%) (47 days)
May 27	Last day teachers
May 30	Memorial Day holiday
Jun 2	Report Cards Mailed

## **SCHOOL BEGINNING/ENDING TIMES**

*(Ending time means when class is over and students leave room to go to bus or carpool.)*

### **Sudduth Elementary (PK-1)**

Beginning..... 7:30

Ending ..... 2:20

### **Henderson Ward Stewart Elementary (2-4)**

Beginning..... 7:40

Ending ..... 2:30

### **Overstreet Elementary (5)**

Beginning..... 7:40

Ending ..... 2:40

### **West Elementary (PK-5)**

Beginning..... 7:40

Ending ..... 2:30

### **Partnership Middle School (6-7)**

Beginning.....8:20

Ending .....3:30

### **Armstrong Junior High School (8-9)**

Beginning..... 8:40

Ending ..... 3:55

### **Starkville High School/Millsaps (10-12)**

Beginning..... 8:40

Ending ..... 3:55

### **The Learning Center**

Beginning..... 8:00

Ending ..... 2:30

## **EMPLOYEE BENEFITS**

The SOCSO, in an effort to attract and retain the highest quality personnel to serve the children of the Starkville community, offers a wide range of benefits to eligible personnel. Programs such as Social Security, Workers' Compensation, state disability, and unemployment insurance cover all eligible employees in the manner prescribed by law. Benefits eligibility is dependent upon employee classification and other factors. Details of many of the programs can be found within this handbook.

The following benefit programs are available to eligible employees:

- Cafeteria Plan
- Public Employment Retirement System
- Direct Deposit
- Educational and Sabbatical Leave
- Holidays
- Insurance – Medical, Life, and other supplemental insurances
- Medical Leave
- Personal Leave
- Sick Leave Benefits
- Vacation Benefits

Some benefit programs require contributions from employees, but others are fully paid by the district. The benefit package for full-time employees represents an additional cost to the SOCSO.

### **BENEFITS CONTINUATION (COBRA)**

The Federal Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) gives employees and their qualified beneficiaries the opportunity to continue health insurance coverage under the SOCSO's health plan when a "qualifying condition" would normally result in the loss of eligibility. Such conditions include resignation, termination of employment, a reduction in the employee's hours, a leave of absence, an employee's divorce or legal separation, a dependent child no longer meeting eligibility requirements, or death of an employee. Under COBRA the employee or beneficiary pays the full cost of coverage at the SOCSO's group rates.

### **CAFETERIA PLAN**

SOCSO participates in the Section 125 Flexible Benefit Plan. Medical insurance premiums paid through payroll deduction are exempt from federal and state income taxes.

### **SALARY PAY SCHEDULE / DIRECT DEPOSIT**

This school district shall process a single monthly payroll for licensed employees and may process a single monthly or a semimonthly payroll for non-licensed employees, in the discretion of the school board, with electronic settlement of payroll checks secured through direct deposit of net pay. In December, salaries or wages shall be paid by the last working day. The standard contract for school district employees prescribed by the State Board of Education shall provide that school district employees shall earn a salary payable in equal monthly installments beginning in the first month of employment, regardless of the number of days worked in any particular month by the employee. Any employee failing to complete the contractual obligation of service, and who receives payment in excess of the monthly installment for the period which such employee ceases employment with the school district, shall become liable immediately to the School Board of the SOCSO for the sum of all amounts received in payment less the corresponding amount of any compensation paid for which service has been rendered, plus interest accruing at the current Stafford Loan rate at the time the person discontinues his/her service. Any school employee whose employment ends during a school term, regardless of the reason(s) the employment ended, shall be paid salary or wages only for that portion of the school term that

employee actually worked. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to entitle any employee to payment of salary or wages when no work has been performed. Please contact the payroll department at 615-0017 for a direct deposit form. Form must be returned to the payroll office with a voided check.

## **INSURANCE**

The SOCSO participates in the state health and life insurance plan for school employees. Health and life insurance is provided for all full-time employees of the district. A full-time employee is defined as one who works 20 hours per week or more. Eligible employees may participate in the state insurance plan subject to all terms and agreement between the SOCSO and the insurance carrier. Information on available insurance types and plans may be obtained from the HR Benefits Specialist at the District Administrative Office. Additional insurances, as well as the employee's portion of health and life insurance, will be deducted from the employee's salary.

## **LEAVE FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF MEMBERS AND SALARIED, NON-LICENSED SUPPORT PERSONNEL (GBRI)**

The following rules shall replace all existing policies and regulations regarding authorized leave, unauthorized leave, and substitute pay policy. The regulations set forth in this document apply to all professional staff members and salaried, non-licensed support personnel employed by the school district for their contracted period. Professional personnel shall be defined as any person employed by the school district who holds a valid Mississippi teaching or administrative license and a teaching, supervisory, or administrative position.

### **Sick Leave**

- A. Each professional staff member and salaried, non-licensed support person with the exception of teacher assistants shall be granted sick leave at the beginning of each school year prorated at the rate of:
  - 187-day employee: .0535 X days worked to a maximum of ten days per year
  - Ten-month employee: .0550 X days worked to a maximum of eleven days per year
  - Eleven-month employee: .0600 X days worked to a maximum of twelve days per year
  - Twelve-month employee: .0541 X days worked to a maximum of thirteen days per yearProrated sick leave will be rounded to nearest ¼ day. Leave will be prorated from date of hire if it is different from the beginning of the school year.
- B. All sick leave not used prior to the end of the contract period shall be accumulated leave for that employee. At the time of termination, all accumulated sick leave shall be canceled. All unused leave, at the time of departure from the district, will be certified to PERS for use as service credit toward retirement. At the time of retirement, accumulated sick leave may be reported to the state retirement program or may be paid in a lump sum payment to the employee in the manner prescribed in this policy.
- C. Sick leave may be granted for:
  - 1. actual period of temporary disability caused by or attributed to any personal illness, injury, or other temporary disability which prevents an employee from performing his or her usual duties. Personal illness for three or more consecutive days will require a doctor's excuse.
  - 2. illness in the employee's immediate family that necessitates the employee's attendance. Immediate family is defined as spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, or any person of like relationship by marriage, or any person standing in loco parentis. If illness in immediate family extends three or more consecutive days, a doctor's excuse is required.
  - 3. death or funeral in immediate family. Immediate family is defined as spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, or any person of like relationship by marriage, or any person standing in loco parentis.
- D. An employee, who is absent for reasons other than for personal leave, shall furnish a certificate from a physician, dentist, or other medical practitioner as to the illness of the employee or the employee's immediate family when the absence is (3) or more consecutive days.

- E. When reasonable suspicion exists, an employee's immediate supervisor and/or the district reserves the right to require a certificate of a physician, dentist, or other medical practitioner verifying the necessity of the absence from work of an employee.

### **Worker's Compensation**

It is the policy of the SOCSO to prohibit employees injured at work from combining workers compensation benefits with accrued leave that would result in compensation in excess of 100% of their wages. If an employee is taken off duty by a doctor for a work-related injury more than five (5) days and is therefore eligible to receive workers' comp lost time benefits, then they may not use accrued leave in order to receive compensation in excess of the compensation they would have received if they had been on the job. Prior to worker's compensation beginning, the employee may use a proportional share of accrued leave to receive full (100%) compensation for the days off work, until their accrued leave has been exhausted.

### **Authorized Emergency**

If an employee has used all state personal leave days, and if an unforeseen event occurs which requires immediate action on the part of the concerned staff member, leave may be authorized from unused sick leave by the appropriate administrative official. All part-time employees that are eligible for retirement and health benefits with the SOCSO shall be eligible for one half of the allowed sick leave earned per classification.

### **Personal Leave**

- A. State personal leave shall be granted to each professional staff member and salaried, non-licensed person at the rate of two days per year. The two days are available for use commensurate with the first day the employee begins work.
  - 1. Personal leave shall be requested three days in advance but may be approved by the superintendent in the event an emergency prohibits the advance notice of three days. Prior to taking a state personal business day, the employee shall request and receive approval. This shall be done by submitting a Request for Leave through Employee Connect.
  - 2. Leave in this category may not be taken in the first or last ten student days of school or on a day previous to a holiday or a day after a holiday.
- B. Notwithstanding the restrictions on the use of personal leave prescribed in item A above, a *licensed* employee may use personal leave as follows:
  - 1. Personal leave may be taken on the first day of the school term, the last day of the school term, on a day previous to a holiday or a day after a holiday **IF**, on the applicable day, an immediate family member of the employee is being deployed for military service.
  - 2. Personal leave may be taken on a day previous to a holiday or a day after a holiday **IF** an employee of a school district has either a minimum of ten (10) years' experience as an employee of this school district or a minimum of thirty (30) days of unused accumulated leave that has been earned while employed in this school district.
  - 3. Personal leave may be taken on the first day of the school term, the last day of the school term, on a day previous to a holiday or a day after a holiday **IF**, on the applicable day, the employee has been summoned to appear for jury duty or as a witness in court.
  - 4. Personal leave may be taken on the first day of the school term, the last day of the school term, on a day previous to a holiday or a day after a holiday **IF**, on the applicable day, an immediate family member of the employee dies or funeral services are held. Any day of the three (3) bereavement days may be used at the discretion of the teacher and are not required to be taken in consecutive succession.
- C. All 12-month salaried personnel shall be granted 10 days of vacation. Vacation days will be prorated from date of hire if different from the beginning of the school year. All part-time employees that are eligible for retirement and health benefits with the SOCSO shall be eligible for one half of the allowed vacation earned per classification.



- D. All personal leave not used prior to the end of the contract period shall be accumulated leave for that employee up to a maximum of seven (7) days, carried over to the next school year, and credited to the employee's accumulated leave category. More than seven (7) accumulated days shall be rolled into sick leave.

### **Extended Personal Illness**

In the event that extended personal illness causes the employee to deplete all accrued sick leave, leave shall be granted with substitute pay for ten days.

### **Approved School Business**

Leave for approved school business shall be at the discretion of an administrator. The district recognizes the critical impact of the teacher and instructional time as they relate to student performance. Given this impact, approved school business must be used only for leave that impacts the district or the school as a whole. Leave that specifically relates to the School Improvement Plan or a district initiative may be approved with the recommendation of the administrator. Approved school business leave may also be granted for teachers who accompany groups of students to state or national competitions. Leave for school business shall not be charged against a person's leave days nor shall there be a reduction in pay.

### **Professional**

State and district-level, elected officers of educationally oriented organizations may be authorized to attend meetings upon approval of appropriate administrative officials not to exceed a total of three (3) days in any year. There will be no deduction of leave or pay.

### **Education Leave**

- A. Certified personnel whose contracts extend beyond the school year, and who are enrolled in an accredited doctoral program, may, upon presentation of documentation from the college or university that a scheduling conflict exists, request up to five (5) consecutive days of educational leave during the summer. Such leave shall be granted by the superintendent upon board approval. Leave in this category will be granted only once to any certified employee. No deductions from pay or accumulated leave shall be made for leave in this category.
- B. Certified personnel who are candidates for an advanced degree may request up to three (3) days leave for the purpose of taking orals or defending a dissertation. The employee will pay the cost of the substitute plus the employer's cost of benefits. State leave days will not be reduced.
- C. Certified personnel who are candidates for National Board Certification may request up to two (2) days leave for the purpose of portfolio preparation. No deductions from pay or accumulated leave shall be made for leave in this category.

### **Leave of Absence without Pay**

A staff member may request a leave of absence without pay during the current contract year. The superintendent will review each request on a case-by-case basis. The superintendent shall not honor requests for additional leave time unless extraordinary circumstances exist which, in the opinion of the superintendent, warrant consideration of granting additional leave days. A Personnel Request for Leave of Absence shall be required when such leave exceeds 3 days without pay or leave currently available to the employee. The request shall include the relevant facts concerning the occasion of the leave including beginning and ending dates of leave and shall be executed by the professional staff member or full-time non-licensed support personnel and the appropriate administrative officials and sent to the superintendent for approval.

The following benefits shall be frozen for the duration of the leave:

1. Insurance coverage shall remain in effect for up to 12 months for both the employee and his/her covered dependents as long as the staff member on leave wishes to continue premium payments, and it is agreeable with the insurance company. These arrangements must be made between the staff member, the district accounting office, and the company. (Refer to the State & School Employees' Life & Health Insurance plan document at <http://knowyourbenefits.dfa.state.ms.us>).
2. Accumulated days of leave, if any, shall be retained but shall not be increased while on leave.
3. Years of experience credited in the SOCSO shall be retained but shall not be increased while on leave.
4. A leave of absence without pay will not be charged against authorized days of leave.

### **Approved Leave without Pay**

A maximum of three (3) days of leave without pay may be granted an employee upon approval of appropriate administrative officials. One (1) full day's pay will be deducted for each day taken in the category. There will be no reduction of authorized leave days.

### **Major-Medical Leave of Absence**

(See also Policy GBRIA - Leave Taken Under the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993)

- A. Major-medical leave decisions will be made cooperatively between the employee, principal, the employee's doctor, and the superintendent on a case-by-case basis. The length of the leave shall be based upon the ability of the individual employee to perform his/her duties.
- B. The employee may elect to use all allotted leave earned through the provisions of this policy. These include accumulated sick leave, state personal leave, and leave of absence without pay. It also includes vacation days for employees who are eligible for vacation days.
- C. In the event the employee does not elect to use allotted leave days, all unused leave days will be retained but not increased during the time of the leave.
- D. Years of experience shall be retained but shall not be increased unless the number of days worked exceed the currently established minimum for earning experience.
- E. In any case in which the necessity for leave is foreseeable based on an expected birth or placement, the employee shall provide the superintendent with a 30 days' notice, before the date the leave is to begin, of the employee's intention to take leave, except that if the date of the birth or placement requires leave to begin less than 30 days, the employee shall provide such notice as is practicable.

### **Inclement Weather Leave**

If an employee cannot report to work due to inclement weather, then the employee may take a personal day or leave without pay.

### **Jury Duty/Subpoena**

There shall be no deduction in pay for service as a juror or for those who serve as witnesses under subpoena for school-related business except when the employee is the defendant or plaintiff. Any payments made to staff members for service as a juror may not be charged against the salary of the staff member. Leave for jury duty is not charged against any approved leave.

### **Teacher Assistants**

- A. Teacher assistants shall be credited with seven (7) days of authorized sick leave per school year for personal illness, severe family illness, death in the immediate family, and any combination thereof, as set out in **Section C-Sick Leave**.
- B. At the beginning of the third consecutive year of continuous service, the teacher assistant shall be entitled to nine (9) days of sick leave per year. Teacher assistants are entitled to accumulate sick leave days.
- C. State personal leave shall be granted upon request to each teacher assistant at the rate of two (2) days per year. The two days are available for use commensurate with the first day the employee begins work.

3. State personal leave shall be requested three days in advance but may be approved by the superintendent in the event an emergency prohibits the advance notice of these days. Prior to taking a state personal leave day, the employee shall request and receive approval. This shall be done by submitting a Request for Leave through Employee Connect.
  1. Leave in this category may not be taken in the first or last ten student days of school or on a day previous to a holiday or a day after a holiday.
- D. All personal leave not used prior to the end of the contract period shall be accumulated leave for that employee up to a maximum of seven (7) days, carried over to the next school year, and credited to the employee's accumulated leave category. More than seven (7) accumulated days shall be rolled into sick leave.
- E. All authorized leave shall be requested or directed, approved and authorized prior to or concurrent with the taking of such leave.

### **Bus Drivers**

Bus drivers (excluding substitute bus drivers) shall be credited with two (2) days of authorized sick leave days per school year for personal illness, severe family illness, death in the immediate family, and any combination thereof, as set out in Section C-**Sick Leave**. Current leave not used prior to the end of the school year will be applied to accumulated leave.

### **Reimbursement of Unused Leave Days**

The School Board of the SOCSO recognizes the advantage to students for school employees to be experienced, well-qualified individuals. The board also recognizes the importance of employees being at work each day. In an effort to encourage good attendance and longevity with the district and to reward retiring employees as permitted under state law, the board authorizes payment for unused leave days. Leave days for which payment may be received are designated as those in the special accumulated personal leave category.

- A. The employee must be retiring from the SOCSO, must be eligible for retirement benefits from the Mississippi Public Employees' Retirement System, and must not be entering into employment with an agency which is affiliated with the Mississippi Public Employees' Retirement System (PERS) except as authorized by PERS regulations.
- B. Upon retirement of an employee, all unused leave days certified to PERS are combined. The total number of unused leave days determines the amount of service credit allowed at retirement.
- Section 37-7-307, Mississippi Code of 1972 (as amended 4/7/94), allows school employees to be paid for any part or all of their unused leave accrued at retirement up to thirty (30) days. The payment provision applies only when an employee is terminating covered employment for the purpose of receiving retirement benefits under PERS. An employee may have the option to be paid for unused leave or have the leave certified toward service credit with PERS.
- When an employee exercises the option for payment, he/she will receive payment for no more than thirty (30) days of unused accumulated leave earned while employed by the SOCSO at a rate equal to the employee's substitute rate set by the School Board. Any remaining lawfully credited unused leave, for which payment has not been made, shall be certified to the Public Employees' Retirement System in the same manner and subject to the same limitations as otherwise provided by law for unused leave.

### **Special Consideration**

If an absence should extend beyond all authorized leave, a study of each individual case may be made by the appropriate administrative officials to determine whether the absent person is entitled to further compensation. Any such compensation shall be authorized only on recommendation by the superintendent and approval by the school board.

## **Unauthorized Leave**

Unauthorized leave shall be interpreted to mean absence not authorized by school board policy. The taking of such leave shall result in deduction of pay and may result in termination of service unless a satisfactory explanation is made to the appropriate administrative officials.

## **Substitute Pay**

Substitute pay shall be determined by the school board prior to the beginning of the school term.

## **DONATING PERSONAL AND/OR MAJOR MEDICAL LEAVE TO ANOTHER EMPLOYEE (GADF)**

### **I. Definitions**

- A. For the purposes of this subsection, the following words and phrases shall have the meaning ascribed in this paragraph unless the context requires otherwise:
  - i) “Catastrophic injury or illness” means a life-threatening injury or illness of an employee or a member of an employee’s immediate family that totally incapacitates the employee from work, as verified by a licensed physician, and forces the employee to exhaust all leave time earned by that employee, resulting in the loss of compensation from the state for the employee. Conditions that are short-term in nature, including, but not limited to, common illnesses such as influenza and the measles, and common injuries, are not catastrophic. Chronic illnesses or injuries, such as cancer or major surgery, that result in intermittent absences from work and that are long-term in nature and require long recuperation periods may be considered catastrophic.
  - ii) “Immediate family” means spouse, parent, stepparent, sibling, child or stepchild.
- B. Any school district employee may donate a portion of his or her unused accumulated personal leave or sick leave to another employee of the same school district who is suffering from a catastrophic injury or illness or who has a member of his or her immediate family suffering from a catastrophic injury or illness, in accordance with the following:
  1. The employee donating the leave (the “donor employee”) shall designate the employee who is to receive the leave (the “recipient employee”) and the amount of unused accumulated personal leave and sick leave that is to be donated, and shall notify the school district superintendent or his designee of his or her designation.
  2. The maximum amount of unused accumulated personal leave that an employee may donate to any other employee may not exceed a number of days that would leave the donor employee with fewer than seven (7) days of personal leave remaining, and the maximum amount of unused accumulated sick leave that an employee may donate to any other employee may not exceed fifty percent (50%) of the unused accumulated sick leave of the donor employee.
  3. An employee must have exhausted all of his or her available leave and sick leave before he or she will be eligible to receive any leave donated by another employee. Eligibility for donated leave shall be based upon review and approval by the donor employee’s supervisor.
  4. Before an employee may receive donated leave, he or she must provide the school district’s superintendent or his designee with a physician’s statement that states that the illness meets the catastrophic criteria established under this section, the beginning date of the catastrophic injury or illness, and a prognosis for recovery and the anticipated date that the recipient employee will be able to return to work.
  5. Before an employee may receive donated leave, the superintendent of education of the school district shall appoint a review committee to approve or disapprove the said donations of leave, including the determination that the illness is catastrophic with the meaning of this section, as well as the total number of days to be received by the employee.
  6. If the total amount of leave that is donated to any employee is not used by the recipient employee, the whole days of donated leave shall be returned to the donor employees on a pro rata basis, based

on the ratio of the number of days of leave donated by each donor employee to the total number of days of leave donated by all donor employees.

7. Donated leave shall not be used in lieu of disability retirement. 37-7-307

### **MILITARY LEAVE (GBRID)**

The law provides that state employees and employees of “any county, municipality or other political subdivision” are entitled to a leave of absence from their respective duties for periods not to exceed 15 days without loss of pay, time, annual leave or efficiency rating when ordered to military duty. Districts do not have to pay such employees after the 15-day absence, but all other benefits are to remain intact until the employee “is relieved from duty.” Employees released from military service have 90 days to apply for reemployment and cannot be discharged “without cause” within one year after reinstatement to their school district positions. The law adds that reemployment protection is not extended to employees dishonorably discharged from military service. If the time of call to active duty is optional for the employee, this school district expects that the employee choose a time for reporting to active duty that is least disruptive to the district.

The district shall comply with the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994, which among other things, removes the distinction between active service personnel and reserve personnel from the employer’s perspective.

### **FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE ACT (GBRIA)**

Due to the complexity of the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and because it involves consideration of your district’s leave and absence policies and your practices, along with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) and parts of the Internal Revenue Code relating to group health plans and cafeteria plans, all federal anti-discrimination laws and applicable state laws, it is not practical to attempt development of a detailed policy for the administration of the FMLA. Each request for leave must be evaluated individually due to myriad combinations of circumstances and medical conditions one may have to consider. It is strongly recommended that the school district purchase a competent analysis of the rules, regulations and guidelines of the FMLA to review while evaluating individual requests for leave under FMLA. The school district’s attorney should always be consulted when there is uncertainty. Of particular importance are the posting and notice requirements of the Act. You must conspicuously post and keep posted in all schools and offices where employees are employed and where applications for employment are taken a notice explaining the Act’s provisions and providing information concerning the procedures for filing complaints of violations of the Act with the Wage and Hour Division. Copies of the required notice may be obtained from any local Wage and Hour Division Office. No reproductions of the notice may be any smaller than 8 x 11 inches and the text must be fully legible. Failure to post the required notice prohibits you from taking any adverse action against an employee as well as liability for payment of fines to the Department of Labor (DOL). Information concerning FMLA entitlements and employee obligations must be included in any employee handbook or other documents providing written guidance explaining all the obligations and rights of an eligible employee whenever that employee requests leave under FMLA. A fact sheet is available from the nearest Wage and Hour Division Office that will provide this guidance. Also, you must provide an employee, who has given you notice of the need for FMLA leave, a notice of your specific expectations and employee obligations. Such notice must detail all consequences for failing to meet these obligations. This notice must include the following information as is appropriate to the leave request being considered:

1. whether the district will require a medical certificate of a serious health condition or recertification and what will happen if the employee fails to do so;
2. whether the district will require the employee to furnish, prior to being restored to employment, a fitness for duty certificate;

3. that the taking of this leave will count against the employee's annual FMLA leave entitlement;
4. that the employee has a right to substitute paid leave (sick leave, vacation, personal days) for FMLA leave or whether the district will require the substitution of paid leave and any conditions related to substitution;
5. whether the employee is a "key employee" and that restoration might possibly be denied after taking FMLA leave, explaining the condition required for you to deny restoration;
6. whether the employee will be required to pay any health insurance premiums to maintain benefits while on leave and the arrangements for making the payments;
7. that if the employee fails to return to work after taking unpaid FMLA leave, he is potentially liable for payment of health insurance premiums paid by the school district;
8. that the employee has a right to restoration to the same or equivalent job upon return from leave.

The school district is also expected to act in good faith in answering questions from employees about their rights and responsibilities under the FMLA. FMLA provides that the school district shall make, keep and preserve records pertaining to its obligations under the Act in accordance with the record keeping requirements of section 11 C of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and the FMLA. No particular order or form of records is required. No requirement exists that requires the school district to revise its computerized payroll or personnel records to comply; however, some items are required.

## **Leaves and Absences and the Family Medical Leave Act of 1993**

### **A. Definitions**

1. "Eligible employee" means one who is employed at a school facility where at least 50 persons are employed, either there or within a 75 mile radius of that school facility as measured by road miles by the shortest route possible; and who has been employed for at least 12 months by the school district as of the date leave commences, and who has also provided at least 1250 hours of service during that 12 month period. Fifty-two (52) weeks of casual, intermittent or occasional employment qualifies as "at least 12 months". School district employees exempt from FLSA requirements are presumed to have worked 1250 hours.
2. "Employee's spouse" means spouse as defined by law.
3. "Employee's son or daughter" means biological child, adopted child or foster child, legal ward or the child for whom the employee is standing in loco parentis who is either under the age of 18 or above the age of 18 and incapable of self-care because of a mental or physical disability.
4. "Employee's parent" means biological parent or an individual who stood (or now stands) in loco parentis to an employee when the employee was a child (not to include parents-in-law).
5. "Employee's immediate family member" means spouse, son or daughter or parent as defined hereinabove.
6. For the purposes of FMLA, "serious health condition" means an illness, injury, impairment or physical or mental condition that involves either in-patient care (overnight stay) in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

### **B. Leave Provisions**

1. An eligible employee is entitled to 12 unpaid work weeks of leave during any 12 month period for any one or more of the following reasons:
  - a) The birth of a son or daughter, and to care for the newborn child (within 12 months of the birth).
  - b) The placement of a child with the employee for adoption or foster care (within 12 months of the placement).
  - c) To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter, or parent with a serious health condition (not parent "in-law").

- d) Because of the employee's own serious health condition which makes the employee unable to perform the function of his/her job.
- e) Service Member Exigency Leave: For absences caused by an active duty exigency when the employee's spouse, child, or parent is a service member.
- f) Military Caregiver Leave: To care for the employee's spouse, child, parent, or next of kin (if the employee is the nearest blood relative) who is undergoing medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, is otherwise in outpatient status, or is otherwise on the temporary disability retired list, for a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of duty on active duty.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** The school district must choose any one of the following methods of determining the "12-month period". Once chosen, that method must be used consistently and changed only upon 60 days written notice to all employees.

1. The calendar year;  
Any fixed 12 month "leave year", that is,
  - a) a fiscal year
  - b) a year required by state law
  - c) a year starting on the employee's employment anniversary date
  - d) the 12 month period measured forward from the beginning date of the employee's FMLA leave
  - e) a rolling 12 month period measured backward from the date the employee uses FMLA leave (may not extend back before August 5, 1993).
2. When both spouses are employed in the district, employees have a 12 week aggregate leave limit except for personal illness or the illness of a child or the other spouse; that is, if each spouse took 6 weeks of leave for the birth of a child, each could later use an additional 6 weeks due to personal illness or to care for a sick child.
3. Brother and sister employees would have an aggregate limit of 12 weeks to care for their parent.
4. Special rules apply to this school district which allows it to require eligible instructional personnel only to take FMLA leave on an intermittent or reduced leave schedule, or to take leave near the end of a semester. Instructional employees are only those employees whose principal function is to teach and instruct students in a class, small group or individual setting. Instructional employees include teachers, teacher aides and assistant teachers who actually teach, coaches, driver's education instructors and special education assistants such as signers. All other eligible employees may request intermittent leave or leave on a reduced leave schedule to care for a family member or for the employee's own serious health condition.

**C. Notice Requirement**

1. School district employees must provide this district at least 30 days advance notice before FMLA leave is to begin if the need for the leave is foreseeable based on an expected birth, placement for adoption or foster care or planned medical treatment for a serious health condition of the employee or family member.
2. Due to lack of knowledge or a medical emergency, notice must be given as soon as is practicable, which means as soon as both practical and possible or at least verbally within 1 or 2 working days when the need for leave becomes known to the employee (followed by written notice).
3. Failure to give 30 days' notice for foreseeable leave may result in the denial of the taking of FMLA leave until at least 30 days after the date the employee provides notice.

**Required Certification**

- A. Eligible employees shall provide the superintendent certification of a serious health condition for his/her own serious health condition or that of a family member. The certification, to be signed by the health care provider, shall be attached to the required written notice or submitted in a timely manner which shall be no more than three (3) working days after providing written notice. No leave period may begin without the

approval of the superintendent. No approval shall be granted by the superintendent without the required written notice and certificate.

- B. The certification is to include the following:
  - 1. The date on which the serious health condition in question began.
  - 2. The probable duration of the condition.
  - 3. Appropriate medical facts regarding the condition.
  - 4. A statement that the employee is needed to care for a spouse, parent or child (along with estimate of the time required) or that the employee is unable to perform his/her functions, and, in the case of intermittent leave, the duration of treatment to be given.
  - 5. Signature of health care provider.
- C. The school district may require that a second opinion be obtained at the school district's expense. The second opinion may not be provided by a health care provider employed by this school district. In the event of conflicting opinions, the school district may pay for a third and final provider to offer a binding decision.
- D. The school district may require subsequent written recertification on a reasonable basis.

### **Employment Benefits Protection**

- A. An employee who completes a period of leave and has complied fully with the terms of this policy shall be returned either to the same position he/she had before the taking of leave or to a position which is genuinely equivalent (as compared to a comparable or similar job) in pay, benefits, and other terms and conditions of employment.
- B. Taking of leave shall not result in the loss of any previously accrued seniority or employment benefits. Except for health benefits, no other benefits will accrue during the leave period.
- C. The school district may exempt from the restoration requirement in paragraph A above a key employee who is in the highest paid 10 percent of this district's workforce within a 75 mile radius of the school facility if restoring the key employee would cause substantial and grievous injury to the classroom and instructional program.
- D. The school district shall notify the key employee of its intent not to restore him/her at the time of the request for leave or when the determination is made. If the leave has begun, the key employee shall have the option of deciding whether or not to return to work after receiving the notice. An employee who is not restored shall be considered to be on leave for the duration of his/her leave period.
- E. Health benefits shall continue through an employee's leave period, even for key employees who have been notified that reinstatement will be denied. The school district shall recover health coverage premiums paid for an employee who fails to return from leave except as follows:
  - A. No recovery will be made from a key employee who has chosen to take or continue leave after receiving notice of non-reinstatement.
  - B. No recovery will be made from an employee who fails to return from leave if the reason is the continuation, recurrence, or onset of a serious health condition, or something else beyond the employee's control, all of which is subject to the certification requirement spelled out in **Required Certification**, above.

### **Prohibited Acts**

This school district shall not interfere with or restrain an eligible employee's right to exercise the provisions of this policy.

### **WAGE AND HOUR LEAVE/VACATION/HOLIDAYS (GCRG)**

The regulations set forth apply to all wage and hour personnel employed by the SOCSO. Wage and hour personnel for the purposes of these regulations shall be defined as any person employed by the SOCSO on an hourly basis.



## **Leave Accumulation**

- A. Current Leave: The above-named personnel shall be granted current leave at the beginning of each school year. Current leave may be used for personal illness, severe family illness, and death in the immediate family. If said employee shall have taken all current leave provided and terminates employment prior to the expiration of the school year, the SOCSD shall withhold from the employee's last check the amount not earned under the provisions of this regulation. Current leave days shall be granted at the rate of:  
Employee leave is prorated according to percentage of the total year worked.
- (1) Nine (9) month employee - five (5) days
  - (2) Ten (10) month employee - five and one-third ( $5 \frac{1}{3}$ ) days
  - (3) Eleven (11) month employee - five and two-thirds ( $5 \frac{2}{3}$ ) days
  - (4) Twelve (12) month employee - six (6) days
- B. No deduction from the pay of said employee shall be made because of absence due to illness or death in the immediate family until all current leave days have been used.
- C. Accumulated Leave: Current leave not used prior to the end of the contract period can be applied to accumulated leave.  
Accumulated leave days may only be taken for personal illness. No deduction from the pay of said employee shall be made because of personal illness until all current and accumulated leave days have been used. All accumulated leave shall cease upon termination of employment in the SOCSD and shall not be restored if the employee should later be re-employed by the district.
- D. All part-time employees that are eligible for retirement and health benefits with the SOCSD shall be eligible for one half of the allowed sick leave earned per classification.

## **Basis for Approved Leave**

- A. Personal Illness: If personal illness extends three (3) or more consecutive days, a doctor's certificate is required.
- B. Illness in the Immediate Family: For the purpose of administering this regulation, immediate family is defined as spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, or any person of like relationship by marriage, or any person standing in loco parentis. If illness in immediate family extends three (3) or more consecutive days, a doctor's certificate of need is required.
- C. Death in the Immediate Family: For the purpose of administering this regulation, death in the family is defined as spouse, children, parents, siblings, grandparents, grandchildren, or any person of like relationship by marriage, or any person standing in loco parentis.
- D. Absences due to job-related injuries shall be deducted from accrued days of sick leave.

An employee is not entitled to compensation under this section for any period of time after the termination of workers compensation benefits. This section is inapplicable for absences from work for which workers compensation benefits are denied.

## **Leave Approval**

All days must be requested and approved by the immediate supervisor prior to or concurrent with the taking of such leave.

## **Certificate of Authorized Leave**

A certificate of authorized leave shall be required for each case of leave granted. The certificate shall include the relevant facts concerning the occasion of the leave and shall be executed by the immediate supervisor and/or principal and submitted to the office of the superintendent for final approval.

### **Leave for Employees Employed on a Part-Time Basis**

Leave for persons employed by the SOCSD on a part-time basis will be prorated according to the percentage of the total day worked by the employee.

### **Unauthorized Leave**

Unauthorized leave shall be interpreted to mean absence not authorized by school board policy. The taking of such leave shall result in termination of service unless a satisfactory explanation is made to the appropriate administrative officials.

### **Vacations/Holidays**

1. Non-certified employees' days of vacations and holidays are determined according to the calendar approved by the board each year. Vacation days are prorated from date of hire if different from the beginning of the school year.
2. In addition to the days of vacation granted in paragraph 1 hereof, all 12-month non-certified employees shall receive additional vacation days as follows:
  - a. Year one (1) through year six (6) of continuous employment, 12-month non-certified employees shall receive five (5) days of vacation.
  - b. At the beginning of year seven (7) through and every year thereafter of continuous employment, 12-month non-certified employees shall receive ten (10) days of vacation.

All days of vacation must be requested and approved by the employee's immediate supervisor prior to the taking of such vacation days. All part-time employees that are eligible for retirement and health benefits with the SOCSD shall be eligible for one half of the allowed vacation earned per classification.

Vacation days not used during each 12-month period can be applied to accumulated vacation leave. All rights to accumulated vacation days shall cease upon termination of employment in the SOCSD and shall not be restored if the employee should later be re-employed by the district. These days will be certified to PERS for retirement purposes.

Wage and hour staff shall receive the following paid holidays:

1. New Year's Eve
2. New Year's Day
3. Martin Luther King
4. Good Friday
5. Memorial Day (excluding cafeteria employees)
6. July 4 (excluding cafeteria employees)
7. Labor Day
8. Thanksgiving Day
9. Christmas Eve
10. Christmas Day

## **EMPLOYEE EXPECTATIONS**

### **ABSENCES – EMPLOYEES**

Any employee who anticipates an absence for any reason should report that absence to his/her principal or immediate supervisor in advance or the day of the absence or will lose full payment for unreported absences. Refer to the **Employee Benefits** section of this document for sick leave policy.

## **ACCIDENT REPORTS**

Any accident involving school personnel, students, or others on school property should be reported immediately to the principal. All accidents involving district vehicles should be reported to the proper law enforcement agency and the superintendent of schools. Any accident involving school personnel or students participating in a school event away from SOCSO should be reported immediately to the school supervisory representative on the trip and to the school superintendent. If it is not reported, you will not get benefits.

## **ALCOHOL AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES PROHIBITION**

No employee of the SOCSO, whether licensed or non-licensed, shall possess, sell, use, transmit, or be under the influence of any alcoholic beverage, or any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, or marijuana while at work on school property, school vehicles, or at school-sponsored activities. Valid drugs prescribed to employees are exempted. Violation of the policy by an employee may result in dismissal from employment with the school district.

Transportation employees are subject to regulations by the Federal Highway Administration and the United States Department of Transportation. As such, employees who are engaged as drivers of commercial motor vehicles and who are subject to commercial driver's license requirements must participate in mandatory random drug testing procedures. Drivers are prohibited from using controlled substances and will be tested for Marijuana, Amphetamines, Opiates, Cocaine, and Phencyclidine (PCP). Drivers are prohibited from consuming alcohol for at least 12 hours before coming on duty, while on duty, or for eight hours after involvement in an accident. Drivers may not at any time refuse to consent to this policy. Any driver in violation of this policy may be subject to termination. **Additional information may be found in policy GBRM-2 of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.**

## **BACKGROUND CHECKS**

The SOCSO requires that all persons *recommended for employment* submit to a current criminal records background check and a current child abuse registry check. This background check is required before interaction with children. This check is performed for licensed and non-licensed prospective employees as well as substitute teachers. Prospective employees must pay a processing fee for the checks. Employment by the school district and all employment contracts shall be contingent upon the receipt of notification that the applicant has no criminal record or listing in the child abuse registry, and any contract entered into with the applicant, pending receipt of the criminal records and child abuse registry checks, will be voidable if the applicant receives a disqualifying criminal record check. **Additional information may be found in policy GBDA of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.**

## **BULLYING POLICY (JDDA)**

The School Board of the SOCSO prohibits bullying or harassing behavior of students, school employees, or volunteers. (HB 263- A) The SOCSO will make every reasonable effort to ensure that no person or school employee is subjected to bullying or harassing behavior by other students or other school employees.

### **Definitions:**

Bullying or harassing behavior is any pattern of gestures or written, electronic, or verbal communications, or any physical act or any threatening communication, or any act reasonably perceived as being motivated by any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic that:

- (a) Places a student or school employee in actual and reasonable fear of harm to his or her person or damage to his or her property, or
- (b) Creates or is certain to create a hostile environment by substantially interfering with or impairing a student's education, including but not limited to, educational performance, opportunities, or benefits

A "hostile environment" means that the victim subjectively views the conduct as bullying or harassing behavior and the conduct is objectively severe or pervasive enough that a reasonable person would agree that it is bullying or harassing behavior.

The above conduct constitutes bullying if that conduct interferes with a student's education or substantially disrupts the operation of a school. (HB 263 - 6)

Bullying or harassing behavior will not be condoned or tolerated when it takes place on school property, at any school-sponsored function, or on a school bus, or when it takes place off school property when such conduct, in the determination of the school superintendent or principal, renders the offending person's presence a disruption to the operation of the educational environment of the school or a detriment to the best interest and welfare of the pupils and teacher of such class as a whole.

The SOCSO encourages anyone who has witnessed or has reliable information that a student or school employee has been subject to any act of bullying or harassing behavior to report the incident to the appropriate school official. Retaliation or reprisal against any person, including a victim, a witness, or another person, who in good faith provides information concerning an incident of bullying or harassing behavior, is prohibited. (HB 263 - B)

The SOCSO recognizes the fundamental right of every student to take "reasonable actions" as may be necessary to defend himself or herself from an attack by another student who has evidenced menacing or threatening behavior through bullying or harassing.

"Reasonable action" includes, but is not limited to, promptly reporting the bullying or harassing behavior to a teacher, principal, counselor, or other school employee.

The procedures shall be appropriately placed in SOCSO personnel policy handbooks, school handbooks that include discipline policies and procedures, and any other policy or procedure that deals with student or employee behavior.

The SOCSO School Board directs the superintendent or designee to design and implement procedures for reporting, investigating, and addressing bullying and harassing behaviors.

## **BULLYING OR HARASSING BEHAVIOR – REPORTING PROCEDURES (JDDA-P)**

### **I. Procedures for Reporting a Complaint**

- A. Any student, school employee, or volunteer who feels he/she has been a victim of bullying or harassing behavior, or has witnessed or who has reliable information that a student, school employee, or volunteer has been subject to bullying or harassing behavior shall report such conduct to a teacher, principal, counselor, or other school official. The report shall be made promptly, but no later than five (5) calendar days after the alleged act or acts occurred. (HB 263-D)
- B. The reporting individual shall complete the SOCSO "Bullying/Harassing Behavior" form which shall include the name of the reporting person, the specific nature and date of the misconduct, the name(s) of the victim(s) of the misconduct, the name(s) of any witness(es) and any other information that would assist in the investigation of the complaint. The report shall be given promptly to the principal or superintendent who shall institute an immediate investigation. Complaints against the principal shall be made to the superintendent, and complaints against the superintendent shall be made to the Board chairman. The complaint shall be investigated promptly. (HB 263-F)
- C. Parents or guardians will be notified of the nature of any complaint involving their student. The District official will arrange such meetings as may be necessary with all concerned parties within five (5) working days after initial receipt of the complaint by the District. The parties will have an opportunity to

submit evidence and a list of witnesses. All findings related to the complaint will be reduced to writing. The District official conducting the investigation shall notify the victim and parents as appropriate when the investigation is completed and a decision regarding disciplinary action, as warranted, is determined. (HB 263 - C)

- D. If the victim is not satisfied with the decision of the District official, he/she may submit a written appeal to the superintendent. Such appeal shall be filed within ten (10) working days after receipt of the results of the initial decision. The superintendent will arrange such meetings with the victim and other affected parties as deemed necessary to discuss the appeal. The superintendent shall provide a written decision to the victim's appeal within ten (10) working days.
- E. If the victim is not satisfied with the decision of the superintendent, a written appeal may be filed with the Board. Such appeal shall be filed within ten (10) working days after receipt of the decision of the superintendent. The SOCSO school board shall, within twenty (20) working days, allow the victim and parents as appropriate to appear before the SOCSO school board to present reasons for dissatisfaction with the decision of the superintendent. The SOCSO school board shall provide a written decision within ten (10) working days following the victim's appearance before the school board.
- F. If, after an investigation, a student is found to be a victim of bullying, such student shall not face disciplinary action on the basis of that student's use of "reasonable self-defense was in response to the bullying." (HB 263-G & 2).
- G. If the victim of bullying is a student with disabilities, disciplinary action for the offender shall comply with the requirements of federal law including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 USCS Section 1400 et seq.) (HB 263-H)

The school district shall maintain and make available a list of counseling services to any student who is a victim of or a witness to bullying, or who engages in bullying. The following list of the types of counseling and support services are available to any victim of or a witness to bullying.

- Mississippi Department of Education
- Mississippi Department of Health
- Mississippi Department of Human Services -Juvenile Services Department
- Community/Family Public or private community-based mental health services
- Faith-based services
- Law enforcement agencies

This list is presented as a guide that by no means limits this school district from including other additional support services. (HB 263-E)

### **CLASSIFIED PERSONNEL HOURS AND DUTIES (GCDAB)**

Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District's classified personnel are scheduled for a 40-hour week or less. The duties and responsibilities of classified personnel will be as fixed and prescribed in the job descriptions approved by the board of education. Time schedules are assigned as follows:

1. Custodians – assigned by the building principal
2. Maintenance persons and special employees – assigned by the Maintenance Director
3. Cafeteria workers – assigned by the Director of Child Nutrition and the Cafeteria Managers
4. Bus drivers – assigned by the Transportation Director

Should the superintendent close schools due to inclement weather or other emergencies, supervisors should work with classified employees to make up missed hours if possible. Hours not worked cannot be reimbursed.

### **OVERTIME**

Overtime pay will be authorized in extreme emergencies, but only then with the approval of the superintendent.

In order to earn overtime, an employee must be on the job for forty (40) hours during the work week prior to becoming eligible for overtime. It is the responsibility of the department in which overtime is performed to pay the overtime rate. Paid leave absences, except for approved school business, do not count toward the 40-hour work week.

Employees who disregard this policy may be terminated.

## **CODE OF ETHICS (GAA)**

### **Mississippi Department of Education Standard of Conduct**

All employees shall comply with the Mississippi Professional Educator Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct as outlined in Mississippi Department of Education policy rules 14.10 and 14.17.

The superintendent or his or her designee shall establish procedures to assure that all school district employees comply with this policy. The procedures shall include, but are not limited to:

1. Providing all employees with a copy of the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct (included in Employee Handbook and attached to this policy)
2. Maintaining a signed statement from all employees verifying that he or she has been given notice of the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct;
4. Advising all licensed employees that his or her contract with the school district is subject to the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct; and may be revoked or suspended pursuant to its terms; and
5. Providing annual in-service training for all employees on the Mississippi Professional Educator Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct.

The superintendent shall report to the Mississippi Department of Education all license holders who engage in unethical conduct relating to an educator/student relationship.

### ***Standard 1: Professional Conduct***

An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards.

1.1 Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Encouraging and supporting colleagues in developing and maintaining high standards
- b. Respecting fellow educators and participating in the development of a professional teaching environment
- c. Engaging in a variety of individual and collaborative learning experiences essential to professional development designed to promote student learning
- d. Providing professional education services in a nondiscriminatory manner
- e. Maintaining competence regarding skills, knowledge, and dispositions relating to his/her organizational position, subject matter and pedagogical practices
- f. Maintaining a professional relationship with parents of students and establish appropriate communication related to the welfare of their children.

1.2 Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Harassment of colleagues
- b. Misuse or mismanagement of tests or test materials
- c. Inappropriate language on school grounds or any school-related activity
- d. Physical altercations

- e. Failure to provide appropriate supervision of students and reasonable disciplinary actions.

### ***Standard 2: Trustworthiness***

An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice and does not knowingly engage in deceptive practices regarding official policies of the school district or educational institution.

2.1 Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Properly representing facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression
- b. Advocating for fair and equitable opportunities for all children
- c. Embodying for students the characteristics of honesty, diplomacy, tact, and fairness.

2.2 Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting any of the following:
  - 1. employment history, professional qualifications, criminal history, certification/recertification
  - 2. information submitted to local, state, federal, and/or other governmental agencies
  - 3. information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel
  - 4. reasons for absences or leave
  - 5. information submitted in the course of an official inquiry or investigation
- b. Falsifying records or directing or coercing others to do so.

### ***Standard 3: Unlawful Acts***

An educator shall abide by federal, state, and local laws and statutes and local school board policies.

- 3. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the commission or conviction of a felony or sexual offense. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought or situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilt pursuant to the charge was granted.

### ***Standard 4: Educator/Student Relationships***

An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.

4.1 Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Fulfilling the roles of mentor and advocate for students in a professional relationship. A professional relationship is one where the educator maintains a position of teacher/student authority while expressing concern, empathy, and encouragement for students.
- b. Nurturing the intellectual, physical, emotional, social and civic potential of all students
- c. Providing an environment that does not needlessly expose students to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement
- d. Creating, supporting, and maintaining a challenging learning environment for all students.

4.2 Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

- a. Committing any act of child abuse
- b. Committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment
- c. Committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act
- d. Engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, national origin, religion or disability
- e. Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs
- f. Soliciting, encouraging, participating or initiating inappropriate written, verbal, electronic, physical or romantic relationship with students.

Examples of these acts may include but not be limited to:

- 1. sexual jokes
- 2. sexual remarks

3. sexual kidding or teasing
4. sexual innuendo
5. pressure for dates or sexual favors
6. inappropriate touching, fondling, kissing or grabbing
7. rape
8. threats of physical harm
9. sexual assault
10. electronic communication such as texting
11. invitation to social networking
12. remarks about a student's body
13. consensual sex.

#### ***Standard 5: Educator/Collegial Relationships***

An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with colleagues, both in and outside the classroom.

5. Unethical conduct includes but is not limited to the following:
  - a. Revealing confidential health or personnel information concerning colleagues unless disclosure serves lawful professional purposes or is required by law
  - b. Harming others by knowingly making false statements about a colleague or the school system
  - c. Interfering with a colleague's exercise of political, professional, or citizenship rights and responsibilities
  - d. Discriminating against or coercing a colleague on the basis of race, religion, national origin, age, sex, disability or family status
  - e. Using coercive means or promise of special treatment in order to influence professional decisions of colleagues.

#### ***Standard 6: Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Use or Possession***

An educator should refrain from the use of alcohol and/or tobacco during the course of professional practice and should never use illegal or unauthorized drugs.

- 6.1 Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - a. Factually representing the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use and abuse to students during the course of professional practice.
- 6.2 Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - a. Being under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs
  - b. Being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while documented as being under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages. A school-related activity includes but is not limited to, any activity that is sponsored by a school or a school system or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum such as club trips, etc. which involve students.
  - c. Being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while documented using tobacco.

#### ***Standard 7: Public Funds and Property***

An educator shall not knowingly misappropriate, divert, or use funds, personnel, property, or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain or advantage.

- 7.1 Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - a. Maximizing the positive effect of school funds through judicious use of said funds
  - b. Modeling for students and colleagues the responsible use of public property.
- 7.2 Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:
  - a. Knowingly misappropriating, diverting or using funds, personnel, property or equipment committed to his or her charge for personal gain



- b. Failing to account for funds collected from students, parents or any school-related function
- c. Submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay
- d. Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts
- e. Using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing body.

### ***Standard 8: Remunerative Conduct***

An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.

8.1 Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Insuring that institutional privileges are not used for personal gain
- b. Insuring that school policies or procedures are not impacted by gifts or gratuities from any person or organization.

8.2 Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator unless approved by the local governing body
- b. Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local school board
- c. The educator shall neither accept nor offer gratuities, gifts, or favors that impair professional judgment or to obtain special advantage. (This standard shall not restrict the acceptance of gifts or tokens offered and accepted openly from students, parents, or other persons or organizations in recognition or appreciation of service.)

### ***Standard 9: Maintenance of Confidentiality***

An educator shall comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material, and other information covered by confidentiality agreements.

9.1 Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Keeping in confidence information about students that has been obtained in the course of professional service unless disclosure serves a legitimate purpose or is required by law
- b. Maintaining diligently the security of standardized test supplies and resources.

9.2 Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Sharing confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information family status/income and assessment/testing results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law.
- b. Violating confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, and violating local school board or state directions for the use of tests
- c. Violating other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.

### ***Standard 10: Breach of Contract or Abandonment of Employment***

An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local school board or educational agency for the duration of the contract.

10. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- a. Abandoning the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the school board
- b. Refusing to perform services required by the contract.

## **COMMUNITY / PARENT RELATIONS**

The school board will maintain an organized system to encourage community involvement, parental communication, and business partnerships in school district decision-making. **Additional information may be found in policies GAH and KCB of the *SOCSD Board Manual* located on the district's website.**

## **DRUG AND ALCOHOL TESTING POLICY (GBRM-2)**

### **Transportation Employees**

The SOCSD adopted this policy for the District's transportation employees. These policies are intended to increase safety and to deter and detect the use of controlled substances and alcohol by transportation employees who are employed in safety-sensitive positions, such as bus drivers. This policy is being adopted under the requirements of regulations from the Federal Highway Administration ("FHWA") and other agencies of the Federal Department of Transportation. The regulations that require this policy and specify most of its contents are found in the Code of Federal Regulations, at 49 C.F.R. Parts 40,382,391,392 and 395, all as amended in 1994. Whenever those regulations change, the terms of this policy are also changed automatically. This policy prohibits all use of controlled substances by bus drivers and other District employee-drivers of commercial motor vehicles who are subject to commercial driver's license requirements. Drivers are prohibited from consuming/possessing alcohol for at least 12 hours before coming on duty, while on duty, and for a period of eight hours after being involved in an accident. To further this policy, the District will conduct drug and alcohol testing as required in the regulations. Those who test positive in violation of this policy are subject to termination. In addition, those who test positive cannot again drive a commercial motor vehicle for any employer until they have been evaluated by a Substance Abuse Professional for potential treatment needs.

A policy manual available on the school district's website outlines in detail the policy the District is adopting to comply with the Federal Regulations. All affected employees and prospective employees must carefully review this policy and sign an agreement to be bound by its terms as a condition of employment. Any questions about this policy should be directed to the Assistant Superintendent for Operations, who will serve as the supervisor of the District's drug and alcohol program.

### **Individuals who will be affected by the Policy**

The drug and alcohol testing and other requirements of this policy apply to all District employees who are engaged as drivers of commercial motor vehicles and who are subject to commercial driver's license requirements. This includes the driver of any bus or other vehicle designed to carry 16 or more passengers, including the driver. Also included is any driver of a vehicle with a gross vehicle weight rating of more than 26,000 pounds or a vehicle/trailer combination with a total vehicle weight of at least 26,000 pounds if the vehicle alone has a gross vehicle rating of 10,000 or more pounds. From this point forward in this policy, the word "Driver" means employee drivers of commercial motor vehicles who are subject to commercial driver's license requirements. This policy and the federal regulations that require it often use the term "on duty" in conjunction with prohibited conduct or drug and alcohol testing. Whenever used in this policy, the term "on duty" has the meaning given to it by the Department of Transportation Regulations found in 49 C.F.R. § 395.2(a). "On duty" includes all the time a Driver is preparing to work or is working until relieved from all work responsibility. It includes time spent awaiting dispatch, inspecting equipment, assisting with loading or unloading a commercial vehicle, as well as time spent repairing, obtaining assistance for, or remaining in attendance with a disabled vehicle. Whenever a Driver is "on duty" as defined in this section, that Driver is considered to be performing safety-sensitive functions and is subject to all aspects of the District's policies and the regulations on which it is based.

### **Prohibited Conduct**

Drivers are prohibited from using controlled substances and will be subject to testing for Marijuana, Amphetamines, Opiates, Cocaine, and Phencyclidine (PCP). Drivers are prohibited from possessing alcohol while on duty. In addition, Drivers are prohibited from consuming/possessing alcohol for at least 12 hours before coming on duty, while on duty, and for a period of eight hours after being involved in an accident. Drivers are also prohibited from refusing to consent to this policy or to an alcohol or drug test under the terms of this policy.

## **Effects of Violations**

Any Driver found in violation of this policy through a positive drug or alcohol test or otherwise will be subject to termination. In addition, the Federal regulations mandate that a violator cannot again drive a commercial motor vehicle until the Driver has been evaluated by a Substance Abuse Professional (“SAP”), has successfully completed any treatment or rehabilitation recommended by the SAP, and has successfully passed a return to duty drug test, as well as any periodic follow-up tests recommended by the SAP.

## **Drug and Alcohol Testing**

In order to detect and deter violations of this alcohol and controlled substances policy, the District is implementing a drug and alcohol testing program. This testing program is required by the FHWA regulations and Drivers must participate in the testing as a condition of employment in the District. The District has contracted with MEA Drug Testing Consortium, a physician owned company which specializes in drug and alcohol testing services in compliance with Federal Regulations. Controlled substances testing uses a urine specimen provided by the Driver. Alcohol testing utilizes a breath testing machine into which the Driver will blow. This machine is similar to the “breathalyzer” machines utilized by law enforcement personnel. Testing procedures and security precautions are discussed in detail in Appendix “A” to this policy. Controlled substances testing will be limited to tests for (1) Amphetamines; (2) Cocaine; (3) Marijuana; (4) Opiates; and (5) Phencyclidine (PCP). The terms “drug” and “controlled substances” are used interchangeably in this Policy and refer to the 5 substances just listed. No controlled substances test will be ruled as a verified positive until the Driver’s urine specimen has been tested once by a federally certified laboratory and found positive, has been tested again by the laboratory and confirmed positive and then has been reviewed by a Medical Review Officer (“MRO”). The MRO gives the Driver an opportunity to explain any circumstances which might indicate the test is invalid or otherwise does not represent a violation of the District’s policy, such as use of prescription medications pursuant to a doctor’s order. The MRO for the District will be a licensed medical or osteopathic doctor with particular knowledge of substance abuse. Since alcohol is not an illegal substance, the District’s policy does not prohibit or test for responsible alcohol use by Drivers of legal drinking age. Testing will be conducted only at times when the Driver is either on duty or is about to come on or off duty, and the testing levels for alcohol are designed to register positive only when a Driver has consumed alcohol prior to reporting for duty or while on duty.

## **Pre-employment Testing**

The District will conduct pre-employment drug and alcohol testing for employee applicants who will be Drivers and no person shall be allowed to perform safety-sensitive functions (i.e., on-duty Driver functions) until they have satisfactorily passed both an alcohol and drug screen. The only exceptions to this requirement occur when a Driver has been part of another FHWA testing program within the previous six months and the employer documents through contact with previous employers that the driver has not been guilty of any prior violations of the other employer’s program.

## **Post-Accident Testing**

Post-accident testing for drugs and alcohol is also required for each surviving Driver if the accident involved the loss of human life or if the Driver receives a citation for a moving traffic violation arising from the accident. The alcohol test is to be administered within eight hours following the accident. If a test is not administered within two hours, the District must prepare and maintain a written statement of the reasons for the delay. If the test is not performed within eight hours of the accident, there shall be no further attempts to administer an alcohol test and the records shall reflect why no test was administered. Drug testing, on the other hand, must be conducted within 32 hours following the accident. Drivers must remain readily available for testing after an accident, though necessary medical attention will not be delayed.

## **Worker's Compensation Testing**

The SOCSO will require an employee to submit to reasonable drug testing if there is a belief that an employee has caused or contributed to an accident while at work that results in off-site first aid or medical treatment. This post-incident drug test should be administered immediately after the employee is treated for his/her injuries but all affected employees should submit to testing within one hour of the incident or notification by administration. SOCSO will contract with a local physician to conduct the reasonable drug testing. In all cases of reasonable suspicion testing, the district shall provide transportation to and from the testing site except in those post-incident situations where it has been determined that the employee is not in need of assistance. In addition, in all instances where the results of an on-site initial screening test are non-negative, the employee will be temporarily suspended from duty until the final results are known, and the district shall provide or arrange for transportation to the employee's place of residence or other mutually agreeable location. If the final results are negative, the employee will be returned to duty and made whole for any lost wages. An employee will be subject to the same consequences as a positive test result if he/she refuses the test, adulterates or substitutes the specimen, will not sign the required forms or refuses to cooperate in the testing process in such a way that prevents completion of the test. In the event of the physician being unable to conduct the testing, SOCSO administration will direct the employee to another facility for testing. As used in this policy, the term "drugs" includes alcohol, inhalants (chemical vapors), cannabis (marijuana), controlled substances, and similar substances which impair a person's ability to work productively and safely. The proper use of drugs as prescribed by a licensed physician is not subject to discipline action. If an employee's ability to work safely may be affected by the use of a prescribe drug, the employee must inform his/her supervisor so that precautions can be taken.

## **DRUG FREE WORKPLACE (GBRL)**

No employee engaged in work in connection with the SOCSO shall unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess or use on or in the workplace any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana or any other controlled substance, as defined in schedules I through V of section 202 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812) and as further defined by regulation at 21 CFR 1300.11 through 1300.15.

"Workplace" is defined to mean the site for the performance of work done in connection with the SOCSO. That includes any school building or any school premises; any school owned vehicle or any other school approved vehicle used to transport students to and from school or school activities; off school property during any school sponsored or school approved activity, event or function, such as a field trip or athletic event, where students are under the jurisdiction of the school district where work on a federal grant is performed.

As a condition of employment in the SOCSO, each employee who is engaged in performance of a federal grant shall notify his or her supervisor of his or her conviction of any criminal drug statute for a violation occurring in the workplace as defined above, no later than 5 days after such conviction. As a condition of employment in the SOCSO, each employee who is engaged in performance of a federal grant shall abide by the terms of the school district policy respecting a drugfree workplace. An employee who violates the terms of this policy may be nonrenewed or his or her employment may be suspended or terminated, at the discretion of the board. Sanctions against employees, including nonrenewal, suspension, and termination shall be in accordance with prescribed school district administrative regulations and procedures.

## **Denial of License**

The State Board of Education, acting through the commission, may deny an application for any teacher or administrator license if the applicant is actively addicted to or actively dependent on alcohol or other habit-forming drugs or is a habitual user of narcotics, barbiturates, amphetamines, hallucinogens, or other drugs having a similar effect, at the time of application for a license. 37-3-2 (11) (c)

### **Suspension of License**

The State Board of Education, acting on the recommendation of the commission, may revoke or suspend any teacher or administrator license for specified periods of time if the teacher or administrator has been convicted, has pled guilty or entered a plea of nolo contendere to a felony, as defined by federal or state law. 37-3-2 (12) (d). Dismissal or suspension of a licensed employee by a local school board pursuant to Section 37-9-59 may result in the suspension or revocation of a license for a length of time which shall be determined by the commission and based upon the severity of the offense. 37-3-2 (13) (a)

### **Notice to Employees Engaged in Work on Federal Grants**

You are hereby notified that it is a violation of the policy of this school district for any employee to unlawfully manufacture, distribute, dispense, possess or use on or in the workplace any narcotic drug, hallucinogenic drug, amphetamine, barbiturate, marijuana or any other controlled substance, as defined in schedules I through V of section 202 of the Controlled Substances Act (21 U.S.C. 812) and as further defined by regulation at 21 CFR 1300.11 through 1300.15.

“Workplace” is defined as the site for the performance of work done in connection with a federal grant. That includes any place where work on a school district federal grant is performed, including a school building or other school premises; any school owned vehicle or any other school approved vehicle used to transport students to and from school or school activities; off school property during any school sponsored or school approved activity, event or function, such as a field trip or athletic event, where students are under the jurisdiction of the school district. You are further notified that it is a condition of your continued employment on any federal grant that you will comply with the above policy of the school district and will notify your supervisor of your conviction of any criminal statute for a violation occurring in the workplace, no later than 5 days after such conviction.

Any employee who violates the terms of the school district’s drug-free workplace policy may be non-renewed or his or her employment may be suspended or terminated, at the discretion of the school district.

### **DUTY – LEAVING SCHOOL GROUNDS**

Except in case of extreme emergency, teachers are expected to remain on school grounds from check-in until check-out time and to remain in their classrooms during class sessions or on their duty posts for the entire assigned time.

### **EMPLOYEE CONDUCT (GAB)**

Employees of the SOCSO are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will reflect positively on the school district and the community, thus promoting a positive environment for teaching, learning, and student well-being. The dignity of students and of the educational environment shall be maintained at all times. Unseemly dress, conduct, or the use of abusive, foul or profane language in the presence of students is expressly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Suspected violations will be investigated. Repeated or severe misconduct will lead to the employee being suspended, dismissed or non-renewed.

### **EMPLOYEE DRESS CODE (GABA)**

All staff members are expected to dress in a manner that is professionally appropriate for the duties assigned. Attire should be clean, tasteful, and in good repair. Staff members should regard it their professional responsibility to dress in a manner that sets a good example for students and that conveys a positive professional image. Any type or style of clothing or manner of dress or personal grooming prohibited for students shall likewise be prohibited for employees.

The board expects all staff members to dress in a manner that is generally acceptable in the business and professional setting.

Exceptions of this policy are allowed for field day, special occasions as designated by the principal (spirit day), coaches during practice sessions or in the weight room, physical education teachers when they are teaching physical education, and days designated by the principal for staff to wear jeans.

Exceptions to this policy are allowed for Maintenance, Child Nutrition, Transportation, and Technology department technicians due to the nature of these positions as well as safety considerations.

Within these parameters, each administrator shall be responsible for determining appropriate dress at his/her site. Supervisors and school level administrators are authorized to interpret this policy and their interpretations shall be given deference. Principals are expected to counsel staff assigned to their building and to require staff to dress appropriately. Any attire deemed inappropriate by the principal is prohibited. The employee may be asked to return to school with the appropriate attire.

The district will make exceptions to this policy to reasonably accommodate qualified employees unless the accommodation creates an undue hardship on the district in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAA). If the employee needs an accommodation, he/she will need to provide a medical excuse to his/her principal for a review.

### **SOCSD ID BADGES**

SOCSD teachers, administrators, support staff, volunteers and visitors will be required to wear identification (ID) badges at all times on school grounds and at school events, when on duty. The ID badge is to be visible and worn outside of clothing. ID badges are printed annually for new employees. If the badge is lost or damaged, access will be turned off and the badge must be replaced. The cost to replace a badge is \$5.00.

### **EVALUATIONS**

The SOCSD implements a formal annual performance appraisal system based on job descriptions and on-the-job performance of every employee. Teachers may access this document through their principal. Non-certified employees may access this document through their immediate supervisor. **Additional information may be found in policies GBI and GDI of the *SOCSD Board Manual* located on the district's website.**

### **EXTRA WORK / COMPENSATORY TIME / REMUNERATION RECEIVED**

In lieu of additional pay, compensatory time may be awarded to salaried non-certified staff who work more than forty hours per week. Compensatory time shall be awarded at the rate of one and one-half hour per one hour of overtime worked over forty hours per week.

An employee may earn a maximum of 120 compensatory hours during one year (July 1 through June 30). The employee shall receive over-time pay for additional work above the maximum yearly total of 120 compensatory hours.

Compensatory time for staff who have to work at times when off contract must be verified in writing by the immediate supervisor of the person and approved by the superintendent. A copy must be provided to the district payroll specialist. Unless proper documentation is on file, compensatory time cannot be granted. This time is to be taken during the regular contract period.

All compensatory time must be taken by June 30 of each year. At the close of business on June 30 of each year, all unused compensatory time shall be converted to sick leave.

When an individual retires from the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District, unused leave of thirty

(30) days or less may, at the option of the employee, be converted to cash payment rather than converted to sick leave. The rate of pay shall be the substitute rate set by the School Board.

It is generally acknowledged that a part of teaching and related fields includes job assignments which occur outside the regular school day. Examples of such assignments but certainly not an all-inclusive list are before and after school duty, PTO meetings, fund-raising events, open house, field trips, dances, etc. Faculty will not receive additional remuneration for activities such as these which are considered a normal part of the job assignments.

The school board recognizes, however, that the responsibility associated with some extra-curricular activities is such that extra pay should be provided. To determine the amount of extra pay, the principal and superintendent shall jointly determine time and responsibility factors for performing the job assignment. Determination of the time and responsibility factors shall be done in the same manner as for coaching supplements. The factors shall be determined in such a manner as to assure there is equal pay for equal work when comparing coaching salary supplements to salary supplements for other approved extra-curricular activities.

The board also recognizes there are other extra duty assignments which require substantial amounts of time above the normal duty expected of a teacher but which require less time than coaching and other large, time-consuming assignments. Staff members given these assignments will be given a flat rate supplement in salary. The amount of the supplement will be approved annually by the board at the time other salary scales are approved.

As with the time and responsibility factor supplements, the principal and superintendent shall determine eligibility for the supplements and shall make such recommendations to the board for approval.

#### **FITNESS FOR DUTY / RETURN TO WORK POLICY (GBRHC)**

It is the goal of the SOCSO Board of Trustees to provide quality educational services and to ensure a safe and secure environment for its students, employees, and the general public. Accordingly, it is essential that all employees be physically and psychologically capable of performing their duties in a manner consistent with the mission of the SOCSO and its policies. No employee will be allowed to continue his or her job responsibilities when there are indications that the employee cannot safely perform his/her duties or is a direct or potential threat to students, other employees, him/herself, other persons, or property until the employee has been determined to be fit for duty. In the event that an employee's fitness for duty is in question due to obvious physical or psychological impairment, the exhibition of irrational and/or inappropriate behavior (including acts or threats of violence), notification of an impairment, or other circumstances, he/she may be placed on administrative leave by the Superintendent or designee, pending an evaluation of his/her physical or psychological fitness for duty. Determination of fitness for duty shall be made by a board-certified physician.

**Additional information may be found in policy GBRHC of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.**

#### **Staff Grievances and Complaints (GAF)**

The Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District is committed to resolving complaints, grievances, and other forms of conflict through a formal process when appropriate. Employees unable to informally resolve complaints and grievances shall file a formal grievance. The failure of a complainant to proceed from one level to the next within the set time limit shall be deemed an acceptance of the decision previously rendered and shall eliminate any further review concerning that particular complaint. The complainant may withdraw his/her complaint at any level without reprisal. However, a complainant shall not be permitted to re-file the same



complaint once withdrawn unless it is within the initial time period. No reprisal shall be invoked against the complainant for filing a complaint or against any person for participation in any way.

## **PROCEDURE FOR PROCESSING GRIEVANCES**

Grievances shall be processed in accordance with the following procedure:

### Level One

1. All grievances, as defined above, must be presented orally to the principal or immediate supervisor of the grievant within five (5) days of the act or omission complained of, and the principal or immediate supervisor and grievant will attempt to resolve the matter informally.
2. If the grievant is not satisfied with the action taken or the explanation given by his principal or immediate supervisor, the grievant shall, within five (5) days after meeting with his principal or immediate supervisor, file a written statement with his principal or immediate supervisor setting forth in detail how the grievant claims to have been aggrieved against. This written statement shall contain, in addition to the above, the time, place, and nature of the alleged act or omission and the state or federal law or board policy violated. The statement must be signed by the grievant.
3. In the event the grievant does not submit to his principal or immediate supervisor a written statement as required, his failure to do so shall be deemed as an acceptance of the informal decision rendered by his principal or immediate supervisor.
4. Within five (5) days after receiving the grievant's signed statement, the principal or immediate supervisor shall send to the superintendent a copy of the grievant's statement, along with a statement from the principal or immediate supervisor setting forth his response to the grievant and/or his decision, as is applicable. At the same time, the principal or immediate supervisor shall also provide a copy of his written statement to the grievant.

### Level Two

1. Upon receipt by the superintendent of the written notice that the grievant intends to appeal the decision of his principal or immediate supervisor, the superintendent shall notify the grievant in writing within five (5) days and shall advise the grievant of the date, time, and place upon which the matter will be considered by the superintendent. The superintendent shall schedule a hearing on the matter no later than ten (10) days from the date of receipt of the grievant's written notice of intention to appeal the written decision of his principal or immediate supervisor.
2. The written statement submitted by the grievant to his principal or immediate supervisor in Level One shall form the basis of the grievance before the superintendent. The grievant shall submit in writing any and all additional information on his behalf which he desires to the superintendent not later than five (5) days prior to the date upon which the matter is scheduled for hearing by the superintendent.
3. In the event the grievant does not personally attend the hearing scheduled by the superintendent, his failure to attend shall be deemed as an acceptance of the written decision rendered by his principal or immediate supervisor at LEVEL ONE.
4. The superintendent shall render a written decision to the grievant within five (5) days of the date upon which the matter was heard.

### Level Three

1. If the grievance is not resolved to the satisfaction of the grievant at LEVEL TWO, or if the superintendent does not render a decision within five (5) days, the grievant may file the grievance with the secretary of the school board.
2. If the grievance is not filed with the secretary of the school board within five (5) days of the hearing at LEVEL TWO, the grievance shall be considered resolved.

3. Within five (5) days after receipt of the grievance, the board secretary, in concert with the board chairman and superintendent, shall schedule a hearing before the school board on the grievance.
4. The board shall render its decision within seven (7) days of the hearing.

## **HARASSMENT**

It is the policy of the SOCSO School Board to maintain learning and working environments free from any form of sexual or general harassment due to an individual's race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or religion. The School Board prohibits any and all forms of harassment. The board will promptly investigate all complaints of harassment and take appropriate action to protect individuals from further occurrences or incidents. If the board determines that harassment has occurred, it will discipline any student, teacher, administrator, or other school personnel who has violated this policy and/or take appropriate action reasonably calculated to end the harassment.

**Additional information may be found in policies GBR, GAAA, GAF, and GAFA of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.**

## **INSULIN DEPENDENT BUS DRIVERS**

The SOCSO School Board seeks to employ and maintain qualified persons to serve as bus drivers in the district. In compliance with Section 63-1-208 of the MS Code of 1972, bus drivers who are insulin dependent must meet the following requirements:

Notwithstanding any requirement imposed by state law or state or federal regulations restricting the issuance of a commercial driver's license to a person suffering from diabetes, a person suffering from diabetes may be issued a commercial driver's license if the person otherwise meets all qualifications for issuance provided:

1. The driver is physically examined every year, including an examination by a board certified/eligible endocrinologist attesting to the fact that the driver is:
  - a. Free of insulin reactions (an individual is free of insulin reactions if that individual does not have severe hypoglycemia or hypoglycemia unawareness, and has less than one (1) documented, symptomatic hypoglycemic reaction per month);
  - b. Able to and has demonstrated willingness to properly monitor and manage the person's diabetes; and
  - c. Not likely to suffer any diminution in driving ability due to the person's diabetic condition.
2. The driver agrees to and complies with the following conditions:
  - a. A source of rapidly absorbable glucose shall be carried at all times while driving;
  - b. Blood glucose levels shall be self-monitored one (1) hour prior to driving and at least once every four (4) hours while driving or on duty prior to driving using a portable glucose monitoring device equipped with a computerized memory;
  - c. Submit blood glucose logs to the endocrinologist or medical examiner at the annual examination or when otherwise directed by the Department of Public Safety;
  - d. Provide a copy of the endocrinologist's report to the medical examiner at the time of the annual medical examination; and
  - e. Provide a copy of the annual medical certification to the person's employer for retention in the driver's qualification file and retain a copy of the certification on his person while driving for presentation to a duly authorized federal, state or local enforcement official.
3. The commercial license issued under this subsection will bear an endorsement restricting commercial driving on the license to driving only within the boundaries of Mississippi.

This policy hereby directs the superintendent to develop procedures to ensure that insulin dependent bus drivers are in compliance with these requirements.

## **NEWS MEDIA / INTERVIEW REQUESTS**

The Director of Communication is responsible for providing accurate and timely information to all educational staff, students, and citizens of the community regarding the efforts by the district to provide each student with the best possible education and preparation. The Communications' Department must approve all information and interview requests prior to publishing or airing with the exception of superintendent media releases. Parents in the district must sign a release to give or deny permission for their child(ren) to participate in any public relations activities or school related websites. Educators should report noteworthy activities within classrooms and schools to the Director of Communication as the support arm for all staff in informing the media and the community of events, activities, and stories.

## **OUTSIDE EMPLOYMENT (GBRG)**

The SOCSO school board considers a professional assignment in the school district a full-time job. Employees shall not engage at any time in any outside employment that would interfere with their effectiveness in performing regular assigned duties; would compromise or embarrass the school system; or would in any way conflict with assigned duties. Employees shall not be employed or involved in any private or otherwise public business during hours necessary to fulfill their contractual responsibilities.

## **OVERTIME (GCDAB)**

Overtime pay for classified employees will be authorized in extreme emergencies, ***but only with the approval of the superintendent***. In order to earn overtime, an employee must be on the job for forty (40) hours during the work week prior to becoming eligible for overtime. It is the responsibility of the department in which overtime is performed to pay the overtime rate. Paid leave absences except for approved school business do not count toward the 40-hour workweek. Employees who disregard this policy may be terminated.

## **PERSONNEL ASSIGNMENT (GBE)**

The Superintendent of the SOCSO shall make assignments to the various schools in the district of all non-instructional and non-licensed employees and all licensed employees, as provided by law, and shall make reassignments of such employees from time to time; however, a reassignment of a licensed employee may only be to an area in which the employee has a valid license issued by the State Department of Education. Upon request from any employee transferred, such assignment shall be subject to review by the school board.

## **EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENTS (DJD)**

Administrative personnel and others who have first been authorized by the superintendent to travel in the performance of their duties shall be advanced or reimbursed their expenses by the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSO) for such travel as indicated below:

### **In District Travel**

It is recognized that certain positions within the Starkville-Oktibbeha Consolidated School District (SOCSO) are required by job description to travel extensively within the district. The superintendent or designee is authorized to approve personnel who will be provided a SOCSO owned vehicle for official travel within the district. It is understood that SOCSO vehicles will not be utilized for any personal usage.

Employees approved to travel within the district are authorized to use their privately owned vehicles and be reimbursed the rates in accordance with regulations set forth by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration. Employees must have prior authorization from the superintendent or designee in order to be reimbursed. No reimbursement will be authorized for travel between the residence of the employee and the usual work location.

Persons seeking reimbursement for in-district travel must maintain a daily travel log and submit the completed, signed, and approved log prior to the docket cut-off date for Board approval.

### **Out-of-District Travel-Administrators**

The superintendent or designee can authorize administrators to travel out-of-district for meetings, representation of SOCSO at approved events, performance of prescribed duties, or other matters. Administrators are authorized to use their privately owned vehicles and be reimbursed the rates in accordance with regulations set forth by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration. District owned vehicles or rental vehicles are also allowed in these instances. No mileage reimbursement will be allowed if the administrator uses a district owned vehicle or a vehicle rented by SOCSO.

### **Out of District Travel – All other Employees**

It is recognized that by assignment or by request, individual employees (other than administrators) of the SOCSO may have just cause to perform official school or district business travel outside the district.

The use of district owned vehicles or rental vehicles are encouraged to be used by non-administrative employees for approved out of district travel. No mileage reimbursement will be provided if the employee uses a district owned vehicle or a vehicle rented by SOCSO. Vehicle rentals may provide a cost savings to the district over reimbursing employees for mileage in their personal vehicles. Therefore, if a non-administrative employee wishes to use their personal vehicle for out-of-district travel, they will be reimbursed at the reduced rate of pay that the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration allows for reimbursement if there is a government owned vehicle available, or if there is a cost-savings form using a rental vehicle.

Non-administrative employees are expected by the board to car pool where two (2) or more employees are traveling to the same destination. In such an event only one (1) travel expense allowance at the authorized rate per mile shall be allowed for any one (1) trip. If a group is traveling, all members of the group should travel in the same vehicle. If a member of the group wishes to use their personal vehicle instead of traveling with the group, they will not receive reimbursement for their mileage.

Travel by means of a public carrier or other means not involving a private motor vehicle will be handled through the use of the district's procurement card and will comply with rules and regulations set forth by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration.

Employees shall be advanced or reimbursed for other actual expenses such as meals and other necessary expenses incurred in the course of such travel, subject to limitations placed on meals for intrastate and interstate official travel by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration and rules and regulations adopted by the Mississippi Department of Audit. Lodging and registration fees will be handled through the use of the district's procurement card and will comply with rules and regulations set forth by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration.

### **Current reimbursements are as follows:**

1. Maximum reimbursement for meals for in-state and out-of-state travel as defined by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration. Overnight travel is required in order to be reimbursed for meals.
2. Mileage for private vehicle
3. Incidental expenses – reasonable gratuities, parking, etc.  
The Superintendent shall comply with the rules and regulations of the Mississippi Department of Audit regarding itemized expense accounts upon return of the employee.

### **Travel Advances**

1. The superintendent or designee ONLY is authorized to approve travel advances.
2. The superintendent shall comply with all rules and regulations of the Mississippi Department of Audit regarding travel advances.
3. The superintendent shall comply with the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration daily limits on expenditures for meals.

4. All official travel must be pre-approved.
5. Persons receiving advances must be officers or employees of SOCSO.
6. Travel advances may not be used for personal expenses or for any purpose other than the actual expenses of the authorized travel.
7. Accounting for any travel advance shall be made no later than five (5) working days after the official travel occurred.
  - a. Any money not used for travel related expenses shall be repaid to SOCSO at this time.
  - b. A travel reimbursement form that complies with regulations prescribed by the Mississippi Department of Finance and Administration shall be completed and submitted at this time for all money not refunded to SOCSO.
  - c. Actual receipts for all travel expenses, other than meals, must be included.

#### **POLITICAL ACTIVITY OF STAFF MEMBERS**

The Board recognizes and encourages the right of its employees, as citizens, to engage in activities, which exemplify good citizenship. However, the board also recognizes that school property and school time, financed by all of the people, shall not be used for political purposes. **Additional information may be found in policy GAHB of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.**

#### **REDUCTION IN FORCE (RIF POLICY) (GBKAR)**

The School Board has the responsibility for providing and maintaining quality schools in the district. In order to carry out its responsibility, the board may abolish or combine job positions, reduce the length of the work year with a concomitant reduction in salary, the same to be in no event less than 185 days per contract year, salary of employees, and/or reduce the number of employees. When doing so, the board will take into account the following reasons for reduction in force: enrollment, educational programs, and human, material and financial resources.

The primary objective of the board when reducing the work force will be the maintenance of a fair and balanced educational program consistent with the needs of the students and the functions and responsibilities of the school district. The board will consider the following factors, not necessarily in the order listed:

1. Criticality of the position to the mission, goals, and objectives of the school district.
2. Area(s) and level(s) of competence indicated by certification.
3. Experience, professional training and length of service within the district and the work assignment.
4. Quality of performance including character, teaching capacity and/or executive ability.
5. Skills in areas where the district has instructional and/or supervisory needs.

Initially, staff reduction will be accomplished by attrition.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDELINES FOR STAFF**

All employees shall participate responsibly on social networking sites, in conjunction with existing policies concerning the use of social media during work hours and other applicable policies, including, but not limited to, those concerning non-discrimination, anti-harassment, anti-bullying, and copyright/fair use. Employees must recognize the very public forum of social networking and act in a way that appropriately represents the employee's professional reputation and the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District.

Some specific guidelines to consider:

**Use Common Sense.**

The goal is not to limit or infringe upon personal rights to comment upon the workplace; however, it remains good practice never to post anything that would bring personal embarrassment or embarrassment to Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District or would call into question an employee's professional reputation.

**Be Transparent.**

Represent positively and honestly. Do not misrepresent self or use someone else's identity. Be honest about the who, where, and what.

**Be Respectful.**

While the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District respects the rights of its employees to exercise their rights, employees should not make any derogatory statements about colleagues or students or other comments that would reflect poorly on your professional reputation or the reputation of the Starkville Oktibbeha School District. All employees are responsible for comments, photographs, and videos posted on social media and the Starkville Oktibbeha School District recommends that personal rights and responsibilities are thoughtfully considered before posting.

**Be Aware of Liability.**

Employees are personally responsible for the content that is published online or sent in a private message. "Content" includes personal comments, links, photographs, audio or video, and content created by other users that is shared, sent, or re-posted. As an employee of the SOCSO, posted content should not include provocative photographs, sexually explicit messages, content showing or promoting the excessive or irresponsible consumption of alcohol or use of drugs, or any activity students are legally prohibited from doing. Remember, even with privacy settings in place, content could be seen by students or parents or find its way into the public realm.

**Know that "Delete" Doesn't Mean Gone Forever.**

Be mindful that any content you publish will be public for a long time. Not only can your content show up in Google and other search engines, but the FTC allows private corporations to store publicly accessible Facebook posts for a period of some seven years to be used in employee background checks made by current or potential employers. Moreover, even posts and messages that are "private" or designed to disappear after a short time may be subject to discovery in legal actions.

**Once Posted, You Can't Take It Back.**

Be mindful that once something is posted, it cannot be taken back. In most instances, deleting content will not make it disappear. Deleted content can still show up in online searches, or with the click of a button, other users can take a screenshot, re-post, or share content with others. Even when sharing content with a very limited number of people, nothing prohibits contacts from sharing the information that is posted.

**Be Mindful When Posting Photos.**

Special care should be taken when posting personal photographs. Social networking sites are an extension of an individual's personality and professional reputation. All photographs should be posted with the assumption that they could end up in the public realm.

**Always a School Employee.**

The lines between public and private, personal and professional, are intersected in the digital world, even with a disclaimer or a different username. Whether it is clearly communicated or not, it is assumed that an online identity is a representation of the district. Online behavior should reflect the same standards of honesty, respect, and consideration applied offline.

**Build Community.**

Represent the District, students, and parents you serve in the best light and respect the privacy and the feelings of others. Under no circumstance should offensive comments be made about students, colleagues (including administrators), or the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District. As a district employee, posts and comments should be accurate and help build and support the school community.

**Do Not Share Confidential Information.**

Online postings and even private message conversations are not private. Do not share confidential information whether it is internal school discussions or specific information about students or other staff. Photos and videos of students should be posted only through district social media accounts with parental consent, which is obtained each school year as part of enrollment and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). It is an opt-out procedure that is coordinated at the district level and shared with employees each year to ensure proper information is withheld from social media release.

**Protect Your Privacy.**

Understand and control privacy settings on each social network used. Always assume default settings will make any profile and any shared content publicly accessible. It is important to understand that even with maximum privacy settings in place, or in social media apps designed to make content disappear, what is presented can still find its way into the public domain.

**Responding to Negative Comments and Criticism.**

Let the subject matter experts respond to negative posts. If you become aware of social media content that raises questions or objections about the SOCSO, you, or any other employee, it should be immediately reported to your supervisor or the Communications Department.

**Additional information may be found in policy GABBA of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.**

**TIME CLOCK PROCEDURES (GBRCB)**

All hourly or monthly salaried employees who are nonexempt (not in a supervisory role) must accurately record their hours worked each day as an employee of the SOCSO. The district uses a time system requiring the employee's fingerprint or handprint to identify and record their time worked. It is the responsibility of the principal or department head of each school to ensure that employees are trained in the use of the time keeping system. Each principal or supervisor shall insure to the school board or its designee accurate and true time records. Paid leave absence taken during a week with overtime does not count towards the 40-hour threshold. If an employee fails to use the time clock or follow clock procedures without a written satisfactory reason submitted to the supervisor, the employee may be terminated or disciplined with the following actions:

First Offense:	verbal warning
Second Offense:	written reprimand
Third Offense:	termination

**TOBACCO POLICY (GBRM)**

The SOCSO School Board recognizes that smoking is regarded as a health hazard for smokers and non-smokers and that smoking represents a possible safety hazard to buildings and facilities. Because of the Board's responsibility to protect school facilities and in order to protect students, staff, visitors and guests of the school district from an environment that may be harmful to them, and because of its possible harm to personal well-being, the board hereby prohibits smoking by all staff, students, visitors or guests in all school district buildings and district vehicles. The smoking ban will be in effect 24 hours a day, seven days a week. For the purpose of

this policy, smoking will include any and all use of tobacco, including but not limited to cigars, cigarettes, pipes, snuff, smoking tobacco, smokeless tobacco, or electronic cigarettes.

Educational property is any public school building or bus, public school campus, grounds, recreational area, athletic field, or other property owned, used or operated by the local school board, school, or directors for the administration of any public educational institution or during a school-related activity.

#### **SANCTIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:**

##### **A. EMPLOYEES**

The School Board encourages all employees to adhere to provisions of the policy. The board recognizes the difficulty tobacco users have in refraining from using tobacco products but believes that in the interest of all concerned, tobacco users will refrain from using tobacco products at all times while in school facilities, school vehicles, or on school property. Individuals found in violation may be liable to the United States for a civil penalty in an amount not to exceed \$1,000 for each violation or may be subject to an administrative compliance order or both. Each day a violation continues shall constitute a separate violation.

In addition, any adult who violates this section shall be subject to a fine and shall be liable as follows:

1. for a first conviction, a warning;
2. for a second conviction, a fine of Seventy-five Dollars (\$75.00); and
3. for all subsequent convictions, a fine not to exceed One Hundred Fifty Dollars (\$150.00) shall be imposed.

Any adult found in violation of this section shall be issued a citation by a law enforcement officer, which citation shall include notice of the date, time and location for hearing before the justice court having jurisdiction where the violation is alleged to have occurred. Anyone convicted under the pertinent statute shall be recorded as being fined for a civil violation of the act and not for violating a criminal statute.

##### **B. COMMUNITY GROUPS REQUESTING USE OF INDOOR FACILITIES**

A copy of the policy shall be given to individuals representing non-school groups who request use of indoor school facilities for non-school purposes. If it is discovered that an individual non-school group is not in compliance with the policy, the group may be denied use of school facilities for a period up to twelve months from the date of the infraction.

##### **C. OUTDOOR FACILITIES, SPORTING EVENTS, AND OTHER EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES**

No-smoking signs will be posted as needed. Announcements of the policy will be made and the cooperation of those in attendance will be requested.

##### **D. STUDENTS**

Students found to be in violation of the policy will be disciplined in accordance with the SOCS D Discipline Policy.

To assist employees in meeting regulations specified in this policy, the Board directs the administration to:

- A. Annually inform all employees about the policy.
- B. Post conspicuous signs in all district facilities which advertise the tobacco free environment.
- C. Arrange educational and cessation clinics or programs for employees who request or require such programs.
- D. Periodically provide information to employees and students about the hazards of tobacco use.



## **USE OF DISTRICT CELLULAR PHONES (IFBC)**

The SOCSO provides cell phones to employees whose position requires the use of a cell phone to conduct district business. In order to be considered to receive a district issued cell phone or for reimbursements, the duties required of the employee's position must fall within or implicate at least one of the criteria defined below:

- Public Safety Issues
- On-call duties
- Major job performance and responsibilities are away from assigned work area
- Need to be in contact with office in support of professional duties that are conducted out of town
- Transporting children
- Other authorized exceptions

If the employee is approved to receive a district issued cell phone, the employee must agree to abide by the cell phone policy and the fixed assets policy of the district. Employees who are issued district cell phones will be required to sign the "Cell Phone User Agreement" form indicating agreement to the policy terms and conditions. If the employee fails to follow all policies concerning cell phone use, the employee will be required to return the cell phone to the Director of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning. Access privileges may be revoked at any time and for any reason. Abuse of the cell phone policy will result in disciplinary action not to exclude permanent revocation of cell phone privileges and/or a demand for financial reimbursement to the district for unauthorized use of a cell phone. **Additional information may be found in policy IFBC of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.**

## **USE OF DISTRICT TIME, FACILITIES, MATERIALS, OR EQUIPMENT (GBRG)**

Employees of the SOCSO shall not use school time, facilities, material or equipment in connection with any personal activity for financial profit outside the regular school program. No equipment shall be removed from school property without approval by the principal. Individuals will pay for any damage, loss, or theft of borrowed property.

## **USE OF PRIVATE VEHICLES FOR SCHOOL PURPOSES (EDAE)**

The SOCSO discourages and prefers no use of privately owned vehicles for transporting students on behalf of the school. Should occasion arise when a privately owned vehicle must be used to transport students, the following provisions must be met. Under no circumstances should a privately owned vehicle be used when there is a National Transportation Safety Board approved student transportation vehicle available.

1. An employee of the SOCSO may not use his or her personal vehicle to transport students unless such employee provides to the school district proof of having in force insurance on such vehicle. Proof of insurance shall mean "proof of financial responsibility" as defined in *Miss Code Annotated*, §63-15-3 (1972), as amended. Further, the employee's personal vehicle must have a proper license tag.
2. Each use of the automobile must be approved in writing by the principal and/or the superintendent. No administrator shall approve use of the employee owned vehicle when school district owned vehicles are available.
3. No one shall be permitted to operate the vehicle other than the school district employee.
4. An employee of the school district using his or her personal vehicle to transport students must possess and exhibit a valid, current driver's license, and must have an acceptable driving record as shown by an official Motor Vehicle Report obtained no more than one (1) year prior to the time the school vehicle is used. For the purposes of this policy, an unacceptable driving record includes one or a combination of the following:
  - A. One (1) or more major violation; or
  - B. Three (3) or more incidents (at-fault accidents or minor violations)

"Major violation" shall include:

- a. DWI/DUI other alcohol or drug-related violation;
- b. Failure to stop and report an accident;
- c. Attempting to elude an officer of the law;
- d. Murder or assault with a motor vehicle;
- e. Negligent homicide;
- f. Driving with a suspended or revoked driver's license;
- g. Reckless driving;
- h. Speed contests, drag or highway racing;
- i. Possession of an open alcoholic beverage container;
- j. Major speeding conviction (20 mile per hour over the posted speed limit);
- k. Hit and run.

"Minor violation" shall include:

- a. Minor speeding violation (less than 20 miles per hour over the posted speed limit);
  - b. Driving too fast for conditions;
  - c. Careless or inattentive driving;
  - d. Unsafe lane change;
  - e. Failure to stop or yield right of way;
  - f. Improper passing;
  - g. Following too closely;
  - h. Any standard moving violation that does not fall into the major violation category.
5. An employee using his or her personal vehicle to transport students shall not transport more passengers than the manufacturer of his or her vehicle prescribes in the owner's manual for said vehicle.
  6. An employee who uses his or her personal vehicle to transport students without having complied with, or in violation of, this policy shall be deemed to be acting outside of the course and scope of his or her duties as an employee of the school district during such use of a personal vehicle.

## **USE OF VEHICLES (GACK)**

### **District Vehicle**

When the job classification requires the employee to drive a district vehicle, the employee shall be required to have a valid driver's license and shall qualify for vehicle insurability. When an employee is denied insurance coverage by the district's insurance carrier and the employee provides his or her own coverage, the insurance coverage the employee provides must meet district-approved standards. If the employee's driver's license is revoked and/or insurability is removed, the employee is subject to dismissal.

Except for buses, heavy-duty trucks, and other vehicles designated by the Superintendent or his or her designee, vehicles owned, leased, or rented by the SOCSO School Board of Trustees may be assigned to employees for use in connection with the school business. Personal use of an assigned vehicle is limited to commuting to and from work with minimal potential stops along a reasonable route between school district related business activities and an employee's home, unless authorized by the Superintendent or his or her designee. All SOCSO school district employees who operate board owned, leased, or rented vehicles during the performance of their jobs must do so in a lawful and safe manner and in accordance with any regulations the Superintendent may develop to implement this policy.

### **Justification of Need**

In order to be assigned use of a district vehicle, the duties required of your position must meet at least one of the criteria defined below:

- Public Safety Issues
- On-call duties
- Major job performance and responsibilities are away from assigned work area

- Transporting students for official district activities
- Other authorized exceptions

### **Approval of District Vehicle Use or Reimbursement for Use of Personal Vehicle**

The “District Vehicle Employee Agreement” (form GJ – A) must be completed by the employee and approved by the direct supervisor and assistant superintendent/superintendent before a district vehicle may be assigned to the employee. Reimbursement for use of personal vehicle must comply with policy GBRF in the SOCSO Policy Manual.

### **Employee Ineligible to Drive on School Business**

The superintendent or his/her designee shall periodically review Motor Vehicle Reports (MVR) on all employees when driving is a part of their job. The MVR will be reviewed to determine whether the employee holds a valid driver’s license and whether or not the employee’s driving record is within the standards set by the school district. Motor vehicle reports on individual school employees that fall outside the model MVR STANDARD stated below may affect the status of the employee to continue to drive on school business.

SOCSO may declare an employee ineligible to drive on school business if a three (3) year MVR background screen reveals any of the following:

1. Any combination of moving violations and/or “at fault” motor vehicle accidents totaling three (3) or more. (Violations **include** seat belt violations, but do not include such non-moving violations as weight violations or improper or inadequately maintained equipment).
2. One or more of the following types of serious traffic convictions within the past three (3) years:
  - a. Driving while under the influence of alcohol or while disabled by use of drugs;
  - b. Refusal to undergo testing for alcohol or a controlled substance as required by any state or local jurisdiction when suspected of driving under the influence;
  - c. Driving while license is suspended or revoked;
  - d. Reckless driving;
  - e. Racing;
  - f. Vehicular homicide;
  - g. Hit and run;
  - h. Leaving the scene of an accident.

### **Appropriate Use**

District vehicles should be used for legitimate district business as determined by the Superintendent or Superintendent’s designee.

### **Prohibited Use**

Employees shall not use the district vehicles for any of the following reasons:

- Illegal activities;
- Disruptive activities;
- Unethical or unprofessional activities;
- Personal gain;
- Purposes that could jeopardize the interest of the district;
- Transporting self or others for purposes or activities other than those dealing with legitimate district business.

### **Terms and Conditions**

If the employee is assigned a district vehicle, the employee must agree to abide by the district vehicle use policy. Employees who are assigned or use a district vehicle will be required to sign the District Vehicle

Employee Agreement (form GJ – A) indicating agreement to the policy terms and conditions. If the policies are not followed, the employee will be subject to disciplinary action, including termination. Access privileges may be revoked at any time and for any reason.

**Internal Audit**

The immediate supervisor will complete the District Vehicle Verification Form (form GJ – B) which monitors the use of all vehicles assigned to his or her department and submit the form to the assistant superintendent or superintendent that is the immediate administrator according to the district's organizational chart.

Failure to comply with this policy may result in an employee being suspended, dismissed or non-renewed.

# EMPLOYEES: INSTRUCTIONAL/SUPERVISORY

## ACTIVITY FUND PROCEDURES

Activity funds describe all funds received by school officials paid or collected to participate in any school activity, such activity being part of the school program and partially financed with public funds or supplemented by public funds. The school board is authorized and empowered to promulgate rules and regulations designating for what purposes school activity funds may be expended. **Additional information may be found in policy DK of the SOCSB Board Manual located on the district's website.**

## ATTENDANCE PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS

Attendance in school and participation in class are an integral part of academic achievement and the teaching-learning process. Regular attendance develops patterns of behavior essential to professional and personal success in life. Regular attendance by every student is mandatory: The State of Mississippi requires that every child abide by the Compulsory School Attendance Law. Parents or legal guardians have the responsibility for ensuring that students attend and remain at school daily.

### Attendance Records

School officials will keep an accurate record of attendance, including accurate attendance records in each class. The classroom teacher, principal, and MSIS data operator will maintain records. Attendance records will be used to enforce the Compulsory Attendance Law of Mississippi. Violations of the Compulsory Attendance Law will be reported pursuant to Mississippi Code SEC. 37-13-91.

### 63% Rule (Policy JBD)

In compliance with House Bill 1530's 63% attendance law, SOCSB will calculate an attendance percentage by dividing each student's actual minutes attended by his potential instructional minutes per day. If the percentage attended is at least 63% of the potential, the student will be counted present for the day.

Potential Instructional Minutes – the total number of minutes of all scheduled classes using the bell schedule in the automated student information system minus any lunch or class change times.

Minutes attended – the sum of the bell schedule instructional minutes actually present (excluding time between class periods, lunch, and minutes for which the student is marked absent.)

Examples of “not present” for a full academic day include if a student arrives late to school, leaves early, or leaves in the middle of the day and returns later, assuming the total minutes attended divided by the student's potential instructional minutes equate to less than 63%.

### Excused Absences

Each of the following shall constitute a valid excuse for temporary nonattendance of a compulsory-school-age child enrolled in a public school, provided satisfactory evidence of the excuse is provided to the superintendent of the school district, or his designee.

(MS Code § 37-13-91)

- (a) An absence is excused when the absence results from the compulsory-school-age child's attendance at an authorized school activity with the prior approval of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee. These activities may include field trips, athletic contests, student conventions, musical festivals and any similar activity.
- (b) An absence is excused when the absence results from illness or injury which prevents the compulsory-school-age child from being physically able to attend school.

- (c) An absence is excused when isolation of a compulsory-school-age child is ordered by the county health officer, by the State Board of Health or appropriate school official.
- (d) An absence is excused when it results from the death or serious illness of a member of the immediate family of a compulsory-school-age child. The immediate family members of a compulsory-school-age child shall include children, spouse, grandparents, parents, brothers and sisters, including stepbrothers and stepsisters.
- (e) An absence is excused when it results from a medical or dental appointment of a compulsory-school-age child.
- (f) An absence is excused when it results from the attendance of a compulsory-school-age child at the proceedings of a court or an administrative tribunal if the child is a party to the action or under subpoena as a witness.
- (g) An absence may be excused if the religion to which the compulsory-school-age child or the child's parents adheres, requires or suggests the observance of a religious event. The approval of the absence is within the discretion of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, but approval should be granted unless the religion's observance is of such duration as to interfere with the education of the child.
- (h) An absence may be excused when it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, that the purpose of the absence is to take advantage of a valid educational opportunity such as travel, including vacations or other family travel. Approval of the absence must be gained from the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, before the absence, but the approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.
- (i) An absence may be excused when it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the superintendent of the school district, or his designee, that conditions are sufficient to warrant the compulsory-school-age child's nonattendance. However, no absences shall be excused by the school district superintendent, or his designee, when any student suspensions or expulsions circumvent the intent and spirit of the compulsory attendance law.

## **Grades PK-12**

When a student misses school, a parent/guardian must provide a written document to designated school officials within 48 hours (2 school days) for an excused absence to be granted. The school will code absences in accordance with state guidelines. All other absences will be considered **unexcused**.

Administrative absence designation is used to cover special and unique situations, usually of an educational nature, and these excuses are issued *in advance* on an individual basis. Seniors are allowed to arrange for two (2) administrative absences during the school year to visit prospective college campuses or a military installation. Parents must come to the principal's office to request an Administrative Absence form. Signatures are required from a parent and an administrator in order for the Administrative Absence to be valid. Students are not allowed to acquire more than 2 Administrative Absences without special administrative approval. A completed administrative absence form from a parent/guardian containing the student's name, the date of the absence, and the parent's signature should be presented for administrative approval at least 2 school days in advance of the absence. In addition, no Administrative Absence will be given final approval without documentation (verification of the college or military visit). Final approval for the Administrative Absence will not be recorded until all steps are completed.

## **School Related Activities**

All planned classroom activities are important. It is the intention of the SOCS D that class absences are kept to an absolute minimum through close monitoring by the principal. School-related activities must be approved in advance by the principal and Deputy Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. The following school-related activities will not be counted as absences from either class or school:

1. field trips sponsored by the school

2. school-initiated and scheduled activities
3. athletic events requiring early dismissal from school
4. in-school suspension

### **Late Check-in and Early Check-outs**

It is in the best interest of the student and the school's instructional program that all students are in class and ready to begin when the instructional day/period starts. Late check-ins should be avoided. Likewise, a student is expected to remain at school throughout the school day except in case of an emergency. To protect the integrity of the instructional program, appointments should be scheduled after the end of the school day, whenever possible. Building level administrators on each campus will develop and implement standard procedures in managing excessive tardiness and early checkouts. For late check-ins, a parent must sign the student in at the office.

### **Make-up Work Opportunities**

The student is responsible for assignments missed through excused absences. Students should be allowed a minimum of the number of days missed plus one to complete missed assignments without penalty and no longer than two days prior to the end of the grading period, with a reasonable penalty for late work. Students with any missing work will be ineligible for exemption.

### **CELL PHONE USE BY TEACHERS (IFBB)**

The School Board of the SOCS D believes that the school district was created for the primary purpose of effectively educating the children attending school within the school system. The Board further believes that to accomplish this mission, it is imperative that classroom instructional time be protected. Therefore, any activity that distracts the teacher from his or her ability to utilize the entire class period for instructional purposes is prohibited. Specifically prohibited is the use of cell phones by employees during instructional or assigned duty time.

### **Violations**

Alleged violations of this policy shall be discussed in a conference between the employee and the building principal. If the principal finds the violation(s) to be factual, the principal shall issue a written reprimand to the employee(s) involved. This reprimand shall become a part of the employee's personnel file. Repeated violations may result in non-renewal of an employee's contract or dismissal.

### **COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (JGCC)**

The SOCS D will work cooperatively with the Mississippi Health Department to prevent, control, and contain the spread of communicable and infectious diseases, including COVID-19, in schools.

The superintendent or governing authority has the power, authority and duty, under the Mississippi State Board of Health Rules and Regulations Governing Reportable Diseases, to exclude a student from the school when reliable evidence or information from a qualified source confirms his/her having a communicable disease or infection that is known to spread by any form of casual contact and is considered a health threat to the school population. Such a student may be excluded unless a licensed physician, public health officer, or nurse practitioner approves school attendance, or the condition is no longer considered contagious.

School administrators and teachers are required to make frequent decisions regarding when children with communicable diseases should be allowed to attend or return to school. We want children to be protected from these conditions, but it is also our desire that no child be excluded from school longer than necessary. The SOCS D will use the Mississippi Department of Health Guidelines in determining these decisions regarding contagious/communicable diseases.

All persons privileged with any medical information that pertains to students shall be required to treat all proceedings, discussions, and documents as confidential information. Before any medical information is shared with anyone in the school setting, a "Need to Know" review shall be made.

Administrative procedures in furtherance of this policy can be found on the district website under policy JGCC.

### **CONTROVERSIAL INSTRUCTIONAL ISSUES (IKBB)**

Training for effective citizenship is accepted as one of the major goals of our public schools. Our instructional program, developed to achieve this purpose, properly places great emphasis upon teaching about our American heritage, the rights and privileges we enjoy as citizens, and the citizenship responsibilities that must be assumed in maintaining our American way of life.

In training for effective citizenship, it is frequently necessary for pupils to study issues that are controversial. However, any issue deemed controversial by students or parents which could create a divisive educational setting should be formally approved by the superintendent prior to use in the classroom.

When studies within the classroom create differences of opinion, teachers should:

1. deal with the topics and issues as impartially and objectively as possible. Teachers should not intrude their own biases.
2. handle all such topics in a manner suited to the range of knowledge, maturity, and competence of their students.
3. have teaching materials dealing with all possible aspects of the topics readily available.
4. not expect or require that the class reach an agreement. Differences of opinion are the rights of each citizen.

### **COPYRIGHT MATERIAL USE (IJC)**

It is the intent of this school board that all students and staff adhere to the provisions of the copyright law (Title 17 of the U.S. Code). While the law identifies some "fair use" provisions, it also defines restrictions on the reproduction of copyrighted materials. A copyright is a property right; willful infringement of a copyright can result in criminal prosecution. It is the position of the SOCSB that copyrighted materials, whether print or nonprint, will NOT be duplicated unless such reproduction meets "fair use" standards or unless written permission from the copyright holder has been received. Illegal copies of copyrighted material may NOT be made or used on district equipment.

#### **Fair Use**

Congress has identified four criteria to be balanced in considering questions of "fair use":

1. The purpose and character of the use, including whether such is a commercial nature or is for nonprofit educational purposes;
2. The nature of the copyrighted work;
3. The amount and substantiality of the portion used in relation to the copyrighted work as a whole; and
4. The effect of the use on potential market for or value of the copyrighted work.

#### **Employee Liability for Violation**

In an effort to discourage violation of the copyright law and to prevent such illegal activities...

1. All employees will be advised of this policy; and
2. Employees who willfully disregard the district's copyright position are in violation of board policy; they do so at their own risk and assume all liability responsibility. The legal and/or insurance protection of the district will NOT be extended to anyone who violates the fair use standards of this policy.



## **CPR/AED INSTRUCTION**

The curriculum of this school district shall include an instructional component on the proper administration of cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and the use of an automated external defibrillator (AED) shall be included as part of the physical education or health education curriculum in grades 10-12. This course shall be incorporated into the ½ Carnegie unit physical education requirement. The curriculum shall incorporate into the instruction the psychomotor skills necessary to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and use of an automated external (AED) defibrillator.

## **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT RESOURCES/EQUIPMENT (ICA)**

The School Board shall adopt the curriculum utilized by the school district. The Superintendent of Education, subject to review by the School Board, is responsible for developing procedures for the selection of all curriculum resources, textbooks, other instructional media, and the establishment of procedures concerning the teaching in the classroom. Instructional media include all books (hardcover and paperback), newspapers, periodicals, computer software and applications, other technology resources, other printed material and audio-visual resources used by the schools.

Selection of all instructional media must involve the professional staff, and the principal shall be responsible for the administration and supervision of the curriculum within his/her school, including the coordination and selection of textbooks, other instructional media, and making recommendations for purchase to the administration. The responsibility for evaluating and selecting media for classroom use is primarily the responsibility of the principal, with input from the teachers and other staff. It is important in making selections that the professional staff becomes as aware as possible of reputable, unbiased professionally prepared aids and resources.

## **CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT PLANNING (ICB)**

It shall be the policy of this district to ascertain the extent to which students master specific learner objectives and to use such information in instructional planning and decision making. Each teacher shall use formative and summative tests which are congruent with instructional activities to evaluate the level to which specified learner objectives have been attained by students. Test results shall be accurately reported to students and parents in a timely manner. The primary responsibility for determining each pupil's level of classroom performance and ability to function at the next level shall be that of the classroom teacher with guidance from competency measures and subject to review and approval by the principal. The school board of this school district recognizes the need to foster a sense of community and collaboration within schools, and it recognizes the need to provide the opportunity for shared discussions among professional staff and for shared work through positive, open, cooperative relationships. ***Board policies upon which curriculum or instructional goals are determined can be found in section I of the SOCSO Board Manual. Additional information may be found in policies ICB, IDAG, and IHA specific to this topic.***

## **DISCIPLINE POLICIES**

The policies and procedures that outline expectations for student conduct are established in board policy. These are included in the Student Handbook which is provided to all teachers, school personnel, students, and parents/guardians at the beginning of the school year. Each school principal is responsible for the dissemination of the district and school policies. **Board policies upon which school conduct codes are determined may be found in Section J of the SOCSO Board Manual.**

## **EEF FUNDS**

EEF supply funds shall not be expended for administrative purposes. "Teacher" means any employee of the school board of a school district who is required by law to obtain a teacher's license from the State Department of Education and who is assigned to an instructional area of work as defined by the department but shall not

include a federally funded teacher. Procurement cards shall be issued at the beginning of the school year and shall be issued in equal amounts per teacher determined by the total number of qualifying personnel and the current state appropriation for classroom supplies with the Education Enhancement Fund. Such cards will expire on a pre-determined date at the end of each school year. All classroom teachers shall utilize these funds in a manner that addresses individual classroom needs and supports the overall goals of the school regarding supplies, instructional materials, equipment, computers or computer software under the provisions of this subparagraph, including the type, quantity and quality of such supplies, materials and equipment. EEF supply funds allocated shall supplement, not replace, other local and state funds available for the same purposes. All unexpended amounts will be carried forward, combined with the following year's allocation of Education Enhancement Fund instructional supplies funds and reallocated for the following year.

### **FIRST AID**

School personnel may attend to minor injuries and sickness, but only qualified personnel should attempt to administer first aid to pupils.

### **SUPPORT FOR FIRST AND SECOND YEAR TEACHERS (GADD)**

The SOCS D recognizes that the most important professional development is focused on the growth of teachers. Research shows that the teacher is the most important factor affecting student learning. SOCS D is committed to a comprehensive, sustained program for beginning professionals. All first-year teachers and teachers new to SOCS D must participate in the program during their first year of teaching in the district. Second year teachers are encouraged, and teachers identified for specific growth goals are required to participate in the program.

### **FUNDRAISING PROJECTS (JK)**

The board recognizes that unappropriated funds are occasionally needed in order to allow student participation in special activities and travel. Therefore, in an effort to coordinate such fund-raising activities and to avoid excessive fund-raising projects, the board has adopted the following regulations. It shall be the policy of the Board of the SOCS D to review and act upon all recommended fund-raising projects to be sponsored by recognized student organizations in the district. This policy shall apply to all areas of the academic programs, activities programs, and clubs and organizations which function during the normal operating school day. This policy shall not include fundraisings sponsored by activity booster clubs, PTOs, and other such organizations. Upon receipt of fund-raising activity proposals, the school principal shall review all proposals and recommend to the superintendent those which he/she deems to be acceptable. The superintendent shall recommend on or before the regular school board meeting in October or February of each year a list of all recommended fund-raising projects to be sponsored by recognized student organizations in the schools operated by the SOCS D. The board shall consider and either approve, disapprove, or hold in abeyance each of the proposed projects. The superintendent shall notify appropriate personnel of the board's decision no later than five (5) working days after the decision has been made. No projects will be recommended to the board which require students to sell a certain number of products or to purchase any products not sold. Students will not be penalized for non-participation in a fund-raising project. The school board prohibits door-to-door sales by students. The board reserves the right to consider and act upon special fund-raising request(s) which arise from special circumstances which school personnel could not foresee prior to the regular October board meeting.

**Fundraisers must have board approval prior to initiating fundraiser activities. Students are not allowed to do individual fundraisers. They must have a sponsor.**

## **LIBRARY/MEDIA MATERIALS (IJLB)**

This board recognizes that school libraries are essential to academic development and high levels of student achievement. The primary objective of the SOCSO library material selection procedure is to provide students and teachers with a wide range of educational materials on all levels of difficulty and in a variety of formats, with diversity of appeal, allowing for the presentation of many different points of view. To this end, the Board, in keeping with the ideas expressed in the School Library Bill of Rights, asserts that the responsibility of each district media specialist is:

- To provide materials that will enrich and support the curriculum, taking into consideration the varied interests, abilities, and maturity levels of the pupils served.
- To provide materials that will stimulate growth in factual knowledge, literary appreciation, aesthetic values, and ethical standards.
- To provide a background of information which will enable students to make intelligent judgments in their daily lives.
- To provide materials on opposing sides of controversial issues so that young citizens may develop under guidance the practice of critical reading and thinking.
- To provide materials representative of many religious, ethnic, and cultural groups and their contribution to our American heritage, thereby enabling students to develop an intellectual integrity in forming judgments.
- To place principle above personal opinion and reason above prejudice in the selection of materials of the highest quality in order to assure a comprehensive selection appropriate for the users of the library.

*Additional information may be found in policy IJLB of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.*

## **LICENSURE / LICENSURE RENEWAL (GBD)**

The superintendent of the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District shall have the power, authority and duty to enter into contracts in the manner provided by law for each assistant superintendent, principal, and teacher of the public schools under his/her supervision, after such assistant superintendent, principal and teachers have been selected and approved in the manner provided by law.

## **LICENSED AND NON-INSTRUCTIONAL EMPLOYEES**

On or before April 1 of each year, the principal of each school shall recommend to the superintendent of the school district the licensed employees or non-instructional employees to be employed for the school involved except those licensed employees or non-instructional employees who have been previously employed and who have a contract valid for the ensuing scholastic year. If such recommendations meet with the approval of the superintendent, the superintendent shall recommend the employment of such licensed employees or non-instructional employees to the local school board, and, unless good reason to the contrary exists, the board shall elect the employees so recommended. If, for any reason, the school board shall decline to elect any employee so recommended, additional recommendations for the places to be filled shall be made by the principal to the superintendent and then by the superintendent to the school board as provided above.

Any licensed employee whose license expires on June 30th of that year must provide a renewed license to the Office of the Superintendent on or before April 1. If said license is not provided on or before April 1, the employee will receive a letter of non-renewal and their position will be advertised.

Employees with the SOCSO are responsible for the renewal of their license through the accumulation of Continuing Education Units (CEU), participating in recognized national certification programs, or by attending classes and obtaining additional graduate hours and/or degrees. *Each employee is responsible for keeping track*

*of all records to be used for license renewal.* The central office must receive a copy of any upgrade or renewed license for district records.

## **MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS**

Teachers, administrators, counselors or any other school personnel are not qualified to make a medical diagnosis in reference to any student. This includes the medical diagnosis of ADD/ADHD.

## **MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION (JGCD)**

The SOCSO recognizes that many students from time to time feel well enough and healthy enough to attend school but may require medication during school hours. To accommodate this need and to foster better attendance in school, appropriate school personnel will administer medications to students as prescribed by their physician under the following guidelines:

### **Short Term Medication Administration**

The medication dosage must be pre-packaged by the parent in individual doses (for instance an envelope or bottle). The package must be labeled with the student's name, name of the medicine, the amount and time it is to be given. The medications must be left with the teacher or office personnel at the school which the student attends. The school should be provided with a written permission form for the medication to be administered, including the student's name, amount, and time to be given. If difficulty is encountered in administering the medication, such as lost medications, difficulty swallowing, unclear administration instructions, etc., the dose will be missed and a note sent home with a statement of the problem. If the medication is of such a critical nature that missing a dose will represent a hazard to the student, the parent should so state on the note sent to school.

### **Long Term (Daily) Medications**

In the event that a student is taking daily medications ordered by a physician to be given during school hours, the following procedure will apply:

1. The parent/guardian is responsible for getting the medication to school. All medications must be in a proper container with a label from the pharmacy, which states the following: student's name, physician, name of medicine, method and time of administration and amount to be given.
2. School personnel will not administer any prescription medication without a signed and completed School District permission form and a parent's authorization and indemnity agreement. These forms will be effective for the school year in which they are obtained and will be renewed each school year. Parents are responsible for notifying the school of any medication changes in writing, and an updated permission form must be completed and signed to indicate the changes.
3. The school district shall permit self-administration of medication (such as asthma medications or insulin) if the parent or guardian provides written authorization to the school. Upon fulfilling the requirements, a student may possess and self-administer medications under the supervision of school personnel.
4. Each school will have specific procedures for locked storage of medicine. Logs will be maintained and will include the student's name, person who administers medication, time and date of administration.

### **Medications for Minor Pain Relief**

School personnel shall not exceed the usual practice of first aid and shall not diagnose illness or suspected injury, however, students occasionally develop headaches and minor discomfort at school. If no fever or vomiting is present, appropriate school personnel in grades K through 6 may administer an age appropriate dose of acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil), with parental permission. Date, time, and dosage should be documented accordingly. Students in grade 7 through 12, who develop headaches or other minor discomfort without fever or other symptoms, may be given an appropriate dose of acetaminophen or ibuprofen by school personnel as requested. The student's name, date, time, and medication should be documented.

## **ASTHMA / ANAPHYLAXIS MEDICATIONS (JGCDA)**

Every child who has been diagnosed with asthma must have an asthma action plan on file in the school office.

The SOCSB school board permits the self-administration of asthma and anaphylaxis medication pursuant to the requirements of this policy. A student with asthma and/or anaphylaxis is entitled to possess and self-administer prescription asthma and/or anaphylaxis medication while on school property, on school-provided transportation, or at a school-related event or activity if:

1. The prescription asthma and/or anaphylaxis medication has been prescribed for that student as indicated by the prescription label on the medication;
2. The self-administration is done in compliance with the prescription or written instructions from the student's physician or other licensed health care provider; and
3. A parent of the student provides to the school:
  - a) Written authorization, signed by the parent, for the student to self-administer prescription asthma and/or anaphylaxis medication while on school property or at a school-related event or activity;
  - b) A written statement, signed by the parent, in which the parent releases the school district and its employees and agents from liability for an injury arising from the student's self-administration of prescription asthma and/or anaphylaxis medication while on school property or at a school-related event or activity unless in cases of wanton or willful misconduct;
  - c) A written statement from the student's physician or other licensed health care provider, signed by the physician or provider, that states:
    - i. That the student has asthma and/or anaphylaxis and is capable of self-administering the prescription asthma and/or anaphylaxis medication;
    - ii. The name and purpose of the medication;
    - iii. The prescribed dosage for the medication;
    - iv. The times at which or circumstances under which the medication may be administered; and
    - v. The period for which the medication is prescribed.
    - vi. The physician's statement must be kept on file in the office of the school nurse of the school the student attends or, if there is not a school nurse, in the office of the principal of the school the student attends.
4. If a student uses his/her medication in a manner other than prescribed, he/she may be subject to disciplinary action under the school codes. The disciplinary action shall not limit or restrict the student's immediate access to the medication.
5. The school board authorizes the school nurse or trained school employee to administer auto-injectable epinephrine to a student who the school nurse or trained school employee, in good faith, believes is having an anaphylactic reaction, whether or not the student has a prescription for epinephrine.

### **Yearly Renewal**

The permission for self-administration of medications shall be effective for the school year in which it is granted and shall be renewed each following school year upon fulfilling the requirements as stated in this policy.

### **Definitions:**

6. "Parent" means parent or legal guardian.
7. "Auto-injectable epinephrine" means a medical device for the immediate administration of epinephrine to a person at risk for anaphylaxis.
8. "Asthma and anaphylaxis medication" means inhaled bronchodilator and auto-injectable epinephrine.
9. "Self-administration of prescription asthma and/or anaphylaxis medication" means a student's discretionary use of prescription asthma and/or anaphylaxis medication.

## **NATIONAL BOARD**

The district will pay \$1,000 toward the fee of teachers applying for national board certification. This money is reimbursed to the district once the teacher completes the process, whether they pass or not. Contact the Department of Human Resources for details.

## **PARENT CONFERENCES**

As the need for parent conferences arise throughout the year, teachers should make every effort to accommodate parents' schedules for conferences. The teacher should inform the principal of any conference in which a third party may be required to attend the conference.

## **RELEASE OF STUDENTS**

No student shall be suspended from school or school-sponsored activity prior to scheduled release time without first notifying parent/guardian. No student shall be released to the custody of an individual other than parent/guardian or person designated in the student's record. No student shall be allowed to withdraw from school or school-sponsored activity prior to scheduled release time. Students shall not be allowed to leave and return to school or to a school-sponsored activity to run personal errands, purchase supplies, parts or food. No student shall be released at the conclusion of any out-of-town school-sponsored activity to return home via alternate means without prior approval by school authorities of a written request from parent/guardian. No student shall be abandoned by a sponsor/director/chaperon at the completion of a school-sponsored activity to wait for a ride or to walk home.

## **RELIGIOUS MATTERS (IGAA)**

Public schools must be hospitable to students of all faiths and no faith. Public school teachers rightly function as important authority figures in the lives of their students. But, under the Constitution, their authority may not extend to matters of religious beliefs. According to the Supreme Court, the First Amendment requires that public school students never be given the impression that their school officially sanctions religion in general or prefers a specific faith in particular. Further, students must never feel coerced by peer or public pressure into adhering to the dictates of any religion. *Additional information may be found in policy IGAA of the SOCSB Board Manual located on the district's website.*

## **REPORTS OF CHILD ABUSE / NEGLECT**

Any school employee having reasonable cause to suspect that a child is neglected or abused is required by Mississippi Code of 1972 (§43-21-353) to make an oral report immediately to the school principal /designated supervisor and by telephone or otherwise to the Department of Human Services (DHS). As soon as possible thereafter, a written report must be filed with DHS. Reports must contain the names and addresses of the child and parents or other persons responsible for the child's care. If known, the child's age, nature and extent of injuries, any evidence of previous injuries, and other information pertinent to establishing cause of the injury and identity of the perpetrator should be included in the report. Reports of abuse and neglect made under this law and the identity of the reporter are confidential except when the court in its discretion determines the testimony of the person reporting to be material to a judicial proceeding. A school employee makes a required report pursuant to this law is presumed to be acting in good faith. Any person reporting in good faith is immune from civil or criminal liability. MS CODE (§43-21-355)

## **SALARY SCHEDULE**

Current year salary schedules are available on the SOCSB website.

## **STUDENT CONDUCT**

All employees will be provided with an explanation of both their responsibilities and their rights under law in terms of actions that they may take to maintain order, discipline, and an appropriated educational environment. Each school principal is responsible for the dissemination of the district and school policies. A student handbook, detailing specific policies and procedures, will be made available on-line and distributed to parents and students outlining student conduct expectations and possible disciplinary actions, including consequences for disorderly conduct. **Board policies upon which school conduct codes are determined may be found in Section J of the SOCSB Board Manual.**

## **STUDENT RESTRAINT AND SECLUSION POLICY**

The SOCSB School Board supports a positive approach to behavior that uses proactive strategies to create a safe school climate that promotes dignity, creates authentic student engagement, and improves student achievement for all students. In accordance with Miss. Code Ann. §§ 37-9-69 and 37-11-57, it is recognized that staff may intercede in situations wherein students are displaying physically violent behavior or are deemed to be a danger to themselves or others. The use of excessive force or cruel and unusual punishment regarding student management is prohibited. Restraint and/or seclusion shall not be utilized as a punitive measure. Only school personnel trained in the use of restraint and seclusion should be used to observe and monitor these students. Staff engaged in monitoring students shall have knowledge of effective restraint and seclusion procedures, emergency procedures, and knowledge of how to effectively debrief students after the use of restraint or seclusion. This policy in no way shall inhibit the right of staff to reasonable self-defense in accordance with the provisions of the 5th and 14th amendments to the Constitution of the United States, or the Constitution of Mississippi, nor negate the obligation of the district to provide a safe work environment. In any situation in which a student is a danger to himself/herself or others, and it becomes necessary to contact law enforcement or emergency medical personnel, nothing in this policy guidance shall be construed to interfere with the duties of law enforcement or emergency medical personnel.

### **RESTRAINT**

Physical restraint is considered to be an emergency response after all other verbal and non-verbal de-escalation measures have failed in effectiveness. When using physical restraint for students who are a danger to themselves or others, staff should take precautions necessary to ensure the safety of the student and the staff members engaged in restraining the student.

1. Physical restraints that restrict the flow of air are prohibited in all situations.
2. The use of mechanical restraints is prohibited, except by law enforcement.

### **SECLUSION**

The use of seclusion occurs in a specially designated room or space that is physically isolated from common areas and from which the student is physically prevented from leaving. The room or space used for seclusion may not be locked and staff shall be present to monitor the student. Seclusion shall cease once the student regains control of his or her behavior.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

This policy and the supporting procedures are designed to ensure the safety of all students, school personnel, and visitors. The following provisions shall be adhered to:

1. Staff and faculty shall be trained at least annually on the use of physical restraint and seclusion. Teachers and other district personnel shall be trained on how to collect and analyze student data to determine the effectiveness of these procedures in increasing appropriate behavior. Administrators shall document incidents of the use of physical restraint or seclusion by staff or faculty participating in or supervising the restraint or seclusion event.
2. A review of the use of a restraint and seclusion process shall be conducted by the school to determine if revisions of behavioral strategies are in place to address dangerous behavior or if positive behavioral strategies were not in place at the time of the restraint or seclusion.
3. The school board shall review this policy and incidents of seclusion and restraint data at a minimum, annually. At a minimum, the Superintendent shall make quarterly reports of incidents

of restraint and/or seclusion to the school board. The school district shall report the incidents to Mississippi Department of Education annually.

4. This policy and supporting procedures shall be reviewed with all staff on an annual basis.
5. The superintendent or designee shall develop procedures for reporting the use of restraint or seclusion to the local board of education and to the Mississippi Department of Education.
6. After reviewing the district reports of incidents in which restraint and seclusion were used, if necessary, the superintendent shall make recommendations to the board for possible revisions to this policy. The review and/or revisions to this policy shall be documented on the school board meeting agenda and the subsequent minutes of the school board meeting. The school district or school shall maintain records of its review of and any resulting decisions or actions regarding the use of seclusion and restraint.

## PARENTAL NOTIFICATION

1. All parents shall receive, at least annually, written information about the policies and procedures for restraint and seclusion issued by this school district. The written policies shall be included in the code of conduct, student handbook, school board policy manual, and any other appropriate school publication.
2. Parents or guardians shall be notified verbally or in writing on the day of the restraint or seclusion or no later than 48 hours following the incident. In the event a parent cannot be reached by telephone, a letter shall be sent informing the parent of the incident and the person who can be contacted at the school to address any questions the parent may have. At the time the parent is notified, the school shall schedule a debriefing with the parent to discuss the incident.
3. The superintendent or designee shall develop procedures by which a parent may submit a complaint regarding the physical restraint or seclusion of their child; the procedures shall be printed in the Student Handbook.

The superintendent or designee shall establish and disseminate all procedures relevant to the implementation of this policy and the guidelines set forth by the Mississippi Department of Education.

## WELLNESS POLICY

The link between nutrition, physical activity, and learning is well documented. Healthy eating and activity patterns are essential for students to achieve their full academic potential, full physical and mental growth, and lifelong health and well-being. All students in the SOCSO shall possess the knowledge and skills necessary to make nutritious food choices and enjoyable physical activity choices for a lifetime. All staff in the SOCSO are encouraged to model healthful eating and physical activity as a valuable part of daily life. Board Policy directs schools to effectively utilize school and community resources and to equitably serve the needs and interest of all students and staff, taking into consideration differences in culture. **Additional information may be found in policy JG of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district's website.**

## PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SERVICES

### **SOCSO's Mass Messaging System is School Messenger**

Keeping parents and employees informed about events and happenings in the SOCSO is a top priority, and School Messenger is the mass messaging system that SOCSO uses to provide accurate, timely information. SOCSO will use School Messenger throughout the year to send primarily email messages to parents and employees to remind you of important dates and events and to share information. SOCSO will also use School



Messenger to inform parents and employees about any weather-related changes to the school day as well as other emergency situations. Please make sure you provide an accurate email address and contact number with your school in order to receive these messages. If your contact information changes, please contact your school directly to update your information. The district's website is [www.starkvillesd.com](http://www.starkvillesd.com).

The District also uses REMIND as a communication tool for text messaging that integrates with Google Classroom and Canvas.

### **Stay connected with SOCS**

The fastest way for the SOCS to share information regarding school delays, cancellations or urgent announcements is through our text notification service via School Messenger and REMIND and our social media channels. Be sure to follow the SOCS on Twitter @StarkvilleSD and like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/StarkvilleSD](http://www.facebook.com/StarkvilleSD).

## **EMERGENCY AND HEALTH PROCEDURES**

### **EMERGENCY CLOSINGS**

The superintendent is hereby authorized to close schools and offices or dismiss them early in event of natural disaster, inclement weather or other emergencies which threaten the safety or health of students or staff members. The superintendent will take such action only after consultation with transportation, emergency management, and weather authorities. The superintendent shall notify the school board of the decision to close the schools. Parents, students, and staff members shall be informed how they shall be notified in event of emergency closings, early dismissals, or delayed start. Principals/directors should notify the Superintendent's office when cancelling after-school programs. Information on closing and delays by the district will be announced on the district website. Information on closing and delays by the District will also be announced via Facebook, Twitter and shared via School Messenger and/or REMIND through text and/or email messaging.

### **EXTREME WEATHER CONDITIONS**

In cases of a severe weather alert, such as a tornado, hurricane, or snow/ice warning being issued by the National Weather Service, the superintendent of schools or designee shall notify each principal and necessary administrators. Children will be retained in the school buildings until it is deemed safe to dismiss them, unless they are picked up by their parents. Pupils will not be allowed to use the telephone during severe weather alerts except in cases of emergency. Parents and their children should have an arrangement worked out in advance with regard to transportation during extreme weather conditions.

When school must be canceled due to severe weather or other emergency situations, announcements will be made via Facebook, Twitter and text and/or email messaging through School Messenger and/or REMIND.

### **REUNIFICATION SITES**

If there is a need to evacuate a school building/campus, the following are our reunification sites.

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| ➤ Sudduth Elementary     | Calvary Baptist Church (Primary) / Starkville Sportsplex (Secondary)    |
| ➤ Henderson Ward Stewart | Calvary Baptist Church (Primary) / Starkville Sportsplex (Secondary)    |
| ➤ Overstreet Elementary  | Calvary Baptist Church (Primary) / Starkville Sportsplex (Secondary)    |
| ➤ West Elementary        | Sturgis Baptist Church  |
| ➤ Armstrong Junior High  | Starkville Sportsplex (Primary) / Calvary Baptist Church (Secondary)    |
| ➤ Partnership Middle     | First John Baptist Church (Primary)/ Calvary Baptist Church (Secondary) |
| ➤ Starkville High        | Starkville Sportsplex (Primary) / Calvary Baptist Church (Secondary)    |
| ➤ The Learning Center    | Sixteenth Section Missionary Baptist Church                             |
| ➤ Emerson                | Starkville Sportsplex (Primary) / Calvary Baptist Church (Secondary)    |

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES/DRILLS**

### **Fire Drill**

The signal for fire is one (1) long ring of the bell. Everyone must leave the building in a quiet and orderly manner following the procedures outlined for the specific classroom. Students must stay with their teachers. Students in special subjects will remain with the special subject teacher. The classroom teacher should join her students at the designated place. A bell will signal that all is clear.

### **Tornado Drill**

The signal for a tornado is three (3) short rings of the bell. Students will proceed to the hallways in an orderly manner. Students should stay with the teacher, remain quiet, sit with their backs to the wall, and cover their heads. A bell will signal that all is clear.

### **Earthquake**

Definition: An earthquake is the oscillating movement of the earth's crust caused by the rupturing of great masses of rock miles beneath the surface of the earth. This generally takes the form of slipping or sliding along a rupture plane (a weakness in the earth's crust) called a fault. There are three major types of earthquakes: Volcanic, Plutonic, and Tectonic. Tectonic is the most common and most destructive. Earthquakes can occur at any time with no advance warning. The onset of a large earthquake is initially signaled by a deep rumbling or by disturbed air making a rushing sound. Probably the most disheartening feature in the aftermath of a damaging earthquake is the reported occurrence of aftershocks.

- Students and staff should stay put until tremors stop.
- Students and staff should duck and cover until tremors stop.
- Students and staff should take cover under desks and tables, against inside walls, or under doorways.
- Students and staff should be alert for possible aftershocks.
- Shut off any electrical or gas operated appliances.
- Students and staff should evacuate the building through nearest safe exit if instructed to do so. The earthquake evacuation signal is FIRE DRILL SIGNAL.
- Students should avoid overhead wires and utility poles.
- Teachers should call roll and report missing students to the principal.
- The secretarial staff will take enrollment cards and sign-out sheets for off-site student release.
- Unattached students should report to the nearest teacher. Teachers should report student additions to the principal.
- The principal will make the decision for the students and other personnel to re-enter the building only after being advised to do so by the civil defense office and/or school architect/engineer.

### **Bomb Threat**

The signal for a bomb threat is one (1) long ring of the bell followed by the code Red over the intercom. Students will exit the building by walking in a quiet and orderly manner and proceed to their designated areas. Students will stay with their class and teacher. A bell will signal that all is clear.

### **Lockdown**

The signal for lockdown is known only to faculty and staff. At the direction of the teachers, students will move away from windows and doors and remain quiet. A bell will signal that all is clear.

## **TECHNOLOGY POLICY/ PROCEDURES**

### **TECHNOLOGY AND INSTRUCTION/ELECTRONIC INFORMATION RESOURCES (IJ)**

Students may use the Internet to participate in distance learning activities, to ask questions of and consult with experts, to communicate with other students and individuals, and to locate additional educational resources.

The SOCS D School Board expects that library media specialists and teachers shall work together to help students develop the intellectual skills needed to discriminate among information sources, to identify information appropriate to their age and developmental levels, and to evaluate and use the information to meet their educational goals. However, the Internet is a fluid, global environment in which information is constantly changing, thereby making it impossible to predict with certainty what information students might locate. Availability of information to students on the Internet does not imply endorsement by this school district.

Administrative guidelines for student exploration and use of electronic information resources shall address issues of privacy, ethical use of information with respect to intellectual property, illegal uses of networks, and conditions of usage. In developing such guidelines, the administration will strive to preserve student rights to examine and use information to meet the educational goals and objectives of this school district.

#### **The guidelines shall include language affirming that:**

1. Students have the right to examine a broad range of opinions and ideas in the educational process, using and exchanging information and ideas on the Internet.
2. Students are responsible for the ethical and educational use of their own Internet accounts.
3. Students have a responsibility to respect the privacy of other Internet users.

#### **Terms**

**All users of district provided laptops, tablets or other computing devices will comply at all times with the SOCS D technology policies and procedures.** Failure to abide by board policy and administrative regulation governing use of the district's system may result in the suspension and/or revocation of system access. Additionally, student violation may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion and notification of law enforcement. Staff violation may also result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Fees or other charges may be imposed. A police report will be required for all stolen devices. Lost or damaged devices should be reported to the appropriate school authorities immediately.

#### **Title**

The district has legal title to the property at all times. The user's right of possession and use is limited to and conditioned upon full and complete compliance with this agreement, and SOCS D policies and procedures.

### **NETWORK ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY FOR ELECTRONIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (IJ)**

Students may use the Internet to participate in distance learning activities, to ask questions of and consult with experts, to communicate with other students and individuals, and to locate additional educational resources.

The SOCS D School Board expects that library media specialists and teachers shall work together to help students develop the intellectual skills needed to discriminate among information sources, to identify information appropriate to their age and developmental levels, and to evaluate and use the information to meet their educational goals. However, the Internet is a fluid, global environment in which information is constantly changing, thereby making it impossible to predict with certainty what information students might locate. Availability of information to students on the Internet does not imply endorsement by this school district.

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The guidelines shall include language affirming that:

1. Students have the right to examine a broad range of opinions and ideas in the educational process, using and exchanging information and ideas on the Internet.
2. Students are responsible for the ethical and educational use of their own Internet accounts.
3. Students have a responsibility to respect the privacy of other Internet users.

Failure to abide by board policy and administrative regulation governing use of the district's system may result in the suspension and/or revocation of system access. Additionally, student violation may result in disciplinary action up to and including suspension, expulsion and notification of law enforcement. Staff violation may also result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal. Fees or other charges may be imposed.

### **Administrative Procedures for Use of District Electronic Information Systems**

Individuals to whom a SOCS D device or account is issued are responsible, at all times, for its proper use. For damage that occurs to any district device (student and employee) there will be a required deductible to cover damage by incident. If the device is lost, stolen, or damaged as a result of irresponsible behavior, individuals responsible may be responsible for replacement costs. **A police report will be required for all stolen devices.** Any damage should be reported to the appropriate school authority immediately.

Seniors must clear all records and pay all fees before they shall be allowed to participate in commencement exercises.

### **Deductible for damaged devices:**

- First Occurrence: \$50.00 deductible to cover damage
- Second Occurrence: \$50.00 plus 50% cost of the repair cost
- Third Occurrence: Fair Market Value to replace the device

### **Handling and Care:**

- Keep device free of any writing, drawing, stickers, or labels that are not applied by SOCS D.
- Use the device on a flat, stable surface.
- Do not place books on the device.
- Do not have food or drink around the device.
- Wipe/Clean surfaces with a clean, dry soft cloth.
- Avoid touching screens with pens or pencils.
- Do not leave the device exposed to direct sunlight or near any heat or moisture source for extended periods of time.
- Do not leave the device unattended in an unlocked classroom or during extracurricular activities.

All users are responsible for keeping backups of important data. If a device has to be repaired there may be a need to reset it to the original setting. The technology department will not be responsible for any user data that may be lost as a part of this process.

When an individual is using District electronic information systems, the following behaviors are not permitted:

1. Sharing confidential information
2. Disclosing personal and/or private information about oneself or others over the network and/or Internet;
3. Sending or displaying offensive messages or pictures;
4. Engaging in political activity in violation of board policy;
5. Using obscene language;
6. Harassing, insulting, or attacking others;
7. Engaging in practices that threaten the systems (e.g., intentionally loading files that may introduce a virus);
8. Violating copyright laws (see Board Policy IJC);
9. Using others' passwords;
10. Trespassing in or destroying others' folders, documents, files, or computer systems;
11. Intentionally wasting limited resources;
12. Utilizing District electronic information systems for personal gain or for commercial purposes;
13. Violating regulations prescribed by electronic information systems providers;
14. Accessing, transmitting, or retransmitting threatening, harassing, or obscene material, pornographic material, and/or any other material that is inappropriate to minors;
15. Accessing, transmitting, or retransmitting any material protected by trade secret;
16. Accessing, transmitting, or retransmitting any material that promotes violence or the destruction of persons or property by devices including, but not limited to, the use of firearms, explosives, fireworks, smoke bombs, incendiary devices, or other similar materials;
17. Accessing, transmitting, or retransmitting any material in furtherance of any illegal act or conspiracy to commit any illegal act in violation of local state or federal law or regulations;
18. Engaging in any activity that is in violation of any other School Board policy; or
19. Other violations that are in violation of SOCS D policy or law.

*Technology resources will be selected in accordance with the District's instructional and library media selection policy.*

### **Social Media (GABBA)**

All employees, faculty and staff of the SOCS D shall observe the following while participating in social media websites or applications such as, but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, and/or Instagram:

1. Access of social media websites for individual use during school hours is prohibited.
2. Employees, faculty, and staff shall not friend students on any social media platforms.
3. Employees, faculty, and staff shall not give social media passwords to students.
4. Employees, faculty, and staff shall not post any data, documents, photos, or inappropriate information on any website or application that might result in a disruption of classroom activity. (The determination of appropriateness will be made by the Superintendent).
5. Employees, faculty, and staff are solely responsible for the content and the security of their social media websites and applications.
6. Employees, faculty, and staff shall NEVER use their personal social media accounts in any way purporting to be or speaking for the SOCS D.

Fraternalization on unofficial SOCS D platforms between employees, faculty or staff, and students is prohibited and may be in violation of standards of the Mississippi Educator Code of Ethics. Social media on unofficial SOCS D platforms shall never be used and is not an appropriate form of communication.

Violation of any of these policies may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

Nothing in this policy prohibits employees, faculty, staff, or students from the use of educational websites. Employees should keep in mind at all times that use of school devices, district email accounts, and all other aspects of social media use connected to district sites can be accessed by district administration and is subject to Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests.

### **CIPA - CHILDREN'S INTERNET PROTECTION ACT (IJB)**

It is the belief of the SOCSD School Board that the use of telecommunications, including the Internet, in instructional programs is an educational strategy which facilitates communication, innovation, resource sharing, and access to information. Use of the Internet must be in support of education and research and consistent with the educational mission, goals, and objectives of the school system.

#### **Introduction**

It is the policy of the SOCSD school board to:

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

#### **Access to Inappropriate Material**

To the extent practical, technology protection measures (or "Internet filters") shall be used to block or filter Internet, or other forms of electronic communications, access to inappropriate information. Specifically, as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, blocking shall be applied to visual depictions of material deemed obscene or child pornography, or to any material deemed harmful to minors. Subject to staff supervision, technology protection measures may be disabled for adults or, in the case of minors, minimized only for bona fide research or other lawful purposes.

#### **Inappropriate Network Usage**

To the extent practical, steps shall be taken to promote the safety and security of users of the SOCSD online computer network when using electronic mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, and other forms of direct electronic communications. Specifically, as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, prevention of inappropriate network usage includes: (a) unauthorized access, including so-called 'hacking', and other unlawful activities; and (b) unauthorized disclosure, use, and dissemination of personal identification information regarding minors.

#### **Education, Supervision and Monitoring**

It shall be the responsibility of all members of the SOCSD's staff to educate, supervise, and monitor appropriate usage of the online computer network and access to the Internet in accordance with this policy, the Children's Internet Protection Act, the Neighborhood Children's Internet Protection Act, and the Protecting Children in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act. Procedures for the disabling or otherwise modifying any technology protection measures shall be the responsibility of the Director of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning or designated representatives. The SOCSD or designated representatives will provide age-appropriate training for students who use the SOCSD Internet facilities. The training provided will be designed to promote the SOCSD's commitment to:

- I. The standards and acceptable use of Internet services as set forth in the SOCSD's Internet Safety Policy;
- II. Student safety with regard to:

- a. safety on the Internet;
- b. appropriate behavior while online, on social networking Web sites, and in chat rooms; and
- c. cyber bullying awareness and response.

III. Compliance with the E-rate requirements of the Children’s Internet Protection Act (“CIPA”).

Following receipt of this training, the student will acknowledge that he/she received the training, understood it, and will follow the provisions of the District’s acceptable use policies.

**CONFIDENTIALITY AND COMPLIANCE WITH FERPA**

The SOCSO shall operate in compliance with the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 regarding student information and records. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) have provided schools, school districts, and state educational agencies guidelines in disclosing student records. School officials with a “legitimate educational interest” in any student information can have access to educational records without specific consent of parents or eligible students. Pursuant to SOCSO Board Policy JRAB, a legitimate educational interest is the person’s need to know in order to:

1. Perform an administrative task required in the school employee’s position description approved by the School Board;
2. Perform a supervisory or instructional task directly related to the student’s education; or
3. Perform a service or benefit for the student or the student’s family such as health care, counseling, student job placement, or student financial aid.

However, the misuse or improper disclosure of confidential information by school officials or a third party is strictly prohibited and is punishable by federal statutes. Electronic access to student information will be limited to job duty specifications of each employee. At no time should this information be printed, transferred, or shared under conditions other than those stipulated in FERPA. **Additional information may be found in policy JRAB of the SOCSO Board Manual located on the district’s website.** A complete explanation of FERPA may be found online at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>.

# Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District

## REPORT OF A BULLYING/HARASSMENT INCIDENT

### BULLY/HARASSMENT COMPLAINT FORM FOR USE BY STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND OTHER COMPLAINANTS

Any student, school employee or volunteer who feels he/she has been a victim of bullying or harassing behavior, or has witnessed or who has reliable information that a student, school employee or volunteer has been subject to bullying or harassing behavior shall report such conduct to a teacher, principal counselor or other school official and complete bully/harassment complaint form. The report shall be made promptly but no later than (5) calendar days after the alleged act or acts occurred.

PERSON REPORTING INCIDENT:	
<b>NAME:</b> _____ <small>(Please Print)</small>	<b>DATE:</b> _____
Place an (X) in the appropriate box: <input type="checkbox"/> Student <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Guardian <input type="checkbox"/> Employee <input type="checkbox"/> Other	

**Name of VICTIM:** \_\_\_\_\_ **School:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

**BULLY'S NAME(s) (if known):** \_\_\_\_\_  
(Please Print)

**Is anyone in immediate danger?** \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No. If yes, contact proper authorities such as law enforcement

**Please describe the incident, in as much detail as possible, what happened (attach additional paper if necessary):**

- a. Who is harassing/bullying you? \_\_\_\_\_
- b. What has happened? \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Where did it happen? \_\_\_\_\_
- d. When did it happen? \_\_\_\_\_
- e. How long has this been going on? \_\_\_\_\_
- f. In what way, if any, did you react to the incident? \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Witness(es):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Identify and attach copies of evidence, i.e., letters, photos, etc.:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Have you talked to anyone about this already?** (Student, Teacher, Other Adult)

Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you want to happen now?**

- a. \_\_\_\_ I just want someone to know
- b. \_\_\_\_ I want an adult to talk to the person who is harassing/bullying me.
- c. \_\_\_\_ I want an adult to help me and the person(s) doing the harassing/bullying to solve the problem.
- d. \_\_\_\_ I want an adult to try to stop the bullying/harassment
- e. \_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Is there an environment (place) that you feel unsafe?** \_\_\_\_Yes \_\_\_\_No

If yes, where? \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\*\*\*I agree that all of the information on this form is accurate and true to the best of my knowledge\*\*\*\*\*

**Signature of person filing report:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>School Officials ONLY</b>		
<b>Received by:</b> _____	<b>Position:</b> _____	<b>Date:</b> _____



## BULLY/HARASSMENT COMPLAINT FORM

### FOR USE BY STUDENTS, PARENTS, AND OTHER COMPLAINANTS

## INVESTIGATION REPORT

Signature of Administrator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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## RECEIPT AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Employee Handbook describes important information about the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District, and I understand that I should consult with my immediate supervisor regarding any questions not answered in the Employee Handbook.

Contents in this handbook are subject to change as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Starkville Oktibbeha Consolidated School District. I acknowledge that revisions to the Employee Handbook may occur and such changes will be communicated through official notices. I understand that revised information will modify or eliminate existing policies.

I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this handbook and understand that it is my responsibility to read and adhere to the guidelines and the policies contained in this Employee Handbook and any revisions made to it.

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Printed Name of Employee

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Signature of Employee

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Date