



Gestalt

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

2026-2027 EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

Welcome

From the CEO

Welcome to Gestalt Community Schools. You are now a member of an organization dedicated to building better communities through education and empowering citizens to be college-ready, career-ready and community-ready. This vision has our high-quality schools at the center of vibrant community revitalization and partnerships.

Our commitment is that every scholar is Known, Loved, and Educated (KLE) and every adult in our network is Known, Valued, and Accountable (KVA). This commitment is the foundation to our work together. Moreover, it becomes the catalyst for our work in our beloved Memphis community. This work is deeply rooted in our vision of building better communities through education.

We are pleased to provide you with this Staff Handbook, which outlines the personnel policies and procedures for Gestalt Community Schools. I encourage you to reach out to Human Resources for additional information regarding the policies, procedures, and benefits described in this Handbook.

In order to fulfill our vision and mission, we lean on the African proverb that it takes a village to raise a child. You are now a member of a powerful village bringing educational excellence to Memphis.

Welcome to the GCS Village!



Yetta Lewis
CEO and co-founder
Gestalt Community Schools

Welcome

From the CPO

We are thrilled to have you join our Village! At Gestalt, we believe that our people are the heart of everything we do, and we are excited that you have chosen to be part of a team committed to empowering scholars, strengthening communities, and transforming lives through education.

This Employee Handbook has been designed to support your understanding of our key policies, procedures, and expectations for professionalism across our network. It serves as a valuable resource to help you navigate your employment experience and ensure that we continue to foster a safe, respectful, collaborative, and high-performing workplace for every member of our team.

As you become part of the Gestalt family, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the information contained in this guide and refer to it whenever questions arise. While this handbook provides important guidance, it cannot address every situation you may encounter. Our People Team is here to support you every step of the way.

If you have questions or need assistance, please don't hesitate to contact the Gestalt People Team:

Email: hrteam@gestaltcs.org

Website: hr.gestaltcs.org

Phone: (901) 598-1044

Thank you for choosing to be part of the Gestalt Community Schools village. We look forward to partnering with you as we work together to create exceptional learning environments where both scholars and team members thrive. Welcome aboard!

Fully Committed,



Dr. Brian Ingram, SHRM-SCP
Chief People Officer
Gestalt Community Schools

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
EMPLOYMENT BASICS	4
• VOLUNTARY AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT	
• INTRODUCTORY PERIOD	
• EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER	
• TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964	
• LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PROGRAMS (LEP)	
• AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES AMENDMENTS ACT (ADA/ADAAA)	
• TALENT AND RECRUITMENT	
• BACKGROUND CHECKS AND OFFENSES	
WORKPLACE POLICIES	11
• DEFINITIONS	
• HARASSMENT	
◦ POLICY AGAINST WORKPLACE HARASSMENT	
◦ SEXUAL HARASSMENT	
◦ OTHER TYPES OF DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT	
◦ REPORTING	
• COMMUNICATIONS	
◦ INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS	
◦ KNOWN, VALUED AND ACCOUNTABLE (KVA) COMMUNICATION	
◦ MEDIA RELATIONS	
◦ MEDIA RELEASE	
◦ MARKETING AND LOGOS	
◦ SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY	
• COMPANY PROPERTY	
◦ EQUIPMENT DAMAGE	
◦ PERSONNEL RECORDS	
◦ RETURN OF COMPANY PROPERTY	
◦ TELEPHONE/E-MAIL/INTERNET USAGE	
• CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION	
• INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY	
• INFORMATION STORAGE AND SECURITY	
• PARKING	
• REIMBURSEMENT	
• SOLICITATION	
• PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
• EMPLOYEES AS VENDORS POLICY	
• REMOTE WORK POLICY	
WORKPLACE SAFETY	25
• DRUG-FREE AND ALCOHOL-FREE WORKPLACE	
• INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS	
• INJURY/INCIDENT REPORTING	
• PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY	
• SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE	
• WEAPONS 21	
• WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND BULLYING	
• CHILD SAFETY PROCEDURES	

CODE OF CONDUCT	31
• DRESS CODE AND PERSONAL HYGIENE	
• CONFLICT OF INTEREST	
• NEPOTISM	
COMPENSATION AND DEVELOPMENT	34
• PAYROLL AND SALARY ADMINISTRATION	
◦ TIME REPORTS	
◦ PAYDAYS	
◦ PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS	
◦ GARNISHMENTS	
• STAFF MEMBER PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION	
◦ POSITION DESCRIPTION	
◦ PERFORMANCE REVIEWS AND EVALUATIONS	
◦ PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLANS	
◦ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT	
◦ INTERNAL TRANSFERS	
BENEFITS AND PERKS	39
• ANNUAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD	
• INSURANCE	
• COBRA	
• LIFE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LAP)	
◦ UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE	
◦ WORKERS' COMPENSATION	
◦ RETIREMENT PLANS	
◦ 401(K)	
◦ VACATION, SICK, & PERSONAL LEAVE	
• PTO BUY BACK PROGRAM PILOT	
• GESTALT CARES LEAVE BANK	
WORKING HOURS AND TIME AWAY FROM WORK	47
• ATTENDANCE	
◦ ABSENCE	
◦ TARDINESS AND EARLY DEPARTURES	
• SCHOOL CALENDAR	
• HOLIDAYS	
• MEAL AND BREAK PERIODS	
• LEAVE OF ABSENCE (not including FMLA)	
• FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE (FMLA)	
• PARENTAL LEAVE	
• BEREAVEMENT LEAVE	
• JURY DUTY	
• MILITARY LEAVE	
• SABATICAL	
STAFF MEMBER DISCIPLINE, RESIGNATION AND TERMINATION	54
• CORRECTIVE ACTION	
• GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES	
• GRIEVANCE PROCESS	
• SEPARATION	
◦ INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION	
◦ VOLUNTARY SEPARATION	
◦ DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER	
◦ BENEFITS UPON SEPARATION	
• EXIT PROCESS	
APPENDIX	61



INTRODUCTION



Founded in 2011, Gestalt Community Schools ("GCS") is a 501(c)(3) charter K-12 management organization focused on developing community-based schools to empower citizens who will be college-ready, career-ready and community-ready. Based on core values of achievement, community, humility, innovation and zeal, Gestalt is building better communities through education.

Led by a volunteer Board of Directors and a professional staff, Gestalt employs a unique model utilizing a blended learning approach, inclusive practices, response to instruction and intervention, data-driven instruction, project-based learning and social-emotional learning. Gestalt schools provide strong academic outcomes for our scholars through initiatives that include meaningful community involvement. We believe that the most effective method to support student achievement is through an integration of education and community – a true "gestalt".

Gestalt Community Schools
2650 Thousand Oaks Boulevard
Memphis, TN 38118
(901) 213-5161
www.gestaltcs.org



GCS MISSION

We aim to leverage community assets to empower individuals who will be college-ready, career-ready and community-ready. We will achieve this mission by providing students with an exceptional educational program, defined by rigorous curriculum standards, high expectations for academic achievement, integrated technology and community service.

GCS VISION

Our vision is to build better communities through education. To this end, Gestalt targets low-income communities that have failing schools, then catalyzes grassroots leadership to revitalize the neighborhood; educate the youth through high-performing schools; and partner with providers to tackle out-of-school challenges that hinder students from succeeding.

GCS COMMITMENTS

LOVE RADICALLY: Gestalt is not school as usual. Here, you are part of a community that builds relationships like family. At Gestalt, we want scholars, families and staff to be Known and Loved — for your strengths and weaknesses; your passions; your past, present and envisioned future. Only then can we educate you. Radical love means we make personal sacrifices to know, support and nurture one another.

INVEST DEEPLY: The social, economic and racial challenges our community faces require an unwavering vision of excellence. All of us need someone in our corner who is relentless in their commitment to developing our greatness. We will invest deeply in you through education, mentoring, coaching and committing fiercely to growth. In turn, we ask you to invest in yourself, in others and in your community.

ADVOCATE BOLDLY: Your ideas matter, and you have the right to be heard. We'll educate you so you feel confident using your voice to speak up articulately and passionately in any setting, to anyone. Advocating boldly is the result of an education that trains your mind and heart, rooting passionate opinions in well-reasoned facts; balanced views of any issue; and the ability to listen. We believe the act of speaking out is liberating in itself.

ACT PURPOSEFULLY: Each of us has a moral obligation to leave our community better than we found it. Our schools offer authentic experiences for you to participate in community service, social entrepreneurship and community development. Collectively, our efforts transform under-resourced spaces into community hubs with effective schools at the center. We believe that every person can find hope and a life of lasting meaning through purposeful action.



EMPLOYMENT BASICS



VOLUNTARY AT-WILL EMPLOYMENT

Your employment with Gestalt Community Schools is a voluntary at-will one and is subject to termination by you or GCS, with or without cause, and with or without notice, at any time.

Nothing in this Handbook, or any other policies, shall be interpreted to be in conflict with or to eliminate or modify in any way the employment-at-will status of GCS staff members.

INTRODUCTORY PERIOD

The Introductory Period is used to determine if a new staff member's performance successfully meets the expectations of the role and if continued employment is warranted. The Introductory Period shall consist of the first ninety (90) days of employment. During this time, new staff member's supervisor or school leader, will work closely on all aspects of training, establish performance standards, and provide education as to the role and responsibilities.

By completing this introductory period, a staff member is not guaranteed continued employment for any term as it is always at-will and subject to various conditions.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

Gestalt Community Schools is an equal opportunity employer. GCS does not discriminate against, or in favor of, applicants or staff members based upon race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation or any other legally protected status protected under federal, state or local law. The GCS policy regarding equal employment opportunity applies to all aspects of employment, including recruitment, hiring, job assignments, promotion, wage and salary administration, disciplinary actions and terminations.

Gestalt Community Schools will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination. All staff members are expected to cooperate fully in implementing this policy. If GCS determines that a violation of this policy has occurred, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the offending party, which can include warnings, suspension or termination. Staff members who report, in good faith, violations of this policy and staff members who cooperate with investigations into alleged violations of this policy will not be subject to retaliation.

Any staff members with questions or concerns about equal employment opportunities in the workplace are encouraged to contact the Human Resources Department.



GCS has a no retaliation policy. Any staff member who feels they may have been subjected to any such retaliation should bring it to the attention of the Human Resources Department.

Retaliation can include adverse conduct taken because an individual reported an actual or a perceived violation of this policy, opposed practices prohibited by this policy, or participated in the reporting and investigation process. Adverse conduct can include, but is not limited to, shunning or avoiding a reporting individual, threats or intimidation, demotion, or other harassment.

TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Specifically, Title VI provides that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (42 U.S.C. Section 2000d).

For any inquiries related to Title VI, please contact Tandra Parks, the Title VI Coordinator for Gestalt Community Schools, at 2650 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 2200, Memphis, TN 38118, by phone at (901) 390-0080, or via email at tparks@gestaltcs.org.

Title VI information posters will be prominently and publicly displayed in common areas at all Gestalt Community School locations. Additional information relating to nondiscrimination obligation can be obtained from the Gestalt Community Schools Title VI Coordinator. Non-discrimination information shall be disseminated to GCS staff members annually via the Staff Handbook, which is available through the Human Resources Information System, on the GCS website, or from the Human Resource Department.

This information reminds staff members of the GCS policy statement and of nondiscrimination responsibilities in daily work and duties. All GCS staff members are provided a copy of the plan in the Staff Handbook and are required to sign an Acknowledgement of Review and Receipt as a condition of employment.

During orientation, new staff members shall be informed of the provisions of Title VI and GCS' expectations to perform duties accordingly.

All subcontractors and vendors receiving payments from GCS where funding originates from any federal source are subject to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 as amended. Written contracts shall contain non-discrimination language, either directly or through the bid specification package which becomes an associated component of the contract.



RECORD KEEPING

The Human Resource Department will maintain permanent records, including, but not limited to, signed acknowledgements of receipt from staff members indicating the receipt of the Staff Handbook. Copies of Title VI complaints or lawsuits and related documentation, records of correspondence to and from complainants, and Title VI investigations, will be maintained by the Title VI Coordinator.

TITLE VI COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Any individual, who believes they have been subjected to discrimination, may file a written, signed complaint using the Title VI Complaint Form with the Title VI Coordinator up to one-hundred and eighty (180) days from the date of the alleged act of discrimination. The Complaint (either using the Title VI Complaint Form or submitting a written, signed statement) should include the following information:

- Name, mailing address, and how to contact you (i.e., telephone number, e-mail address, etc.)
- How, when, where and why you believe you were discriminated against. Include the location, names and contact information of any witnesses (if applicable).
- Any other information that you deem significant.

The complaint should be provided to the Title VI Coordinator using the contact information listed above. If an individual cannot file a written, signed complaint, verbal complaints may be made to the Title VI Coordinator using the contact information listed above.

NOTE: GCS recommends that all forms and supporting documentation be sent via certified mail if using the U.S. Postal Service. For complaints originally submitted by e- mail, the original signed copy of the complaint must be mailed to the Title VI Coordinator as soon as possible, but no later than 180 days from the alleged date of discrimination.

All complaints alleging discrimination based on race, color or national origin in a service or benefit provided by Gestalt Community Schools will be directly addressed by Gestalt Community Schools. GCS shall also provide appropriate assistance to complainants, including those persons with disabilities, or who are limited in the ability to communicate in English. Additionally, GCS shall make every effort to address all complaints in an expeditious and thorough manner.

A letter acknowledging receipt of complaint will be mailed within seven (7) days of receipt of the complaint. Please note that in responding to any requests for additional information, a complainant's failure to provide the requested information may result in the administrative closure of the complaint.



GCS will send a final written response letter to the complainant including notification of its findings in addition to advising complainant the right to; 1) appeal within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of the final written decision from GCS; and/or 2) file a complaint externally with the U.S. Department of Education and/or Dept. of Justice – Civil Rights Division. Every effort will be made to respond to Title VI complaints within sixty (60) working days of receipt of such complaints, if not sooner.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PROGRAMS (LEP)

Gestalt Community Schools will take affirmative steps to help LEP scholars and staff to overcome language barriers so that they can participate meaningfully in each school district's programs. Under Title VI, public schools and Local Education Agencies must identify LEP scholars and provide educational services to learn English-language skills and acquire the knowledge and skills in academic content areas that all students are required to know.

Similarly, GCS will ensure that language-minority parents who are not proficient in English receive the same information provided to other parents, in a manner and form they understand. This may include information about their children's program, progress, and disciplinary problems, as well as information about the school's rules, policies, and activities.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES AMENDMENTS ACT (ADA/ADAAA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Americans with Disabilities Amendments Act (ADAAA) are federal laws that prohibit employers with fifteen (15) or more staff members from discrimination against applicants and individuals with disabilities and, when needed, to provide reasonable accommodations to applicants and staff members who are qualified for a job, with or without reasonable accommodations, so that they may perform the essential job duties of the position.

It is GCS policy to comply with all federal and state laws concerning the employment of persons with disabilities and to act in accordance with regulations and guidance issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). Furthermore, it is GCS policy not to discriminate against qualified individuals with disabilities in regard to application procedures, hiring, advancement, discharge, compensation, training or other terms, conditions and privileges of employment.

For more information regarding this policy or to request an accommodation, applicants or staff members should contact the Human Resources Department.



TALENT AND RECRUITMENT

All open positions, network wide, are posted on the GCS web site at www.gestaltcs.org and on other public professional platforms such as linkedin.com, indeed.com, and monster.com. The closing date of any open positions shall not be less than five (5) days after the initial posting date.

Staff members are encouraged to refer friends, family members, and/or former colleagues to positions at GCS. Information regarding an applicant and/or application status will not be disclosed. If a current GCS staff member is invited to participate as a candidate in the interview process, all information concerning that application and interview process should remain confidential.

BACKGROUND CHECKS AND OFFENSES

Gestalt Community Schools conducts background checks in compliance with all applicable federal and state laws, including the Fair Credit Reporting Act and the Tennessee State Board of Education policies and procedures. All offers of employment are contingent upon acceptable results of a background check. Final candidates must complete a background check authorization form and return it to Human Resources. A background check will be ordered upon receipt of the signed authorization form, and either internal Human Resources staff or an employment screening service will conduct the checks. A designated Human Resources representative shall review all results.

If the background check results are acceptable, the applicant is responsible for paying the fee for completion of the background check. The required fee will be deducted from the applicant's pay during the first pay period as a staff member.

An offer of employment may be rescinded, or employment may be terminated upon falsification of employment documents, omission of information by applicants, or if negative or incomplete information is obtained from the background check.

Any GCS staff member charged or convicted of a felony offense must report it to the Human Resources Department within three (3) working days of the charge or conviction. A staff member charged or convicted of a felony offense may be terminated and failure to report such charges or conviction may constitute grounds for immediate termination.

Cases will be reviewed on an individual basis and appropriate actions will be taken.



Any staff member who has been charged with abuse against a minor and/or selling drugs to a minor must report it to the GCS Human Resources Department. Any staff member convicted of abuse against a minor and/or selling drugs to a minor may be terminated and failure to report such charges or conviction may constitute grounds for immediate termination. Cases will be reviewed on an individual basis and appropriate actions will be taken.

GCS reserves the right to conduct periodic background checks on staff members at any time while employed with GCS, including every five (5) years as required by state policy. Based upon unacceptable results from the background checks (including the nature of felony and/or misdemeanor offenses), Human Resources will take appropriate actions up to and including termination.



WORKPLACE POLICIES



DEFINITIONS

Although this Handbook is written in a straightforward, user-friendly way, this definitions section was created to provide clarification for certain terms used throughout. This is intended to help staff members better understand employment terms and tools. These do not change the at-will employment relationship.

All staff members are designated as either nonexempt or exempt under state and federal wage and hour laws.

- Non-exempt staff members are staff members whose work is covered by the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA). They are not exempt from the law's requirements concerning minimum wage and overtime.
- Exempt staff members are generally executives, managers, or professionals who are exempt from the minimum wage and overtime provision of the FLSA. These positions meet certain standards and criteria established under the FLSA.

Full-time Staff member: Staff members who are not in a temporary status and are regularly scheduled to work a full-time schedule of at least 32 hours a week.

Part-time Staff member: Staff members who are not in a temporary status and are regularly scheduled to work less than 32 hours a week. Regular part-time staff members might be eligible for some of the benefits offered by the company, subject to the terms, conditions and limitations of each benefit program.

HRIS: A human resources information system (HRIS) is a software solution used to maintain, manage, and process staff member information and human resources related policies and procedures. As an interactive system of information management, a HRIS standardizes human resources tasks and processes while facilitating accurate record keeping and reporting to allow for a more seamless, efficient system.

Staff Members: The term staff member is used throughout this Handbook to refer to GCS employees. The use of this term does not alter the employment relationship.

Work Hours: Work hours includes regular class or office hours as well as after school or weekend events or other GCS sanctioned activities.



HARASSMENT

POLICY AGAINST WORKPLACE HARASSMENT

Gestalt Community Schools is committed to providing a work environment for all staff members that is free from sexual harassment and other types of discriminatory harassment. Staff members are expected to show respect to co-workers and conduct themselves in a professional manner.

Gestalt Community Schools has developed a policy against harassment and procedures for staff members who have been harassed or have witnessed harassment in the workplace. This policy applies to all work-related activities and environments, both inside and outside of the workplace, and includes both social and business activities sponsored by GCS. The policy against workplace harassment covers all staff members, and other individuals who have a relationship with GCS for which Gestalt Community Schools has the ability to exercise some control over the individual's conduct in places and activities that relate to GCS work (e.g., directors, contractors, officers, vendors, fellows, volunteers, etc.).

Gestalt Community Schools recognizes the implications of such violations and is committed to supporting claimants in each stage of this process. This may include adopting new policies and procedures, educating and training staff members as well as offering counseling.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

It is the policy of GCS that all staff members are responsible for ensuring that the workplace is free from sexual harassment. Because of our strong disapproval of offensive or inappropriate sexual behavior at work, all staff members must avoid any action or conduct which could be perceived as sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexually harassing nature, when: (1) submission to or rejection of the harassment is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or as a basis for employment decisions or (2) the harassment has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.



OTHER TYPES OF DISCRIMINATORY HARASSMENT

It is also against GCS's policy to engage in verbal, physical or written conduct that offends, or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual because of their race, color, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, national origin or disability. Discriminatory harassment (1) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, humiliating, or offensive work environment; (2) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance; or (3) otherwise adversely affects an individual's work opportunities.

REPORTING

Any staff member who believes they have been subject to or have witnessed sexual harassment or any other type of discriminatory harassment at work by anyone, including supervisors, co-workers or visitors, is requested and encouraged to make a complaint.

Possible harassment by others with whom Gestalt Community Schools has a relationship, including vendors, volunteers or parents should also be reported. Complaints should first be directed to the immediate supervisor, and if the issue is not resolved, they may then be escalated to the Human Resources Department.

If a supervisor knows of an incident of sexual harassment or any other type of discriminatory harassment, they are required to report it to Human Resources Department. A supervisor's failure to report this information may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

If the complaint is against a member of the Human Resources Department or the Chief People Officer, a staff member can report the harassment or conduct directly to the Chief Academic Officer and/or the Chief Executive Officer.

GCS will promptly and thoroughly investigate all reports of harassment and confidentiality will be protected to the extent possible. A timely resolution of each complaint will be reached and communicated to the parties involved.

If GCS determines that a violation of this policy has occurred, appropriate disciplinary action will be taken against the offending party, up to and including termination. Staff members who report, in good faith, violations of this policy and staff members who cooperate with investigations into alleged violations of this policy shall not be subject to retaliation.

GCS has a no retaliation policy. Any staff member who retaliates against another for making a complaint or assisting in an investigation will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Any suspected retaliation or intimidation should be reported immediately using the same process as provided above.



COMMUNICATIONS

INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

GCS values effective internal communication and believes it is a critical element of developing a strong staff member experience, building better places to work, and supporting organizational well-being. Internal communications encompass both “official” communication (announcements, memos, publications, policies and procedures, etc.) and “unofficial” communications that occurs among and between team members.

The Charter Management Office (CMO) will send out periodic communications to staff members providing important announcements including significant accomplishments and event scheduling. The Human Resources department will periodically send out notices that may have an impact on staff member benefits, provide notice of important policy and legal changes, or provide information on training opportunities that may be available.

It is the responsibility of the staff member to review the information and to direct questions or concerns to the appropriate department.

KNOWN, VALUED, AND ACCOUNTABLE (KVA) COMMUNICATION

Gestalt Community Schools aims to ensure every staff member is known, valued, and accountable. Achievement is a critical component of our approach in developing the GCS community, both inside and outside of the classroom or office.

The [KVA Survey Link](#) is available (via the Gestalt Connects website) to all staff members wishing to celebrate accomplishments, milestones, and life changing events. This includes, but is not limited to, earning an advanced college degree, achieving a personal goal, or welcoming a new addition to the family.

MEDIA RELATIONS

Gestalt Community Schools recognizes that from time to time, media personnel will visit or contact the schools and the Charter Management Office (CMO). If media personnel visit a school, staff members should immediately contact the school principal. Staff members should not speak on behalf of GCS unless expressly authorized to do so by the principal. The principal shall notify the Chief of Schools and receive approval prior to authorizing and/or speaking on behalf of the school. If media personnel visit the CMO, staff members should immediately contact their supervisor and should not speak on behalf of GCS unless expressly authorized to do so by the Chief Executive Officer.

All requests to document, film, photograph or record any scholar or staff member of GCS must be approved by the Human Resources Department.



MEDIA RELEASE

Throughout the school year, the media may visit GCS schools to cover special events. Gestalt Community Schools may also wish to use staff photographs, voice or work for promotional and educational reasons, such as in publications, posters, brochures and newsletters on the school's website, social media, radio station or television; or at community fairs or other special school events.

Staff members must provide permission before a staff member's photograph or voice can be used by the media or by the school district. Upon hire, staff members will be provided with a Media Release Form in which staff members can opt to allow their photo, voice or work to be used for GCS promotional purposes.

MARKETING AND LOGOS

School principals may approve the use of school logos for the items listed below:

- Letterhead
- School memos to scholars and parents
- School flyers, projects, and posters
- School apparel

For any other external purpose, the Human Resources Department must approve any use of GCS logos.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Gestalt Community Schools respects the right of staff members to use social media and networking sites, as well as personal websites and blogs. It is important that staff members' personal use of these sites does not damage the reputation of GCS, staff members, or scholars or their families. Staff members should exercise care in setting appropriate boundaries between personal and public online behavior, understanding that what is private in the digital world often has the possibility of becoming public, even without their knowledge or consent.

Carefully read these guidelines, Gestalt's Community Schools' Staff Handbook, including the Discrimination & Harassment Policy, and ensure any online postings are consistent with these policies. Inappropriate postings that may include discriminatory remarks, harassment, and threats of violence or similar inappropriate or unlawful conduct will not be tolerated and may subject staff members to disciplinary action up to and including termination.



From a general standpoint, staff members should not engage GCS scholars on social media. Gestalt Community Schools does recognize that in some instances, social media may be used for GCS business purposes and may involve scholar communication or involvement. An example would be a teacher utilizing "Schoology" to track assignments or post school related information. In those instances, staff members should discuss the proposed use of social media with their supervisor or the Human Resources Department.

Gestalt Community Schools understands that social media can be a fun and an efficient way to share important information with friends, colleagues, co-workers, and the general public. However, use of social media also presents certain risks and carries with it certain responsibilities. If GCS believes that a staff member's activity on a social networking site, social media site, blog, or personal website violates its policies, the staff member will be advised to cease such activity.

Depending on the severity of the incident, the staff member may be subject to disciplinary action.

COMPANY PROPERTY

EQUIPMENT DAMAGE

Staff members are provided various technology related products such as tablet computers, laptops, and cell phones. Staff members are required to sign the Equipment Acknowledgement Form during onboarding and upon receipt of equipment.

These items are property of GCS and any damaged or stolen items, must be immediately reported to the Operations Department. In the event equipment is not returned, GCS will make every attempt to recoup the equipment including deducting the value of the equipment from the staff member's final paycheck. This policy is valid during the entire employment relationship.

PERSONNEL RECORDS

GCS will maintain personnel files for every staff member. All personnel files are the property of Gestalt Community Schools and cannot be removed. Staff members have the right to review their file upon written request to Human Resources. A Human Resource Representative must be present while the staff member is reviewing the file.

GCS will adhere to all federal, state and/or local laws, rules and regulations with regards to access and confidentiality of employment files and their content.

RETURN OF COMPANY PROPERTY

Upon separation of employment with GCS, all GCS property must be returned immediately. This includes equipment such as laptops, cell phones and physical property to include, keys, ID badges, documents, lists, electronic information storage media, manuals, letters, notes, reports, and other materials in the possession or under the control of the staff member at the time of separation.



TELEPHONE/E-MAIL/INTERNET USAGE

Telephones, e-mail, and the Internet are provided to our staff members as tools for success in the workplace. Gestalt Community Schools strongly encourage staff members to keep work life and personal life separate as it relates to telephone, e-mail, and Internet usage. GCS does realize that there may be instances where a personal matter needs to be addressed using company provided telephone, e-mail, or Internet. Staff members should keep these instances to a minimum. Any staff member making excessive personal use of company provided telephone, e-mail, or Internet is subject to disciplinary action.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Staff members of Gestalt Community Schools may encounter confidential information, including but not limited to information about GCS staff members, scholars, suppliers, finances, or business plans. Generally, confidential information is considered any information disclosed to or known by a staff member because of employment with GCS that is not generally known by the public. Staff members shall keep all confidential information that may be disclosed to them, or learned by them, confidential. Furthermore, a staff member who improperly uses or discloses confidential information will be subject to disciplinary action.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Any intellectual property, such as trademarks, copyrights, logos and patents, curriculum, curriculum maps, assessments, lesson plans, and any work created by a staff member while employed with GCS shall be and remain the property of Gestalt Community Schools. The staff member is deemed to have waived all rights in favor of GCS. Work, for the purpose of this policy refers to written, creative or media work. Staff members who are found in violation of the Intellectual Property policy will be subject to disciplinary action, including termination.

INFORMATION STORAGE AND SECURITY

Data loss prevention and data security are critical components in avoiding damages to GCS, scholars, and other stakeholders. While removable media devices can be an efficient way to store and transport data, they can also introduce unique risks including malicious software and security risks. Any use of removable media devices on GCS technology should be with the utmost caution using only trusted and known sources.

Staff members acknowledge that use of any information on removable or portable storage devices (e.g., USB flash drives, external hard drives, etc.) on GCS technology is the property of GCS. Staff members acknowledge that GCS issued technology, and equipment should be used for business purposes only. Downloading of personal materials on company equipment can be harmful to equipment and should not be done.



PARKING

All staff members are required to park in designated parking spaces. Staff members are prohibited from parking in fire zones, no parking zones (where stated or with slanted lines across the space), or accessible spaces (unless decal is present). Staff members who park in these prohibited areas may be subject to towing at their own expense. If the school incurs any fines or penalties from an agency due to staff member's parking violation, the amount will be deducted from the staff member's payroll, as permitted by law. All staff members must display the school-issued parking tag at all times while parked on campus. The tag must be hung from the vehicle's rearview mirror or placed in another clearly visible location.

REIMBURSEMENT

Gestalt Community Schools reimburses staff members for all necessary work-related expenses incurred provided the expenses are approved in advance. Necessary work-related expenses may include:

- Business travel expenses such as meals and lodging
- Necessary supplies and materials
- Professional development

Listed below are the steps required to receive reimbursement:

- Expense must be pre-approved by supervisor
- Upon approval, staff members must complete a reimbursement form
- The reimbursement form must be signed by supervisor
- Proper documentation including receipt or proof of payment must accompany the completed reimbursement form
- Signed reimbursement form and documentation must be submitted to accountspayable@gestaltcs.org.

Please allow seven (7) working days for reimbursement payment processing.

SOLICITATION

Staff members are prohibited from soliciting others within the organization (personally or via internal communications including e-mail) for membership, pledges, subscriptions, collection of money or any other unauthorized purpose anywhere on GCS premises during work hours. Employees may submit to Human Resources notices of general interest, such as for-sale notices, recreational type announcements, and notices looking for carpools or tickets for posting on boards located in the break room. Human Resources approves, posts, and takes down all notices. All notices posted will be removed after two (2) weeks. GCS reserves the right to refuse permission to post or to take down any announcement.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As part of our ongoing commitment to high-quality professional development (PD), Gestalt Community Schools is reinforcing expectations around maintaining a focused, equitable, and professional learning environment for all employees.

In alignment with the Tennessee Teacher Code of Ethics, all educators and staff are reminded of their responsibility to:

- Place the needs of the school community above personal convenience,
- Remain responsible and attentive in carrying out professional duties,
- Maintain professional conduct with colleagues and contribute to a collaborative, growth-focused environment.

To preserve the integrity and effectiveness of our professional learning space, personal children and/or other dependents may not be brought to professional development sessions.

EMPLOYEES AS VENDORS POLICY

PURPOSE

Gestalt Community Schools actively supports and encourages staff members in their entrepreneurial pursuits. The purpose of this policy is to address how employees can contract with Gestalt Community Schools (GCS) and establish guidelines for employee-vendors who provide both ongoing direct services to scholars as an employee-vendor and transactions involving the sale or provision of products or services directly to Gestalt Community Schools or scholars and families of Gestalt Community Schools. This policy prevents conflicts of interest, reinforces internal controls, preserves the integrity of our mission, student programming, and procurement processes, and ensures resources are used in a fiscally responsible manner.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Gestalt Community School employees, including full-time, part-time, contract, and temporary staff members. It also applies to individuals with access to financial information or systems, those involved in procurement or vendor-related processes, and anyone with decision-making authority.

This policy applies to all vendor transactions involving the sale or provision of products or services directly to Gestalt Community Schools, or its scholars and families. It applies when the vendor is:

- A staff member who has ownership, or a financial interest, in a company seeking to contract with, or provide goods or services to, Gestalt Community Schools
- A staff member whose immediate family member has ownership, or a financial interest, in a company seeking to contract with, or provide goods or services to, Gestalt Community Schools



DEFINITIONS

- Vendor refers to any individual or business that enters into a contractual relationship with Gestalt Community Schools through by either providing goods or services to Gestalt Community Schools, scholars and families of Gestalt Community Schools in exchange for payment.
- Financial interest is defined as a direct or indirect interest where a potential gain or loss in a financial matter exists.
- Immediate family member refers to an employee's spouse, domestic partner (or in-law), parent, sibling, child, grandparent, grandchild, or any person residing in the same household. This also extends to step relatives.
- Conflict of interest refers to a situation in which an employee's personal, financial, or familial interests could compromise, or appear to compromise, their professional judgement or ability to act in the best interest of Gestalt Community Schools.
- Ongoing direct services to scholars refers to any service the employee-vendor provides directly to scholars for more than 7 days. Agreements involving ongoing direct services to scholars expire on the last day of each fiscal year, June 30th.

APPROVAL PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

An employee may only serve as a vendor with the written approval of the Chief Financial Officer (CFO). An initial approval does not guarantee approval of subsequent requests.

In order for an employee-vendor to be considered for approval, a financial benefit to Gestalt Community Schools and/or its scholars and families must exist, and certain conditions must be met to include the following:

- Cost of goods or services must be reasonable, necessary, and competitively priced
- Family demand must be clearly documented to support engagement. This is especially true with regard to direct services to scholars (ex: cheer, dance, clubs, etc.)
- Employee must not be involved in selecting, approving, or processing payments for vendor in which they or an immediate family member have a financial interest
- The employee-vendor must have an appropriate business license and insurance coverages that meet state and federal requirements
- Employee-vendors providing direct services to scholars must agree to pay for background investigations for their employees providing direct services
- Employee-vendors providing direct and ongoing services to scholars must have the fully executed Ongoing Direct Services Agreement in place prior to providing services. The Ongoing Direct Services Agreement outlines the scope of services, GCS safety guidelines, facility usage fees and scheduling, payment terms, compliance requirements, and scholar fees.



School/Department leaders, or their designees, must submit a complete Employee-Vendor packet to the Finance Department. A complete packet includes the following:

- Completed Employee-Vendor Selection and Approval Form that includes justification for selecting the employee-vendor.
- Quote from the employee vendor with a description of the goods, or services, to be provided, quantity (if applicable), and pricing
- Two additional competitive quotes from independent and unrelated vendors
 - A comparable quote is a written estimate from vendors offering similar goods or services for comparison purposes

A decision will be made within 7 seven days of receiving a complete employee-vendor packet. Upon approval, a copy of the Employee-Vendor Agreement will be retained in both the employee's HR file and their vendor file.

PROHIBITED ACTIVITIES

- Preferential treatment based on status, or position, with Gestalt Community Schools
- Use of position to influence procurement decisions
- Payments to the employee-vendor in the absence of a written approval from the CFO, valid contract, and invoice
- Approved employee vendors using information gained through their position to gain a competitive advantage, or to market their company's goods or services
- Use of GCS logo, likeness, or proprietary information without written consent
- Employee vendors cannot sell products or services directly to GCS employees, scholars or families without the written consent of the CFO

INTERNAL STUDENT FUNDS

To ensure transparency, accountability, and alignment with the financial policies of Gestalt Community Schools, all payments for ongoing direct students services, such as cheer, basketball, and dance, must be made directly to the school to which the scholar is assigned. Employee-vendors, or their affiliates, are not authorized to accept or collect payments of any kind, for any purpose, from parents, guardians, or scholars under any circumstances. This includes cash, checks, digital transfers, or other forms of personal payments.

PAYMENT TERMS

The payment terms of Gestalt Community Schools are Net 30 days. Employee-vendors must adhere to these terms. Vendor payments will be processed thirty days after receipt of a valid invoice. Invoices must be submitted in accordance with GCS accounts payable policies.

POLICY VIOLATIONS AND CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Violations of the employee-vendor policy, particularly those involving conflicts of interest or financial misconduct, may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment, cancellation of vendor agreements, and potential legal or ethical review in accordance with the policies of Gestalt Community Schools and applicable laws.



REMOTE WORK POLICY

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish clear guidelines for remote work at Gestalt Community Schools (GCS). The policy ensures that school-based roles maintain an effective in-person presence to meet the needs of scholars and families, while allowing network office employees limited flexibility to work remotely when appropriate and approved. This policy also outlines the process for reviewing and approving remote work accommodations, including medical accommodations, to ensure alignment with organizational needs.

SCOPE

This policy applies to all Gestalt Community Schools employees, including full-time, part-time, contract, and temporary employees working in either school-based or network office roles.

This policy applies to:

- School-based employees whose responsibilities involve direct service to scholars and families
- Network office employees whose responsibilities primarily support schools and operations

DEFINITIONS

- Remote work refers to performing assigned job duties at an approved off-site location instead of the employee's designated worksite.
- Temporary or as-needed remote work refers to short-term or occasional remote work arrangements (not to exceed 3 consecutive days) requested by network office employees and approved by their supervisor based on job responsibilities and organizational needs.
- Long-term remote work refers to ongoing remote work arrangements that extend beyond 3 days or as-needed needs and require review, medical documentation, and approval by Human Resources.
- Medical accommodation refers to remote work or other adjustments requested due to a documented medical need and evaluated under applicable laws and GCS policies.

POLICY EXPECTATIONS

School-Based Employees

School-based employees are required to work fully in person. These roles support scholars and families directly and must maintain an on-site presence to ensure effective school operations and scholar services. Remote work is not permitted for school-based staff except in rare circumstances approved in advance by Human Resources, such as in connection with an ADA-related accommodation or aligned with the network's business strategy (ex: part-time virtual instructors in hard to fill positions). Temporary, informal, or undocumented remote work for school-based roles is not permitted.

Network Office Employees

Network office employees may be approved for temporary or as-needed remote work when such arrangements align with job duties and do not interfere with departmental or organizational priorities. All remote work must be approved in advance by the employee's supervisor. Supervisors may deny or limit remote work requests based on workload, team needs, performance considerations, or alignment with responsibilities.



APPROVAL PROCESS AND REQUIREMENTS

Temporary or As-Needed Remote Work (Network Office)

Network office employees may request remote work on a temporary or occasional basis. Requests must be made directly to the immediate supervisor. Supervisors will consider whether the arrangement:

- Aligns with the employee's essential responsibilities
- Supports timely completion of work
- Maintains availability for meetings, collaboration, and communication

Remote work approvals are granted on a case-by-case basis and may be revoked at any time based on organizational needs.

Permanent or Medical Accommodations

Requests for permanent remote work arrangements or remote work due to medical needs must be submitted to Human Resources. HR will review all requests on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration:

- The employee's job responsibilities
- Supporting documentation for medical accommodations
- Operational and departmental needs

HR will communicate the decision to both the employee and the supervisor.

EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES DURING APPROVED REMOTE WORK

Employees approved for remote work are required to:

- Maintain regular work hours and availability for the duration of the workday
- Be accessible via email, phone, and virtual meeting platforms
- Ensure a professional, safe, and distraction-free work environment
- Protect confidential information in accordance with GCS technology and data policies
- Meet all performance expectations and deadlines

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

Supervisors must:

- Evaluate remote work requests fairly and consistently
- Ensure approvals align with the needs of the department and the employee's role
- Communicate work expectations clearly
- Monitor employee performance and address any concerns promptly

POLICY VIOLATIONS

Failure to follow this policy, failure to obtain required approvals, or misuse of remote work privileges may result in the revocation of remote work authorization and may lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.



WORKPLACE SAFETY



DRUG-FREE AND ALCOHOL-FREE WORKPLACE

Gestalt Community Schools maintains a drug- and alcohol-free workplace that is safe and productive for staff members and others.

As such, GCS prohibits the use or possession of an illegal and/or non-prescribed drug or alcohol during work hours. If a staff member comes to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol or uses drugs or alcohol during work hours, the staff member will be disciplined in accordance with this policy up to and including termination. To ensure compliance with this policy, GCS reserves the right to conduct random drug and/or alcohol testing or upon reasonable suspicion that a staff member is under the influence of alcohol or drugs that could affect or have adversely affected the staff member's job performance.

All current and prospective staff members must adhere to the drug testing policy. The policy is intended to comply with all federal and state laws governing drug testing and is designed to safeguard staff member privacy rights to the fullest extent of the law.

Before being asked to submit to a drug test, the staff member will receive notice of the request and/or requirements. The staff member must also sign a Testing Authorization and Acknowledgement Form confirming that he or she is aware of the policy and staff member's rights.

If there is a reasonable suspicion that the staff member is working while under the influence of an illegal and/or non-prescribed drug or alcohol, the staff member will be immediately required to submit to testing and suspended, with or without, pay until the results of the test are made available.

Any testing required or requested by GCS will be conducted pursuant to federal or state law and by a laboratory licensed by the state. All expenses related to the testing will be incurred by Gestalt Community Schools. The staff member may request the name and location of the laboratory that will analyze the staff member's test sample by calling the Human Resources Department before the staff member is scheduled for testing.

If the staff member receives notice that the test results were confirmed positive, the staff member will be given the opportunity to explain the positive result. In addition, the staff member may have the same sample retested at a laboratory of the staff member's choice. Retesting is entirely at the expense of the staff member. Once the testing is complete and/or once the results of the retest are received, the Executive Leadership Team will review the information and make determinations as to whether the staff member has violated this policy. Staff members will be disciplined in accordance with this policy up to and including termination.



All testing results will remain confidential. Staff members must sign a Consent Form prior to the release of test results. Test results may be used in arbitration, administrative hearings and court cases arising as a result of the staff member's drug testing. Results will be sent to federal agencies as required by federal law.

Any staff member that declines to submit to either random or reasonable suspicion testing, will be immediately suspended and will be subject to termination.

INCLEMENT WEATHER CONDITIONS

Gestalt Community Schools recognizes that inclement weather and other emergencies can impact the organization's ability to open schools. During inclement weather and other emergency conditions, staff members of Gestalt Community Schools will be notified via e-mail regarding impacts to the regular opening and closing schedule. For ongoing, updated information regarding operational status, staff members should also consult the GCS voicemail system (901) 213-5161 and the GCS website.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Gestalt Community Schools is committed to maintaining a safe and secure environment for staff members, scholars, and visitors. In the event of an emergency, staff members are expected to remain calm, exercise sound judgment, and immediately notify the appropriate school administrator or supervisor. When immediate emergency assistance is required, staff members should call 911 first and then notify the school office or administration as soon as it is safe to do so. This includes situations involving fire, medical emergencies, threats to safety, criminal activity, or any circumstance requiring immediate police, fire, or emergency medical response.

Each school campus maintains site-specific emergency response procedures for situations including, but not limited to, fire emergencies, severe weather, lockdowns, shelter-in-place events, and intruder incidents. All staff members are required to become familiar with and follow the emergency procedures established for their assigned school or work location. Staff members are expected to participate in all required safety trainings, drills, and emergency preparedness activities.

At no time should scholars be left unattended during an emergency, evacuation, lockdown, or other safety event. Staff members are responsible for maintaining appropriate supervision of scholars, when applicable, and ensuring scholars remain with the assigned group or in the designated safe location until further instructions are provided.



In the event of a fire alarm or fire emergency, staff members must follow evacuation procedures immediately, assist scholars and visitors as appropriate, and report to the designated assembly area until further instructions are given by school administrators or emergency responders.

In the event of a lockdown, secure hold, or intruder-related emergency, staff members must immediately follow the directions of school administrators and the site-specific safety plan. Staff members should take all reasonable steps to protect themselves and scholars, including securing doors, maintaining quiet, and remaining in the designated safe area until an official all-clear is announced.

Failure to comply with established emergency and safety procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

INJURY/INCIDENT REPORTING

Promptly reporting incidents and injuries helps Gestalt Community Schools provide the most appropriate care for injured staff members and return them to work as safely and quickly as possible. If a staff member is injured on the job, the staff member must immediately contact the supervisor. An incident report must be completed immediately, signed by the staff member, and sent to Human Resources. Any incident, no matter how slight the injury or damage, should be reported prior to the end of the staff member's shift. GCS will take appropriate follow-up action, including directing medical attention, completing an investigation report and recommending or implementing appropriate corrective actions.

PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY

GCS will follow all federal, state, and local guidance in response to a public health emergency and will take all appropriate measures needed to address a public health emergency to protect GCS staff members and scholars. Human Resources will provide notification via e-mail of adjustments in policies or procedures, information will be provided through the HRIS system as well as the GCS voicemail system (901) 213-5161, and staff members will be provided contact information for additional questions or clarification. Staff members acknowledge the importance of actively staying informed regarding GCS response during a public health emergency. This includes regularly checking e-mail, the HRIS and voicemail systems, and asking questions to ensure understanding of changes in policy or procedure.



SMOKE-FREE WORKPLACE

Gestalt Community Schools recognizes that smoking represents a major health and safety hazard that can have serious consequences for the smoker and nonsmoker alike. Gestalt Community Schools believes that the health and wellness of staff members, scholars, and visitors are of primary importance; therefore, smoking and/or the use of all tobacco products are prohibited on all GCS property including in all GCS buildings (school and other facilities) and in GCS owned vehicles at all times.

WEAPONS

To ensure that GCS maintains a workplace safe and free of violence, the possession or use of dangerous weapons on GCS property is prohibited. Company property includes all company-owned or leased buildings and surrounding areas such as sidewalks and parking lots under GCS ownership or control and vehicles.

Any staff member who has knowledge of or has reason to believe that anyone including a staff member, scholar, visitor, volunteer, or member of the community has a weapon on GCS premises should immediately notify any member of management.

Once notice of an alleged violation of the weapons policy is received, management will immediately investigate the validity of the report and, if appropriate, contact local authorities. Any violations of this policy by a staff member will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

WORKPLACE VIOLENCE AND BULLYING

Gestalt Community Schools will not tolerate workplace violence, including physical contact, intimidating or threatening behavior, bullying and/or verbal assault among its staff members, visitors, volunteers, scholars, or members of the community. Any staff member who has knowledge of or has reason to believe that a staff member, scholar, visitor, volunteer, or member of the community has violated this policy while on GCS premises should immediately notify any member of management.

Once notice of an alleged violation of the workplace violence policy is received, management, along with Human Resources, will immediately investigate the validity of the report and if appropriate, contact local authorities. Any violations will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination.

The Workplace Violence and Bullying Policy is attached as Appendix A. Please contact the Human Resources Department for additional information and guidance this policy.



CHILD SAFETY PROCEDURES

As a public charter school network, Gestalt Community Schools follows and is governed by Tennessee Code Annotated (TCA) 49-5-413 and 49-5-5610. These laws mandate background checks for various school personnel, including teachers, staff, contractors, and volunteers who have direct contact with students. The checks involve criminal history records checks conducted by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (TBI), and include fingerprinting and other procedures.

IDENTOGO BACKGROUND CHECKS AND FINGERPRINTING

Gestalt Community Schools is a trained, certified center for IdentoGo. IdentoGO Centers provide convenient, fast and accurate Live Scan fingerprinting services. Our fingerprint-based background checks run fingerprint searches against both FBI and state criminal databases to create a complete criminal profile of the applicant.

RAPTOR SYSTEM

In addition to the IdentoGO background screening, each school location operates a visitors and volunteer background check system called Raptor. Additionally, each visitor is automatically screened against two database types in the Raptor system:

- The registered sex offender databases that Raptor maintains and keeps up to date for all 50 U.S. states and territories
- Any number of customized databases created by each school or District. This can include banned/restricted visitors, custody issues, individuals with restraining orders, and more.

A match against any database instantly alerts the attendant and any number of additional staff for prompt attention and resolution.

REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

As a public charter school in Tennessee, all Gestalt staff members are mandated state reporters for any suspected or reported child abuse. In Tennessee, all individuals, including school personnel, are mandated reporters for suspected child abuse and neglect. School staff who have knowledge or reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect must immediately notify the school's child abuse coordinator and report to the Department of Children's Services (DCS) and law enforcement. If the alleged abuse involves someone affiliated with the school, the report can be made directly to DCS and law enforcement.



CODE OF CONDUCT



DRESS CODE AND PERSONAL HYGIENE

Staff members of Gestalt Community Schools should dress in a professional manner to project an appropriate image for the scholars, the parents, and the community. In general, staff members are expected to dress in business casual attire. This is broadly defined as a code of dress that blends traditional business wear with a more relaxed style still professional and appropriate enough for an office environment.

Staff members are expected to maintain proper hygiene. Below is a list of minimum hygiene requirements applicable to all staff members:

- Maintain personal cleanliness by bathing regularly
- Oral hygiene (brushing teeth)
- No heavily scented perfumes, colognes, and lotions
- Use of deodorant or other body odor minimizing products

If violations occur, supervisors will notify staff members to immediately correct the issue. Gestalt Community Schools reserves the right to instruct a staff member who is not in compliance with the dress code and personal hygiene policy to change attire and/or address personal hygiene issues. Failure to comply with the dress code and hygiene policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination. Please see the complete Dress Code and Personal Hygiene Policy attached as Appendix B. For additional information, staff members should contact the Human Resources Department.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Staff members of Gestalt Community Schools and the Board of Directors School shall avoid any conflict or appearance of conflict between their personal interests and the interests of the system when working with suppliers, customers, and organizations or individuals doing or seeking to do business with GCS. Suppliers, customers, organizations and individuals shall include, but are not limited to, business firms and corporations; consultants and consulting firms; college and university academic and athletic recruitment programs; university research programs; foundations; and federal and state government officials. Staff members and school board members shall avoid any situation that would result in their having a direct or indirect financial or material interest in firms, corporations or organizations doing business with the system.

NEPOTISM

No candidate shall be hired for a position where they may report to or supervise a member of their immediate family. Immediate family is defined as: parent(s), child(ren), stepparent(s), foster parent(s), sibling(s), grandparent(s), spouse (including common law a/o same sex partner), stepchild(ren) or ward of the staff member, father-in-law or mother-in-law (including parent of same sex partner). Personal relationships with other staff members or members of the GCS Board of Directors should be disclosed prior to accepting any offer from the employer.



USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

At Gestalt Community Schools (GCS), we believe it takes a "Village" to develop the whole child and empower our scholars to be college, career, and community ready. As we integrate new technologies into our educational model, we view Artificial Intelligence (AI) as a tool to enhance, not replace, the essential human connections that define our "gestalt" philosophy.

To ensure we maintain our high standards of educational excellence while prioritizing the safety of our scholars and staff, all GCS employees must adhere to the following principles:

Humans Must Always Be "In the Loop"

AI serves as a supportive guide or compass, but it is never the final destination. While AI can help brainstorm or draft materials, it is not a substitute for human judgment. No AI produced material, whether for the classroom or administrative use, should be shared or used in decision making without a thorough review by a staff member to ensure it meets our standards for quality and accuracy.

Stewardship of Data and Privacy

Our staff and families entrust us with their personal information, and we must act as responsible stewards.

- No Personally Identifiable Information (PII): Employees are strictly prohibited from inputting student or staff PII, such as names, addresses, or ID numbers, into AI tools.
- Protection of Intellectual Property: Do not upload GCS specific intellectual property, including our curriculum, handbooks, or proprietary methodologies, into any AI platform.
- The "World" Test: Before inputting any data into an AI tool, ask yourself: "Would I share this information with the entire world?" If the answer is no, do not input it.

Commitment to Integrity and Equity

AI models are trained on existing data and can often reinforce cultural biases or "hallucinate" false information.

- Bias Mitigation: Employees must critically assess AI outputs for bias and should use specific prompts to ensure materials reflect our commitment to diversity and inclusion.
- Fact-Checking: Always verify AI generated facts against primary or secondary sources before use.
- Transparency: Do not represent work generated by AI as your own original work. When AI is used to significantly assist in creating a product, it should be cited appropriately.

Professional and Ethical Conduct

AI tools must be used in accordance with the GCS Code of Conduct and anti-discrimination policies. These technologies must never be used to create content that is inappropriate, discriminatory, or harmful to the Village.



COMPENSATION AND DEVELOPMENT



PAYROLL AND SALARY ADMINISTRATION

TIME REPORTS

All non-exempt staff members are required to complete accurate time reports showing all time worked using the HRIS system. These records are required by governmental regulations and are used to calculate regular and overtime pay. Supervisors review time reports and forward to the Human Resources department using the same system.

PAYDAYS

All staff members are paid semi-monthly. Should regular pay dates fall on the weekend or a holiday, staff members will be paid on the preceding business day.

To provide secure, convenient and timely payroll payment, GCS requires all staff members to receive payroll-related payments via direct deposit. It is the staff member's responsibility to notify GCS when there is a change to a bank or bank account that affects direct deposit. Gestalt Community Schools does not offer payroll advancement.

PAYROLL DEDUCTIONS

Gestalt Community Schools will provide payroll deductions for staff member benefits offered through GCS via Memphis-Shelby County Schools. Absent mandatory state and federal wage garnishments and staff member benefits, GCS is unable to payroll deduct benefits or services offered outside of the Gestalt Community Schools network.

GARNISHMENTS

GCS is required by law to honor all court-ordered garnishments. GCS will notify a staff member of any received garnishment orders and provide a copy upon request. Please be advised that GCS is not able to make any changes to or disregard these legally binding orders. Changes to a garnishment including a Stay must be granted and received from the court that issued the garnishment. In the event a staff member needs to dispute a garnishment order, they should do so by contacting the garnishee or the court where the garnishment was issued.

STAFF MEMBER PERFORMANCE AND EVALUATION

POSITION DESCRIPTION

Each position has a written job description that outlining the purpose of the position, areas of responsibilities, qualifications, salary range and work conditions. Supervisors may submit job description modifications for review and approval to Human Resources. Human Resources will review any proposed job description modifications for consistency and ensure organizational needs are met. The title of the position is also provided in the written job description and is the title to be used for e-mail, business cards, and other correspondence or reference.



PERFORMANCE REVIEWS AND EVALUATIONS

Completing performance evaluations allows both supervisors and staff members time to review job performance, share successes, establish goals, discuss professional development, and open lines of communication. All GCS staff members will have their performance evaluated on at least an annual basis. These evaluations are important and, along with budgetary considerations, can provide a basis for salary increases.

All staff members will receive a copy of the performance evaluation and evaluations are available in an electronic format through the HRIS system.

PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLANS

Gestalt Community Schools has developed a Professional Growth Plan also known as a Success Plan for every staff member. This plan provides a framework that identifies goals, resources, activities and learning opportunities for growth. If any opportunities for growth are identified, the Success Plan will provide an identifiable roadmap to work on areas of improvement. This could involve increased coaching, a plan of action known as the Support Plan, and regular feedback. While the goal of professional growth plans is to support and develop staff members, failure to comply with goals established in the Support Plan may result in corrective action.

ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE POLICY

Part of our definition of our commitment to Invest Deeply is the pledge to develop greatness in individuals through education, mentoring, and coaching. In turn, we ask you to invest in yourself, in others, and in your community. Gestalt is devoted to providing a high-quality educational experience for our scholars while providing a supportive work environment for our staff. We believe that quality and support are the keys to successful teaching and learning. When there is a decrease in high-quality educational experiences, academic results, and school climate, we respond with a deeper focus on support for our staff and schools. In turn, we ask that staff members receiving dedicated support and resources commit to their personal growth and the growth of our scholars.



As a result of our commitment to educational quality and support, Gestalt will deploy the following policies effective July 1, 2025.

- All staff who are teaching in assessed subjects and are not meeting single AMO targets will be placed on an up to one school year probationary phase with quarterly benchmarks for success. This phase will be characterized by intense support and coaching. During this probationary phase, your success will be determined by benchmarks from observations, instructional walk-throughs, formal teacher evaluations, and student academic results according to the network's current tool for interim assessments.
- All school-based, non-tested staff receiving a composite evaluation score below 3.0 will be placed on a one school year probationary phase. This phase will be characterized by intense support and coaching. During this probationary phase, performance goals will be established and monitored. This excludes novice teachers with zero to two years' experience who are actively participating in the New Teacher Academy program.
- CMO staff members receiving a composite evaluation score below 3.0 will be placed on a one school year probationary phase. This phase will be characterized by intense support and coaching. During this probationary phase, performance goals will be established and monitored.
- Under the current School Leadership Team performance, when the school's performance results in the status of a D/F and/or a Comprehensive Support Improvement (CSI) designation school, the team will be placed on a school year probationary phase. The phase will be characterized by intense support and coaching that is differentiated for the school leader and administrative staff (ex: deans and instructional coaches). During this probationary phase, the team's success will be determined by the network and school goals, outcomes of observations, instructional walk-throughs, formal leadership evaluations, and student interim assessment results via the network's most current assessment platform. During this probationary phase, all school leadership and instructional hires must be approved by the Chief Academic Officer and the Chief of Schools.

Staff members who are not showing significant progress toward meeting single AMOs (individual teachers) and/or subject-area AMOs (school administrators) in key areas (observation of practice, interim assessment data, and TNReady/EOC data) may be subject to non-renewal.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Gestalt Community Schools recognizes the importance of professional development and understands the value of maintaining a staff that is at the forefront of their respective profession. Any staff member who wishes to attend workshops, meetings, or other events related to professional development at the expense of GCS must submit a request using the Professional Development Request form to their immediate supervisor for review and approval a minimum of two weeks prior to the event.

INTERNAL TRANSFERS

GCS encourages all staff members to grow within the organization. All open positions are posted on the Gestalt Community Schools website at www.gestaltcs.org/careers. To qualify for an internal transfer, staff members must meet the following criteria:

- Be in current position for at least one (1) school year
- Received positive performance evaluations
- Not currently on corrective action
- Meet all requirements for the position of interest including but not limited to background investigations, reference checks, drug screens, and skills assessments

Although this is the transfer eligibility criteria, GCS recognizes that extraordinary circumstances may exist. If a staff member wishes to transfer but does not meet all aspects of the transfer eligibility criteria, the staff member should contact Human Resources to discuss the situation.



BENEFITS AND PERKS



All full-time staff members of Gestalt Community Schools are eligible for benefits the first of the month following thirty (30) days of employment. This includes full-time school level staff members, as well as staff members assigned to work at the Charter Management Office.

ANNUAL ENROLLMENT PERIOD

Each year during Open Enrollment, staff members may enroll in benefits or change their current benefits elections. Any enrollment or coverage changes made during this period will become effective on January 1.

The benefit options selected during the annual enrollment period will remain in effect through December 31 of the following year unless the staff member loses eligibility or experiences a qualifying life event or family status change during the year. Qualifying events may include, but are not limited to, the birth of a child, adoption of a child, a change in marital status, or loss of outside insurance coverage. For more information regarding qualifying events, please contact the Human Resources Department.

INSURANCE

GCS offers full-time staff member the following insurance benefits through Ross & Yerger:

- Medical
- Dental
- Vision
- Group Life
- Accidental Death and Dismemberment

Supplemental Insurance through Sun Life:

- Short Term Disability
- Longer Term Disability
- Hospital Indemnity
- Critical Illness
- Accident Insurance
- Voluntary Life
- Flexible Spending Accounts
- Dependent Care Account

For specific plan information, including employer and staff member contribution, contact the Human Resources Department.



Important information regarding medical insurance:

- If a staff member is granted leave which qualifies as Family Medical Leave (FMLA), the staff member's share of premium payments will be withheld for the period the staff member is on paid FMLA.
- Staff members on unpaid leave of absence (other than FMLA) are responsible for continuing their share of premium payments in order to maintain coverage.

COBRA

The federal Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act (COBRA) helps staff members and their dependents continue health insurance when they are no longer eligible for benefits under the GCS plan upon a qualifying event. Qualifying events include, but are not limited to resignation, termination, reduction in hours worked or death of the covered staff member. When a staff member becomes eligible for COBRA, GCS will provide a written notice to the staff member's home describing COBRA rights. Under COBRA, the staff member is responsible for all premiums as well as any associated administrative costs (currently includes a 2% increase over what the county is charged for individual and dependent coverage). The Human Resources Department can provide additional information regarding COBRA election, costs, and benefits.



UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Staff members seeking unemployment benefits should contact the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development. GCS does not make determinations on eligibility for unemployment benefits.

WORKERS COMPENSATION

Gestalt Community Schools is committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of all employees. If an employee is injured while performing job-related duties, Tennessee workers' compensation law requires most employers to provide coverage for necessary medical treatment. A printed notice of such is posted and maintained in conspicuous places at every building operated by GCS.

Once an injury is reported, the school will assist the employee in obtaining all required medical care related to the injury at no cost to the employee. Medical treatment must be provided by a physician selected from the employer's approved panel of physicians, in accordance with state guidelines. Employees are required to report all work-related injuries within 24 hours of the incident. To report an injury, employees must notify their direct supervisor or office manager, who will then contact the Human Resources Department.

Failure to report a work-related injury within 24 hours may impact the processing of the workers' compensation claim, in accordance with applicable laws and guidelines. Each office manager maintains a copy of the Gestalt Community Schools Workers' Compensation Procedures, which include:

- Injury Report Form
- Supervisor Injury Report Form
- Panel of Physicians (specific to each school location)
- Human Resources contact information

Prompt reporting ensures timely medical care and proper handling of all workers' compensation claims.

RETIREMENT PLANS

All staff members eligible for retirement benefits are required to contribute to the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS) plan at the rate of 5% of salary. This amount will be payroll deducted beginning with the staff member's first paycheck. GCS also contributes to this retirement plan on each staff member's behalf. Employer contribution percentages are subject to change annually.

All full-time staff members are enrolled in a defined benefit plan provided by Tennessee Consolidated Retirement Plan (TCRS) – either the Legacy Plan or the Hybrid Plan.



- The Legacy Plan is a defined benefit plan with the following requirements and benefits:
 - Mandatory 5% pre-tax contribution
 - Guaranteed monthly benefit based on a member's five (5) highest years of consecutive earnings and service to qualifying retirees
 - Payable for the life of the member and when applicable, transferable to a member's spouse or beneficiary(ies)
 - The State of Tennessee guarantees TCRS members receive retirement income for life.
- The Hybrid Plan provides a combination of a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan. The defined benefit portion of the Hybrid Plan is managed by TCRS. The defined contribution assets are deposited in the state's 401(k) plan where enrollees will manage the investments with the 401(k) plan. This plan requires a 5% salary contribution that is paid by Gestalt Community Schools.

The most current information regarding retirement and retirement benefits can be found at [Tennessee Consolidated Retirement Plan](#). Every staff member is strongly encouraged to set up an individual account in the retirement system using the [TCRS Self Service Account Link](#). Gestalt Community Schools will not be responsible for providing health insurance benefits/coverage at the time of retirement for staff members.

401(K)

Gestalt Community Schools recognizes the importance of saving for retirement and offers eligible staff members a 401(k) plan through Empower Retirement. The 401(k) plan is a retirement planning benefit and saving option provided in addition to the TCRS program. Eligibility, vesting, and all other matters relating to these plans can be obtained from Human Resources.

VACATION, SICK & PERSONAL LEAVE

Gestalt Community Schools provides paid time off (PTO) to all full-time staff members. PTO may be used for any reason, including vacation, illness, medical appointments, family care or personal business.

Beginning the first of the month following an initial thirty (30) days of employment, staff accrue PTO based on the annual work schedule.

Staff Member Annual Work Schedule	PTO Accrual Per Pay Period
Less than 12 months per year	.5 days
12 months per year	1 day

PTO must be scheduled and approved by the staff member's supervisor as soon in advance as possible. In some cases, it may not be possible to schedule PTO. Unscheduled PTO is only permitted in cases of medical emergencies or illness, or where otherwise legally required. Documentation for medically related PTO usage must be submitted within 24-48 hours upon the employee's return to work. Gestalt Community Schools does not pay out unused PTO at the time of separation. Further, upon termination of employment, unused PTO cannot be credited towards a TCRS Retirement account.



PAID TIME OFF (PTO) PAYOUT & DONATION POLICY

PTO at Separation

- GCS does not provide payment for accrued, unused PTO upon resignation, termination, or separation of employment, regardless of the reason.
- Any unused PTO balance will be forfeited on the employee's final day of employment unless donated in accordance with this policy.

PTO Donation Option – Gestalt Connects PTO Bank

Employees have the option to donate unused PTO hours to support colleagues through the Gestalt Connects PTO Bank.

- Employees must be in good standing at the time of separation.
- Donation must be elected before the employee's final day of employment as part of the offboarding process.
- Employees may donate up to 100% of their remaining PTO balance.
- A completed PTO Donation Authorization Form is required.
- Donated PTO hours are final, non-reversible, and cannot be exchanged for pay.

Administration

The Human Resources team will verify final PTO balances, process approved PTO donations, and ensure compliance with this policy during offboarding.

Compliance

This policy is administered in accordance with all applicable federal, state, and local laws. Where required by law, GCS will comply with any mandated PTO payout provisions.

Employee Acknowledgment

All employees are required to acknowledge this policy as part of the employee handbook and during the offboarding process.



PTO BUY BACK PROGRAM PROGRAM

The Gestalt Connects: PTO Buy Back Program is designed to provide additional financial flexibility and recognize the dedication of our full-time employees. This initiative is rooted in our organizational commitments to Invest Deeply and Love Radically by honoring the time, attendance, and service of our team members.

Program Overview

The PTO Buy Back Program allows eligible full-time employees to convert up to 40 hours of unused PTO per semester into a one-time monetary payout, with a maximum of 80 hours per year. Payouts will be distributed at two designated points in the school year.

- Fall Payout: last pay period for December 2026 (for July 1 – End of 1st Semester)
- Spring Payout: last pay period for May 2027 (for January 1 – End of 2nd Semester)

Eligibility Requirements

To qualify for each semester's buy back cycle, employees must meet all of the following criteria:

- Employment Status: Must be a full-time employee in good standing.
- Minimum PTO Balance: 12-month employees must have at least 200 hours of PTO at the time of application, and 10-month employees must have 160 hours at the time of application.
- Attendance: Must maintain a 95% attendance rate during the relevant semester.

Note: Bereavement and jury duty leave are excluded from the attendance calculation. All other PTO usage (sick, personal, unpaid) will count against the 95% attendance requirement.

Application and Payout Process

Voluntary Participation: Employees must apply during designated windows for the Fall (Mid-December 2026) and Spring (Mid-May 2027).

- PTO Balance Verification: PTO hours must meet the 200-hour minimum (12-month employees) and 160-hour minimum (10-month employees) at the time of application submission.
- Payout Rate: PTO buyback will be paid at the employee's base pay rate and subject to applicable taxes in accordance with payroll policy.
- Review and Approval: Applications will be reviewed by the HR department and confirmed prior to payout distribution.

Important Notes

- Employees must be actively employed at the time of the payout date to receive buy back compensation.
- Unused buy back hours cannot be carried forward. However, employees may choose to contribute excess hours to the PTO Donation Program.
- The standard 240-hour PTO cap remains in effect; hours in excess of the cap are not retained.

Disclaimer

Gestalt Community Schools reserves the right to modify, suspend, or discontinue the PTO Buy Back Program at any time and for any reason, with or without notice. Participation in the program does not guarantee continued availability in future years.



GESTALT CARES LEAVE BANK

Gestalt Community Schools recognizes that employees may experience a family medical emergency or be affected by a major medical condition resulting in the need for additional time off beyond their available sick or personal leave. In alignment with Gestalt's commitment to supporting staff well-being and maintaining instructional continuity, eligible employees may voluntarily donate accrued paid sick or personal leave to a shared leave bank for use by co-workers experiencing qualifying hardships. Participation in the leave donation program is strictly voluntary.

Eligibility

Employees must be employed with Gestalt Community Schools for a minimum of one (1) year to be eligible to receive donated sick or personal leave time.

Guidelines

Employees requesting donated leave must have a qualifying situation that meets the following criteria:

Medical Emergency

A medical emergency is defined as a serious medical condition of the employee or an immediate family member that requires a prolonged or extended absence from work and results in a substantial loss of income due to the exhaustion of all available paid leave. Immediate family members are defined as a spouse, child, or parent, grandparent, sister, brother. Medical certification may be required to substantiate the request.

Donation of Sick or Personal Time

- Donation of sick or personal time is strictly voluntary.
- Donated leave will be deposited into the Gestalt Cares Leave Bank for use by eligible recipients.
- The identity of leave recipients will not be disclosed to donating employees.
- The minimum amount of leave an eligible employee may donate is 4 hours per fiscal year.
- The maximum amount an employee may donate is 40 hours per fiscal year or no more than fifty percent (50%) of the employee's current sick and/or personal leave balance, whichever is less.
- Employees may not borrow against future leave to donate time.
- Employees who are currently on an approved leave of absence are not eligible to donate leave time.

Requesting Donated Sick or Personal Time

Employees requesting donated leave must complete a Gestalt Cares Request Form and submit the form to Human Resources. All requests are subject to review and approval by Human Resources and are contingent upon the availability of donated leave in the bank.

Employees must exhaust all available personal, sick, and applicable paid leave prior to using donated leave. Donated leave may only be used for the purpose and time period approved by Human Resources.

Maximum Use of Donated Leave

Employees approved to receive donated leave may access up to seventy-five percent (75%) of their annual sick leave accrual within a rolling twelve (12)-month period, subject to approval and availability of leave bank funds, as outlined below:

- 10- and 11-month employees: up to 9 workdays (72 hours)
- 12-month employees: up to 18 workdays (144 hours)

The maximum allowable donated leave applies per rolling twelve-month period, regardless of the number of qualifying events. Exceptions beyond these limits may be considered on a case-by-case basis for catastrophic medical circumstances, subject to Human Resources review and approval.



WORKING HOURS AND TIME AWAY FROM WORK



ATTENDANCE

Punctuality and regular attendance are essential responsibilities of each staff member at Gestalt Community Schools. Staff members are expected to report to work as scheduled, on time and prepared to work. Staff members are expected to remain at work for the entire work schedule. Late arrival, early departure or other absences from scheduled work hours are disruptive and must be avoided.

As a critical education provider, GCS maintains “black out” dates in which staff members may not request time off. Although subject to change, generally these dates are the days before or immediately after a holiday, days aligned with testing, and any other days deemed necessary for staff members to be in attendance. The Human Resources Department provides a listing of these dates at the beginning of the school year, and they are available in the HRIS system. Human Resources will review documentation for bereavement, medical-related absences, and other emergencies that occur during blackout periods on an individual basis.

ABSENCE

Absence is defined as the failure of a staff member to report for work as scheduled and are categorized as either excused or unexcused.

Excused absences occur when all the following conditions are met:

- The staff member provides sufficient notice to the supervisor.
- The absence request is approved in advance by the supervisor.
- The staff member has sufficient accrued PTO for the requested absence.

Unexcused absences occur when any of the above conditions are not met. The only exception is if an illness or emergency causes a staff member to be absent or late for work. In that instance, the staff member must notify the supervisor as soon as possible and no later than one (1) hour before the scheduled start time. All unexcused absences must be reported by phone call directly to the supervisor – e-mail or text are not acceptable forms of communication in this instance. Supervisors may require documentation for unexcused absences.

Staff members with three (3) or more consecutive days of excused absences because of illness or injury must provide a physician’s statement and fitness for duty release prior to returning to work.

Any staff member who fails to report to work for a period of three (3) days or more without notifying the supervisor will be considered to have abandoned their job and voluntarily terminated the employment relationship. Staff members must take accrued PTO for every absence unless otherwise allowed by school policy (e.g., approved leave of absence, bereavement, jury duty).



TARDINESS AND EARLY DEPARTURES

Staff members are expected to report to work and return from scheduled breaks on time. If staff members cannot report to work as scheduled, they must notify their supervisor no later than one hour before their scheduled start time. This notification does not excuse the tardiness but is necessary to notify the supervisor that a schedule change may be needed.

Staff members who must leave work before the end of their scheduled time must notify the supervisor immediately.

Excessive absenteeism and or tardiness, regardless of the reason, will result in corrective action. Supervisors will document each occurrence using the HRIS system. Staff members will receive formal notification when they are in violation of this policy and informed of the consequences of further violations and corrective actions that will be taken. Attendance is a factor in the evaluation process.

SCHOOL CALENDAR

Upon Board approval, the GCS school calendar is available through the HRIS system.

HOLIDAYS

Gestalt Community Schools policy outlines the days recognized as holidays and provides relevant guidelines for receiving holiday pay. Full-time staff members will be paid for holidays provided if the staff member worked the day before and the day after the holiday. Part-time employees will only be paid for hours worked. Additional holidays may be observed on an individual basis and will require use of PTO. GCS reserves the right to modify the scheduled holidays on a yearly basis.

The recognized holidays are as follows:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Good Friday
- Spring Break
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Fall Break
- Veteran's Day
- Thanksgiving Day
- The day after Thanksgiving Day
- Winter Break
- Christmas Day



MEAL AND BREAK PERIODS

Staff members are entitled to meal and break periods throughout the workday as determined by classification and work schedule. It is the policy of GCS that non-exempt staff members who work six (6) consecutive hours or more per day must take a minimum of thirty (30) minutes for a meal period as well as two fifteen (15) minute breaks. Meal and break periods are unpaid and will be scheduled by supervisors. Eligible, non-exempt staff members must report all specific lunch or break times in the HRIS system.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE (not including FMLA)

Should a staff member need to be out of work for an extended time period, they will need to request personal leave from the supervisor. GCS reserves the right to approve and deny personal leave requests based on business needs. Personal leave does not provide job protection unless required by state or federal law (i.e., Family and Medical Leave, USERRA, etc.).

Leave of absence is generally unpaid. However, staff members may use PTO to continue to be paid during the absence(s). Staff members remaining in a paid status will continue to earn PTO and benefits will continue in the same manner prior to taking leave. Staff members taking unpaid leave will not continue to accrue PTO and will not be eligible for employer contributions on the benefits plans. During the leave, staff members remain responsible for benefit premium payments including insurance.

Gestalt Community Schools cannot guarantee reinstatement upon return from a leave of absence. GCS will make reasonable efforts to place the staff member in an available reasonable position for which he or she is qualified. If no position is available, the staff member will be terminated.

Staff members who fail to report back after an authorized leave of absence are deemed to have voluntarily resigned.

FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE (FMLA)

GCS complies with the federal law including the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and any state and local leave laws. The more generous of the laws will apply to the staff member if the staff member is eligible under both federal and state laws.

Please note there are many requirements, qualifications, and exceptions under these laws, and each staff member's situation is different. Contact the Human Resources Department to discuss options for leave.



FMLA entitles eligible staff members of covered employers to take unpaid, job-protected leave for specified family and medical reasons with continuation of group health insurance.

Eligible staff members are entitled to:

Twelve (12) work weeks of leave in a twelve (12) month period for:

- the birth of a child and to care for the newborn child within one year of birth.
- the placement with the staff member of a child for adoption or foster care and to care for the newly placed child within one (1) year of placement.
- to care for the staff member's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition.
- a serious health condition that makes the staff member unable to perform the essential functions of his or her job.
- any qualifying exigency arising out of the fact that the staff member's spouse, son, daughter, or parent is a covered military member on "covered active duty;" or

Twenty-six (26) work weeks of leave during a single a twelve (12) month period to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the eligible staff member is the servicemember's spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin (military caregiver leave).

To be eligible for FMLA benefits, a staff member must have worked for the employer for a total of twelve (12) months, have worked at least 1,250 hours over the previous twelve (12) months and provide the requested documentation to support the need for FMLA. Staff members may use PTO to remain in a paid status during FMLA leave.

In the event both parents are employed by GCS, they shall be eligible for a combined total of twelve (12) weeks leave for the birth of a child, adoption or placement of a child in foster care, or to take care for a parent with a serious health condition. Both may only take a combined total of twenty-six (26) weeks of leave to care for a covered injured or ill service member.

Staff members may take FMLA leave in one consecutive block of time, may use the leave intermittently (take a day periodically when needed over the year) or, under certain circumstances, may use the leave to reduce the workweek or workday, resulting in a reduced hour schedule. In all cases, the leave may not exceed a total of twelve (12) workweeks (or twenty-six (26) workweeks to care for an injured or ill service member) in a twelve (12) month period.

In accordance with Tennessee Maternity Act and Family Medical Leave Act, female staff members who request leave thirty (30) days in advance due to pregnancy or childbirth shall be granted unpaid maternity leave not to exceed four (4) months, which will run concurrent with the FMLA.



PARENTAL LEAVE

Staff members who are not eligible for FMLA based on length of service may be granted unpaid Parental Leave. Unlike FMLA, Parental Leave does not provide job or benefit protection, and the leave is approved at the sole discretion of GCS. Staff members may utilize their available PTO to remain in a paid status for all or a portion of their leave. Parental Leave shall not exceed twelve (12) weeks.

BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

Staff members are eligible for up to five (5) days of bereavement leave for the death of an immediate family member (spouse, mother, father, grandparents, child, sister, and brother). Step relatives including stepparents, stepchildren, and step siblings are considered immediate family and would also fall under the five (5) day bereavement leave policy. Staff members are eligible for up to three (3) days for the death of an extended immediate family member (mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in law, sister-in-law, spouse's grandparents, aunt, uncle, nieces, and nephews).

To utilize bereavement leave, employees should submit documentation to confirm the aforementioned relationships. Acceptable documentation includes a full copy of the funeral program that shows the relationship and/or an official letter from the funeral home outlining the relationship.

JURY DUTY

Gestalt Community Schools believes in the civic responsibility of staff members and encourages this by allowing staff members time off to serve on jury duty. Staff members required to serve on jury duty will be compensated for time missed from work less the state-paid jury duty compensation. Proper documentation is required when staff members request to be absent from work due to jury duty.

MILITARY LEAVE

Gestalt Community Schools complies with federal and state regulations as it pertains to staff members and their spouses serving in the military. Staff members are provided with unpaid leave during this absence. Staff members also have the option of utilizing their accrued PTO to remain in a paid status during military leave.

GCS also provides military leave for the following: short-notice deployment, a call or order to active duty in seven or less calendar days prior to the date of deployment; military events and related activities; post-deployment activities, and additional activities arising out of the military member's active duty or call to active duty, provided the employer and staff member agree such leave qualifies as an exigency and both agree as to the timing and duration of such leave.

As it relates to approval of military leave and return from military leave, GCS complies with The Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994 (USERRA).

Staff members on authorized military leave will remain in continuous service for purposes of determining eligibility for benefits, promotions and other personnel policies.



SABBATICAL LEAVE POLICY

The Board of Directors of Gestalt Community Schools understands the significance of having strong senior leaders and teachers. Sustained individual growth, creativity, and inspiration are fundamental in continuing to lead not only our organization but our sector to greater impact. Time away from the demands of our daily work is critical to sharpening skills, renewing passions, and allowing others to lead in our absence. The Board of Directors of Gestalt Community Schools will implement a sabbatical leave policy to embrace this dynamic better.

Eligibility

Executive Staff & School Principals

The C-level leaders and school principals may apply for a sabbatical leave after five years of continuous full-time service in their current role. This employee may apply to take a sabbatical leave for up to five weeks at full pay. C-level leaders or school principals on sabbatical who are enrolled in our group benefits plan will continue to have pre-tax deductions made from their pay during the sabbatical period. After the sabbatical leave, they are not permitted to reapply for sabbatical leave for a period of three years following the completion of an employee's last sabbatical leave.

Teachers

Teachers who have been with Gestalt in a teacher-role may apply for a sabbatical leave after five years of continuous full-time service in their current role. This employee may apply to take a sabbatical leave for up to two weeks at full pay. Teachers on sabbatical who are enrolled in our group benefits plan will continue to have pre-tax deductions made from their pay during the sabbatical period. After the sabbatical leave, they are not permitted to reapply for sabbatical leave for a period of three years following the completion of an employee's last sabbatical leave.

Procedures

Executive Staff & School Principals

Sabbatical leave must be discussed with the immediate supervisor; in the case of the Chief Executive Officer, the Board must approve the leave. A request for sabbatical leave must be placed in Paylocity and approved by the supervisor at least 90 days before the first day of leave. There is a transition period before and after a sabbatical leave. One interim senior leader or school principal must be appointed within 30 days before the first day of leave. The C-level leader or school principal must release their duties 15 days prior to the first day of leave. During those 15 days, the C-level leader or school principal will monitor the interim's performance, provide feedback, and establish their leadership responsibilities with their respective teams. Upon the return of the C-level leader or school principal, there is a 10-day transitional period where the interim provides updates and properly transitions all functions back to the original C-level leader or principal.

Teachers

Sabbatical leave must be discussed with the immediate supervisor (school principal) and the Board must approve the leave. Blackout periods and other critical junctures in the school year must be considered to ensure there is minimal disruption to teaching and learning. A request for sabbatical leave must be placed in Paylocity and approved by the supervisor at least 60 days before the first day of leave. There is a transition period before and after a sabbatical leave. One teaching assistant (or other designee) must be appointed within 14 business days before the first day of leave. The teacher must work collaboratively with the teaching assistant (or other designee) for a minimum of 2-3 days prior to the first day of leave. During those transitional days, the teacher's school principal will monitor the designee's performance, provide feedback, and establish their responsibilities during the sabbatical period. Upon the return of the teacher, there is a minimal 2-day transitional period where the designee provides updates and properly transitions all functions back to the teacher of record.



STAFF MEMBER DISCIPLINE, RESIGNATION AND TERMINATION



CORRECTIVE ACTION

Gestalt Community Schools has adopted a progressive discipline policy and procedure designed to provide a structured corrective action process to prevent a recurrence of undesirable behavior and performance issues.

Nothing in this policy provides any contractual rights regarding staff member discipline or counseling, nor should anything in this policy be read or construed as modifying or altering the at-will employment relationship between Gestalt Community Schools and staff members.

GCS utilizes a 4-step approach to disciplinary actions:

- STEP 1: Verbal warning with documentation
- STEP 2: Written warning
- STEP 3: Suspension without pay
- STEP 4: Final written warning and dismissal

Once a staff member receives a suspension without pay, the next incident or action may result in termination. These steps may vary based on the nature of the offense.

Staff members are subject to corrective action for various reasons including, but not limited to poor job performance, violation of policy or failure to follow an established procedure.

During the disciplinary process, staff members may be provided with a performance improvement plan that outlines the continued expectations for the role and/or staff member. Staff members are expected to work with their supervisor on rectifying the behavior that is the subject of the corrective action. Should a staff member fail to meet the expectations and/or terms of the performance improvement plan, the staff member will continue through the disciplinary process that may include additional discipline, up to and including termination.

Although the goal is to provide every opportunity for each staff member to be successful in the workplace, certain situations may warrant escalation through the disciplinary process that may result in immediate suspension, demotion or termination.



Examples of incidents or activities that may warrant an escalated response include:

- Falsifying or withholding information on your employment application that did or would have affected Gestalt Community Schools' hiring decision.
- Engaging in discriminatory or abusive behavior, including sexual harassment.
- Insubordination.
- Negligence in performance of your work-related duties likely to cause or cause injury to persons or property.
- Breach of Confidentiality.
- Fighting, arguing or intent to injure staff, scholars, or members of the general public while in your work capacity.
- Theft.
- Possessing weapons on Gestalt Community Schools' property.
- The possession, use, sale, or, under the influence of illegal or non-prescribed drugs or alcohol in the workplace.
- Conflict of interest (such as using GCS property to perform outside employment);
- Continued negative/improper behavior that the staff member has received either written or verbal reprimand.
- Improper communications with or directed to scholars, teachers and/or administration; or
- Conduct unbecoming behavior of a Gestalt Community Schools staff member.

Any questions regarding disciplinary action should be directed to Human Resources.

GRIEVANCE POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Gestalt Community Schools has established a comprehensive grievance and appeal policy to comply with requirements of the Tennessee Department of Education and to ensure the fair, orderly, and prompt resolution of work-related occurrences. A grievance is generally defined as a claim by a staff member that he or she is adversely affected by the misinterpretation or misapplication of a written company policy or contractual agreement. Staff members may file a grievance based on allegations of discrimination, retaliation, failure to follow policy or procedure, and other violations of law and/or procedure.

This grievance policy and appeal procedure will be posted in the HRIS system and will be available in hard copy from the Human Resources Department. New staff members of Gestalt Community Schools will be informed of this grievance and appeal policy during staff member orientation and training sessions. In the event there is a change to this policy, staff members will be notified no later than thirty (30) days prior to the effective date of the change.



GRIEVANCE PROCESS

Staff members are encouraged to report any grievances timely to Human Resources. A staff member can initiate the grievance process by submitting a formal written statement, e-mail or by direct outreach to the Human Resources Department. Human Resources will review the grievance documentation and begin the grievance process.

The grievance process generally involves 4 steps:

- Step 1: Submission of grievance
- Step 2: Launch of investigation
- Step 3: Mediation if appropriate
- Step 4: Meeting with Human Resources to discuss findings and written decision

While every grievance is different, it is the goal of Gestalt Community Schools to complete and report its findings within fifteen (15) days of grievance notification. In the event a grievance is not concluded within fifteen (15) days, Human Resources will provide status notification to both parties.

Staff members may appeal the findings of Human Resources to the Chief Executive Officer within ten (10) days of the written decision. The Chief Executive Officer will issue a final written decision within fifteen (15) days of the request for appeal.

If a grievance is made against the CEO, a neutral third party will be retained to move through the grievance process. The neutral third party will conduct the grievance process in conjunction with the Board of Directors.

GRIEVANCE AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

Gestalt Community Schools ("GCS") is committed to maintaining a professional, respectful, and inclusive workplace where all employees are Known, Valued, and Accountable (KVA). Employees are encouraged to address workplace concerns promptly and respectfully through informal resolution when appropriate; however, employees may submit a formal grievance to Gestalt People Team ("GPT") if a concern involves a potential violation of policy, unfair treatment, or cannot be resolved informally. All grievances and conflict resolution matters will be reviewed objectively, handled with appropriate confidentiality, and addressed in a timely manner. Retaliation against any employee who raises a concern or participates in a review process in good faith is strictly prohibited and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees are expected to participate in good faith, maintain professionalism, and comply with established procedures throughout the resolution process. For all grievance submissions, the digital platform must be used and submitted to GPT. Please contact Human Resources via hrteam@gestaltcs.org for the Grievance and Conflict Resolution Guide.

SEPARATION

Tennessee is an at-will employment state and employment at GCS is at-will. This allows either the employer or the staff member to terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause.

INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION

As provided above, employment with GCS is at-will. Staff members may be separated from employment without cause, with or without notice, and at any time. All decisions regarding involuntary separation will be determined after a thorough investigation and review of the circumstances by the Human Resources Department.



VOLUNTARY SEPARATION

Staff members offering resignation from employment at GCS are encouraged to provide at least a thirty (30) day written notice to the supervisor. Teachers, however, are required to give a thirty (30) day written notice as outlined in TCA 49-5-411. Gestalt Community Schools reserves the right to pursue all remedies for breach of contract as outlined under TCA 49-5-411. The thirty (30) days should be actual working days, not holidays or PTO. Staff members who provide notice pursuant to this section are considered to have resigned in good standing and generally will be eligible for rehire.

Staff members who do not show up for work for three (3) consecutive days, and do not contact the immediate supervisor as required when absent from work, will be considered to have abandoned their position. Job abandonment is treated as a resignation and benefits will end in the same manner as if the person had submitted a letter of immediate resignation. Staff members who abandon their positions are not eligible for rehire.

DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER

In the event of a staff member's death, the GCS benefits administrator will process all appropriate beneficiary payments from the various benefit plans and all personal effects will be returned to the person listed as the primary emergency contact.

BENEFITS UPON SEPARATION

Benefits upon separation depend on the date of separation as well as whether the staff member works in a teaching capacity.

PAY

If a staff member serves in a teaching capacity and the separation occurs:

Time of Separation	Pay/ Benefits
Any point prior to the end of the school year.	• Pay through last day of work • Benefits as provided below under "Benefits"
At the end of the school year (e.g., teaches through the end of the school year)*	• Pay through June 30th • Benefits through June 30th

Please note: This payment through June 30th for the existing school year is not contingent or in any way related to signing an Intent to Return for the following school year. All other staff members will be paid through the date of separation.



BENEFITS

The following apply to benefits provided through GCS upon separation:

Benefit	When Benefit Terminates
Health Related Benefits	Last day of the month of separation from GCS. For example, if a staff member resigns as of May 3 rd , health benefits will terminate on May 31 st . <i>Please also see COBRA below.</i>
Supplemental Benefits Short term disability Long term disability Life insurance	Final day of employment with GCS

Staff members who wish to continue healthcare coverage may do so through COBRA. COBRA allows separated staff members to continue health benefit coverages, including dependents, at their own expense. Separated staff members will receive written COBRA information within ten (10) days of their separation date at the home address on file.

GCS does not pay staff members for unused paid time off (PTO).

EXIT PROCESS

When a resignation is received, staff members will receive a confirmation from Human Resources explaining the exit process:

- Instructions regarding return of equipment (all property of GCS must be returned by the last day of employment)
- Schedule Exit Interview
- Final Paycheck
- Benefits



DEVICE RETURN POLICY

Policy Overview

All devices and technology issued by Gestalt Community Schools (GCS) remain the property of the organization. Employees are required to return all assigned equipment in good condition upon separation or when no longer needed for their role. This policy applies to all employees, substitutes, contractors, and coaches issued GCS devices, including:

- Laptops and desktops
- Tablets/iPads
- Mobile phones
- Chargers and accessories
- ID badges and related equipment

Employee Responsibilities

Employees must:

- Protect and properly use all assigned devices
- Return all equipment on or before their last working day
- Ensure all items issued are included in the return

Return Process

- Devices must be returned to the Human Resources Department or designated campus staff
- A device return form/checklist will be completed at the time of return
- Equipment will be reviewed for condition and completeness

Failure to Return Devices

Employees who fail to return assigned equipment may be subject to the following:

- Written notice with a deadline to return items
- Financial responsibility for replacement costs
- Payroll deduction, where permitted by law
- Additional collection or legal action if necessary
- Ineligibility for rehire

Lost or Damaged Devices

- Must be reported within 24 hours to Human Resources
- Employees may be responsible for repair or replacement costs depending on circumstances

Condition of Returned Equipment

Equipment should be returned in good working condition with reasonable wear and tear (to be determined by Human Resources staff) with all issued accessories.

Acknowledgment

By accepting GCS-issued equipment, employees agree to comply with this policy and understand the responsibility for returning all items.



APPENDIX A

Workplace Violence and Anti-Bullying Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to communicate to all staff members, including supervisors, managers and executives, that Gestalt Community Schools will not in any instance tolerate Workplace Violence or Bullying behavior. Staff members found in violation of this policy will receive disciplinary action.

SCOPE

1. This policy applies to all Gestalt Community School staff members
2. This policy describes the organization's objectives and policies regarding workplace violence and bullying

Gestalt Community Schools does not tolerate any type of workplace violence committed by or against staff members. Staff members are prohibited from making threats or engaging in violent activities. This list of behaviors provides examples of conduct that is prohibited:

- Causing physical injury to another person.
- Making threatening remarks.
- Displaying aggressive or hostile behavior that creates a reasonable fear of injury to another person or subjects another individual to emotional distress.
- Intentionally damaging employer property or property of another employee.
- Possessing a weapon while on company property or while on company business.
- Committing acts motivated by, or related to, sexual harassment or domestic violence.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

Any potentially dangerous situations must be immediately reported to a supervisor or the human resource (HR) department. Reports can be made anonymously, and all reported incidents will be investigated.

Reports or incidents warranting confidentiality will be handled appropriately, and information will be disclosed to others only on a need-to-know basis. All parties involved in a situation will be subjected to mediation and as the results of investigations will be discussed with them.

Gestalt Community Schools will actively intervene at any indication of a possibly hostile or violent situation and involve the necessary law enforcement agency.



ENFORCEMENT

Threats, threatening conduct, or any other acts of aggression or violence in the workplace will not be tolerated. Any employee determined to have committed such acts will be subject to disciplinary action. Non-Employees engaged in violent acts on the employer's premises will be reported to the proper authorities and fully prosecuted.

Gestalt Community Schools considers the following types of behavior examples of bullying:

- Verbal bullying. Slandering, ridiculing or maligning a person or his or her family; persistent name-calling that is hurtful, insulting or humiliating; using a person as the butt of jokes; abusive and offensive remarks.
- Physical bullying. Pushing, shoving, kicking, poking, tripping, assault or threat of physical assault, damage to a person's work area or property.
- Gesture bullying. Nonverbal gestures that can convey threatening messages.
- Exclusion. Socially or physically excluding or disregarding a person in work-related activities. In addition, the following examples may constitute or contribute to evidence of bullying in the workplace:
 - Persistent singling out of one person.
 - Shouting or raising one's voice at an individual in public or in private.
 - Using obscene or intimidating gestures.
 - Not allowing the person to speak or express himself or herself (i.e., ignoring or interrupting).
 - Personal insults and use of offensive nicknames.
 - Public humiliation in any form.
 - Constant criticism on matters unrelated or minimally related to the person's job performance or description.
 - Public reprimands.
 - Repeatedly accusing someone of errors that cannot be documented.
 - Deliberately interfering with mail and other communications.
 - Spreading rumors and gossip regarding individuals.
 - Encouraging others to disregard a supervisor's instructions.
 - Manipulating the ability of someone to do his or her work (e.g., overloading, underloading, withholding information, setting deadlines that cannot be met, giving deliberately ambiguous instructions).
 - Assigning menial tasks not in keeping with the normal responsibilities of the job.
 - Taking credit for another person's ideas.
 - Refusing reasonable requests for leave in the absence of work-related reasons not to grant leave.
 - Deliberately excluding an individual or isolating him or her from work-related activities, such as meetings.
 - Unwanted physical contact, physical abuse or threats of abuse to an individual or an individual's property (defacing or marking up property).

Individuals who feel they have experienced bullying should report this to their supervisor or to Human Resources before the conduct becomes severe or pervasive. All staff members are strongly encouraged to report any bullying conduct they experience or witness as soon as possible to allow Gestalt Community Schools to take appropriate action.



APPENDIX B

Dress Code & Personal Hygiene Policy

PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to outline what is considered appropriate dress attire and personal hygiene requirements and expectations.

SCOPE

1. This policy applies to all Gestalt Community School employees
2. This policy describes the organization's objectives and policies regarding dress attire and personal hygiene

Gestalt Community Schools encourages staff members to maintain a workplace environment that functions well and is free from unnecessary distractions and annoyances. As part of that effort, the school requires employees to maintain a neat and clean professional appearance. To that end, Gestalt Community Schools will determine and enforce guidelines for workplace-appropriate attire and personal hygiene for all its employees.

- Staff members are expected to dress in business casual attire.
- Staff members must always present a clean, professional appearance. Everyone is expected to be well-groomed and wear clean clothing, free of holes, tears, or other signs of wear.
- Clothing with offensive or inappropriate designs or stamps are not allowed.
- Clothing should not be tight, torn or revealing.
- Every employee is expected to practice daily hygiene and good grooming habits
- Guidelines may limit natural or artificial scents that could be distracting or annoying to others.

Business casual attire is broadly defined as a code of dress that blends traditional business wear with a more relaxed style still professional and appropriate enough for an office environment.

The following list is a guideline and should not be considered as all inclusive, of appropriate and inappropriate attire under Gestalt Community Schools business casual attire standards. These are examples only. Managers will determine if an employee is dressed inappropriately for the workplace within the policy.



Appropriate Business Casual Attire Examples

- Gestalt logo wear
- Casual slacks and trousers (Must be clean and free of rips, tears and fraying; may not be excessively tight or revealing)
- Polo shirts
- Dresses or skirts
- Casual shoes

Inappropriate Business Casual Attire Examples

- Flip-flops (beachwear), athletic slides, & house shoes
- Spaghetti straps, muscle shirts, or halter tops
- Leggings or jeggings
- Tight, see-through, backless, low-cut tops or otherwise inappropriate clothing
- Athletic wear including sweatpants or yoga pants
- Non-religious headwear (i.e. hoods, hats, caps, or headwear designed for sleep)
- Clothing with inappropriate graphic designs and/or messaging including (but not limited to) alcohol, drugs, profanity, etc.
- Any clothing that is tight, torn, and/or excessively revealing

ADDRESSING WORKPLACE ATTIRE AND HYGIENE

Violations of this policy can range from inappropriate clothing items to offensive perfumes and body odor. If an employee's poor hygiene or use of too much perfume/cologne is an issue, the manager will discuss the problem with the employees in private and should point out the specific areas to be corrected. If the problem persists, managers will follow Gestalt Community Schools normal corrective action process. If a manager determines that an employee's dress or appearance is not appropriate as provided in this policy, he or she will take corrective action and require the employee to leave the work area and make the necessary changes to comply with the policy.

Employees who are directed to do so will be required to use paid time off (PTO) or unpaid time off for such a purpose.



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