Mountain Education Charter High School

The first choice for a second chance to build a better future through education.

A State Chartered School

FY23 Faculty Handbook

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Established by the Georgia Governing Board in 1992

MECHS is a Title I School
Accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

Mountain Education Charter High School High School is an equal opportunity employer.

Revised June 2022

Mountain Education Charter High School
Governing Board

The Superintendents of Fannin, Gilmer, Lumpkin, Pickens, Towns, Union, and White County School Systems and Collaborative Members

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Dr. Brian Ridley	Interim Superintendent-Gilmer County Schools
Dr. Laurie Burkett	Superintendent-White County Schools
Dr. Franklin Johnson	Collaborative Member
Ms. Amy Gibby-Rosser	Collaborative Member
Ms. Kay Head	Collaborative Member

Mountain Education Charter High School

Mission Statement

Provide a second chance opportunity for students across North Georgia to earn an accredited high school diploma in a student-centered, self-paced, evening public high school.

MECHS is committed to:

- partnering with local school systems, families, and community members to nurture educational excellence.
- engaging students in meaningful learning with personalized graduation coaching, preparing them for college or career.
- offering course credit recovery for students to stay on track for graduation.
- providing dual enrollment opportunities to jump-start the college experience.

Guiding Principles

We believe in a culture of ***excellence***. Therefore, we will hold ourselves accountable while aggressively applying best practices and pursuing continuous improvement to our academic and business models.

We value ***servant leadership***. Therefore, we are committed to developing and keeping leaders who are selfless, visionary, and performance driven.

We believe in ***empowerment***. Therefore, we will promote an environment of encouragement and life skill learning to equip each student to take ownership of pursuing success and discovering their dreams.

We value ***integrity***. Therefore, we will conduct ourselves in a manner that exemplifies honesty, transparency, fidelity and unity of purpose.

We believe in the strength of ***community***. Therefore, we are committed to establishing and fostering productive school-family-community partnerships.

We believe in the power of ***human relationships***. Therefore, we are committed to establishing and nurturing meaningful relationships with every student and staff member.

Criminal Background Checks

A criminal record check will be conducted at or prior to employment on every person who is employed by the Board for the first time to fill either a full-time or part-time certified or classified position with the Mountain Education Charter High School (MEC) as well as all student interns. For this purpose, the applicant shall be fingerprinted as required by state law for all public school employees.

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

The cost of such record checks for all certified employees shall be paid by the applicant. The cost for all classified employees shall be paid by the Board.

Termination

Employees under contract may have their contracts terminated only by following the procedures as set forth in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-940. Certificated employees do not earn any rights to continued employment as set forth in O.C.G.A. § 20-2-942. All employees not under contract are employed at the will of the Board.

Any employee may be suspended without pay by the Board pending a decision regarding termination. Any employee may be placed on administrative leave with pay by the Superintendent at any time.

Staff Attendance

All employees are expected to report to work as scheduled. If extenuating circumstances exist which would cause an employee to be late for work, the campus principals must be informed in order to ensure that job responsibilities are covered. Should an employee be required to be absent during a scheduled work period, that employee must inform the campus administrative staff and, if appropriate, ensure that another employee works in the place of the absentee.

The administrative staff must be informed when an employee arrives or departs the school. Part-time employees must clock in and out using the Kronos clock upon entering and leaving the school. Part-time employee monthly time sheets must be

completed and signed by the employee, and submitted at the predetermined monthly cut-off date.

Schedule

School hours for MEC students are Monday through Thursday from 4:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m., unless otherwise stated by the campus principals.

Hourly Employee Pay

Hourly employees will be paid an hourly rate based on the level of their state certificate or level of education and number of years of verified experience. Some positions will receive a flat rate regardless of certified or classified status or level of education and verified years of experience.

Leaves and Absences

Accrual of Sick Leave and Absence for Medical and Related Reasons

Each full-time employee of MEC shall be entitled to sick leave, with full pay, computed on the basis of one and one-fourth (1 1/4) working days for each completed month. All unused sick leave shall be accumulated from one fiscal year to the next up to a maximum of forty-five (45) days. Sick leave accumulated by a certified full-time employee from another public school system is transferable to MEC up to a maximum of 45 days.

The leave provided for under this handbook is available only for personal illness, injury or exposure to contagious diseases, or for absences necessitated by illness in the employee's immediate family.

For any absence in which sick leave is used, the Supervisor shall have the right to require a physician's certificate stating that the employee is ill and is unable to perform his or her duties. In the event that sick leave is used to care for a member of the immediate family, the Site Administrator shall have the right to require a physician's certificate stating that the employee is needed to care for the sick family member.

For the purposes of absences for medical and related reasons, members of the immediate family are defined as spouse, children, father, mother, sisters, brothers, grandparents, grandchildren, and in-law equivalents of the same or other relatives living in the household.

Bereavement Leave

Death in Immediate Family – In the event of a death in the immediate family (as defined above) of a full-time employee, a leave of absence will be granted to a maximum number of five days in accordance with the rules and regulations of the board and such leave will not be charged against sick leave.

Personal and Professional Leave

Full-time employees may take three (3) days of personal/professional leave if prior approval of the absence has been given by the employee's immediate supervisor and if the presence of the employee requesting absence is not essential for effective school operation. A leave form must be filed and approved by the Site Administrator prior to leave.

Employees are not required to disclose the purpose for which such absence is sought but may be required to state whether the absence is for "personal" or "professional" reasons.

Professional leave for training and/or professional meetings attended at the request of the Site Administrator or designee shall not be counted against an employee's sick leave.

Observance of Religious Holidays

Full-time employees may use personal leave for the observance of recognized religious holidays. If an employee desires to take leave for the observance of recognized religious holidays in excess of the days allowed for personal leave, the employee may take unpaid leave for such purposes provided that such leave is not excessive and does not interfere with fulfilling the obligations of his or her job.

Mandatory Non-Work Days

The following 12 days are mandatory non-work days.

Labor Day
Thanksgiving Holiday (2)
Easter Holiday
Memorial Day
July 4th
Martin Luther King Jr's Birthday
Veterans Day
Christmas (3)
New Years Day

Jury and Witness Leave

Each person employed by the MEC shall be allowed leave with pay for the purposes of serving as a juror in any court or when attending a judicial proceeding in response to a subpoena. Jury and/or witness leave shall not be deducted from an individual's accumulated personal, professional or sick leave. No employee utilizing jury and witness leave shall be required to pay the cost of employing a substitute to serve during his or her absence for such leave. Employees who serve on juries or who are subpoenaed for reasons arising out of their employment with the MEC may keep the jury/witness pay they receive.

Military Leave

All employees of the MEC are entitled to paid leave not to exceed eighteen days in any one federal fiscal year for the purpose of complying with ordered military leave duty with the armed forces of the United States or State of Georgia, including duty as a voluntary member of the militia or reserve component of the United States or State of Georgia. Employees also are entitled to leave not exceeding thirty days in any one federal fiscal year if ordered to duty as a result of the declaration of any emergency by the governor or the appropriate officials of the United States armed forces. Employees who have military commitments shall inform the Site Administrator or designee annually and shall cooperate to the extent possible in scheduling such leave so as to minimize the disruption in those employees' duties and the mission of the MEC.

Family and Medical Leave

A. Eligible Employees

Employees who have been employed by the MEC for at least 12 months and who have worked at least 1250 hours during the previous 12 months are eligible to take 12 weeks of unpaid leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act ("FMLA"). As to the interpretation of this handbook, the MEC's employees should look to the Act itself and its regulations.

An eligible employee may request leave for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Birth of a son or daughter and to care for the newborn child;
2. Adoption or foster placement of a son or daughter with the employee;
3. To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent, if that person has a serious health condition; and
4. Serious health condition of the employee that prevents the employee from performing his/her job functions.
5. Any qualifying exigency arising from the fact that the employee's family member (the covered military member) is on active duty or has been notified of an impending deployment in support of a contingency operation.

Qualifying exigencies are defined as short-notice deployment (seven or less calendar days); military events and related activities; childcare and school activities; financial and legal arrangements; counseling; rest and recuperation (up to five days per instance); post-deployment activities; additional activities where the employer and employee agree that the leave is an exigency and agree to both timing and duration of the leave; and

6. Military caregiver leave to care for a covered servicemember with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the servicemember.

In the event of the birth, adoption or foster placement of a son or daughter, all leave must be completed within twelve months after the birth, adoption or foster placement.

B. Definitions

“Covered Service member” is a current member of the Armed Forces, including a member of the National Guard or Reserves, who is receiving medical treatment, recuperation, or therapy, or is in outpatient status, or is on the temporary disability retired list for a serious injury or illness. A serious injury or illness is one that is incurred by a servicemember in the line of duty on active duty that may cause the servicemember to be medically unfit to perform the duties of his or her office, grade, rank, or rating. A serious injury or illness also includes injuries or illnesses that existed before the service member’s active duty and that were aggravated by service in the line of duty on active duty.

"Instructional employee" means an employee whose principle function is to teach and instruct students in a class, a small group, or an individual setting.

“Next of Kin” of a covered service member means the nearest blood relative other than the covered service member's spouse, parent, son or daughter, in the following order of priority: blood relatives granted legal custody, brothers and sisters, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and first cousins, unless the covered servicemember has specifically designated in writing another blood relative for purposes of FMLA caregiver leave.

“Outpatient Status,” with respect to a covered service member, means the status of a member of the Armed Forces assigned to either a military medical treatment facility as an outpatient; or a unit established for the purpose of providing command and control of members of the Armed Forces receiving medical care as outpatients.

"Parent" means a biological parent or one who acted in place of a parent when the employee was a child. The term “parent” does not include parent “in law.”

"Serious Health Condition" means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves inpatient care in a hospital, hospice or residential medical care facility or continuing treatment by a health care provider.

“Serious Injury or Illness” means, an injury or illness incurred by a covered service member in the line of duty on active duty that may render the service member medically unfit to perform the duties of the member’s office, grade, rank, or rating.

"Son or daughter" means a biological, adopted or foster child, a stepchild, a legal ward, or a child for whom the employee acts as a parent. The son or daughter must be under age 18 or, if the son or daughter is age 18 or older, he/she must be incapable of self-care on a daily basis due to a mental or physical disability.

"Spouse" means a husband or wife as defined in the FMLA regulations.

C. Amount And Type Of Leave Taken

Except as provided below, an employee may take a total of 12 weeks leave during any twelve-month period. A "rolling year" shall be used to determine the twelve-month period during which the twelve weeks of leave entitlement may occur. That is, each time an employee takes FMLA leave, the remaining leave entitlement would be any balance of the 12 weeks that has not been used during the immediately preceding 12 months.

If both spouses work for the MEC and both are eligible for FMLA leave, they are authorized to take only a combined total of 12 weeks leave during any one 12 month period to care for a newborn or adopted child, a child placed with the employee for foster care, or a parent with a serious health condition. Both spouses are authorized to take leave to care for a spouse or child with a serious health condition for twelve (12) weeks.

An eligible employee is eligible to take up to 26 weeks of military caregiver leave during a “single 12-month period.” The “single 12-month period” begins on the date the employee first takes military caregiver leave and ends 12 months after that date, regardless of the method used to determine the leave entitlement period for other FMLA reasons.

If both spouses work for the MEC and both are eligible for FMLA leave, they are authorized to take only a combined total of 26 weeks during the “single 12-month period” described above for military caregiver leave or a combination of military caregiver leave and leave taken for other FMLA reasons.

The Board will require that any accumulated paid leave be substituted for all or a part of the otherwise unpaid FMLA leave.

D. Intermittent Or Reduced Leave

An employee is not permitted to take leave on an intermittent or reduced leave schedule unless it is medically necessary or necessary because of a qualifying exigency. The Board will require a certification, in the form described in Section G below, to document the necessity of such intermittent leave.

E. Notification Of Leave

If the need for FMLA leave is foreseeable, an employee requesting leave must provide at least 30 days advance notice to the Superintendent. If such advance notice is not possible, the employee must give notice to the Superintendent as soon as practicable, ordinarily within one or two working days of learning of the need for leave. When planning medical treatment, the employee should make a reasonable effort to schedule the treatment, subject to the approval of the health care provider, so that any corresponding leave will not disrupt unduly the operations of the MEC.

Employees must provide sufficient information for the MEC to reasonably determine whether the FMLA may apply to the leave request. When an employee seeks leave due to an FMLA-qualifying reason for which the MEC has previously provided FMLA leave, the employee must specifically reference either the previous qualifying reason for leave or the need for FMLA leave.

F. Benefits And Return To Work

Employees will be eligible to maintain health care benefits provided by the MEC while on FMLA leave. The Board will pay the employee's portion, if any, of such benefits. The employee will pay the same portion, if any, of such benefits as the employee paid before beginning the leave.

The Board may recover any health care benefit premiums paid on behalf of an employee if the employee does not return to work after the leave period has expired, unless the employee did not return due to a serious health condition of the employee or the employee's spouse, parent or child, or other circumstances beyond the employee's control. The Board may require certification from the health care provider that a serious health condition of the employee or family member prevented the employee from returning to work.

With the exception of paid vacation, personal, medical or sick leave required to be substituted for unpaid leave under Section C above, the employee's absence during leave will not alter benefits which the employee accrued before taking leave. Any accrued benefits will not be lost during the leave.

Upon return from leave, the employee is entitled to be reinstated to a position equivalent to the one the employee held when he/she left on FMLA leave, with equivalent pay, benefits and other terms and conditions of employment. Upon proper notice, however, the Board may deny reinstatement under this handbook to an employee whose salary is in the highest 10% of the employees employed by the MEC if such denial is necessary to prevent substantial and grievous economic injury to the district's operation, as determined by the Board.

G. Required Certification And Reporting

The Board requires that a request for leave due to a serious health condition of an employee or family member or a serious illness or injury of a covered service member be supported by certification by the appropriate health care provider of the eligible employee, family member or covered servicemember on a form to be provided by the Board. This certification must include (1) the date on which the serious health condition commenced, (2) the probable duration of the condition, (3) if the purpose of the leave is to care for a son, daughter, spouse or parent ("family member"), a statement that the employee is needed to care for the family member and the estimated amount of time needed for such care, and (4) if the leave is due to the employee's own serious health condition, a statement that the employee is unable to perform his/her job functions. MEC may require that the eligible employee obtain subsequent recertification on a reasonable basis as requested by the Board.

The Board, at its own expense, may obtain the opinion of a second health care provider of the Board's choice, if the Board should choose to do so. If a conflict exists between the opinion in the certification and the second opinion, the Board may, at its own expense, obtain a third opinion from a health care provider upon which the Board and the employee jointly agree. Such a third opinion as to the necessity for the leave is binding on both the Board and the employee.

Upon an employee's return to work after leave for the employee's own serious health condition, the Board may require the employee to obtain certification from his/her health care provider that the employee is able to resume work.

The MEC may require that a first request for leave because of a qualifying exigency arising from active duty or a call to active duty be supported by a copy of the covered service member’s active duty orders or other documentation issued by the military. A certification form requesting the required information to support a request for exigency leave will be provided by the MEC upon request.

The Board may require an employee on FMLA leave to report periodically to his/her immediate supervisor or designee on the employee's status and intent to return to work.

H. Special Provisions

When an instructional employee seeks intermittent leave or leave on a reduced schedule in connection with a family or personal illness that would constitute at least 20% of the total number of working days during which the leave would extend, the Board may require the employee to elect to take leave in a block (not intermittently) for the entire period or to transfer to an available alternative position within the MEC that is equivalent in pay, for which the employee is qualified, and which better accommodates the intermittent situation.

If an instructional employee begins leave more than five weeks before the end of a semester, the Board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if

(i) the leave will last at least three weeks; and
(ii) the employee would return to work during the three-week period before the end of the term.

If an instructional employee begins leave for a purpose other than the employee's own serious health condition during the five-week period before the end of the semester, the Board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester if

(i) the leave will last more than two weeks; and
(ii) the employee would return to work during the two-week period before the end of the term.

If an instructional employee begins leave for a purpose other than the employee's own serious health condition during the three-week period before the end of a semester, and the leave will last more than five working days, the Board may require the employee to continue taking leave until the end of the semester.

Employee Benefits

All full-time employees, as determined by the Board, will be eligible for participation in the Georgia State Health Benefit Plan, the Teacher's Retirement System and other benefits available to Georgia school educators. Contact Human Resources for further information.

Compliance Director

Mountain Education Charter High School utilizes Compliance Director sponsored by Pioneer RESA to ensure that all employees annually receive training on topics such as Child Sexual Abuse and Assault Awareness and Prevention, Code of Ethics for GA Educators, Copyright for Schools, Ethical Use of Social Media, FERPA and Data Privacy, Human Sex Trafficking, Internet Safety, Bloodborne Pathogens, among other relevent topics. Every staff member is required to complete the modules upon hire as well as annually.

Child Abuse/Neglect

State Board rule (160-4-8-.04) mandates all employees be briefed annually on identification and reporting procedures for suspected child abuse/neglect. All MEC employees will immediately report all suspected cases of child abuse/neglect to the counselor and/or principal who will in turn report the incident to the MEC Superintendent. Volunteers are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse and thus subject to the same training as employees.

Weapons Reporting Requirements

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

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

3. Students who possess any weapon described in paragraph 1 in violation of this policy will be subject to a minimum of a one calendar year expulsion. The Superintendent shall have the authority either before or after the student is referred for a tribunal hearing to reduce the mandated one year expulsion under circumstances where the one year expulsion appears excessive to the superintendent. The tribunal shall also have the authority to modify such expulsion requirements on a case-by-case basis in determining the appropriate punishment. Finally, in any tribunal decision appealed to the Governing Board, the board may reduce the mandated punishment but shall consider whether the superintendent and/or tribunal considered a reduction and any rationale in denying such a reduction.
4. Students who possess other weapons or hazardous objects as described in paragraph 2 will be subject to discipline.

Students will be permitted to use the office telephone, with teacher permission first, in emergencies only.

Students may not bring MP3 players or iPods, radios, tape players, CD players, CDs, electronic games, playing cards, other electronic devices or other disruptive devices to school.

Students are permitted to bring cell phones, but guidelines must be followed:

- Must be stored out of sight in classrooms
- May only be used during breaks
- Use of the Video and Camera functions are prohibited
- Misuse of a cell phone may result in confiscation of the device.

Students are not permitted to bring book bags to school. The school will provide all necessary materials except pencil, pen, and paper, which must be provided by the student.

Social visits are not permitted during class time.

Inappropriate display of public affection is prohibited.

Students shall not possess, use, or offer to sell, barter, give away, exchange, or be under the influence of any tobacco products, drugs, alcohol or other controlled substance on school grounds. Drug and/or tobacco paraphernalia of any form are prohibited. The prohibited paraphernalia include but are not limited to the following: cigarettes, electronic cigarettes (any type: to include Vape Pens), dip, snuff, cigars, matches, lighters, rolling papers, etc. In the event of such an occurrence, law enforcement officials may be notified immediately and appropriate school disciplinary action will be taken.

- Students may not damage or deface personal property, including the property of another student or any person legitimately at the school, or school property (vandalism or graffiti) during school hours or off-school hours.
- Students may be disciplined for conduct off campus that could result in the student being criminally charged with a felony and which makes the student's continued presence at school a potential danger to persons or property at the school or which disrupts the educational process.

Any employee who has reasonable cause to believe that a student possesses a weapon as defined in paragraph 1, is involved in an assault using a weapon as defined in paragraph 2, or is involved in a second offense with a weapon on campus must report such violations to the principal of the school. If the principal has reasonable cause to believe that such report is valid, he/she must immediately make an oral report to the Superintendent and to the appropriate law enforcement authority and district attorney. The student's parents or guardian will be notified immediately of his/her child's involvement in any activity involving weapons.

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

Classroom Management

Student behavior that prevents a teacher from teaching or a student from learning will not be permitted. Behavior of this nature will result in the student being removed from the class/school. The student will be taken to the office for appropriate administrative action.

Teacher's Role in the Classroom

MECHS utilizes a blended learning model of education. Blended learning is a formal education program in which a student learns at least in part through delivery of content and instruction via online curriculum with some element of student control over time or pace. At MECHS, face-to-face classroom methods are combined with computer-mediated instruction. In order for students to be successful, it is imperative that teacher interaction takes place with students while they work in their online platforms.

It is the expectation of MECHS Administration that teachers interact and formatively assess each student approximately every 20 minutes to ensure that the student is progressing in their coursework. Teachers are expected to facilitate best practices in their classroom at all times. This includes teachers walking around the classroom, being actively engaged with all students, working one-on-one with all students, and differentiating based on student needs.

Student Supervision/Duty

Students are to be supervised at all times. Employees are expected to assist each other in ensuring adequate supervision. Faculty and staff are responsible for monitoring student behavior during scheduled breaks.

Test Security and Accountability

A primary function of the GaDOE is to establish, develop, and implement a state assessment system that fairly, accurately, and with validity measures student achievement related to Georgia's academic content standards (Georgia Standards of Excellence). The material contained in this section is intended to provide guidance and information related to the ethical, fair, and appropriate administration of state assessments.

Security breaches are actions during test administration that gives a student an unfair advantage or compromises the secure administration of the assessment. Any action that compromises test security or leads to the invalidation of an individual student's or a group of students' test scores will be viewed by the GaDOE as an inappropriate use or handling of tests and will be treated as such. Below are guidelines to assist system personnel in determining which activities might compromise test security or score validity. The guidelines apply, where applicable, to both online and paper test administrations and environments. Please note that this list is not exhaustive and includes acts that could be committed by staff and/or students. Any concern regarding test security must be reported to GaDOE immediately. Assessment Administration Division staff members are available to help system personnel develop and implement appropriate test security procedures.

It is a breach of test security if anyone performs any of the following:

- coaches the examinees during testing, or alters or interferes with examinees' responses in any way;
- gives examinees access to test questions or prompts prior to testing;
- copies, reproduces, or uses in any manner (including social media sites, texting, and/or email) inconsistent with test security regulations all or any portion of secure online testing forms, test tickets, passwords, or test booklets;
- makes answers available to examinees;
- reads, reviews, notates, photographs, shares, transmits test items whether online or paper, before, during (unless specified in the IEP, IAP, or EL/TPC), or after testing;
- questions students about test content after the test administration;
- fails to follow security regulations for distribution and return of secure test materials as directed, or fails to account for all secure test materials before, during, and after testing (NOTE: lost test booklets or other lost secure

assessment materials in any assessment program constitute a breach of test security and will result in a referral to Georgia Professional Standards Commission [GaPSC]);
- uses or handles secure test booklets, formula sheets, answer documents, online test tickets, logins, passwords, and/or test forms for any purpose other than examination;
- fails to follow administration directions from the Examiner's Manual including an exact word-for- word reading of the Examiner's script;
- fails to properly secure and safeguard pass codes/usernames found on test tickets necessary for online test administration;
- erases, marks answers, or alters responses on an answer document or within an online test form; and/or
- participates in, directs, aids, counsels, assists, encourages, or fails to report any of these prohibited acts.

The GaDOE monitors various websites/social media sites in search of instances where individuals may have posted secure test information. GaDOE works with websites/social media sites to identify the source of any such posting that becomes known. Such actions may result in invalidation and disciplinary action in accordance with the system's code of conduct.

Professional Ethics

Standardized testing has become a basic component of accountability for students, teachers, administrators, schools and school systems in Georgia and other states. Communities rely on their schools' standardized test scores to determine the success of their schools and to compare them to other communities. Test scores also have a major impact on the economic future of communities. New industries use test scores as a major factor in selecting locations for new facilities. As a result of federal and state accountability ratings, standardized testing has become important to all states. When tests are properly administered, scored, and interpreted with a high degree of professionalism, all the stakeholders can be guided to make reliable and appropriate decisions.

A good testing program provides the following benefits:

- Students, based on their individual test scores, will know which skills and knowledge they have
- mastered and how they compare to other students.
- Parents can evaluate whether their children are obtaining the skills and knowledge they need to be
- successful during and after their school experiences.

- Teachers can determine if students have mastered the skills and knowledge needed to advance to the next level and if not which skills and knowledge need improvement.
- Community members can compare local student performance with performances of students in other locations. The community has a measuring stick to determine if schools are making improvements from year to year.
- Georgia relies on state-mandated assessments as a key component of the state accountability program as well as using the test results to fulfill federal requirements for educational accountability. For reliable and valid reporting, tests must be administered fairly and ethically. In the pursuit of fair and ethical testing for all stakeholders of Georgia, the following areas shall be addressed before, during, and after testing:
- Test Security – Test materials shall be secured before, during, and after testing and scoring to ensure fair assessment of all students.
- Test Preparation – The test should reflect the state-adopted content standards being taught and should be developmentally appropriate for the age and level of the test-taker. Students should be familiar with test- preparation skills including the ability to use online testing tools. Educators should be trained on proper administration procedures and testing practices. Tests should be administered in the appropriate environment.
- Test Administration – Policies and procedures should be developed to implement fair and ethical testing procedures and practices. All eligible students should be assessed. Tests are used for their intended purposes.
- Test Data – Test scoring should be reliable and valid. Test data interpretation shall be appropriately given to stakeholders. Curriculum improvement should be guided by adequate data analyses.

Testing Procedures

All testing procedures follow the Georgia Student Assessment Program Student Assessment Handbook published by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE). The GaDOE updates the handbook each year and local testing examiners are trained in procedures each year using the handbook and presentations/webinars/manuals provided by the GaDOE. The complete handbook can be found at the following website:

http://www.gadoe.org/Curriculum-Instruction-and-Assessment/Assessment/Pages/Information-For-Educators.aspx

Emergency Management Plan

The MEC sites operate under the Emergency Management Plan as prepared by the respective school system of residence in cooperation with local and state emergency agencies (GEMA). This plan details emergency procedures for a variety of situations such as bomb threats, hostage/terrorist situations, tornado, fire, hazardous materials, etc.

Each site's local plan is available for review at the Site Administrator's office.

Faculty Dress Code

Professionalism and good taste should dictate the dress of faculty members. Professional dress by employees sets the tone for how students perceive and act/react to the educational environment.

Drug Free Workplace

The Board declares that the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of controlled substances, marijuana and other dangerous drugs in an unlawful manner or being at work under the influence of alcohol, controlled substances, marijuana or other dangerous drugs is a serious threat to the public health, safety and welfare. With this in mind, the Board declares that its work force must be absolutely free of any person who would knowingly manufacture, distribute, sell or possess a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug in an unlawful manner. This prohibition specifically includes, but is not limited to, the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of a controlled substance or alcohol in the employee's workplace. This prohibition also includes, but is not limited to, an employee being under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances while on duty.

Any employee who is convicted for the first time, under the laws of this state, the United States, or any other state, of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug shall be subject to disciplinary action. At a minimum, such an employee shall be suspended for a period of not less than two months and shall be required to complete, at his or her own expense, a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the board. At a maximum, such an employee may be terminated from his employment with the MEC. Any employee who is convicted for a second or subsequent time under the laws of this state, the United States, or any other state, of any criminal offense involving the manufacture, distribution, sale or possession of a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug shall be terminated from his or her employment and shall be ineligible for employment for a period of five years from the most recent date of conviction.

If, prior to an arrest for an offense involving a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug, an employee notifies the Superintendent or designee that the employee illegally uses a controlled substance, marijuana or a dangerous drug and is receiving or agrees to receive treatment under a drug abuse treatment and education program licensed under Chapter 5 of Title 26 of the Official Code of Georgia and approved by the Board, the employee shall be entitled to maintain his or her employment for up to one year as long as the employee follows the treatment plan. During this period, the employee shall not be separated from employment solely on the basis of the employee's drug dependence, but the employee's work activities may be restructured if practicable to protect persons or property. No statement made by an employee to the Superintendent or designee in order to comply with this code section shall be admissible in any civil, administrative or criminal proceeding as evidence against the public employee. The rights granted by this handbook shall be available to an employee only once during a five-year period and are intended to be and shall be interpreted as being the same as those minimum rights granted pursuant to the Georgia Drug-Free Work Force Act and any subsequent amendments thereof.

As a condition of employment, each employee must abide by the terms of this handbook and must notify the Board within five days after any arrest on any drug-related criminal charge and further notify the Board within five days of any conviction of a drug-related offense.

The Board shall not consider for employment any applicant who has been convicted for the first time of any drug offense as described above for a three month period from the date of conviction nor shall the Board consider any applicant for employment who has been convicted for the second time of any drug offense as described above for a five year period from the most recent date of conviction.

For purposes of this handbook, "conviction" refers to any final conviction in a court of competent jurisdiction, specifically including acceptance of a plea of guilty, nolo contendere, or any plea entered under the First Offenders Act of Georgia or any comparable state or federal legislation.

This handbook is not intended and shall not be interpreted as prohibiting the MEC from taking appropriate disciplinary action against any employee where there exists evidence that an employee uses, distributes or sells illegal drugs even though the employee has not been convicted of any criminal offense or where there exists evidence that an employee is under the influence of alcohol while on duty, except that the MEC may not use the statement of any employee to the Superintendent or designee requesting treatment as described in this handbook.
The MEC shall provide such staff development as required by state or federal law to inform employees of the dangers of drug abuse, the availability of employee assistance and drug counseling and treatment and the terms of this handbook.

Tobacco-Free Workplace

In accordance with the "Georgia Smoke Free Air Act of 2005", smoking shall be prohibited at any time in any school building or property owned or leased by the MEC, or at any time in any MEC-owned vehicle. In addition, this prohibition includes the use of other tobacco products by employees at all times when on duty for the MEC, including when such employees are directly instructing or supervising students.

MEC employees who violate this handbook may be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, including reprimand, suspension with or without pay or termination.

State Mandated Process for Students Reporting Inappropriate Behavior of Employees as Required by O.C.G.A § 20-2-751.7(a)

O.C.G.A. § 20-2-751.7(a) The Professional Standards Commission shall establish a state mandated process for students to follow in reporting instances of alleged inappropriate behavior by a teacher, administrator, or other school employee toward a student which shall not prohibit the ability of a student to report the incident to law enforcement authorities. Each local school system shall be required to implement and follow such state mandated process and shall include the mandated process in student handbooks and in employee handbooks or policies.

Student Reporting of Alleged Sexually Inappropriate Behavior

(a) Any student (or parent or friend of a student) who has been the victim of an act of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by a teacher, administrator or other school system employee is urged to make an oral report of the act to any teacher, counselor or administrator at his/her school.

(b) Any teacher, counselor or administrator receiving a report of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct of a student by a teacher, administrator or other employee shall make an oral report of the incident immediately by telephone or otherwise to the school principal or principal's designee, and shall submit a written report of the incident to the school principal or principal's designee within 24 hours. If the principal is the person accused of the sexual abuse or sexual
misconduct, the oral and written reports should be made to the superintendent or the superintendent's designee.

(c) Any school principal or principal's designee receiving a report of sexual abuse as defined in O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 shall make an oral report immediately, but in no case later than 24 hours from the time there is reasonable cause to believe a child has been abused. The report should be made by telephone and followed by a written report in

writing, if requested, to a child welfare agency providing protective services, as designated by the Department of Human Resources, or, in the absence of such agency, to an appropriate police authority or district attorney.

Reports of acts of sexual misconduct against a student by a teacher, administrator or other employee not covered by O.C.G.A. 19-7-5 or 20-2-1184 shall be investigated immediately by school or system personnel. If the investigation of the allegation of sexual misconduct indicates a reasonable cause to believe that the report of sexual misconduct is valid, the school principal or principal's designee shall make an immediate written report to the superintendent and the Professional Standards Commission Ethics Division.

"Sexual Abuse" means a person's employing, using, persuading, inducing, enticing, or coercing any minor who is not that person's spouse to engage in any act as defined in O.C.G.A. § 19-7-5.

MECHS Policy GAEB: Harassment

It is the policy of the Mountain Education Charter High School (MECHS) to prohibit any act of harassment of employees by other employees based upon race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age or disability at all times and during all occasions while at school, in the workplace or at any school event or activity. Any such act shall result in prompt and appropriate discipline, including the possible termination of employment.

Sexual harassment may include conduct or speech which entails unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, taunts, threats, comments of a vulgar or demeaning nature, demands or physical contact which creates a hostile environment. There may be other speech or conduct which employees experience as inappropriate or illegal harassment which should also be reported; harassment can take many forms and it is not possible to itemize every aspect of the harassment forbidden by this policy.

Any employee or applicant for employment who believes he or she has been subjected to harassment or discrimination of any type as prohibited by this policy should promptly report the same to the site administrator of their school or to the MECHS coordinator designated in policy GAAA, who will implement the Governing Board's discriminatory complaints procedures as specified in that policy. Employees will not be subjected to retaliation for reporting or cooperating with any investigation of such harassment or discrimination.

It is the duty of all employees to promptly report harassment forbidden by this policy. All supervisors will instruct their subordinates as to the content of this policy and, through appropriate professional learning activities, enlighten employees as to the varied forms or expression of prohibited harassment. The site administrators of all schools shall ensure that employees are informed through handbooks, training materials and verbally that all

such harassment is strictly forbidden, how it is to be reported and the consequences for violating this policy.

Computer and Internet Use

The Mountain Education Charter High School (MEC) recognizes that electronic media, including the Internet and electronic mail, enhance the quality and delivery of education in our schools by providing access to unique resources and opportunities for collaborative work. Any electronic communication that uses MEC computer resources, hardware or software, may be subject to review and there should not be any expectation of privacy other than that which is required by law. Use of electronic systems shall be in support of, and consistent with the vision, mission, and goals established by MEC and for the purpose of instructional and administrative support.

The use of electronic technology is a privilege, not a right, which may be discontinued at any time. The MEC reserves the right to examine electronic mail messages, files on all types of MEC computers, logs of websites visited, and other information stored on or passing through MEC networks or stand-alone systems.

Unauthorized usage includes, but is not limited to visiting “chat” rooms, access, transmission, storage, or display of offensive materials or messages including those that contain sexually explicit information; ethnic slurs or racial epithets; defamatory, abusive, obscene, profane, and/or threatening language; encouragement of the use of controlled substances; or illegal material. If an employee accidentally accesses an inappropriate website, the employee must leave the site immediately and report the inadvertent "access" to his/her immediate supervisor.

All data accessed, stored, or transmitted by employees via MEC electronic resources shall be used in a responsible, ethical, and lawful manner. Any unauthorized use or any failure to comply with national, state, local and MEC provisions relating to the use of electronic resources will result in the loss of electronic network access and/or the imposition of disciplinary actions up to and including suspension or expulsion or termination of employees.

Employees may not share passwords with others or allow students to use computers that are signed on under the employee’s password.

The computers at the MEC are for instructional and record keeping purposes only. Personal passwords or locked files are prohibited.

Communication

The campus principal should approve all correspondence leaving the school. This includes correspondence to parents or community.

Personnel Procedures

General

Principals are responsible for ensuring that these procedures are followed at their site. These procedures define the administrative requirements and chain of command that must be followed for all personnel matters.

Principals will request to post jobs through the online application portal, Frontline's Applicant Tracking. This online portal will be the official application software for MECHS.

MECHS Policy GBC: Professional Recruitment Policy

The goal of the Mountain Education Charter High School (MECHS) Governing Board (Board) is to secure professionally qualified employees needed to operate an effective and efficient MECHS. Because the Board seeks to employ or appoint the best persons available, the Board intends for the school system to implement effective recruitment and selection procedures that will best serve the mission of the MECHS.

The recruitment and selection of personnel shall be conducted in such a manner as to assure nondiscrimination on the basis of sex, race, color, religion, national origin, age, or disability.

All job openings shall be announced in writing within the school system and/or publicly advertised on the District website, and all full-time positions are also submitted to a state-wide online job database maintained by the state.

In operating the most effective and efficient MECHS possible, the Superintendent may recommend to the Board the transfer or reassignment of personnel into positions that best meet the needs of the MECHS. Positions that are filled through transfers or reassignments shall not be considered vacant within the meaning of this policy and shall not be subject to the announcement, advertisement or any other provision of this policy.

Mountain Education Charter High School's Professional Qualifications:

For teachers employed with Mountain Education Charter High School whose certification is waived, the minimum qualification is a Clearance Certificate. All Special Education teachers', those who do and do not enter grades, minimum qualifications are to hold a Clearance Certificate and Special Education Certificate in their service area teaching assignment. Paraprofessional's certifications are not waived.

Hiring Process

Principals first request to post a position when they anticipate an opening at their site. The job posting will be open for a minimum of one calendar week. During the opening time as well as after, the Principals have the liberty to review all applicants that have applied to the posting as well as the applicant pool. Applicants may apply at any time to the applicant pool for all positions listed. Applicants must select the job they are applying for and attach it to their application.

Principals will review interested applicants for the open positions and conduct interviews to select the most appropriate candidate to hire. Principals must always hire professionally qualified and in-field employees for the subject area classrooms unless they receive prior approval from the Superintendent for a high needs area or an emergency situation. Applicants must have at least three recently completed references before being hired. Principals will then submit a "Recommendation Form" through Applicant Tracking in order to alert the Director of Human Resources of the pending new hire. After completing the "Recommendation Form", a HR Administrative Assistant will assign the appropriate New Hire Packet to the applicant. The Applicant will be responsible for uploading all documents listed on the email from the HR Administrative Assistant. The applicant will follow fingerprinting instructions on the Authorization to Fingerprint. Applicants will not be hired until all documentation is received.

After the submission of the "Recommendation Form" form and the fingerprint results have been returned, the Administrative Assistant will download the applicant's information.

When the employment package and criminal background checks are complete, the Director of Human Resources will recommend the applicant for hiring to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will approve or deny the recommendation of the applicant to be hired by the board at the next Governing Board Meeting, after reviewing the employment package with the Director of Human Resources.

A HR Administrative Assistant will ensure all new hires are placed on the next board meeting agenda for final approval.

Criminal Background Check

A criminal background check will be obtained by the Director of HR prior to employment on every person who is employed by Mountain Education Charter High School. The Director of HR will report the results of all criminal background checks to the Superintendent. Fingerprinting will be required of all employees every five (5) years of employment.

Previous Experience

New employee previous experience will be utilized to calculate their rate of pay. This will be determined by using the Verification of Experience form submitted during the hiring process. The Superintendent has the authority to grant up to ten (10) years of experience for previous work experience outside of the education field.

Pay Grade

It is the responsibility of the applicant to provide copies of all applicable transcripts and assessments. If this information is not provided, the pay rate for the applicant, if hired, will reflect no pay grade increase for undocumented transcripts and/or assessments. If the transcripts and/or assessments are provided after the new employee hire date and it results in a pay grade increase, the pay grade increase will become effective on the date that such documentation is provided.

Certification

It is the responsibility of the employee to inform the Director of Human Resources of any certificate upgrades or renewals not completed through Mountain Education Charter High School. Any pay grade increases based on certificate upgrades will be implemented and back pay processed after the Director of Human Resources is informed of the need to pull the new certificate from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission website.

Personnel Change Requests

In the event that an employee is assigned a new or different job responsibility, the Principals will be responsible for submitting a Personnel Change Request Form to the Director of Human Resources. After the necessary departments approve the request, the changes will be made in all software systems. The Director of Human Resources will inform the Principals of the approval and changes made.

In the event that an employee will no longer be working for Mountain Education Charter High School, it is the responsibility of the Principals to inform the Director of Human Resources as soon as possible. In addition, the Principals will be responsible for sending detailed information regarding the separation to the Director of Human Resources in order for all necessary reporting to be completed. The Director of Human Resources will inform all relevant administrators and departments of the separation.

MECHS Policy JGC: Student Health Services

Mountain Education Charter High School and its Governance Board realize that Student Health Services is an important aspect of a total school program. With this realization, the Governance Board agrees to the following protocol for general nursing services.

A. MECHS employs school Social Workers who will work with the local health department in an effort to make sure that all required screenings and health care are provided to all students who attend an MECHS site.

B. Services to be considered include the following:

a. Scoliosis Screening
b. Hearing, Vision and Dental Screening
c. Required Immunization.
d. Lice and other infectious diseases
e. AED Training if device is available for Staff
f. Epi-Pen Training for Staff
g. Emergency First Aid Training for Staff
h. Care of Students with Diabetes

At no time will MECHS employees offer the following services to students:

a. Distribution of contraceptives
b. Referrals to abortion
c. Dispensing of abortifacients

Care of Students with Diabetes and Other Medical Services

MECHS employs a school nurse who writes all Diabetes Management Plans for students with diabetes. Furthermore, this nurse will train all Site Administrators and at least one BELAYS at each site (for a minimum of 3 staff members per site) to teach them relevant and appropriate information regarding care of students with diabetes as well as other information relating to student health services including but not limited to services listed in the school's JGC: Student Health Services policy. The school nurse will also hold site level trainings on the warning signs of cardiac arrest.

Professional Conduct

The Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators applies to all staff.

Conflict of Interest

All MECHS employees are strictly forbidden from accepting gratuities or discounts for personal gain. These include but are not limited to, those arising due to a purchase

made for the school or the school system. By accepting a gratuity or discount, a conflict of interest is created.

District employees shall not engage in unethical behavior or compromising practices in relationships, actions and communications with present or potential suppliers, contractors or sub-contractors. Further, District employees shall avoid the intent or appearance of unethical behavior or compromising practices in relationships, actions and communications with present and potential suppliers, contractors or sub-contractors.

Standards of Conduct

District employees or consultants are expressly prohibited from soliciting, demanding or accepting directly or indirectly, any economic opportunity, future employment, gift, loan, gratuity, special discount, trip, favor or service in connection with the following:

- Approving, disapproving, recommending or preparing any part of a program requirement or purchase request;
- Influencing the content of any specification or procurement standard, rendering of advice, investigation or audit; and
- Awarding a contract.

No employee, officer or agent may participate in the selection, award or administration of a contract supported by a federal award if/he she has real or apparent conflict of interest. Purchases from Board members or companies in which the Board member or a member of his/her immediate family has a controlling interest are prohibited. Purchases from employees or companies in which the employee, spouse or children have a controlling interest and are in a procurement decision-making role are prohibited.

Violation of these standards will result in reporting of said personnel to the Superintendent and if appropriate, local authorities. Any misconduct could result in suspension, loss of employment, and any other consequences that are applicable by law.

Chain of Command

Any District employee who observes or suspects unethical behavior in the procurement of goods or services should report that behavior to the following individuals or offices, as appropriate under the circumstances:

1. The individual's supervisor;
2. The Finance Director;
3. The Director of Human Resources;
4. The Superintendent's Office; or
5. The Governing Board.

Nominal Items Nominal items are described as an item having a value of under $25, such as vendor paid for lunch.

Staff Development

Appropriate staff development will be provided for all MEC employees in accordance with information in the Professional Learning Handbook.

Student Support Team (SST)

At MECHS, a SST is an interdisciplinary group that uses a systematic approach to address learning and/or behavior problems of students. It is composed of members whose purpose shall be to collaboratively problem-solve for individual students who are not making adequate progress at MECHS. The MECHS site counselor will serve as the SST Chair and each site shall establish monthly meetings. Students who are not making adequate progress may be served through an SST plan. Should this plan fail to be effective, a referral for a psychoeducational evaluation may be warranted in order to determine whether the student has a disability. Students may be referred by anyone who has a concern about a child's development or educational progress such as teachers, parents, site administrator, or student services staff. Contact with the Special Education Director should be initiated once a referral has been made.

Special Education

The Mountain Education Charter High School's Special Education Department is dedicated to meeting the needs of our students with disabilities by providing a full continuum of services. All students with disabilities have the right to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) in the least restrictive environment (LRE). An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed for all eligible students and is reviewed annually by the IEP team. A reevaluation review is held for all students with disabilities yearly at MECHS. Services and supports are delivered by certified special education teachers and/or licensed parapros at each site.
If you suspect a child has a disability and is in need of special education services, please contact your MECHS site administrator or the System Special Education Director. This includes students that are homeless, incarcerated, wards of the state, migrant, or any other child suspected of having disabilities.

MECHS completes *Child Find* responsibilities in a variety of ways throughout the year. This includes public announcements through local media via public notice, school website, parent/student handbook, collaboration with other public agencies, and local screenings. Referrals may be made by anyone who has a concern about a child's

development. All referrals are considered confidential and the parent retains the right to refuse services.

For further information regarding MECHS Special Education services or procedures, staff should consult the MECHS Special Education Procedures Manual located on our website under the Special Education Department link or directly contact the Special Education Director at the Central Office.

Parental Notice of Right to Know Teacher and Paraprofessional Qualifications

In compliance with the requirements of theEvery Student Succeeds Act, MECHS would like to inform you that parents may request information about the professional qualifications of their student's teacher(s) and paraprofessional(s). The following information may be requested:

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

If the parent wishes to request information concerning their child's teachers' and paraprofessionals' qualifications, please contact your Site Administrator at your student's MECHS site. Numbers are found on the mymec website or can be connected through dialing 706-219-4664.

Confidentiality of Student Records

All MEC employees shall comply with the requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) as outlined in the Student Handbook. Grades of students should never be discussed with or made available to anyone except the student and the student's parent/guardian/caregiver or educators with a legitimate need to know as defined by FERPA. Teachers will not allow students to see the grades of others.

Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act

Mountain Education Charter High School complies with the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act. Under the Boy Scouts Act, no public school, LEA or SEA that

provides an opportunity for one or more outside youth or community groups to meet on school premises or in school facilities shall deny equal access or a fair opportunity to meet to, or discriminate against, any group officially affiliated with the Boy Scouts of America, or any other youth group listed in Title 36 of the United States Code as a patriotic society, that wishes to meet at the school.

Equal Opportunity

The MEC does not discriminate on the basis of age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability in its employment practices, educational programs or activities.

Complaint Procedures

These complaint procedures describe the complaint and grievances procedures for certified personnel. Parents/school communication is described in student handbooks and on the website. Parents are expected to address complaints or grievances beginning at the school level with the teacher first and then the administration. Central office personnel should be contacted next should parents feel the issues have not been resolved. If still unsatisfied, the superintendent should be contacted. The complaint procedures describe grounds for complaints, federal programs for which complaints can be filed, filing and investigation of a complaint, as well as rights to appeal. The GADOE address to which complaints should be filed is included in the procedure.

Complaint Procedures under the ESEA

A. Grounds for a Complaint

Any individual, organization or agency ("complainant") may file a complaint with the Mountain Education Charter High School Governing Board if that individual, organization or agency believes and alleges that a violation of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to a program under the ESEA has occurred. The complaint must allege a violation that occurred not more than one (1) year prior to the date that the complaint is received, unless a longer period is reasonable because the violation is considered systemic or ongoing.

B. Federal Programs for Which Complaints Can Be Filed

1. Title I, Part A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies
2. Title I, Part D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk
3. Title II, Part A: Teacher and Principal Training and Recruiting Fund
4. Title II, Part D: Enhancing Education Through Technology
5. Title III, Part A: English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and

Academic Achievement
6. Title IV, Part A, Subpart 1: Safe and Drug Free Schools and Communities
7. Title IX, Part E, Subpart 1, Section 9503: Complaint Process for Participation of Private School Children

C. Filing a Complaint

A formal complaint must be filed in writing to the Mountain Education Charter High School superintendent or his/her designee. The forms are located on the website and available at all Mountain Education Charter High School office.

The complaint must include the following:

1. A statement that the LEA has violated a requirement of a Federal statute or regulation that applies to an applicable program;
2. The date on which the violation occurred;
3. The facts on which the statement is based and the specific requirement allegedly violated. (Include citation to the Federal statute or regulation);
4. A list of names and telephone numbers of individuals who can provide additional information;
5. Copies of all applicable documents supporting the complaint's position; and
6. The address of the complaint.

D. Investigation of Complaint

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

1. The date the Department received the complaint;
2. How the complainant may provide additional information;
3. A statement of the ways in which the Department may investigate or address the complaint; and
4. Any other pertinent information.

If additional information or an investigation is necessary, the Superintendent will have sixty (60) days from receipt of the information or completion of the investigation to issue a Letter of Findings. If the Letter of Findings indicates that a violation has been found, corrective action will be required and time lines for completion will be included. Either the 30-day or the 60-day timelines outlined above may be extended, if exceptional circumstances exist. The Letter of Findings will be sent directly to the complainant.

E. Right of Appeal

If the complaint cannot be resolved at the local level, the complainant has the right to request review of the decision by the Georgia Department of Education. The appeal must be accompanied by a copy of the Superintendent's decision and include a complete statement of the reasons supporting the appeal.

MOUNTAIN EDUCATION CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

Complaint Form for Federal Programs
Please Print

Name of (Complainant):
Mailing Address:
Phone Number (home): Phone Number (work):
Person/department complaint is being filed against:
Date on which violation occurred:
Statement that the Mountain Education Charter High School has violated a requirement of Federal statue or regulation that applies to an applicable program (include citation to the Federal statue or regulation) (attach additional sheets if necessary):
The facts on which the statement is based and the specific requirement allegedly violated (attach additional sheets if necessary):
List the names and telephone numbers of individuals who can provide information:

Please attach/enclose copies of all applicable documents supporting your position.
Signature of Complainant: Date:
Mail or deliver this form to: Mountain Education Charter High School, School Superintendent MECHS 1963 Tom Bell Rd. Cleveland, Georgia 30528 Date Received:_____
Date of Response to Claimant:

The complaint must be addressed to:
Georgia Department of Education, Office of Legal Services
205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE 2052 Twin Tower East Atlanta, GA 30334

Ethics, Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Procedures

Mountain Education Charter High School is committed to the highest standards of excellence, integrity and accountability throughout all of its operations. The expectation is for all employees to report suspected malfeasance or wrongdoing on the part of any employee or member of the community. The report may be made anonymously or in confidence.

Fraud – An act of intentional or reckless deceit to mislead or deceive.

Examples:

- Fraudulent travel reimbursement.
- Conducting a business on State time for personal gain.

Waste – A reckless or grossly negligent act that causes State funds to be spent in a manner that was not authorized or represents significant inefficiency and unneeded expense, whether intentional or unintentional.

Examples:

- Purchase of unneeded supplies or equipment.
- Purchase of goods at inflated prices.

Abuse – The intentional, wrongful, or improper use or destruction of State resources, or seriously improper proactive that does not involve prosecutable fraud.

Examples:

- Falsification of time records to include misuse of overtime or compensatory time.
- Misuse of State money, equipment, supplies and/or other materials.

Anyone suspecting fraud, waste, or abuse involving Department of Education funds should call or write:

(1) **Mountain Education Charter High School**
1963 Tom Bell Rd.
Cleveland, Georgia 30528
Telephone: (706) 219-4664

Or

(2) **Georgia Department of Education**
Office of Legal Service 205 Jesse Hill Jr. Drive SE 2052 Twin Tower East Atlanta Georgia 30334 Telephone: (404) 463-1537