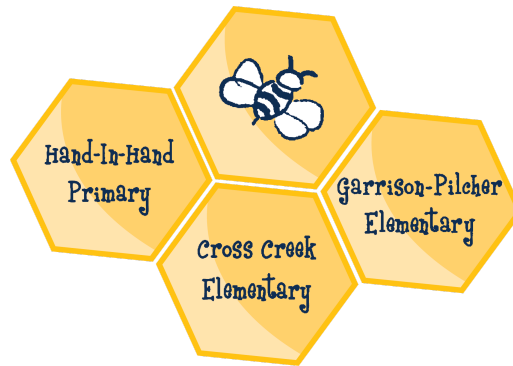


MISSION STATEMENT



Working together, we Teach and nurture Children to Ensure their Success.

VISION STATEMENT

Thomas County Elementary Schools are supportive learning communities where extraordinary learning experiences inspire children to dream and prepare them for a dynamic future.

Our school system's colors are Blue and Gold.

We welcome you and your Pre-K through fourth grade students to Thomas County Elementary Schools. Our schools are designed to provide your student with a rigorous education to prepare him/her for a lifetime of learning. We are conveniently housed in three age-appropriate locations that offer optimal educational experiences for every child.

This handbook is intended to serve as a guide for students and parents of Thomas County Elementary Schools and explain most of the policies and rules of the school. However, it does not address every policy of the school or school system. If you have questions, please contact your child's school.

Thomas County Elementary Schools:

Hand-In-Hand Primary School – Pre-K and Kindergarten

Dee Gaines, Principal
4687 US Hwy 84 Bypass
Frank Delaney, Jr. Parkway
Thomasville, GA 31792
(229) 225-3908 Fax 225-3982

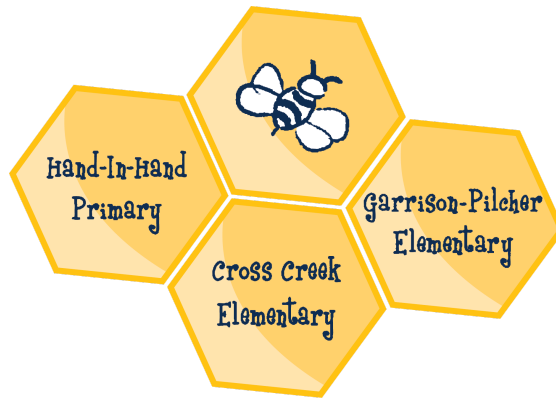
Garrison-Pilcher Elementary School – Grades 1 and 2

Robin Binion, Principal
277 Hall Road
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 225-4387 Fax 413-1334

Cross Creek Elementary School – Grades 3 and 4

Ashley Lane, Principal
324 Clark Road
Thomasville, GA 31757
(229) 225-3900 Fax 413-1420

Thomas County Elementary Schools



Dear Parents,

Thank you for enrolling your child in Thomas County Elementary Schools. We will do all that we can to ensure that your child learns in a safe, challenging, exciting, and fun atmosphere. We want to partner with you in helping your child learn and grow. Please let us know whenever you have a concern, and we will be happy to address it. This handbook is intended to be a tool to inform you about the procedures that we have in place to keep our schools safe and orderly. Please feel free to contact your child's teachers or school administrators if you have any questions or concerns. We look forward to working with you and your family throughout your child's school year.

Respectfully,

Thomas County Elementary School Administrators



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SCHOOL POLICIES

SCHOOL HOURS

Official school hours are from 8:00 – 3:00. The school is open from 7:30 to 3:30. Our office personnel is available to answer phone calls between 7:00 and 4:00.

For safety reasons and by order of the School Superintendent, we cannot allow teachers to be out of the classrooms and on the telephone during instructional time. Each teacher within Thomas County Elementary Schools has voicemail and email. The school receptionist is also happy to take messages for teachers. These are the most effective methods of getting messages to specific faculty members. Email addresses for our staff may be found on the school system website:

www.thomas.k12.ga.us



ATTENDANCE

- Please have your child at school by 7:55; **instruction begins at 8:00.**
- Dismissal begins at 2:40 for Hand-In-Hand students. Dismissal for 1st grade through 4th grade begins at 2:50 P.M.
- If you pick up your child early, he/she will miss part of our instructional day.
- Students are considered absent if they are signed out before 11:30 or signed in after 11:30.
- Sign-outs are difficult to arrange after 2:30.
- Excessive absences and tardies will be reported to the proper authorities, and action will be taken to ensure regular school attendance.
- Letters referencing the state attendance policy will be sent home the week the student misses the 5th, 7th, and 10th day of school. This letter will be sent home after each unexcused absence after the 10th absence.
- If absenteeism persists, the Parent Involvement Coordinator and/or the school administration will make home visits.
- Parents can write 5 “parent excuses” per semester. All other absences must be supported with an excuse from a doctor’s office.
- Additional attendance information and consequences can be found under Board Policy: JBD.

Pre-K Policy

The Department of Early Care and Learning requires that children enrolled in the lottery-funded Pre-K programs be in school for a minimum of 6 ½ hours daily and attend 180 days during the year. (Exceptions are made for sickness or a family crisis.) Tardy arrivals and early checkouts disrupt the routine and are strongly discouraged. Pre-K parents should note that Bright from the Start –Georgia’s Department of Early Care and Learning specifies, “*children who do not attend class or are late for two consecutive weeks without a medical or other reasonable explanation must be removed from the roster.*” When your student is absent, an absentee form must be completed and returned to school following *each* absence. There is a waiting list for Pre-K students. If a child is disenrolled for attendance reasons, the slot is immediately filled with the next student on the waiting list.

Signing Out

Prior to 2:30, parents must sign a child out in the office. Sign-outs are difficult to arrange after 2:30. This is a critical time of the day for teachers to ensure that students are being dismissed to the appropriate locations. *Please make sure that you have listed the names of all those who may pick up your child with the secretaries in the office and are aware of our pick-up policies and the reason for our policies. We require a driver’s license ID to match all names on our pick-up list.* We will not release your child to anyone we cannot verify as a person permitted to sign him/her out from school. Please make sure that all of your friends and relatives understand this policy before picking up your child. Legal guardians are the only people allowed to change a child’s transportation.

Tardy Policy

Pre-K and Kindergarten students are tardy at 8:05. 1st grade through 4th grade students are tardy at 8:00. After the tardy bell, Hand-In-Hand, and Garrison-Pilcher students must be signed in at the front office by an adult. A reason for the tardiness must be provided in writing. If you are going to arrive at school after 8:05, please make sure that your child has had breakfast.

The accumulation of tardies will warrant action. Also, parents are encouraged not to pick their students up before the end of the school day, except where there is a legitimate emergency. Tardies and early sign-outs, combined, should not exceed 12 per school year for Hand-In-Hand and Garrison-Pilcher and 10 for Cross Creek, as these are factored into a student’s eligibility for perfect attendance awards.

Excused tardy-includes events that are physically uncontrollable such as an accident, road closed due to an accident, power outage, etc.

Unexcused tardy-includes: oversleeping, heavy traffic, errands for parents, delays at a train crossing, etc.

Perfect attendance Awards-Excessive tardies and early sign-outs will cause a student to be **ineligible** to receive such awards. Any instructional time missed by students at **Cross Creek** is accumulated & will impact student attendance records & perfect attendance recognition.

BOOK BAGS

Pre-K through 4th grade students need a backpack or book bag (labeled with the student's name) each day that is large enough to hold a standard-size folder. No rolling book bags for Pre-K-4th grade. Large bags, such as duffle bags, are not necessary and present a safety hazard.

BUS RIDERS

Riding a school bus is a privilege provided by the Thomas County Board of Education. This privilege may be denied if it is determined that a child exhibits behavior that causes a safety risk to himself or others on the bus. In the event the child is not allowed to ride the school bus, it is the responsibility of the parents to get the child to and from school each day. Being suspended from riding the school bus does not constitute an excused absence.



Bus problems should be reported to the school administration or the bus garage at 225-4386 or 227-3187.

Thomas County Bus Behavior Policies

All students are expected to conduct themselves in such a way as not to hinder the driver from giving his full attention to driving the bus. Students misbehaving will have a Bus Conduct Report Form filled out by the bus driver. The student will be seen by an administrator or counselor. To maintain a safe, orderly, and comfortable atmosphere on all buses, rules and safety features must be observed at all times.

CAR RIDERS

Each school has staff members on duty between the hours of 7:15-8:00 and 3:00-3:30. Cars should YIELD to BUSES at all times.

For the safety of our students, staff, and parents, all drop off/pick up areas are a NO PHONE ZONE. If you are found texting or talking on a cell phone, you will be asked to park and walk to the building to drop off or pick up your student.

Repeat offenses may result in the revocation of the option to drop off in the circle in the mornings or drive through for afternoon pick-up.

During morning dropoff students should not exit the vehicle until supervising staff is in place for duty. Students arriving after morning drop-off MUST be escorted by an adult to obtain a tardy slip.

As a result of child custody issues and overall child safety, we have an important pick-up policy that is strictly enforced. If you are picking up your child in the afternoons, **YOU MUST DISPLAY A CAR RIDER SIGN PROVIDED BY THE OFFICE STAFF AT YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL. IF YOU ARE PARKING IN THE PARKING LOT AND ARE WALKING TO SCHOOL DOORS, YOU MUST HAVE THE CAR RIDER SIGN IN YOUR HAND.** This identifies you as the custodial parent or the person approved to pick up the child. If you do not have a pickup sign, you will be asked to report to the school office to sign the student out. Please make sure you have a photo ID (driver's license) with you.

CHANGES IN TRANSPORTATION

If a student needs to ride a bus, other than his/her regularly scheduled bus, a note or phone call from the parents is required before 2:00. Changes may not be made through email. Teachers may not be able to check email during the instructional day. Legal guardians are the only people allowed to change a child's transportation. We must know if the bus driver knows your child and where the child gets off the bus. Young children do not always know when to get off the school bus. If you need to call the school about a change in transportation, you must do so before 2:00.

Please refer to your student's school page, in the back of this handbook, for specific details regarding drop off and pick up.

CURRICULUM

Thomas County Elementary Schools are Learning-Focused schools where all teachers utilize research-based instructional strategies on a consistent and pervasive basis school-wide. The instructional program is based on the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), for grades K-4. A more in-depth look at the courses is available on the GSE website (www.georgiastandards.org).

CUSTODY ISSUES

If you have primary custody of your child and do not want the non-custodial parent to pick up or visit your child at school, you must provide court documentation supporting your wishes.

DELIVERIES TO STUDENTS

Please do not send flowers or balloons to your child at school. These items are a safety hazard on the buses and are disruptive in the classrooms. It is recommended that these items not be brought to the school at all, as it is difficult for other young children in the class to understand why they didn't get the same.

DISCIPLINE PLAN

When a student chooses to participate in behavior that is contrary to the good order and discipline of the school, consequences will be implemented to correct the behavior. Consequences are designed to teach students self-discipline and to help them replace inappropriate behaviors with those that are consistent with the expectations for behavior in our schools. Behaviors which might warrant administrative intervention include, but are not limited to:

- Defiance/Disrespect/Non-compliance
- Disruption
- Dress Code Violation
- Tardy for Class
- Technology Violation
- Abusive and Inappropriate Language/Profanity
- Arson
- Bomb Threat/False Alarm
- Threats (Verbal, Physical, Virtual)
- Fighting/Physical Aggression
- Forgery/Theft
- Gang Affiliation Display
- Harassment/Bullying
- Inappropriate Display of Affection
- Inappropriate Location/Out of Bounds Area
- Lying/Cheating
- Property Damage/Vandalism/Misuse
- Sexual Harassment
- Skipping Class
- Truancy
- Use/Possession of Alcohol
- Use/Possession of Combustibles
- Use/Possession of Drugs
- Use/Possession of Products containing CBD, with or without THC
- Use/Possession of Tobacco
- Use/Possession of Vapes
- Use/Possession of Weapons or Dangerous Objects

Depending on the severity of the behavior and the number of times the behavior has occurred, the following consequences may be used to correct student behavior:

- Verbal reprimand
- In-class isolation
- Telephone parent
- Requirements to obtain appropriate clothing
- Parent conference
- Change seating

- Participation in a service project which allows the child to engage in the desired behavior
- Restriction from school programs/assemblies
- Compensation (cleaning or repair)
- Compensation (financial)
- In School Suspension
- Out of School Suspension
- Morning or after school detention
- Other consequences deemed appropriate by parents, teachers, and/or school administration

Investigations: School representatives have the authority to conduct investigations, may question students, & may search students' belongings when there is reason to believe the search could prevent danger or disruption or the continued violations of established district policies and/or school rules/laws. Students may also be charged with insubordination, up to level 3, for failure to comply with a search directive.

Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports

Hand-In-Hand, Garrison-Pilcher, & Cross Creek participate in an important positive behavior initiative. It is called Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

PBIS is a process for creating safer and more effective schools. It is a systems approach to enhancing the capacity of schools to educate all children by developing research-based, school-wide, and classroom behavior support systems. The process focuses on improving a school's ability to teach and support positive behavior for all students. Rather than a prescribed program, PBIS provides systems for schools to design, implement, and evaluate effective school-wide, classroom, non-classroom, and student-specific plans. PBIS includes school-wide procedures and processes intended for all students and all staff in all settings. PBIS is not a program or a curriculum. It is a team-based process for systemic problem-solving, planning, and evaluation. It is an approach to creating a safe and productive learning environment where teachers can teach and all students can learn.

We have adopted a unified set of school rules. These rules define our expectations for behavior in our school. You will see these expectations and rules posted throughout the school, and your child will be learning them during his or her first days at school. Our unified school expectations are found in every classroom and non-classroom setting in the school.

DRESS CODE

Students will wear attire appropriate for the occasion. Comfortable tops (T-shirts), shorts/pants, and tennis shoes are recommended. This makes playground activities, bathroom times, and other activities easier for the children. Active learning is sometimes "messy."

Please send your child to school in clothes that are suitable for "active" activities. The school is not responsible for soiled clothing. Boots, flip-flops, and open-toe shoes are not recommended for outside/ playground play.

Dress Code Policy of the Thomas County School System

All students shall be modestly dressed and groomed as not to unreasonably distract the attention of others or cause disruption or interference with the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

Please avoid the following when sending your child to school:

- Make-up
- Body piercing, other than pierced ears
- Tank tops
- See-through clothing
- Shirts, pants, or shorts with vulgar or inappropriate messages
- Shorts/pants with writing on the seat
- Bare midriffs
- Oversized pants
- Bare feet
- Short shorts and skirts (Cross Creek student's shorts and skirts must be fingertip length or longer)
- Uncleanliness
- Bandanas
- Signs, symbols, names, or other items that can be associated with any street gang.

The principal or designee shall have the final say in determining if an item is inappropriate or gang-related.

Parent Dress

All parents and adults visiting the campus should dress in a manner appropriate for our program and follow the same guidelines that are expected of students. Do not wear sleep attire or clothing that exposes undergarments or private body parts. Low-cut tops and extremely short skirts or shorts are not appropriate for the school environment. Clothing that advertises alcohol or drugs is not allowed on campus. Any parent dressed inappropriately will be asked to leave campus.

All guidelines are subject to the interpretation of the administration.

ELEMENTARY TRANSITION PLAN

It is important for children to have smooth transitions between schools. Every school within our school system works to provide opportunities for students to visit and participate in special events at their future schools. The Thomas County Elementary Schools have scheduled visits for students rising to the next grade level. These events help to alleviate anxiety about transitioning to a new building for both students and parents.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

The school will do everything possible to ensure the safety of your child. Monthly fire drills and periodic lockdowns & severe weather drills will be held.

Fire Drills will be held monthly. Students are to file out of the building to the designated area where their teacher will take roll. Students remain in place until an all-clear is given.

Lockdown Drills

A soft lockdown means all exterior & classroom doors are secured but class activities continue as scheduled. In the event of a hard lockdown, all exterior and classroom doors are secured & staff and students remain in place until further notice is given.

Severe Weather Drills

When a tornado watch is issued, staff secures all exterior doors & students remain indoors, and continue to conduct the day as usual. A tornado warning is issued when tornadic activity has been spotted in the vicinity. Staff & students transition to safety zones and remain in place until an all-clear has been given.

Another part of our safety program is a sign-in pass policy for all visitors to enter the building. Please come by the office to get a pass before going to any other part of the building. Visitors on campus without an appropriate pass will be asked to report to the office to sign in and obtain a pass. Be prepared to show a photo ID to enter the building or sign out a student.

LOST AND FOUND

Please **label all clothing and personal items** before they leave your home. Unlabeled articles that are found are put into a designated lost/found area. Parents are encouraged to check this frequently. Unclaimed items will periodically be donated to charity. **The school is not responsible for any lost, stolen, or misplaced items belonging to students.** We will, however, do our best to help you locate them. **Please do not let students bring special or expensive toys to school that could be lost or stolen.**

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

Each child's belongings, including school supplies, sweaters, jackets or coats, should be plainly marked to avoid loss or exchange. Students are not allowed to sell or trade items at school. Toys, small gadgets, or electronic devices may **not** be brought to school except with the permission of the teacher. The school is not responsible for any loss of personal property and will not assume liability. At the teacher's discretion, these items will be taken by the teacher or administrator & held until the parent can come to get them.

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Promotion requirements are determined by the State Board of Education and the Thomas County Board of Education. Criteria for promotion include passing course grades and acceptable scores on state-mandated criterion-referenced tests.

Grade placement of students in grades 1 through 4 who have repeated a grade previously and who are currently failing to meet criteria for promotion including state promotion requirements for grades 3, 5, & 8 will be handled on an individual basis.

Hand-In-Hand Students:

Students will be promoted from Pre-Kindergarten to Kindergarten unless there is a successful appeal to Bright from the Start, Georgia's Department of Early Care and Learning.

Students will be promoted from Kindergarten to Grade 1 unless there is a successful appeal to the school administration.

Garrison Pilcher Students:

Students in grades 1 and 2 will be promoted according to the student's classroom achievement (class grades), benchmark, and screener assessments.

Cross Creek Students:

Students in grades 3 and 4 must pass both reading and math and one of the following courses: language, science, and social studies. Summative assessments that assess mastery of GSE will be considered as part of the subject grade.

The Georgia Milestones Assessment in grade 3 will be used in making promotion, placement, and retention decisions for students.

REPORT CARDS

Midterm progress reports are sent home with students in grades 1-4. Report cards are sent home with students in grades K-4 at the end of every nine weeks. Both will indicate the progress a student has made during the grading period. Pre-K students will receive progress reports in December and May at Student-Led Conferences.

WITHDRAWAL FROM SCHOOL

When withdrawing a student from a Thomas County School, it is necessary for the parent to notify both the teacher and the office. Withdrawal forms must be completed, bills paid, lunch charges (if applicable) paid, and all electronic devices, textbooks, and library books returned before a student's record is cleared. If a parent comes to school to withdraw a child, he/she should go to the office, not the classroom.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS & SERVICES

BUSINESS EDUCATION EXCHANGE

Goals of the Business and Education Exchange:

- to increase student achievement using incentives
- to promote good school attendance
- to increase awareness of career opportunities and work ethics within the community
- to improve communication between school, home, and work
- to improve parental involvement
- to introduce students to community service
- to establish community relationships

GUIDANCE, GAP, & COUNSELING SERVICES

Guidance, GAP, and counseling considers the physical and emotional development of students and offers age-appropriate support in the form of preventive counseling, responsive services, academic and career support.

If you have concerns about your child's adjustment to school or other issues, you may contact your child's school counselor.

If your child is having any difficulty identified at school, we will refer him/her to the counselor. The school counselor will contact you if your child has been referred for services.

HOSPITAL/HOMEBOUND

Hospital/Homebound (HHB) services are designed to provide continuity of educational services between the classroom and home or hospital for students in Georgia public schools whose medical needs, either physical or psychiatric, do not allow them to attend school for a limited period of time.

HHB instruction may be used to supplement the classroom program for students with health impairments whose conditions may interfere with regular school attendance (e.g., students receiving dialysis or radiation/chemotherapy or students with other serious health conditions). Students must be enrolled in a public school in Georgia in order to receive HHB services.

HHB services are not intended to supplant regular school services & are by design temporary. The student must anticipate being absent from school for a minimum of ten consecutive or intermittent school days due to a medical or psychiatric condition. The student's inability to attend school for medical or psychiatric reasons must be certified by a licensed physician or licensed psychiatrist who is currently treating the student for the diagnosis presented.

For HHB forms or questions contact your school counselor or:

Chris Huckans, District of Student Services
(229) 225-4380
(229) 225-4376 fax
chuckans@tcjackets.net (email)

MEDIA CENTER

Students will be allowed to check out a book from the school media center to take home. When a student returns the book, he or she may check out another one. Students will not be permitted to check out a book unless all titles checked out to that student have been returned to the library. Computers are also available for students and parents to use in our media centers. The media specialist is in charge of the library. The media specialist will host 2 Book Fairs during the year to help you build your child's library. We do not charge fines for late books; however, parents will be charged the replacement cost for books that are lost or damaged.

NURSE/CLINIC

Each elementary school has a full-time nurse who will assist your child during illness or injury at school. Parents will be notified when a child is sick or complaining of continuous discomfort or pain. The CDC considers a fever to be 100.4° F or higher.

Students must be fever-free and symptom-free for **24 hours** before returning to school. ***It is vital to always have up-to-date telephone numbers where a parent, relative, or friend can be reached at all times.***

If your telephone number changes, please inform your child's teacher and the office as soon as possible. In case of an emergency and a parent cannot be found, an ambulance will be called and your child will be transported to the hospital.

The cost of the ambulance will be the parent's responsibility. A new medical information card should be filed with the nurse every year and updated when any changes occur. This card provides information about your child's medical history and personal contact information. A medical record is kept on your child throughout his education in the Thomas County School System and follows him/her to the next grade level. Parents of students who are being treated for epilepsy or a seizure disorder may provide the school with a seizure action plan. If you would like more information regarding how to develop a seizure action plan for your student, please contact the school nurse.

Medication

If it is necessary for a student to take any form of medication at school, a signed permission sheet from the nurse's office must be filled out before the medication can be given.

All medication must be checked in at the office in its original container with the labeled dosage/directions. All medication will be kept in and dispensed through the nurse's office. All medication should be in the original medication container, labeled and dated properly. Parents are encouraged to give medication at home whenever possible. When sending temporary medication, please only bring what is needed to be given during school hours (ex.-five days of antibiotics. We need five pills.). The nurse has the right to refuse to give any medication that is questionable or expired.

Medication should NOT be transported by children.

The Thomas County School System will not be held responsible for any medication lost by a student while transporting medication to school. Parents have the responsibility to inform the school of any changes in medications or medical conditions.

Any student possessing prescription or over-the-counter medication not in accordance with these guidelines will be considered in violation of the School District's drug policy and shall be subject to the discipline set forth in the student code of conduct and/or the student/parent handbook.

A student for whom the school has on file supporting medical documentation may carry at all times with parental/guardian permission inhalers for asthma, auto-injectable epinephrine for allergic reactions, ready-to-use glucagon, and all necessary supplies and equipment to perform monitoring and treatment functions authorized by the student's diabetes medical management plan or medication and supplies authorized by the student's seizure action plan.

Students authorized to self-administer such medications shall be instructed not to permit any other student to handle, possess, or otherwise attempt to use his/her medication.

Students shall be informed that violations of such instructions will be dealt with in accordance with the student code of conduct.

In order for the student to carry and self-administer such medications, or in order for the school to store and administer the medication for students who are unable to self-administer because of age or any other reason, parents must provide a written statement from a licensed physician confirming that the student is able to self-administer the medication, if applicable, and written permission from the parent for the nurse or designated employee to consult with the doctor regarding any questions that may arise concerning the medication.

Such permission shall release the school district and its employees and agents from civil liability for administering such medication to students, or if the self-administering student suffers an adverse reaction as a result of self-administration of such medication. The terms of this paragraph may be met through a student's diabetes medical management plan developed and implemented pursuant to state law.

Parents are encouraged to provide the schools with duplicate medication and supplies in the event a student is unable to self-administer or fails to bring the medication or equipment to school. Nurses or other school employees are authorized to administer auto-injectable epinephrine, if available, to a student who is having an actual or perceived anaphylactic adverse (allergic) reaction, regardless of whether the student has a prescription for epinephrine. Such persons are also authorized to administer levalbuterol sulfate, if available, to a student in perceived respiratory distress, regardless of whether the student has a prescription for levalbuterol sulfate. Any school employee who in good faith administers or chooses not to administer such medication to a student in such circumstances shall be immune from civil liability.

All medications other than the exceptions listed in this policy, whether prescription or over-the-counter, may be administered only in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the principal of each school.

Please do not send children to school on the buses when they have an upset stomach or other illnesses that could cause them to get sick on the bus. No child should ever be sent to school if he/she has a fever. If a child gets sick on the bus ride to school, a parent or guardian will be called immediately to come and pick the child up.



Children will be sent home due to illness at the discretion of the school nurse and/or the school administration.

Head Lice

To prevent the spread of head lice, the Thomas County School System will abide by the following procedures:

- When a student is found with head lice, the student will be sent home with a letter containing recommendations for treatment. If the student has siblings in the school system, the siblings will also be examined.
- The school nurse/designee will examine every student readmitted to school. If the student is free of lice, the student will be given a written clearance to return to class.

The school nurse/designee will re-examine the student within 7-10 days or as often as deemed necessary by the nurse.

- After a student is absent more than two days, the principal or his/her designee should notify the family and urge them to get the student treated and back in school.
- Students found with head lice will not be allowed to ride the bus or participate in school activities until cleared by the nurse.

The School-Based Health Center and school nurses have information that can help parents learn how to get rid of head lice. Parents are encouraged to set up an appointment time with the clinic or school nurse for help.

PARENT CONFERENCES

Parents are encouraged to confer with teachers on a regular basis concerning the progress of the student. Conferences must be held before school, after school, or during the teacher's planning period. Teachers will not be able to leave class to meet with parents. Parents may make appointments for conferences by calling the school office and leaving a message for the teacher. Teachers will return phone calls as soon as possible. At Hand-In-Hand, student led conferences will be held twice yearly (in the fall and in the spring). Your child's teacher will be working with you on the best time to have your conference. **STUDENTS MUST ATTEND WITH THE PARENT.** During your conference, a portfolio of work samples, pictures, and anecdotal notes will be shared with parents.

PARENT PORTAL

We offer all parents the opportunity to sign up for Parent Portal online. Please go to www.thomas.k12.ga.us and click on the "For Parents" tab. Follow the three steps under the "Registering for Parent Portal" area. On the registration page, you will need to provide your child's Social Security number and his/her birth date before receiving an activation GUID code. Your child's ID number is his/her lunch number. Once you receive your activation code, you will need to write it down so that you can key it in on a linked page. At this time, the system will not let you copy and paste the code.

After writing down your code, click on the "Parent Portal" link. You will be directed to a green Infinite Campus screen. Next, open "HELP" in the bottom right corner of the screen. Click on the link that states "If you have been assigned a Campus Portal Activation Key." Enter your personal GUID code in the boxes provided. Once this is completed, you will need to create a username and password.

Now that you have your username and password, in the future, you will simply go to <https://www.thomas.k12.ga.us> click "For Parents" then click "Infinite Campus Portal Login".

An Infinite Campus Parent Portal App is also available at the App Store or Google Play store. Search for Infinite Campus Parent Portal and download the app. Type Thomas County in the District Name and the state of Georgia. Once this is entered, you will be able to use your existing username and password.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Sunshine Horne (229-225-4380).

PARENT'S RIGHT TO KNOW

We encourage all parents to be active participants in the education of their children and wish to share related information as a routine practice. Parents have a right to request information or make inquiries about the topics listed below:

Teacher & Paraprofessional Qualifications

In accordance with Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015, the Thomas County School District will provide, upon request, certain information on the professional qualifications of classroom teachers and paraprofessionals (ESSA Section 1112(e)(1)(A)). Parents may request the following information:

1. Whether the student's teacher—
 - has met State qualifications and licensing criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction;
 - is teaching under emergency or another provisional status through which State qualification or licensing criteria have been waived; and,
 - is teaching in the field or discipline of the certification of the teacher.
2. Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

If you desire information concerning the qualifications of your child's teacher(s), please contact the principal at your child's school.

Non-Professionally Qualified Teachers

Each Thomas County School will provide to the student's parent or guardian a timely notice that his or her student has been assigned or taught for four or more consecutive weeks by a teacher who has NOT met subject or grade level requirements for professional qualifications (ESSA Section 1112(e)(1)(A)).

Student Achievement

Each Thomas County School will provide parents with information on their child's level of achievement on each of the state academic assessments (ESSA Section 1111(2)(B)(x)).

PARENT RESOURCES TITLE I

The following schools are classified as Title I Schools: Hand-in-Hand Primary, Garrison-Pilcher Elementary, Cross Creek Elementary, Thomas County Middle, The Renaissance Center for Academic and Career Development, and Bishop Hall Charter School. Each of the previously listed schools qualifies as Title I schools based on the number of students meeting federal poverty guidelines. Title I schools are required to use research-based teaching strategies and programs to improve student achievement. Staff must be professionally qualified and must be involved in ongoing staff development. School staff studies data gathered from student assessments, parent surveys, and staff surveys to guide the school's Improvement Plan. Title I Family Engagement Plans are distributed electronically to every parent at the beginning of the school year. The plan will also be attached to the school's web page. A parent advisory panel meets twice a year to discuss school accomplishments and areas for improvement. Each Title I school has a parent resource room that houses information pertaining to child health, discipline, development, and other topics relevant to the ages of the students at that school. Additionally, a variety of parent books are available for check-out in the media center. If you need information that we do not have, please ask the media specialist. In most situations, we are able to secure resources for you to check-out. Copies of our Title I Plans are available for parent review in the school office or online via school websites. Please contact your school's Parent Involvement Coordinator if you need assistance.

PARENT VOLUNTEERING

Parent participation is encouraged at each of our schools (ESSA Section 1116(d)(2)(C)). We encourage parents to participate in their student's school life. An orientation for volunteers is held in the fall of each school year.

If you are interested in volunteering at your child's school, please contact the Parent Involvement Coordinator at that school. He or she will be more than happy to schedule times that are convenient for you and that will not disrupt class schedules.

PARENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Each Title I school will have an annual parent workshop to build parent capacity to support their children. Topics may include academic support, homework help, obtaining school information, behavior management, digital citizenship, standardized test data, or college and career planning. We welcome your input for the planning and evaluation of these events. We will survey participants at the conclusion of each workshop to evaluate workshop quality, obtain feedback and gather suggestions.

COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Thomas County Schools has a complaint procedure that is described in detail on our website: www.tcjackets.net. To access this description, hover over the "Departments" icon, and select the "Federal Programs" link. The complaint procedure is also outlined in our Parent/Student/Teacher Handbooks. In the event that you have a complaint, we wish you to contact the school your child attends and seek assistance from the teacher or administration as an initial point of contact. If you are unable to resolve your concern, you are invited to contact the Superintendent at the Thomas County School Board of Education. If you are still unsatisfied, you may contact the Georgia Department of Education via:

<http://programcomplaint.doe.k12.ga.us/everestwebportal/webform.asp>.

Title I School and District Contact information:

Hand In Hand Primary
Principal, Dee Gaines
(229) 225-3908

Garrison Pilcher Elementary
Principal, Robin Binion
(229) 225-4387

Cross Creek Elementary
Principal, Ashley Lane
(229) 225-3900

Thomas County Middle School
Principal, Clay Stanaland
(229) 225-4394

Bishop Hall Charter School
Principal, Dr. Verna Wiggins
(229) 225-3197

Renaissance Center for
Academic and Career
Development
Principal, Todd Creech
(229) 227-3222

Questions:

For additional information, you may contact Dr. Bob Dechman, Assistant Superintendent of Federal Programs and Accountability, by calling (229) 225-4380, or via email at bdechman@tcjackets.net.

Title IX: Inquiries concerning Title IX (discrimination based on sex) can be directed to the Title IX Coordinator Chris Huckans, Director of Student Services, 200 N. Pinetree Blvd, Thomasville, GA; or (229) 225-4380, or chuckans@tcjackets.net.

SCHOOL BOOSTER ORGANIZATIONS

The purpose of the booster organizations is to encourage and promote the education, care, and nurturing of all children and youth of Thomas County. Schools alone cannot adequately prepare our children for the demands of the future; it is through the involvement of each of us –parents, teachers, friends, and the business community– that we can truly educate and care for all our children.

We believe that we must all work together - sharing ideas and encouraging one another for the betterment of our children.

The elementary school staff and booster officers invite each parent to become part of the boosters at your child's school. Each group will have a variety of projects, fundraisers, and activities throughout the school year. Please look for meeting dates and times in school newsletters and calendars. We look forward to a great year!

SCHOOL COUNCIL

Each school has its own School Council that meets four times a year. Council members include two teachers, the principal, two parent business representatives, and two parents. Council members serve a two year term. School Council meetings are posted on the school calendar.

SCHOOL PICTURES

Individual school pictures will be taken early in the school year. Every student in the Thomas County Elementary Schools will be photographed; however, pictures must be prepaid to receive a packet. Information on the types of picture packets and their cost will be furnished prior to picture day. Fall, Spring, and class pictures will be taken by professional photographers. See the school calendar for your student's picture dates.

SCHOOL NUTRITION

"Building Healthy Bodies.... Ready to Learn." Thomas County Schools Nutrition Program



"Our mission is to be a partner in the educational process by providing quality meals and nutrition education opportunities for students that promote healthy children, READY to LEARN."

The school nutrition program strives to instill healthy habits in all of our students along with promoting good health and academic success. Through good nutrition and healthy habits, every child in Thomas County Schools will be challenged, prepared, and successful. We provide free breakfast and lunch to help your children get the nutrition they need to learn, grow and develop. After school snacks are provided for after school tutorials and enrichment programs. The nutrition goals of the Thomas County School Nutrition Program must be in compliance with the United States Department of Agriculture. Menus must adhere to strict guidelines issued by USDA. The menus must meet USDA nutrition goals when averaged over a school week. Each meal planned must provide the required (USDA) number of food components and food items to meet the nutrient standards for the age/grade group served. (Reference requirements below) Your child's monthly menus are posted on the Thomas County School's website, www.thomas.k12.ga.us.

Lunch Boxes from Home: We request that lunch boxes contain the food components provided below that meet the nutrition standards that the School Nutrition Program is required to offer. If all components are not provided, students will be **encouraged**, but **not required** to get a meal from the cafeteria at no cost to you in addition to their meal from home.

- ½ cup of fruit; fresh or canned with no sugar added
- ¾ cup of vegetable; preferably dark green or red/orange
- 1 - 2 ounces of grain; preferably 100% whole grain
- 1 - 2 ounces of meat/meat alternate
- 1 cup of milk or water

For Pre-K through 4th graders; Maximum average of calories 650, less than 10% of calories from saturated fat, and less than or equal to 1,110 mg of sodium per total meal.

The school nutrition program participates in the Community Eligibility Program (CEP) which allows ALL students in Thomas County Schools to eat breakfast and lunch at **NO COST** to the student. Student meals will continue to be of the highest quality and will provide the necessary nutrients that enable students to be ready for learning.

Adult meal prices are **\$3.75** for lunch and **\$2.75** for breakfast. **Students must have a complete meal before purchasing any extra items/a la carte items. There will be no charging of extra items/a la carte items by students or adults.**

Food/Beverages brought in the cafeteria during the school day: Our local board policy prohibits the sale of non-nutritional foods and beverages during the school day in all areas of the school campus. With this in mind and in order to encourage better nutrition and to develop healthy eating habits, faculty, students, or parents **are not allowed** to bring food to school from outside restaurants anytime during the school day. Of course, lunches from home sent with students in lunch boxes or plain bags are permissible. Healthy food choices are encouraged when parents bring food for school celebrations.

Parties and Celebrations:

When bringing food for celebrations or parties, we strongly encourage healthy food choices, such as those listed below. To assist families in planning a healthy celebration, our school cafeterias can cater to your child's classroom. For more information on food options and ordering, please visit the school nutrition website at www.thomas.k12.ga.us. Homemade goods, including cupcakes & other snacks will not be served to students. Due to the number of food allergies in our schools, we ask that all foods be sealed and have a nutrition information label.

Healthy Party Snacks:

- Pretzels
- Goldfish
- Cheese Crackers
- Animal Crackers
- Trail Mix
- Yogurt Parfaits
- Light Popcorn
- Applesauce or Fruit Cups
- Raw Veggies/Low Fat Dip
- Graham Crackers
- Raisins or dried Fruit
- Low Fat Pudding Cups
- String Cheese
- 100% Fruit Snacks
- Canned fruits (in light or own juice)
- English Muffins, Whole Grain
- Rice Cakes

"USDA is an equal opportunity provider."

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEM OF SUPPORTS (MTSS)

If a student is having difficulty academically or behaviorally or needs enrichment above and beyond what the classroom teacher can provide, he or she will be referred to the MTSS team. The MTSS team includes all staff directly involved with the child and specialized staff in the area where the child is experiencing difficulty or need. The MTSS team always includes the parent of the child. Through the MTSS process, structures and programs are put in place to assist the child in learning academic skills and appropriate behaviors.

The MTSS team will meet as frequently as needed to review student progress and review the effectiveness of interventions put in place by the team.

All elementary schools have the following specialists that serve as resources and provide direct services to students: Speech Therapists, School psychologists, School Counselors, Reading interventionists, Behavior interventionists, Special Education Teachers, and School Nurses. We also have access to Physical and Occupational Therapists that contract with our school system. If your child is referred to the MTSS team, you will be invited to attend the meetings. You will be included in all decision-making regarding the education and success of your child.

SECTION 504

The implementing regulations for Section 504 as set out in 34 CFR Part 104 provide parents and/or students with the following rights:

1. Your child has the right to an appropriate education designed to meet his or her individual educational needs as adequately as the needs of non-disabled students.

2. Your child has the right to free educational services, except for those fees that are imposed on non-disabled students or their parents.
3. Insurers and similar third parties who provide services not operated by or provided by the recipient are not relieved from an otherwise valid obligation to provide or pay for services provided to a disabled student.
4. Your child has a right to participate in an educational setting (academic and nonacademic) with non-disabled students to the maximum extent appropriate to his or her needs.
5. Your child has a right to facilities, services, and activities that are comparable to those provided for non-disabled students.
6. Your child has a right to an evaluation prior to a Section 504 determination of eligibility.
7. You have the right to not consent to the school system's request to evaluate your child.
8. You have the right to ensure that evaluation procedures, which may include testing, conform to the requirements of 34 CFR 104.35.
9. You have the right to ensure that the school system will consider information from a variety of sources as appropriate, which may include aptitude and achievement tests, grades, teacher recommendations and observations, physical conditions, social or cultural background, medical records, and parental recommendations.
10. You have the right to ensure that placement decisions are made by a group of persons, including persons knowledgeable about your child, the meaning of the evaluation data, the placement options, and the legal requirements for the least restrictive environment and comparable facilities.
11. If your child is eligible under Section 504, your child has a right to periodic reevaluations, including prior to any subsequent significant change of placement.
12. You have the right to notice prior to any actions by the school system regarding the identification, evaluation, or placement of your child.
13. You have the right to examine your child's educational records.
14. You have the right to an impartial hearing with respect to the school system's actions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement, with the opportunity for parental participation in the hearing and representation by an attorney.
15. You have the right to receive a copy of this notice and a copy of the school system's impartial hearing procedure upon request
16. If you disagree with the decision of the impartial hearing officer (school board members and other district employees are not considered impartial hearing officers), you have a right to a review of that decision according to the school system's impartial hearing procedure.
17. You have the right to, at any time, file a complaint with the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

Safeguards:

1. Overview: Any student, parent, or guardian may request an impartial hearing due to the school system's actions or inactions regarding your child's identification, evaluation, or educational placement under Section 504. Requests for an impartial hearing must be in writing to the school system's Section 504 Coordinator; however, a grievant's failure to request a hearing in writing does not alleviate the school system's obligation to provide an impartial hearing if the grievant orally requests an impartial hearing through the school system's Section 504 Coordinator. The school system's Section 504 Coordinator will assist the grievant in completing the written Request for a Hearing.

2. Hearing Request: The Request for the Hearing must include the following:

- a. Student name
- b. Address of student
- c. School student is attending
- d. Reason for request for the hearing
- e. Decision objected to
- f. The remedy suggested
- g. Your name and contact information

Within 10 business days of receiving the Request for a Hearing, the 504 Coordinator will acknowledge the Request for a Hearing in writing and schedule a time and place for a hearing. If the written Request from the parent, guardian, or student is incomplete, the 504 Coordinator will tell the grievant what specific information is needed to complete the request. All timelines and processes will stop until the Request for Hearing contains all the above noted information.

3. Mediation: The school system may offer mediation to resolve the issues. Mediation is voluntary and may be terminated at any time. If mediation is terminated without an agreement, procedures for conducting an impartial hearing will be followed without an additional Request for a Hearing.

4. Hearing Procedures:

- a. The 504 Coordinator will obtain an impartial review official and schedule a hearing within 45 calendar days unless a continuance is granted by the impartial review official.
- b. A continuance request in writing to all parties may be granted by the hearing officer with good cause.
- c. The grievant will have an opportunity to examine the child's educational records prior to the hearing.
- d. The grievant may be represented by legal counsel at his/her own expense. The grievant may participate, speak, examine witnesses, and present information at the hearing. If represented by legal counsel at the hearing, the grievant must notify the 504 Coordinator in writing at least 10 calendar days before the hearing. Failure to do so will constitute good cause for continuance of the hearing.
- e. The burden of proof will be on the grievant. When warranted by circumstances or law, the impartial hearing officer may require the school or 504 Coordinator to defend its position/decision regarding the claims (i.e. A school or 504 Coordinator shall place a disabled student in the regular educational environment operated by the system unless it is demonstrated by the school or 504 Coordinator that the education of the person in the regular environment with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily 34 C.F.R. §104.34). One or more representatives of the school system, who may be an attorney, will attend the hearing to present the evidence and witnesses, respond to the grievant testimony, and answer questions posed by the review official.
- f. The impartial review official shall not have the power to subpoena witnesses, and the strict rules of evidence shall not apply to hearings.
- g. The impartial review official shall have the authority to issue pre-hearing instructions, which may include requiring the parties to exchange documents and names of witnesses to be present
- h. The impartial review official shall determine the weight to be given any evidence.
- i. The hearing shall be closed to the public.
- j. The issues of the hearing will be limited to those raised in the written or oral request for the hearing.
- k. Witnesses will be questioned directly by the party who calls them. Cross-examination of witnesses will be allowed. The impartial review official, at his or her discretion, may allow further examination of witnesses or ask questions of the witness.

- l. Testimony shall be recorded by court reporting or audio recording at the expense of the system. All documentation related to the hearing shall be retained by the system.
- m. Unless otherwise required by law, the impartial review official shall uphold the action of the school system unless the grievant can prove that a preponderance of the evidence supports his or her claim.
- n. Failure of the grievant to appear at a scheduled hearing unless prior notification of absence was provided & approved by the impartial review official or just cause is shown shall constitute a waiver of the right to a personal appearance before the impartial review official.

5. Decision: The impartial review official shall issue a written determination within 20 calendar days of the date the hearing concluded. The determination of the impartial review official shall not include any monetary damages or the award of any attorney's fees.

6. Review: If not satisfied with the decision of the impartial review official, any party may pursue any right of review, appeal, cause of action or claim available to them under the law or existing state or federal rules or regulations.

Notice of Rights of Students and Parents:

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, commonly referred to as "Section 504," is a nondiscrimination statute enacted by the United States Congress. The purpose of Section 504 is to prohibit discrimination and to assure that disabled students have educational opportunities and benefits equal to those provided to non-disabled students.

For more information regarding Section 504, or if you have questions or need additional assistance, please contact the system's Section 504 Coordinator at the following address:

Beth Weiss
504 Coordinator/School Psychologist
Garrison Pilcher Elementary School
(229)-225-4387

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Students with disabilities are to be educated in the least restrictive environment. The determination of the least restrictive environment is different for each child based on his/her disability and is determined by each child's educational team. The team must at least include the parent, a special education teacher, a regular education teacher, and a school system designated LEA. Often, the least restrictive environment is determined to be the regular classroom setting. When a child with disabilities is in the regular classroom setting with support from special education, we call this "inclusion."

All students, regular and special education, benefit from having additional staff in the classroom. Because special educators serve all students in the regular education classroom, it is often not obvious which students have actually qualified for the additional support. Again, special education services are determined on an individual basis.

WATER SAFETY/SWIMMING LESSONS

The American Academy of Pediatrics cautions that drowning is one of the top causes of injury and death in children each year in the United States. Parents can help prevent these tragedies by enrolling children in water safety courses & swimming lessons. In our community, the Everett-Milton & Butler-Mason YMCA locations offer swim lessons with year-round and seasonal options. Private, semi-private, and group lessons are available. Please contact the YMCA (229-226-3446) for more information.

This information is provided in accordance with H.B. 402, also known as the Edna Mae McGovern Act.

SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES

TRAINING AND MONITORING PROCEDURES FOR ASSESSMENTS

All faculty members involved with the administration or supervision of testing participate in training sessions to orient them to their duties and responsibilities concerning testing. The system test coordinator provides orientation and training to each school test coordinator in August. Following this training, each school test coordinator conducts the initial training session for the school faculty. Test examiners and test proctors receive copies of their roles which delineate the “must do” activities and “must not do” activities. Signed copies of this information are collected and sent in after school officials train all staff.

The system test coordinator provides a detailed orientation and training session prior to each standardized test administration. School test coordinators are prompted to review state training webinar sessions as appropriate. Sign-in sheets and agendas serve as documentation of system training sessions for each testing program. Sessions specify district requirements for security and timelines for the return of materials.

School test coordinators are responsible for conducting training sessions with their staff members prior to the administration of any standardized test. The content of this training will specify state regulations for test administration as well as school procedures and daily schedules for the duration of the testing window.

School test coordinators will document staff participation in school-based training sessions prior to the test administration period.

School test coordinators stay in contact with the system test coordinator on an as needed basis throughout the test administration period. School test coordinators are responsible for reporting irregularities promptly.

The system test coordinator will make periodic site visits to observe testing conditions, routines, and processes. The system test coordinator will report any observations to the principal and or the superintendent in order to ensure corrective actions are implemented if needed.

FRAUD AND ETHICS POLICY

To ensure the reporting of suspicion of fraudulent activity, the Thomas County School Superintendent and Board of Education ensure employees, clients, and providers have confidential channels to report suspicious activities.

- ❖ Fraud: A false representation of a matter of fact, whether by words or by conduct, or by concealment of that which should have been disclosed, that is used for the purpose of misappropriating property and/or monetary funds from federal grants or other sources.

The Thomas County School District thoroughly and expeditiously investigate any reported cases of suspected fraud to determine if disciplinary, financial recovery and/or criminal action should be taken.

All reports of suspected fraud must be handled under strict confidentiality. Only those directly involved in the investigation should be given information. Informants may remain anonymous but should be encouraged to cooperate with the investigators and should provide as much detail and evidence of the alleged fraudulent act as possible.

Procedures and Responsibilities:

1. Anyone suspecting fraud concerning federal or other programs should report their concerns to the Superintendent at 229-225-4380. In the event the allegation of fraud involves the Superintendent, an employee may report his or her suspicions directly to the chairman of the Thomas County Board of Education. Contact information for the Thomas County Board Chairman may be found on the school system’s website.
2. Any employee of the Thomas County Board of Education (temporary staff, full-time staff and/or contractors) who receives a report of suspected fraudulent activity must report this information within the next business day to the superintendent or chairman of the Thomas County Board of Education at 229-225-4380. Employees have the responsibility to report suspected fraud. All reports can be made in confidence.

3. The Thomas County School District shall conduct investigations of employees, providers, contractors, or vendors as necessary.
4. If necessary, employees will be contacted for additional information.
5. Periodic communication through meetings should emphasize the responsibilities and channels to report suspected fraud.

AHERA NOTICE

A written Asbestos Management Plan is available that documents inspection and surveillance activities, known and presumed asbestos-containing materials in the building, records of asbestos-related building material disturbances and response activities, and post-response documentation. The Asbestos Management Plan is located in the main school office and at the Thomas County Board of Education and is available for review by parents, legal guardians, teachers, and other school personnel, representatives of EPA, representatives of the State, and the public. The designated person for the Thomas County School System's AHERA program is Dr. Jim Rehberg, and he can be contacted by telephone at 229-584-9164, or via email at jrehberg@tcjackets.net.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES STATEMENT

It shall be the policy of the Thomas County Board of Education not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, religion, creed or disability in educational programs and activities, in employment or recruitment for employment, admission to facilities, or in any related policies, practices or benefits.

Notification of Provisions of Georgia's "Compulsory Student Attendance Law" (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1)

Georgia law requires children between the ages of 6 and 16 to be enrolled in and attend school. However, if a child is under 6 and has attended more than 20 days in a public school, he/she is subject to the compulsory attendance law (O.C.G.A. 20-2-150(C)).

A student is considered truant if he/she misses more than five unexcused absences during the school year. Pursuant to O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1, a parent/guardian shall be held responsible for the child's failure to report to school. Potential consequences for parents and/or students include a referral to the District Attorney's office, misdemeanor charges with a fine of not less than \$25.00 and not greater than \$100.00 for each offense, imprisonment for up to 30 days, community service, or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court having jurisdiction may be imposed.

Each day's unexcused absence from school, after the initial five unexcused days, shall constitute a separate offense.

Any applicant who has dropped out of school without graduating and has remained out of school for ten consecutive days and is younger than 18 years of age must be enrolled in and not under expulsion from a public or private school. This suspension is mandated by O.C.G.A. 40-5-22(a.1)(2).

ABSENCES AND EXCUSES POLICY

Definitions:

Truant: Any child subject to compulsory attendance who during the school calendar year has more than five days of unexcused absences. Note: School days missed as a result of an out-of-school suspension shall not count as unexcused days for the purpose of determining student truancy.

Student Attendance Protocol: Procedures to be used in identifying, reporting, investigating, and prosecuting cases of alleged violations of O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1, relating to mandatory school attendance as well as school climate and appropriately addressing the issue with parents and guardians. The protocol shall also include recommendations for policies relating to tardiness.

Student Attendance Committee: A committee established by the chief judge of the superior court of each county for the purpose of ensuring compulsory school attendance, reducing the number of unexcused absences from school, and increasing the percentage of students present to take tests that are required to be administered under the laws of this state.

Excused Absences: Students may be temporarily excused from school:

1. Who are personally ill and attendance in school would endanger their health or the health of others.
2. When in their immediate family there is a serious illness or death, which would reasonably necessitate absence from school.
3. On special and recognized religious holidays observed by their faith.
4. When mandated by order of governmental agencies (pre-induction physical examination for services in armed forces or court order).
5. A student may be excused from school when prevented from such attendance due to conditions rendering attendance impossible or hazardous to his/her health or safety or the safety of others.

6. A student whose parent or legal guardian is in military service in the armed forces of the United States or the National Guard, & such parent or legal guardian has been called to duty for or is on leave from overseas deployment to a combat support postin, shall be granted excused absences, up to a maximum of five school days per school year, for the day or days missed from school to visit with his or her parent or legal guardian prior to such parents or legal guardians deployment or during such parents or legal guardians leave.

When a child is absent from school, the parent will furnish the school with a written excuse within three school days of the absence. The school will require students to present appropriate medical documentation for absences due to illness upon return to school for the purpose of validating that the absence is an excused absence after accepting a parent excuse five times within a semester.

With proper verification, a student may be eligible for hospital/homebound instruction as outlined in State Board of Education Rule 160-4-2-31.

Students who miss an excessive amount of class time (as defined by school rules) may be required to participate in make-up activities as described by the individual schools. The principals shall work with the Superintendent to develop rules for implementing this policy.

Unexcused Absences:

The Thomas County School System will notify the parent, guardian or other person who has control or charge of the student when such student has five unexcused absences. The notice shall outline the penalty and consequences of such absences and that each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense. After two reasonable attempts to notify the parent, guardian, or another person who has charge of the student, the school system shall send a written notice via first-class mail.

The Thomas County School System will provide to the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of each student enrolled in public school a written summary of possible consequences and penalties for failing to comply with compulsory attendance. By September 1 of each school year or within 30 school days of a student's enrollment in the school system, the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of such student shall sign a statement indicating receipt of such written statement of possible consequences and penalties. In addition, students age ten or older by September 1 shall sign a statement indicating receipt of the written statement of possible consequences for non-compliance to the local policy.

Excessive Unexcused Absences:

The following provisions apply to consecutive and non-consecutive unexcused absences during one academic year.

After Three Unexcused Absences: The attendance office or the principal's designee will contact the parent/guardian by telephone, letter, email, parental conference, or any other means of communication deemed necessary. All contacts made will be documented.

After Five Unexcused Absences: The attendance office or principal's designee will notify the parent/guardian by mail, **and** by any other means of communication deemed necessary. The mailed letter and/or contact will serve as the required notification that outlines the penalty and consequences of the student's unexcused absences and that each subsequent absence shall constitute a separate offense. All contacts made will be documented.

After Seven Unexcused Absences: The attendance office or principal's designee will notify the parent/guardian by mail, **and** by any other means of communication deemed necessary. The Counselor/Parent Coordinator will meet or make contact with the parent/guardian and the student. The parent/guardian and student will be informed of the consequences of excessive unexcused absences. Strategies will be discussed to help improve the student's attendance. An attendance plan and contract will be signed and implemented. The Counselor/Parent Coordinator will continue to monitor the student's attendance. The parent/guardian and student will be contacted for non-compliance of the plan and contract. All contacts made will be documented.

After Ten Unexcused Absences: A mandatory attendance meeting will be scheduled between the parent/guardian, the student, and the grade-level assistant principal. A plan that contains specific strategies to help improve the student's attendance will be created and signed.

The parent and the student will also be reminded of the consequences of continued unexcused absences. The student's attendance will continue to be monitored. The parent/guardian and student will be contacted for non-compliance with the plan and contract. All contacts made will be documented.

After Thirteen Unexcused Absences: The parent/guardian and/or student may be referred to the Thomas County School System's truant officer if the student continues to accrue unexcused absences. After the student has been referred to the truant officer, the school will continue to monitor the student's attendance and continue to use school-based interventions to help prevent continued unexcused absences. The school will also continue to inform the parent/guardian, the student, and the truant officer of any continued unexcused absences by any means of communication deemed necessary. All contacts will be documented.

Based upon the determination of the truant officer, the parent/guardian and/or student may be referred to the Community-Based Risk Reduction Team (CBRRT).

Community-Based Risk Reduction Team

The Thomas County Board of Education has adopted the Community-Based Risk Reduction Team (CBRRT) as a sub-committee of the Thomas County Schools/Thomasville City Schools Student Attendance Protocol Committee.

The CBRRT was created in an effort to help improve school attendance and to provide early community intervention for students who are at risk of becoming delinquent, unruly, or deprived.

The CBRRT includes representatives from the following community agencies: the District Attorney's Office, the Department of Juvenile Justice, the Department of Family and Children Services, GA Pines Mental Health, the Vashti Center, the Thomas County Sheriff's Department, the Thomasville Police Department, the Thomas County School System, and the Thomasville City School System. Upon encountering chronic absences and/or tardies, along with other matters which may constitute educational deprivation, the Thomas County School System's designee may refer a student to the CBRRT. The team of school and community agency representatives will hold a scheduled mandatory meeting for the parent/legal guardian to attend.

The student is also mandated to attend the CBRRT meeting if he/she is in grades 4th-12th. The meeting will be held in the Thomas County Judicial Center located at 325 N. Madison St. in Thomasville, GA, and the parent/legal guardian will receive prior notification of the meeting's scheduled date and time.

The CBRRT will prepare a multi-agency intervention plan with the parent and student that will address factors that may be negatively impacting the student's education.

If the parent and/or student fail(s) to attend the mandatory CBRRT meeting, or if the parent and/or student continue(s) to be non-compliant, then the CBRRT may recommend that the District Attorney's Office proceed with an educational deprivation petition in the Thomas County Juvenile Court or criminal prosecution in the Thomas County State Court for the parent/legal guardian and/or prosecution in the Thomas County Juvenile Court or any other court having jurisdiction for the student.

Withdrawals

The Thomas County School Board authorizes the schools to withdraw a student who:

1. has missed more than 10 consecutive days of unexcused absences;
2. is not subject to compulsory school attendance;
3. is not receiving instructional services from the local school system through homebound instruction or instructional services required by the federal Individual with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); or
4. is subject to compulsory attendance if the local superintendent or designee has determined the student is no longer a resident of the local school system or is enrolled in a private school or home study program. Students shall be withdrawn retroactively to the first day of the consecutive absences.

BULLYING

The Board of Education believes that all students can learn better in a safe school environment. Behavior that infringes on the safety of students will not be tolerated. Bullying, as the term is defined in Georgia law, of a student by another student is strictly prohibited. Such prohibition shall be included in the Student Code of Conduct for all schools within the school system.

Bullying is defined as follows:

As an act that is:

1. Any willful attempt or threat to inflict injury on another person, when accompanied by an apparent present ability to do so;
2. Any intentional display of force such as would give the victim reason to fear or expect immediate bodily harm; or
3. Any intentional written, verbal, or physical act that a reasonable person would perceive as being intended to threaten, harass, or intimidate, that:
 - Causes another person substantial physical harm within the meaning of Code Section 16-5-23.1 or visible bodily harm as such term is defined in Code Section 16-5-23.1;
 - Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education;

- Is so severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating; or threatening educational environment; or
- Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

The term applies to acts that occur on school property, in school vehicles, at designated school bus stops, or at school-related functions or activities, or by use of data or software that is accessed through a computer, computer system, computer network, or other electronic technology of a local school system.

The term also applies to acts of cyberbullying that occur through the use of electronic communication, whether or not the electronic act originated on school property or with school equipment, if the electronic communication (1) is directed specifically at students or school personnel, (2) is maliciously intended for the purpose of threatening the safety of those specified or substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school, and (3) creates a reasonable fear of harm to the students' or school personnel's person or property or has a high likelihood of succeeding in that purpose.

Electronic communication includes but is not limited to, any transfer of signs, signals, writings, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic, photo-electronic, or photo-optical system.

Procedures may be developed at each school encouraging a teacher or other school employee, student, parent, guardian, or another person who has control or charge of a student, either anonymously or in the person's name, at the person's option, to report or otherwise provide information on bullying activity. Any teacher or other school employee who, in the exercise of his or her personal judgment and discretion, believes he or she has reliable information that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that someone is a target of bullying is encouraged to immediately report it to the school principal. Any report will be appropriately investigated by the administration based on the nature of the complaint in a timely manner to determine whether bullying has occurred, whether there are other procedures related to illegal harassment or discrimination that should be implemented and what other steps should be taken. Any report of retaliation for reporting bullying will also be investigated and addressed as called for in this policy and in accordance with school procedures.

Acts of bullying shall be punished by a range of consequences through the progressive discipline process, as stated in the Code of Conduct.

However, upon a finding by the disciplinary hearing officer, panel, or tribunal that a student in grades 6-12 has committed the offense of bullying for the third time in a school year, the student shall be assigned to an alternative school.

Upon a finding by a school administrator that a student has committed an act of bullying or is a victim of bullying, the administrator or designee shall notify the parent, guardian, or other person having control or charge of the student by telephone call or through written notice, which may be done electronically.

Students and parents will be notified of the prohibition against bullying and the penalties for violating the prohibition by posting information at each school and by including such information in the student/parent handbooks.

CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

All employees of the Board of Education, as well as persons who attend to a child pursuant to their duties as a volunteer for the school system, who have a reason or cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred, shall notify the principal or the school system's designee, who shall report such abuse immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe that suspected child abuse has occurred, in accordance with Georgia law and the protocol for handling child abuse cases for Thomas County, Georgia. Under no circumstances shall the principal or designee to whom a report of child abuse has been made exercise any control, restraint, modification or make any other change to the information provided by a mandated reporter, although the reporter may be consulted prior to the making of a report and may provide any additional, relevant and necessary information when making the report.

GANGS

The Thomas County Board of Education established this policy to eliminate or prevent the influence and activities of gangs in schools. For the purposes of this policy, a "gang" is defined as any group or association, whether formal or informal, which encourages, solicits, promotes, urges, counsels, furthers, advocates, condones, assists, causes, advises, procures, or abets any illegal or disruptive activity or behavior of any kind, whether on school campuses, during school-related events, or in the community. A gang member is defined as any individual who, as a representative of or on behalf of, participates in any of the activities associated with gangs. Gangs which initiate, advocate, or promote activities that threaten the safety or well-being of persons or property are harmful to the education process.

The use of hand signals, graffiti, or the presence of any apparel, tattoos, jewelry, accessories, or manner of grooming which, by virtue of its color, arrangement, trademark, symbol, or any other attribute indicates or implies membership or affiliation with such a group or disrupts the school environment is prohibited. Such behaviors are contrary to educational objectives and promote an atmosphere where unlawful acts or violations of school regulations may occur.

No student will be allowed to wear, display, or carry any type of clothing, apparel, tattoos, article, or manner of grooming which indicates or implies membership/affiliation with a gang or gang activity.

No student will be allowed to exhibit behavior or gestures which symbolize gang membership or cause and/or participate in activities that intimidate or seek to cause bodily harm or affect the attendance of another student.

School officials reserve the right to punish any other gang-related behavior that is subversive to good order and discipline in the schools, even though such behavior is not specifically identified in the preceding rules.

Students who violate this policy may be subject to suspension, arrest, and/or disciplinary hearing referral, which could result in expulsion.

GRADING POLICY

The following grading practices unduly impact the reported accuracy of academic achievement and, therefore, will not be used in Thomas County Schools:

- Extra credit/penalty for nonacademic purposes (i.e. contributing to food drives, participating in fundraisers or dress-up days, returning school-related forms, attending school functions, etc.)
- Extra credit or make-up assignments that are not directly related to the state curriculum
- Extra credit/penalty for spelling, handwriting, or not following directions *unless* directly related to the state curriculum (i.e. using wrong writing utensil, having no name on paper, being unprepared, etc.-School Specific)
- Extra credit/penalty for disciplinary issues (i.e. dress code, sleeping, tardiness, etc.-School Specific)

Please note that since the examples listed are not exhaustive, any questions with regards to grading should be addressed with a school administrator.

HB 1321 – FALSE ACCUSATIONS AGAINST AN EDUCATOR

The Georgia Legislature enacted a law, which became effective July 1, 2008, addressing falsified, omitted, or erroneous reports of inappropriate behavior by educators towards students. The following procedure will be followed:

1. Student will provide a written statement of complaint to the school principal.
2. The school principal will notify the parent/guardian and the superintendent the day the written statement is received.
3. The school principal and the school resource officer will begin to investigate the accusation the day the written statement is received, keeping the teacher, parent/guardian, the superintendent, and law enforcement apprised of all developments.
4. A ruling will be determined within three working days of the receipt of the student's written complaint.
5. If the allegation is substantiated, school system procedures will take place for the discipline of the educator & the reporting to the Professional Standards Commission.
6. If the allegation is deemed unsubstantiated, the student will be suspended for a minimum of five days and can be expelled if deemed necessary by school and system officials. In addition, court ordered community service or any other court sanction may occur for students over ten years of age. Students under ten years of age can be suspended for up to ten days.

HOMELESS STUDENTS POLICY

To the extent practical and as required by federal law through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the Thomas County School System will work with homeless students and their families to provide stability in school attendance and other services. Special attention will be given to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students not currently attending school.

Homeless students will be provided district services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and comparable preschool programs, Title I, similar state programs, special education programs for students with limited English proficiency, vocational and technical education programs, gifted and talented programs, and school nutrition programs.

Homeless students are defined as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including children who experience one or more of the following characteristics:

1. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;

2. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of adequate accommodations;
3. Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
4. Abandoned in hospitals;
5. Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
6. Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations, or similar settings;
7. Migratory children living in conditions described in the previous examples; or
8. Unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Homeless children and unaccompanied youth will be identified through three main sources:

1. School personnel will be trained to inquire about homelessness upon enrollment and withdrawal of students. School personnel will notify the homeless liaison of any students determined to be homeless.
2. School staff will be trained on the identification of children in the class who may be experiencing homelessness and the appropriate procedures to follow.
3. Partnerships will be created between community agencies and the school system to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness. Outreach materials will be provided to partner agencies by the homeless liaison to provide public notice of the rights of homeless students.

Each homeless student has the right to remain at his or her school of origin, to the extent feasible, or to attend school in the attendance area in which he or she is currently residing. Students identified as homeless have the right to immediate enrollment in school. Homeless students are also entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled. If transportation is requested by the parent/guardian, the school shall notify the district liaison.

If a dispute arises over any issue related to the rights of any homeless student, then the student shall be immediately enrolled and provided all services until the dispute is resolved in accordance with federal law. The school must provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its decision and inform him/her of his/her right to appeal with the district homeless liaison. The liaison shall ensure enrollment and appropriate services until the dispute is resolved. All records of disputes shall be kept.

The state-level appeals process will also be provided following the district-level appeal.

Homeless students shall be provided comparable services to other students including the following: transportation, Title I, education services where they meet eligibility criteria, vocation and technical education program, gifted and talented program, and school nutrition.

Upon being identified as homeless, students automatically qualify for free school meals. Title I services should also be made available to all homeless students regardless of the school of enrollment's Title I status.

The district's liaison for homeless students and their families shall coordinate with local social service agencies that provide services to homeless children and youths and their families; other school districts on issues of transportation and records transfers; and state and local housing agencies responsible for comprehensive housing affordability strategies.

The district's liaison will also review and seek revisions to district policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students.

For any concerns regarding the rights of homeless students, please contact the Thomas County School District's Homeless Liaison at (229) 225-4380.

SECLUSION OR RESTRAINT OF STUDENTS

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and staff are safe in school and that students who may have a behavior crisis are free from inappropriate use of physical restraint or seclusion. Thomas County Schools authorizes staff members to use physical restraint in limited situations. As part of the emergency procedures in place in our schools, any student who poses an imminent risk of injury to him/herself or others may be physically restrained by school staff in accordance with Thomas County Board of Education policy. Restraint may be used only under the circumstances specified in this policy.

For a complete explanation of this policy, please go to the web address below.

https://simbli.eboardsolutions.com/SB_ePolicy/SB_PolicyOverview.aspx?S=4154

Informing Parents and Guardians

As part of the emergency procedures in place in our schools, any student who poses an imminent risk of injury to him/herself or others may be physically restrained by school staff in accordance with Thomas County Board of Education policies. This restraint could occur along with other emergency actions such as contacting law enforcement. Significant violations of the law including assaults on students and staff will be reported to law enforcement. Within a reasonable time, not to exceed one school day, parents or guardians will be informed in writing when any of these actions occur.

STUDENT ENROLLMENT POLICY

Accepting Students from Other Systems

Students residing within the corporate limits of Thomasville or in Georgia counties other than Thomas County shall be allowed to attend the Thomas County School System upon:

1. applying to the Board of Education for admission and providing all school records, including discipline, grades, and test scores; and
2. acceptance by the superintendent after reviewing of records.

No student who is under suspension or expulsion from another school system will be accepted for enrollment in the Thomas County School System.

Accepting Students from Out of State

Students from out of state will have to apply and provide all records. Upon acceptance, parents will be required to pay an annual tuition fee per child determined by the finance director and Superintendent based on the average FTE cost for that school year.

Continuing Enrollment of Non-resident Students

The Thomas County Board of Education reserves the right to withdraw and rescind its permission for a nonresident student to attend Thomas County Schools.

STUDENT CODE OF CONDUCT

It is the policy of the Thomas County Board of Education that each school within this system shall develop and implement age-appropriate student codes of conduct designed to improve the student learning environment and which will comply with the state law and State Board of Education Rule 160-4-8-.15. Each code of conduct shall include at a minimum, the requirements specified in State Board Rule 160-4-8-.15 and shall include: student standards of behavior, student support processes, progressive discipline processes, and parental involvement processes. The Student Code of Conduct will be distributed to each student and the parents or guardians and shall be available in each school and classroom. All Student Codes of Conduct shall have evidence of parental involvement in their development and updating, which may occur through school councils.

The Superintendent or designee shall develop procedures to carry out the provisions of this policy. In addition, the principals shall provide notification to students and parents of this prohibition against bullying and the penalties for violating the prohibition by ensuring the posting of such information at each school and by ensuring the inclusion of such information in student and parent handbooks.

TEACHER AUTHORITY TO REMOVE STUDENTS FROM CLASSROOM

It is the policy of the Board of Education that the Superintendent and each school principal shall fully support the authority of teachers to remove a student from the classroom pursuant to Georgia law as cited in § 20-2-738 and § 20-2-751.5(d).

A teacher shall have the authority to manage his or her classroom, discipline students, and refer a student to the principal or designee to maintain discipline in the classroom. Any teacher who has knowledge that a student has exhibited behavior that violates the student code of conduct and repeatedly or substantially interferes with the teacher's ability to communicate effectively with the students in his/her class or with the ability of such student's classmates to learn shall file a report of such behavior with the principal or designee. The principal and teacher shall thereafter follow the procedures established in Georgia law, specifically O.C.G.A. §§ 20-2-737-738.

The Superintendent and/or designee shall ensure that procedures are disseminated as necessary for the implementation of this policy and applicable state laws.

DISCIPLINE

In accordance with O.C.G.A. 20-2-752, the Board of Education authorizes the Superintendent or a designee to establish disciplinary hearing panels comprised of system administrators to hear disciplinary cases which may result in such action that may include but is not limited to expulsion, long-term suspension, short-term suspension, or placement in an alternative educational setting. At the superintendent's discretion, an impartial hearing officer from outside the district may be hired to hear a disciplinary case. No principal and or administrator shall serve on a hearing tribunal for a charge against a student(s) enrolled at that principal's or administrator's school. The Superintendent or designee shall set the time for the hearing.

1. This policy shall apply whenever a student of the Thomas County School System is charged with any one or more of the following disciplinary offenses:

(a) Where a student has committed an alleged assault or battery upon a teacher, other school official or employee, if such teacher or other school official or employee so requests;

(b) Where a student has violated any school or system rule or engaged in any other act of misconduct or insubordination for which the student's principal recommends a suspension or expulsion longer than ten school days.

2. Any instance specified in paragraph 1 is declared to be a violation of school policy and of the school behavior code and subversive to the good order and discipline in the schools.

3. The provisions of subsection (b) of O.C.G.A., 20-2-754 which relates to opportunity for a hearing; notice; counsel; subpoenas; record; and enforcement powers, shall apply to all proceedings under this policy.

When a procedure under this policy is administered, the Superintendent, or designee, shall send a written notice to the student and his/her parents, or other person standing in loco parentis, either in person, by Deputy Sheriff or by United States mail, directed to their last known address, which notice shall include the following:

- (a) A copy of the rule and a description of the act(s) the student allegedly violated.
- (b) A short and plain statement of the matters asserted;
- (c) The maximum penalty which may be administered for this alleged misconduct.
- (d) A tentative time and place for the hearing.
- (e) A copy of this policy.
- (f) A statement that the student has a right to a hearing before long-term suspension, short-term suspension, or expulsion, or other punishment can be invoked. A student may waive a hearing if the student and the student's parents (or in loco parentis) agree in writing prior to or at the time of the hearing to forego the hearing and admit to the charge or charges made and agree to the discipline determined to be administered by the hearing tribunal. A waiver is offered at the discretion of the Principal of the school where the violation occurred.
- (g) A statement that the student is entitled to compulsory process for witnesses upon request to the Superintendent, or designee and that the student is entitled to be represented by legal counsel of the student's choice and expense.

The school system shall ensure that a verbatim electronic or written record of the hearing is made. Any verbatim electronic or written record of the hearing shall be made available to all parties. The hearing tribunal, school administrator, school system's attorney, or student or his/her parents or their legal representative, may question witnesses about any matters logically relevant to the charge against the student and the proper disposition of the matter. The hearing tribunal has the authority to limit unproductively long or irrelevant questioning. Witnesses may include the person filing the complaint and the student. Objections to the sufficiency of the notice and all other procedural and other objections shall be waived unless written notice thereof is filed with the hearing tribunal at or prior to the commencement of the hearing.

The hearing may be postponed until all such defects have been removed and cured. A continuance will be allowed to provide sufficient time for the school to contact their school board attorney to represent the school in the event legal counsel has been secured by the defense.

4. When two or more students are charged with having violated the same rule and have acted in concert, and the facts are basically the same for all such students, a single hearing may be conducted if the hearing tribunal believes that the following conditions exist:

- (a) A single hearing will not likely result in confusion, and
- (b) No student will have his/her interest substantially prejudiced by a group hearing. If, during the hearing, the tribunal finds that a student's interest will be substantially prejudiced by the group hearing, a separate hearing for that student may be ordered.

The hearing tribunal shall determine what, if any, disciplinary action shall be taken. Such action may include but is not limited to, expulsion, long-term suspension, or short-term suspension. Any action taken by the tribunal shall be subject to modification by the local school board on appeal.

The hearing tribunal shall conduct the hearing, and after receiving all evidence, render a decision based solely on the evidence received at the hearing.

The decision shall be in writing and shall be given to all parties within ten (10) days of the close of the record.

5. Any decision by such hearing tribunal may be appealed to the local Board of Education by filing a written notice of appeal within twenty (20) days from the date the decision is rendered. Such notice shall be given by filing the same with the Superintendent, or designee.

6. Any disciplinary action imposed by a tribunal may be suspended by the Superintendent pending the outcome of an appeal to the local Board of Education

7. After an appeal has been filed, the local Board of Education shall review the record and shall render a decision in writing. That decision shall be based solely on the record and shall be given to all parties within ten (10) days from the date it receives the notice of appeal. The Board may take any action it determines appropriate, and any decision of the Board shall be final. All parties shall have the right to be represented by legal counsel at any such appeal and during all subsequent proceedings.

8. The provisions of sub-sections (b) through (f) of O.C.G.A. 20-2-1160, which relate to appeals to the State Board of Education and thereafter for appeals to the Superior Court, shall apply to all proceedings under this policy.

9. Every disciplinary tribunal appointed under this policy shall, in addition to any other requirements imposed by rules and regulations which may have been promulgated pursuant to the O.C.G.A. 20-2-752, ensure that the provisions set forth in O.C.G.A. 20-2-754, are complied with in connection with any procedure hereunder.

CONDUCT OFF SCHOOL GROUNDS

Students are subject to discipline, up to and including suspension and expulsion, for misconduct even if such misconduct occurs off school property and during non-school time.

Students may be disciplined for conduct off campus which could result in the student being charged with a felony and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or disrupts the educational process.

Such discipline may be imposed:

1. if the incident was initiated in the school building or on school grounds; or
2. if the incident occurred or was initiated off school grounds and on non-school time and if after the occurrence there was a reasonable likelihood that return of the student would produce a disruptive effect on the school's educational program or threaten the health, safety, or welfare of students or endanger school property.

Examples of the type of off-school-property misconduct which may result in such discipline include but are not limited to:

1. use, possession, sale, or distribution of dangerous weapons, including but not limited to knives or guns;
2. use, possession, sale, or distribution of controlled substances; or
3. use of physical force against another person.

A hearing tribunal may impose discipline if it is determined that a student's:

1. use, possession, or sale of controlled substances in the community has a reasonable likelihood of endangering the safety of students or employees because of the possibility of sales in the school;
2. use of weapons or violent conduct in the community presents a reasonable likelihood of repeating itself in the school environment, or
3. misconduct in the community has a reasonable likelihood of being continued or repeated in school or of bringing retaliation or revenge into the school for such misconduct off school grounds.

Any student charged with or convicted of the commission of any serious State or Federal crime may be denied the right to attend classes by the Superintendent when the Superintendent determines that the continued presence of the student in the school will have a substantially disruptive effect on the school community. Such denial may be continued until the Superintendent determines the presence of the student will no longer have a disruptive effect. Any student so denied that right to attend school may request a hearing pursuant to the procedures provided for in O.C.G. A. 20-2-754.

The intent of Thomas County School Board policy JD-R is not to punish students or to expose them to "double jeopardy," but rather to ensure the safety of other students, school staff, and school property, and to avoid disruption of the school program.

School administrators must act when there is reasonable cause to believe that a student is guilty of misconduct which is covered by this policy. In the case of criminal misconduct, a decision cannot be delayed until the student has been judged innocent or guilty by a court, a process that often takes months.

When a school principal receives information from any source (students, parents, school staff, law enforcement officers, news media, etc.) indicating that a student is guilty of misconduct which is covered by this policy, he/she will make every reasonable effort to determine the truth of the allegation. Action will be taken if the principal has reasonable cause to believe that the misconduct has occurred.

Judgments will be made by the principal or designee as to:

1. whether the student's misconduct off school grounds results in a reasonable likelihood that the student's return to the regular educational program would produce a disruptive effect or threaten the health, safety, or welfare of students or staff or endanger school property; and
2. the disciplinary action which is appropriate.

In making these judgments, the administrator should consider the welfare of the offending student and, insofar as possible, impose discipline which is corrective rather than punitive.

As with any disciplinary action, the student and/or his/her parents have the right to be heard, to appeal the decision of an assistant principal to the principal, the decision of the principal to the superintendent, and the decision of the superintendent to the Thomas County Board of Education.

The hearing at the first level is to be held as soon as

practical after the alleged misbehavior becomes known to school officials.

WEAPONS IN SCHOOL

The presence of weapons on school property is a threat to the safety of students and school personnel and is a violation of state and federal law.

It is the policy of the Board of Education that a student shall not possess, use, handle or transmit any object that reasonably can be considered a weapon on property or in a building owned or leased by a school district, at a school function, or on a bus or other transportation provided by the school district. Weapons may include, but are not limited to:

1. And handgun, firearm, rifle, shotgun or similar weapon; any explosive compound or incendiary device; or, any other dangerous weapon as defined in O.C.G.A. § 16-11-121, including a rocket launcher, bazooka, recoilless rifle, mortar, or hand grenade.
2. Any hazardous object, including any dirk, bowie knife, switchblade knife, ballistic knife, any other knife having a blade of two or more inches, straight-edge razor, razor blade, spring stick, knuckles, whether made from metal, thermoplastic, wood, or other similar material, blackjack, any bat, club, or other blackjack, any bat, club, or other bludgeon-type weapon, or any flailing instrument consisting of two or more rigid parts connected in such a manner as to allow them to swing freely, which may be known as a nun chahka, nun chuck, nunchaku, shuriken, or fighting chain, or any disc, of whatever configuration, having at least two points or pointed blades which is designed to be thrown or propelled and which may be known as a throwing star or oriental dart, or any instrument of like kind, any nonlethal air gun, and any stun gun or Taser. Such term shall not include any of these instruments used for classroom work authorized by the teacher.

Students who possess any weapon described in paragraph 1 in violation of this policy will be subject to a minimum of one calendar year expulsion. The Superintendent shall have the authority either before or after the student is referred for a tribunal hearing to reduce the mandated one year expulsion under circumstances where the one year expulsion appears excessive to the superintendent. The tribunal team shall also have the authority to modify such expulsion requirement on a case by-case basis in determining the appropriate punishment.

Finally, in any tribunal decision appealed to the board of

education, the board may reduce the mandated punishment but shall consider whether the superintendent and/or tribunal team considered a reduction and any rationale in denying such a reduction. Students who possess other weapons or hazardous objects as described in paragraph 2 will be subject to discipline as specified in the student code of conduct.

Reporting Requirements

Any employee who has reasonable cause to believe that a student possesses a weapon as defined in paragraph 1, is involved in an assault using a weapon as defined in paragraph 2, or is involved in a second offense with a weapon on campus must report such violations to the principal or assistant principal of the school.

If the principal has reasonable cause to believe that such a report is valid, he/she must immediately make an oral report to the Superintendent and to the appropriate law enforcement authority and district attorney.

The student's parents or guardian will be notified immediately of his/her child's involvement in any activity involving weapons.

Students will be given a copy of the Code of Conduct, which includes a statement of prohibited conduct with regard to weapons and possible disciplinary actions.

INTERNET ACCEPTABLE USE FOR STAFF AND STUDENTS

Technology equipment, the Internet, and digital learning tools provide vast, diverse, and unique resources that can be used to transform learning. Our goal in providing these resources to teachers, staff, and students is to provide a unique and personalized learning experience in the Thomas County School System. By promoting quality instruction while using digital tools, educational excellence can be achieved.

In our schools, student access to and use of the Internet will be under teacher direction and monitored as any other classroom activity. The use of technology equipment and digital tools in the Thomas County School System is a privilege that requires all users to act responsibly. All users are accountable for any violations of this Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

As required by the Children's Internet Protection Act, Thomas County Schools has an Internet filtering system in place to protect the students in our schools. The filtering system blocks unacceptable sites that fall into the following categories: violence, pornography, drugs, chat, free email, hate/discrimination, etc. However, it is impossible to control all materials on a global network and an industrious user may discover inappropriate information.

The school system cannot completely prevent the

possibility that some users may access material that is not consistent with the educational mission, goals, and policies of the school system. Violations of the Internet Acceptable Use Policy can result in disciplinary action.

It is the belief of the board that the Internet's advantages far outweigh its disadvantages. The Thomas County Board of Education views information gathered from the Internet in the same manner as reference materials identified by the schools. Specifically, the system supports resources that will enhance the learning environment with directed guidance from the faculty and staff. Exploration of resources, by both teachers and students, within the confines of this Acceptable Use Policy, is encouraged.

All students in Thomas County Schools will receive age-appropriate instruction regarding safe and appropriate online behavior including, but not limited to, electronic interactions with others on social networking sites and in chat rooms; behaviors that may constitute cyberbullying; and how to respond when subjected to cyberbullying. The Common Sense Media Digital Citizenship Curriculum will be taught in all schools.

Guidelines for Internet Usage

- Internet use must be in support of education and research consistent with classroom curriculum.
- Use of the Internet must be consistent with the rules appropriate to any network being used or accessed.
- Unauthorized use of copyrighted material is prohibited. This also includes accessing pirated music, movies, and television shows through our network.
- Threatening or obscene materials are prohibited.
- Distribution of material protected by trade secrets is prohibited.
- Product advertisement and political lobbying are prohibited.
- Commercial activities are not acceptable.
- Non-instructional games are prohibited on school computers.
- Staff and students shall not download software from home or unauthorized programs from the Internet.
- The use of proxy sites and/or VPN services to access Internet sites that are blocked by Thomas County Schools is prohibited.
- Nothing should be posted on the Internet

that would be inappropriate for parents, teachers, students, etc. to read. The Internet is a public forum.

- Any blog post or social networking post, including photographs, which are posted on the Internet are there permanently. Any post that is deleted may be cached in a search engine, school system server, or Internet archive and cause embarrassment years later. Internet posts that are a violation of this Acceptable Use Policy could result in disciplinary action.
- Faculty, staff, and students should refrain from the use of personal social networking sites including, but not limited to, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or Tumblr, during working hours.
- Faculty and staff should not post pictures of students or school activities to their personal social networking sites.

Privileges

- Access to the Internet is not a right, but a privilege.
- Unacceptable and/or inappropriate usage will result in cancellation of network and/or Google accounts. Administration will deem what is inappropriate use and the administration's decision is final.
- Administration reserves the right to regulate any particular use of these computing resources.
- An administrator, faculty member, or staff member may request the denial, revocation, or suspension of specific user(s) account(s).
- Students are issued devices at Thomas County Central High School and Bishop Hall Charter School upon signing and returning a required parent and student agreement letter. Students are required to adhere to all policies set forth in the agreement notice and the Internet Acceptable Use Policy.

Appropriate Digital Citizenship

- Use of profanity, vulgarities, or other inappropriate language is prohibited.
- Users should not reveal their or anyone else's personal information including, but not limited to, home address, phone number, credit card number, social security number, or student identification number.
- The network should not be used in a way that would disrupt the use of the network by others. Illegal activities are strictly forbidden.
- Students should not use personal or

school-issued devices or accounts in a way that would threaten, harass, abuse, intimidate, or embarrass others.

- The use of websites or other types of electronic communication to circulate gossip and rumors about staff or students is prohibited.
- The use of cameras, camera phones, or other camera devices to take or exchange threatening or potentially embarrassing photographs of staff or students is prohibited.

Security

- Security problems should be reported to the system administrator immediately.
- Account passwords should be kept confidential.
- Users should only use the network via the account assigned to them.
- Users must not interfere with or disrupt network users, services, traffic, or equipment. Disruptions include but are not limited to, the distribution of unsolicited advertising, downloading and/or streaming music or videos that slow the network, propagation of computer viruses, and using a network to make unauthorized entry to any other machine accessible via a network.
- Attempts to log on as another user or log-in to any accounts belonging to another user will result in the cancellation of privileges.
- Any user identified as a security risk or having a history of problems with other computer systems may be denied access.

Vandalism/Harassment

- Vandalism is defined as any malicious attempt to harm or destroy data of another user, the Internet or other networks. This includes, but is not limited to, creating and/or uploading computer viruses.
- Vandalism also includes the attempt to harm or destroy computer hardware and unauthorized installation of software.
- Students should carefully handle all technology equipment, including, but not limited to, iPads, Chromebooks, desktop computers, and all specialty equipment in labs or other specialized areas. For example, Chromebooks should be handled with two hands, should not be picked up by the screen, keys should remain intact, and all items should be removed from the Chromebook before the screen is closed.
- Users should report damages to the technology department in their buildings and not attempt to make the repairs themselves.
- Vandalism and/or harassment will result in

the cancellation or revocation of the offender's privileges and disciplinary action.

Google for Education, Email, and Other Electronic Communication

- Google for Education accounts are provided for all employees and students in grades 2-12. Google for Education accounts include Gmail, Google Drive, Google Docs, Google Slides, Google Sheets, Google Classroom, etc. as a part of the tcjackets or bhknights domain.
- Google for Education accounts are provided for professional and academic purposes. These accounts should not be used for personal gain, personal business activities, or to solicit for non-school system business. Broadcasting of unsolicited messages is prohibited.
- All users, including students, should not use school-issued email accounts to sign up for personal accounts on websites, including, but not limited to, social media and gaming websites.
- All school-related business should be sent via the email account provided by Thomas County Schools. Personal email accounts should not be used for school-related business.
- All electronic communication created, sent, or received via the Thomas County Schools email system is the property of Thomas County Schools. Employees and students shall not have any expectation of privacy regarding this information. The Board reserves the right, as deemed necessary, to access, read, review, monitor, and copy all messages and files on its computer system without notice. Thomas County Schools reserves the right to disclose text, video, audio, or image files to law enforcement agencies without employee or student consent.
- Student related messages should be guarded and protected in compliance with FERPA in order to protect the privacy of students. Employees must abide by the copyright laws, ethics rules, and applicable state and federal laws.
- Email messages should only contain professional and appropriate language. Employees and students shall not send abusive, harassing, intimidating, threatening, discriminatory, or otherwise offensive messages.
- Thomas County Schools has a SPAM filter in

place to prevent inappropriate email messages, viruses, malware, etc. However, this does not guarantee that this type of email message will not make it through and those who make use of electronic communication will occasionally receive messages that are found offensive or annoying. When this happens, the employee should delete the messages. The Thomas County School System is not responsible for items employees or students may view via links to other web pages if the employee chooses to open and read these messages.

- Student Google accounts are monitored for inappropriate usage through Gaggle.net and filtered through Go Guardian. Inappropriate use of Google accounts is reported to school and system administrators and handled as a disciplinary violation.
- The use of school-issued Google accounts on personal/home devices will install extensions and/or apps for monitoring purposes for that account. School-issued student accounts are monitored on home and personal devices when students are logged in, including on home and personal devices. Students should log out of school-issued Google accounts when not in use.

Electronic or Mobile Devices

- Students in all schools have access to either iPads, Chromebooks, or desktop computers. However, the use of personal mobile devices may be necessary in some situations.
- The use of mobile devices will only be allowed in specific areas or classes per the direction of the school staff.
- Devices are to be used only for school-related or school-approved activities. Games are not allowed.
- Teachers and staff reserve the right to check devices for inappropriate use or inappropriate material.
- The Thomas County School System is not responsible for lost or damaged devices.
- Cell phones and all device cameras are to be turned off and not used during any testing or examination period. During the testing session, cell phones/camera phones are to be stored in a case, book bag, knapsack, or purse, and may not be placed on the table, desktop, or individual's lap. Staff members have the right to confiscate devices during testing.

- Students should not use their own data

connection in order to access the Internet during the school day. Students shall access the Internet via Thomas County Schools' wireless network while on school grounds in order to ensure their Internet connection is filtered through Thomas County Schools' filtering system as required by the Children's Internet Protection Act. Teachers and staff reserve the right to check an electronic or mobile device for proper connection. Students who do not follow this guideline could potentially lose the right to use their own electronic or mobile devices while at school.

- Students may only access the Internet during class sessions for instructor authorized, class-related purposes. It should be noted that the school controls the Internet connectivity in classrooms and may elect to "turn-off" the wireless network during class time or restrict student passwords for wireless connections.
- Electronic or mobile devices should not be used to video or take pictures of disruptive behavior such as fights or other class/school disruptions. The sharing or posting of such videos or pictures or any other inappropriate videos or pictures is prohibited and may result in disciplinary action. This activity is a violation of privacy under FERPA and, depending upon the severity, may be reported to law enforcement.
- Students who use their own personal devices to access their Google for Education accounts should realize that account activity is monitored through Gaggle.net. Inappropriate usage or violations of the Internet Acceptable Use Policy are still applicable.

Disclaimers

The Thomas County School System makes no warranties of any kind, whether expressed or implied, for the service it is providing. The Thomas County School System will not be responsible for any damages a user may suffer, including loss of data, non-deliveries, misdeliveries, or service interruptions caused by negligence or errors, or omissions. The use of any information obtained via the Internet is at your own risk. The system will not be responsible for the accuracy or quality of information obtained through the Internet connection.

Hand-In-Hand Primary School

4687 US Hwy 84 Bypass
Frank Delaney, Jr. Parkway
Thomasville, GA 31792
225-3908 Fax 225-3982



Grades Pre-K and Kindergarten

Hand-In-Hand Primary School houses three distinct special programs. Our kindergarten program operates under the Georgia Department of Education. Our preschool program operates under Bright From the Start: Department of Early Care and Learning. The Child Development Program operates under the Thomas County School System. The Child Development 3-year-old program is for students with identified developmental delays and for children of Thomas County School System employees. Our calendar is the same for all three programs, but many policies vary according to the agency that funds the program.



BUS TAGS

All Hand-In-Hand students are required to wear a bus tag every time they ride the bus. Tags will be distributed before the first day of school. Bus tags assist staff in getting students to the correct bus and assist drivers in getting students to the correct locations. Hand-In-Hand students will not be allowed to ride the Thomas County School buses without a bus tag. **We will provide the first tag and one replacement. A charge of \$1.00 per tag will be applied for additional tags.** Clear and complete directions to your home are required on our application forms.

CAR RIDERS

❖ Morning Drop-Off

For the safety of all students, please load and unload in the appropriate zones. The left lane must remain open and moving at all times. The left lane will open for parking at 7:15 when staff arrives for duty. From 7:15 until 8:00, staff is available to take children from cars in the front circle. One of our staff members will greet students and assist them to the front entrance of each hallway where they will be supervised by staff members until classrooms open at 7:30. The front parking lot is available to walk students to the front lobby doors on the A/B/C side & D/E/F side. Students should then be released to staff to continue walking to classrooms.

Please remember that teachers are NOT on duty until 7:30. Students must wait in the front hallways until the 7:30 bell. At 8:00, staff members must leave the stations and report to their class. For the safety of students and employees on duty, the front circle will be closed at 7:55, requiring parents to park in the parking lot and walk their child to the front office. **Absolutely no one should ever drop a child off in the front circle or parking lot without giving the child to a school employee.**

❖ Afternoon Pick-Up

We will supply two car rider signs. If you need additional signs, you can request them in the office, and we will charge \$.25 for each additional sign. ALL Pre-K and kindergarten children *must* be picked up by 3:30. Car riders will be brought to the front hallway areas at 2:40 to be delivered to your car.

Parents may also park in the front parking lot and come to the front doors **with a pick-up sign** to pick up a child. No parent will be allowed to enter the building during pick-up time without going through the office for clearance. **A photo ID is required each time that you enter our building - no exceptions.** If the office staff is not able to contact the parent or a responsible adult to pick up a child by 3:30, the Sheriff's Department or the Department of Family and Children's Services will be notified. This action is always a last resort. Every effort is made to contact the people you listed at registration to pick up your child. **Please keep contact information current in the front office.**

Bus/Pick-up changes must be made by writing a note to the teacher or calling the front office before 2:00. Changes may not be made through email. Teachers may not be able to check email during the instructional day.

COMMUNICATION AND FAMILY PARTNERSHIPS

Communication between home and school is vital to the success of your child. We have set up consistent plans for communication both from school to you and from you to the school. We want to know as much about your child and your family as appropriate to provide the best educational experience for your child.

We will communicate with you through the following methods:

1. Student screenings for all new students (At the screening, we ask that you complete a questionnaire giving us information about your child.)
2. Parent/student open house
3. Weekly classroom newsletters
4. Monthly school newsletters
5. SeeSaw/Remind messages from your child's teacher and Parent Involvement Coordinator
6. Email
7. Facebook
8. Daily communication folders
9. Parent/student conferences

We ask that you communicate with us through the following methods:

1. Attending your child's screening and completing the student information page
2. Attending open house
3. Sending correspondence in the daily folder
4. Email (Please do not email transportation changes.)
5. Attending parent/student conferences
6. Serving on the Parent Advisory Board
7. Completing Parent Surveys.

HANDWASHING GUIDELINES

Employees shall be instructed that handwashing is the single most important line of defense in preventing the transmission of disease-causing organisms. [CDC guidelines](#) are followed for the proper handwashing procedure.

When Should Hands Be Washed?

Staff:

- Employees shall wash hands upon arrival
- Immediately before handling food and/or feeding children
- After handling food
- Before handling clean utensils or equipment
- After using the toilet, assisting a child in using the toilet, or changing diapers
- After the handling of body fluids (e.g., saliva, nasal secretions, vomitus, feces, urine, blood, secretions from sores)
- After handling soiled items such as garbage mops, cloths, and clothing
- After removing disposable gloves
- Whenever hands are visibly soiled

Children:

- Children shall wash hands upon arrival
- After each diaper change or visit to the toilet
- Immediately before eating meals or snacks
- Before & after shared art or sensory materials such as sand, paint, play dough activity
- After playing on the playground
- Whenever hands are visibly soiled

OUTSIDE PLAYTIME

Outside play time will be provided every day, weather permitting. "Weather permitting" means *almost every day*, unless there is active precipitation, public warnings of extremely hot or cold conditions, or public announcements that advise people to remain indoors due to high levels of pollution that might cause health problems. This might require that the schedule be changed to allow children outdoor play in the early morning if it will be very hot later in the day.



SPECIAL DAYS AT HAND-IN-HAND

Multiple special events are provided at Hand-In-Hand for parents to participate in with their child. Please refer to the calendar to determine dates of events. Some events may change due to weather conditions or the availability of community helpers. Notice of changes will be provided as soon as the change is determined.

- ★ Grandparent's Day/Bookfair
- ★ Chick-Fil-A Night (Evening event)
- ★ Dairy Queen Night (Evening event)
- ★ Winter Family Fun Day (Saturday event)
- ★ Snow Day
- ★ Read Around the School
- ★ Student-Led Conference Nights
- ★ Kindergarten visits to GP
- ★ Spring Kindergarten Field Trips
- ★ Kindergarten Graduation/Bookfair
- ★ Pre-K End of Year Programs/Bookfair
- ★ YMCA End of Year Celebration

Hand-In-Hand Primary School is an Early Learning School that is fully accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission and the Cognia Association of College and Schools. Because we operate through a non-profit governmental agency, an accredited local school system, as a Pre-K and Kindergarten primary school, we are exempt from Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning child-care licensing requirements. In addition, all educational services provided to Pre-K and Kindergarten students at Hand-In-Hand are free of charge. In addition, we are required to inform parents that Hand-In-Hand does not carry liability insurance for students.

RULES AND EXPECTATIONS

**I AM SAFE.
I AM RESPECTFUL.
I AM RESPONSIBLE.
I AM READY.**

Positive Behavior Incentives:

- ★ Students will earn Starbucks for displaying these behaviors. Starbucks can be cashed in for non-tangible rewards such as:
 - ★ Fast pass to the swings
 - ★ Play in another classroom
 - ★ Sit by the teacher at lunch
 - ★ Wear something special to lunch (crown, cape, costume)
 - ★ Extra iPad time
 - ★ iPad or book during nap
 - ★ Run an errand with the teacher
- ❖ **BEE RESPECTFUL** by using kind words and thinking of yourself and others.
- ❖ **BEE RESPONSIBLE** by taking care of your belongings and being safe
- ❖ **BEE READY** by being prepared at all times and putting your best foot forward



Garrison-Pilcher Elementary School

277 Hall Road
Thomasville, GA 31757
225-4387 Fax 227-2428

Grades 1 and 2

Programs and Activities

- ❖ **EIP**- Early Intervention Program - Program offered to first and second grade students who are not meeting state required benchmark standards (GSE and GKIDS)
- ❖ **Acadience**– (Curriculum-Based Measure) Web-based assessment used to progress monitor students' reading and math.
- ❖ **Partnership with Business/Community Leaders**
- ❖ **Accelerated Reader** – Motivation and enrichment reading program
- ❖ **Star Reading** - Diagnostic assessment used to measure instructional level in reading.
- ❖ **Star Math** – Diagnostic assessment used to measure instructional level in math.
- ❖ **Specials**- Students attend on a six day rotation
 - Music** - All students receive 60 minutes of music.
 - Art** - All students receive 60 minutes of art.
 - P.E.** – All students receive 120 minutes of physical education.
 - Health**- All students receive 60 minutes of health.
 - Science** – All students receive 60 minutes of hands-on science and coding, in addition to classroom instruction.
- ❖ **Gifted Education**- Gifted students taught by gifted endorsed teachers.
- ❖ **Internet** - Access to the Internet by students is closely monitored. A signed permission form is required for a student to access the Internet.
- ❖ **Enrichment/Intervention** – Students are given the opportunity to receive additional support in the areas they are experiencing difficulty or to excel in the areas in which they are performing at or above grade level.
- ❖ **Group/Individual Counseling** – Counseling program provided by school counselor.



Special Days at Garrison-Pilcher include:

- Red Ribbon Week
- Grandparents Day
- Dr. Seuss' Birthday
- Olympic Field Days
- K-1 Visitation
- 2nd Grade Visitation to Cross Creek
- Character Kid
- Wee Bee Fundraiser
- Celebration Days
- Jump Rope for Heart
- Accelerated Reader Celebrations
- Pod Family and Friends Picnic Days

School Store

Pencils, paper, and erasers are sold each day as students enter the building. School T-shirts and other small items will be available on a regular basis through the school store. All necessary school supplies are furnished except for pencils. Please see your child's teacher for any special needs.

Parent Drop-off and Dismissal

Safety is our top priority for our drop-off & dismissal procedures. Bus and car traffic follow the same routes through the front of the school. For this reason, parents and students should not walk through the covered crosswalk area during drop-off and dismissal time. Our staff will safely escort all students to & from vehicles. **For the safety of all students, please make sure to load and unload in the appropriate zones.**

Parent Drop-off (Morning)

Vehicles are to use the lanes that run through the front parking lot. Staff is available to assist with student drop off from 7:00-7:55 AM in the school driveway only. Parents may park in the tennis court parking lot & walk students to the front porch using the catwalk in front of the gym. Students should then be released to staff to continue walking to classrooms. Students arriving after 7:55 AM must be escorted by an adult to obtain a tardy slip.

Parent Pickup (Dismissal)

Parents are asked to remain in vehicles with a visible pickup sign. Vehicles may begin loading the two right lanes closest to the school prior to dismissal at 2:45 PM. This area will be cleared first for incoming bus traffic. Vehicles may continue to load through the lanes running through the parking lot. Staff will escort all students safely to vehicles. Parents must have a pickup sign. Parents without a sign are asked to park in the tennis court parking lot & visit the front office with the proper ID.

- ❖ **BEE RESPECTFUL** by using kind words and thinking of yourself and others.
- ❖ **BEE RESPONSIBLE** by taking care of your belongings and being safe
- ❖ **BEE READY** by being prepared at all times and putting your best foot forward

Positive Behavior Incentives

Behavior incentives for appropriate behavior are in place in every classroom. Every month, school-wide incentives and rewards will be provided by the PBIS Team.

Infinite Campus Parent Portal

All parents of Thomas County School students are eligible to register for Infinite Campus Parent Portal. Through this online tool, you will be able to check your student's grades, assignments and attendance. All Garrison-Pilcher parents registered for Parent Portal will also receive an email notification from Infinite Campus Parent Portal each time your child earns a failing grade on any assignment. Registration is quick and easy and step-by-step directions may be found on our system webpage, www.thomas.k12.ga.us, under the "For Parents" tab.



CROSS CREEK ELEMENTARY

324 Clark Road
Thomasville, GA 31757
225-3900 Fax 413-1420

Grades 3 and 4



Parent Drop-off (Mornings)

Students who do not ride a bus may be dropped off in the school driveway on the Clark Road crosswalk. Staff will be present on duty 7:15-7:55. Students should not exit the vehicle until supervising staff is in place for duty. **Please use the appropriate zones for loading and unloading. For safety reasons, students should not be dropped off or picked up on Clark Road or Hall Road.** These are public roads with high traffic volume before and after school each day. Traffic on Clark Road is one-way, U.S. 19 to Hall Road, 7:00-8:00 and 2:30-3:30, on school days.

Parent Pick-up (During School)

Please use a parking space when picking up your child during the school day and please **do not leave unattended vehicles in the driveway. Parking in traffic lanes to wait for dismissal time should not begin before 2:30** in the afternoons. Please use a parking space prior to this time to avoid blocking traffic.

Parent Pick-up (Dismissal)

All afternoon parent pick-ups **MUST** be made on the Clark Road side of the school. Parent pick-up begins at 3:00. Students will not be allowed to leave the campus and walk to cars parked on the road or to get into cars on the road without a parent escort. Parents must park and come to the crosswalk to receive student(s). All students should be picked up by 3:30 each day unless they are involved in an after school activity.

Visiting During the School Day

Cross Creek loves having parents and caregivers participate in the educational lives of students. Students have many things that they enjoy sharing with you; however, it can sometimes be a distraction to your child and his/her classmates when parents come during instructional times of the day.

Special Days at Cross Creek

- ❖ Grandparents Days
- ❖ Parent Conference Nights
- ❖ Red Ribbon Week
- ❖ Book Fair (twice per year)
- ❖ "Lucky to Have You" Breakfast
- ❖ Super Heros are Extra Special
- ❖ Read Across America Week
- ❖ Quarterly Accelerated Reader Celebrations
- ❖ Field Days
- ❖ Achieving Bees YMCA Picnics
- ❖ 4th grade visits to TCMS
- ❖ Learning Celebrations with GP
- ❖ Center for the Arts Field Trips
- ❖ Science Field Trips
- ❖ Jump Rope for Heart
- ❖ STEM Night
- ❖ Honors Days
- ❖ Parent Meetings

Programs and Activities

- ❖ **Acadience** – A web-based screener used to assess & track student growth in areas of reading and math.
- ❖ **Accelerated Reader** – Motivation and enrichment reading program
- ❖ **Art** – Each student attends art class during each specials rotation.
- ❖ **Coding Lab** - Coding is an interactive and collaborative approach to learning the basic fundamentals of computer programming using a variety of technology and robotic devices.
- ❖ **EIP**- Early Intervention Program
- ❖ **Enrichment/Intervention** – Students are given the opportunity to receive additional support in the areas they are experiencing difficulty or to excel in the areas in which they are performing at or above grade level.
- ❖ **Flocabulary**- A library of songs, videos and activities for K-12 online learning.
- ❖ **Gifted** - Program for gifted students
- ❖ **Hands-On Science Lab** – Each student attends the science lab for one hour each specials rotation.
- ❖ **Internet** - Access to the Internet by students is closely monitored. A signed permission form is required for a student to access the Internet.
- ❖ **Keyboarding Without Tears** - Each student attends keyboarding class for one hour each specials rotation to learn keyboarding fundamentals, including typing fluency and speed.
- ❖ **Moby Max** – Closes learning gaps for students.
- ❖ **Music** – Each student attends music class for one hour each specials rotation.



- ❖ **P.E.** – Each student attends PE on a regular rotation.
- ❖ **Project Lead The Way** - Computer science education training through the science enrichment class.
- ❖ **Star Math** – Diagnostic Assessment used to measure instructional level in math.
- ❖ **Star Reading** - Diagnostic Assessment used to measure instructional level in reading.
- ❖ **Study Island**-Provides standards-based assessment and instruction.

Special Recognitions

At the end of the 4th nine weeks, parents will be invited to attend an Honors Assembly where students will be recognized, by class, for yearly accomplishments such as:

- Perfect Attendance
- “A” Average
- “A/B” Average
- Highest Average in each subject area
- Accelerated Reader
- Art Contest Awards
- DAR Contest Winners
- Geography/Spelling Bee Winners
- Young Georgia Authors Writing Contest Winners

Infinite Campus Parent Portal

All parents of Thomas County School students are eligible to register for Infinite Campus Parent Portal. Through this online tool, you will be able to check your student’s grades, assignments and attendance. All Cross Creek parents registered for Parent Portal will also receive an email notification from Infinite Campus Parent Portal each time your child earns a failing grade on any assignment. Registration is quick and easy and step-by-step directions may be found on our system webpage, www.thomas.k12.ga.us, under the “For Parents” tab.

APPENDIX I

Thomas County Schools 2023-2024 School Calendar

Event	Day(s) of the Week	Date
Independence Day Holiday	Tuesday	July 4, 2023
Preplanning	Monday-Friday	July 24-August 4, 2023
First Day for Students	Monday	August 7, 2023
Labor Day Holiday	Monday	September 4, 2023
Fall Break	Monday-Friday	October 9-13, 2023
Teacher Workday/Student Holiday	Monday	October 16, 2023
44 days in first nine weeks		
First Day, Second Nine Weeks	Tuesday	October 17, 2023
Thanksgiving Holidays	Monday-Friday	November 20-24, 2023
Winter Holidays	Friday-Thursday	Dec. 22, 2023-Jan. 4, 2024
Teacher Workday/Student Holiday	Monday	January 5, 2024
43 days in second nine weeks		
First Day, Third Nine Weeks	Monday	January 8, 2024
Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday	Monday	January 15, 2024
Teacher Workday/Student Holiday	Friday	March 8, 2024
43 days in third nine weeks		
First Day, Fourth Nine Weeks	Monday	March 11, 2024
Spring Break	Monday-Friday	April 1-5, 2024
Last Day for Students	Friday	May 17, 2024
45 days in fourth nine weeks		
Post-planning	Monday-Tuesday	May 20-21, 2024
Memorial Day Holiday	Monday	May 27, 2024

Veterans Day will be observed as part of a planned activity at each school.

APPENDIX II

School Bus Safety Information

Smarts

- Children 8 years and under must be accompanied by an adult or sibling age 13 or older at the bus stop.
- Students with special needs, who require special transportation, should be accompanied by an adult, age 18 or older.
- Stay out of the danger zone at all times!
- Remember — if you can't see the driver, the driver can't see you!
- Never go near the bus unless the driver has given you the signal to come!
- Never walk or play behind a vehicle!
- When you go near the bus, always be sure you can see the bus driver!
- If you drop anything in the danger zone, leave it. Never stop to pick it up!

Know the Danger Zones

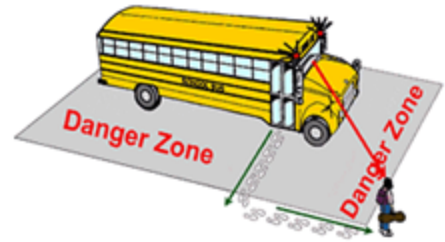
- Every child must know the DANGER ZONES around the school bus.
- Children should never enter the DANGER ZONE unless the driver has given them permission.
- If a child can touch the bus, he or she is too close.
- If a child must cross the street, know all the rules to cross safely.
- The 10 Giant Step rule is a good measurement for children to identify the DANGER ZONE around the school bus, particularly when crossing in front of the bus.



- When near a bus, the children must have the attention of the school bus driver.
- Children should never play around or near school bus vehicles.
- When leaving the bus, children must walk directly home.

Getting On and Off the Safe Way

- Always be on time with your school things tucked safely away.
- Never run to or from the bus.
- Wait for the bus at a safe place away from the road.
- Wait for the bus to stop before approaching to get on.
- Remember, if you can touch the bus, YOU ARE TOO CLOSE!
- Your driver will tell you when to get on.
- Walk up the steps, one at a time, using the handrail.
- Never push or shove.
- IF YOU DROP ANYTHING IN THE DANGER ZONE, LEAVE IT. NEVER STOP TO PICK IT UP!
- Sit facing the driver, feet in front of you.
- Keep the aisle clear at all times.
- ALWAYS LISTEN TO AND OBEY YOUR SCHOOL BUS DRIVER!

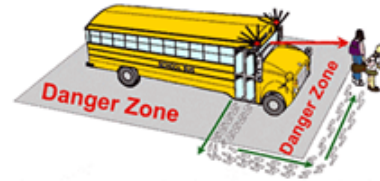


Getting Off the Bus

- Use the handrail.
- Do not push or shove.
- Walk, don't run away from the bus.
- Never go behind the bus.
- Go right home

Crossing the Street After Getting Off the Bus

- If you must cross the road after getting off the bus, use the 10 GIANT STEPS as a guide to take you out of the DANGER ZONE at the front of the bus.
- Be sure you can see the driver and that the driver sees you.
- Watch for the driver's signal that it is safe to cross.
- Stop when you reach the edge of the bus.
- Look and listen both ways to be sure it is safe before you cross.
- IF YOU DROP ANYTHING IN THE DANGER ZONE LEAVE IT. NEVER STOP TO PICK IT UP!
- Walk across the street.
- Go right home.

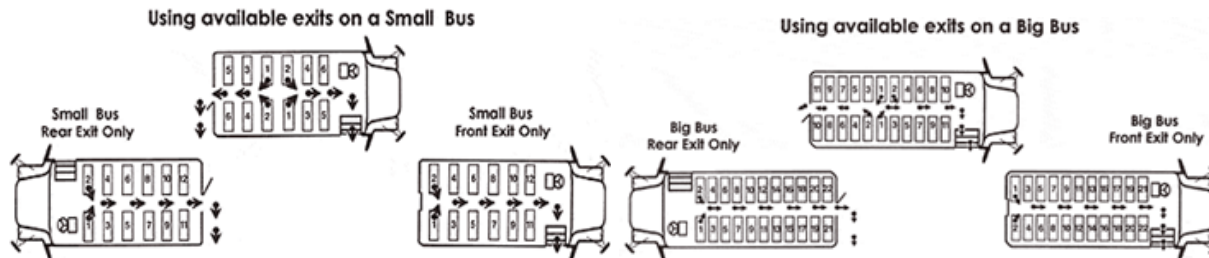


Crossing the Street to the Bus

- If possible, have an adult help you cross the road.
- Before crossing, be sure you can see the stop arm and lights flashing.
- Wait for the driver's signal before you start to cross.
- Look and Listen both ways to be sure it is safe before you cross.
- Walk across the street.
- STAY OUT OF THE DANGER ZONE AT ALL TIMES!
- IF YOU DROP ANYTHING IN THE DANGER ZONE LEAVE IT. NEVER STOP TO PICK IT UP!

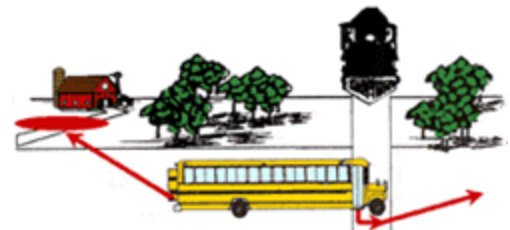
Emergency Evacuation the Safe Way

- Listen to the driver's instructions for the correct exit.
- Be calm, quiet and don't panic.
- Leave your belongings behind.
- Exit seat by seat alternating rows.
- Leave the bus quickly without pushing, or shouting.
- Walk to a safe place and stay together.



Railway Crossing Evacuation

- Listen to the driver's instructions for the correct exit.
- Go away from the tracks as far as possible in a direction (at a 45 degree angle) toward the train to avoid being hit by debris from the crash.
- Go to a safe place and stay together.



APPENDIX III

System Accelerated Reader (AR) Policy

Glossary of Terms

AR	Accelerated Reader is a collection of quizzes on student books. To become better readers, students need time to practice their new skills. AR quizzes give some accountability and guidance to this reading practice time. After students have finished a book, they take a quick multiple choice test on the computer.
STAR	A computerized reading test designed to help find the reading level at which a student will be most successful. The student reads a sentence and then fills in the blank with the correct word. The difficulty level of the test changes with correct or incorrect answers, depending on student response. After the test, the program will suggest an independent reading level and range for the student.
On Target	When the percentage of the AR goal is at or above the percentage of the scoring period that has elapsed.
Reading Level	A number to help guide students in selecting books that are on their level. For example, a reading level of 3.5 would be an ability level of a third grader in the fifth month of the school year.
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development is the range of books in which a child will be challenged while reading but should be successful.

The Accelerated Reader Program is a curriculum-based assessment tool that provides a summary and analysis of results to enable teachers to monitor both the quantity and quality of reading practice engaged in by their students. It helps facilitate:

- frequent and detailed assessment in less time and with greater consistency;
- formative feedback for the student;
- student development of metacognitive awareness;
- increased student motivation to read more;
- formative feedback for the teacher;
- class-wide diagnostic information, including alerts regarding students who are at risk; and
- teacher promotion and management of effective reading practice.

With the purpose of the Accelerated Reader program being to encourage reading and improve reading comprehension skills, an AR Committee representative of all schools in the Thomas County School System developed the following guidelines:

Elementary:

- STAR test December and May
- Celebration at the end of each nine weeks
 - Cut-off for points is the day before the end of the nine weeks
 - 80% overall comprehension required
 - Parent/Guardian will receive updates on child's progress
- AR will not be used in a punitive manner

Garrison Pilcher:

- 1st grade students - 1st semester
 - Inform parents about AR
 - Complete "practice" tests with students
- At or Above Grade Level Students (based on STAR)
 - Use the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to determine points goal
 - Allow for free choice after meeting goal
- Below Grade Level Students (based on STAR)
 - Use the ZPD to determine points goal
 - Have buddy readers
 - Read test and/or book to students – making sure it is not developing into a crutch for student

Cross Creek:

- At or Above Grade Level Students (based on STAR)
 - Use the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to determine points goal
 - Allow for free choice after meeting goal
 - Cap of 20 points
- Below Grade Level Students (based on STAR)
 - Use the ZPD to determine points goal
 - Read test and/or book to student – making sure it is not developing into a crutch for student
 - Allow student to use book on test
 - Delete and allow for retake of tests below 40

APPENDIX IV

Thomas County Elementary Schools 2023-2024 Testing Calendar

SCHOOL(s)	DATE(s)	TEST
TCCHS, RC, & BH	July 10-13	Milestones EOC retest
HH	July 24-August 4	GKIDS Pre-Admin Training
HH	August 7-Sept 15	GKIDS Readiness check
TCCHS, RC, & BH	August 21-25	EOC Midmonth
TCCHS, RC, & BH	Sept. 11-15	EOC Midmonth
TCCHS, RC, & BH	October 16-20	EOC Midmonth
TCCHS	Oct. 28	ACT (college entrance exam)
TCCHS, RC, & BH	Oct. 19	PSAT/NMSQT
TCMS (8th)	Oct. 26	PSAT 8/9
TCCHS	Nov. 4	SAT (college entrance exam)
CC (3rd), TCM (6th)	Nov. 6-17	ITBS, CogAT
TCCHS, RC, & BH	Nov. 6-10	EOC Midmonth
TCCHS	Dec. 2	SAT (college entrance exam)
BH	Dec. 5-6	End of Pathway Assessments
TCCHS, RC, & BH	Dec. 14-15, 18-20	Georgia Milestones EOC: ELA, Math, Science, SS
2024		
TCCHS, RC, & BH	Jan 22-26	EOC Midmonth
HH (K), GP (1st)	Jan 22-26	ITBS grade 1, CoGat K&1
HH, GP, CC, TCMS, TCCHS, BH	Jan. 10- Mar. 1	ACCESS for ELLs
TCCHS	Feb. 10	ACT (college entrance exam)
TCCHS, RC, & BH	February 12-16	EOC Midmonth
TCCHS, RC, & BH	March 11-15	EOC Midmonth
TCCHS	March 18-March 29	End of Pathway Assessments
CC, TCMS, TCCHS	March 25-May 3	GAA Admin window
BH	April 10-11	End of Pathway Assessments
TCCHS	Apr. 13	ACT (college entrance exam)
CC, TCMS, RC, BH	April 22-26	Grades 3-8 Georgia Milestones EOG ELA Sessions 1,2,3, EOG Math 1, 2
CC, TCMS, RC, BH	April 26-May 2	Grades 3-8 Georgia Milestones Science & Social Studies
TCCHS	April 22-April 26	End of Pathway Assessments Retest
TCCHS, RC, & BH	May 1	Ga Milestones EOC American Literature Day 1

TCCHS,RC, & BH	May 2	Ga Milestones EOC American Literature Day 2
BH	May 9	End of Pathway Assessments Retest
TCCHS	May 4	SAT (college entrance exam)
TCCHS	May 6	AP US Gov't & Politics, AP Chemistry, AP Art History
TCCHS,RC, BH, & TCMS	May 6	Ga. Milestones EOC Algebra 1
TCCHS	May 7	AP Human Geography, AP Statistics, AP Seminar
TCCHS	May 8	AP Literature & Comp, AP Computer Science A
TCCHS	May 9	AP Environmental Science, AP Psychology
TCCHS	May 10	AP US History, AP Studio Art
TCCHS,RC, & BH	May 7	Ga. Milestones EOC Biology
TCCHS,RC, & BH	May 9	Ga. Milestones EOC US History
HH	May 13	GKIDS (last day to submit data)
TCCHS	May 13	AP Calculus, AP Pre-Calculus
TCCHS	May 14	AP Language and Comp
TCCHS	May 15	AP World History, AP Computer Science Principles, AP Music Theory
TCCHS	May 16	AP Biology, AP Spanish Language
TCCHS	May 17	AP Physics 1
All Schools	May 17	Last day of school
CC	May 23-24	Ga Milestones EOG retest grades 3
TCMS, RC, BH	May 22-23	Ga Milestones EOG retest grades 5, 8
TCCHS, RC & BH	June 10-13	Ga Milestones EOC Summer School