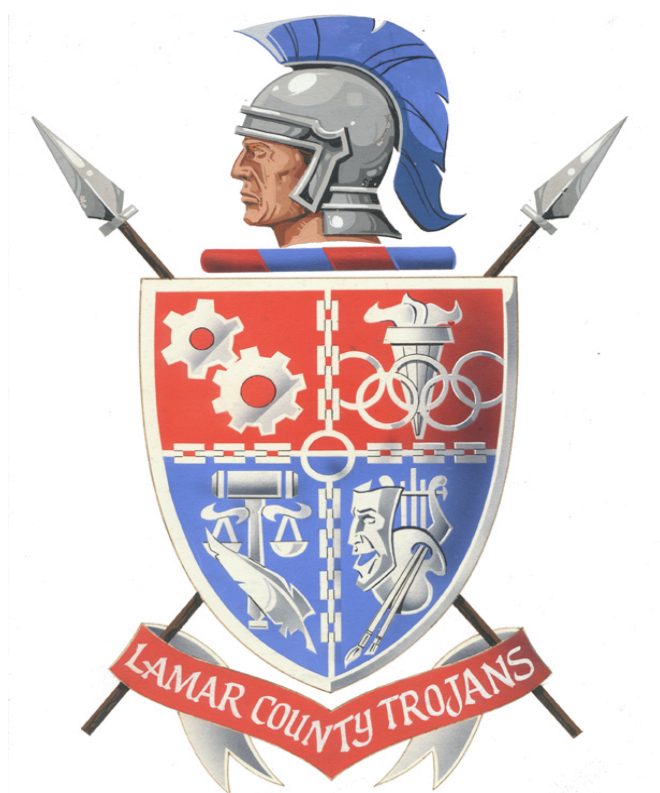


2015-2016
LAMAR COUNTY SCHOOLS



EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

NEVER STOP IMPROVING

Mission:

The Mission of Lamar County Schools is to work with and encourage our families and community to provide and participate in world class educational opportunities that inspire all learners to reach their potential.

Vision:

The Vision of the Lamar County Schools is to be one of the top performers in academics when compared to our RESA members and other surrounding school districts. We will rank in the top 10% of like systems in Georgia. We will accomplish this vision through high expectations, measured improvement through various systems of accountability, multiple levels of student support, horizontal and vertical curriculum design and implementation, and an emphasis on work ready and college success.

Beliefs: We believe

- Every person should respect learning and be an active participant in the process.
- Every person should be a life-long learner.
- Our community should support the goal of world-class education as well as our local goals and activities.
- Our community should help our school system with legislative influence and the power of the vote.
- Families should support the goals of our schools by making sure students attend school regularly; participating in school activities; teaching and modeling quality character, values, and behavior; and minimizing distractions in order to help students succeed in learning.
- Teachers should model responsible leadership and provide relevant experiences for better learning.
- Teachers should know their own learning styles and those of their students in order to better accommodate all learning styles, abilities, and intelligence.
- Schools should provide an inviting, positive, and safe learning environment.
- Schools should demonstrate excellence in all areas of operation that includes providing resources and technologies that encourage cooperation, stimulation, innovation, and creativity.
- Students should be serious about learning, exhibited by a positive attitude and quality work.
- The BOE and administration should encourage and model accountability through a dynamic Balanced Scorecard.

Revised 7/01/15

Lamar County Faculty & Staff,

Welcome to the Lamar County School System. We have compiled this handbook to serve as a quick reference for policies, regulations, and helpful information. Additional details can be obtained by visiting our system web pages, contacting building or department leaders, or reaching out to our administrative team in the Central Office. We all are here to make sure you are well prepared as a colleague and a member of the Trojan Family.

- Let us all remember that, as adults, children are watching us. We are role models and trend/direction setters for our youngsters. Let's give them something good to emulate and remember.
- Credibility is an important part of education. A simple way you can convey your expertise as a professional is to be sure your work is proofed before it is made public. Let's make sure our grammar, spelling, and content are correct in all communication.
- During these times of economic challenge, we need to conserve our resources and protect our investments. Be conscious of our use of utilities, supplies, and others' time and efforts.
- Respect, etiquette, diligence, and punctuality set the tone for quality work and a wholesome environment for all of us.
- Make student confidentiality and professionalism a priority.

We look forward to seeing you become a quality part of our team and family. We know we will be a better system because you are here.

Sincerely,

Jute Wilson

Jute Wilson, PhD
Superintendent

TABLE OF CONTENTS

General Information

Purpose	5
Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination	5
Board of Education	5

Personnel Policies/Procedures

Certification	6
Drug-Free Workplace	6
Employee Complaints	6
Evaluation	6
Internet Acceptable Use	6
Professional Development	7
Reduction in Force	7
Resignation	7
Suspension/Termination	8
Tobacco Products	8
Transfers	8
Dress Code	9

Benefits

Health Insurance	9
Vision Insurance	10
Group Life Insurance	10
Dental Insurance	10
Short Term Disability	10
Long Term Disability	10
Cancer Insurance	10
403(b)/457 Retirement Savings	10

Leave

Sick Leave	11
Personal Leave	11
Family Medical Leave (FMLA)	11
Bereavement	12
Professional and Duty Leave	12
Jury Duty	12

Additional Information

Payroll Procedures	13
Workers Compensation	13
Employee E-Mails	13
Personally-owned Digital Equipment Use	14
Digital Resources Malfunction	14

Helpful Information

Central Office Personnel	15
Schools and Facilities	15

GENERAL INFORMATION

Purpose

This handbook is designed to answer frequently asked questions regarding policies, procedures, benefits, services, work rules and other areas of concern to employees. While it is intended to be as comprehensive as possible, it does not cover every situation. For further information, please review the Lamar County Board of Education Policies. These can be accessed from the Lamar County website: www.lamar.k12.ga.us, under the School Board section. The information in this handbook does not create or amend any contract of employment. The Board has the right to adopt new policies and procedures and to modify, amend or eliminate any of its existing policies or procedures. Each school may institute additional procedures relating to normal school operations, but those may not conflict with Board Policy or items specified in this handbook.

Equal Opportunity and Non-Discrimination

The Lamar County Board of Education is an equal opportunity employer. The school system does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex national origin, age or disability in any employment opportunity practices, educational programs or activities. Supervisors and department heads must base all employment-related decisions and recommendations on merit. The system and each of its departments will make a determined effort to recruit, employ and promote the most qualified person, including those who are members of minority groups. The following employees are responsible for coordinating district efforts to comply with and carry out district responsibilities under: Title II - Shannon Reeder, Director of Special Education, Title IX - Cleve Hendrix, Deputy Superintendent, and Section 504 - Shannon Reeder, Director of Special Education.

Reference: Policy GAAA

Board of Education

The Lamar County School System is governed by a five-member Board of Education. The primary role of the Board is the legislation of school system policies, which are carried out by the Superintendent and Staff.

The duties and obligations of an individual Board of Education member may be enumerated as follows:

- to become familiar with the state school laws, regulations of the Georgia Department of Education, School System policies, rules and regulations;
- to have a general knowledge of educational aims and objectives of the system;
- to work harmoniously with other Board members without trying either to dominate the Board or neglect a share of the work;
- to vote and act in the Board meetings impartially for the good of the district;
- to accept the will of the majority vote in all cases and give wholehearted support to the resulting policy;
- to represent the Board and the system in the public in such a way as to promote both interest and support; and
- to refer complaints to the proper school authorities and to abstain from individual counsel and action.
- Individual Board of Education Members cannot legally act on behalf of the Board concerning Board business.

- No member of the Board of Education, by virtue of his/her office, shall exercise any administrative responsibility with respect to the schools. His/her role is to formulate policy and to serve in an advisory capacity to the superintendent.
- No Board Member as an individual may command the services of any school employee.

Reference: Policy BBA, BBBA

PERSONNEL POLICIES/ PROCEDURES

For further information, refer to Lamar County Policies and Procedures located under the School Board section of the district website, www.lamar.k12.ga.us

Certification

Professional employees of Lamar County Schools must hold proper certification from the Georgia Professional Standards Commission and must meet all state and federal requirements. It is the responsibility of the individual to keep his/her certification current. As the school system is able, it will notify employees of their certification status; however, this is ultimately the sole responsibility of the employee.

Drug-Free Workplace

The Lamar County Board of Education recognizes that a drug-free workplace promotes employee productivity and facilitates the accomplishment of the school system's missions and goals. In accordance with federal and state law, the Board prohibits the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, sale or use of illegal drugs and alcohol. Specific disciplinary sanctions may include referral for prosecution, completion of an appropriate rehabilitation program at the employee's expense, suspension from employment, termination of employment and other disciplinary measures as appropriate. As a condition of employment, each employee must abide by the terms of this policy and must notify the Board immediately after any criminal charge or conviction from a drug or alcohol related violation.

Reference: GAMA

Employee Complaints

Any employee who feels that his/her employment has been substantially affected by a violation or misapplication of any statute, policy, rule or regulation with which the Board of Education is required to comply, may file an employee complaint, unless it relates to one of the areas excluded from the employee complaint procedure. The following areas are excluded from the complaint procedure:

- Personnel evaluations;
- Professional Development Plans;
- Employee job performance;
- Termination, non-renewal, demotion, suspension or reprimand; and
- Employment contracts.

Reference: GAE

Evaluation

All employees of the Board of Education must have their performance evaluated annually. All certificated teachers and administrators will be evaluated by a certified TKES/LKES evaluator. Performance evaluation records are a part of the personnel evaluation file and are confidential.

Internet Acceptable Use

The system maintains an electronic network (EN) that includes local and wide-area networks and access to world-wide networks such as Internet. Access to the EN, along with the hardware and software that supports access, are the property of the system, and shall be used solely in support of the system's instructional and administrative programs. Use of this property is a privilege that may be discontinued at any time. The EN should be used only in a responsible, ethical and lawful manner. Any unauthorized use or failure to comply with local and system wide provisions relating to EN use will be grounds for loss of EN access and other disciplinary and/or legal action.

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc., are prevalent in today's society and are often used to communicate with friends and acquaintances. The school system has implemented "best practice" guidelines to help you effectively use these forums, protect your personal and professional reputation and follow national, state and/or district laws, rules and policies. It is not a requirement to use these emerging media and mandating their use is discouraged.

Reference: IFGB & Social Media Guidelines on the LCS Intranet

Professional Development

All employees are expected to participate in required trainings designed to maintain or improve job skills. Certified personnel must meet the requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools and the State of Georgia by completing all mandatory training and course requirements.

Reference: GAD

Reduction in Force

Under certain circumstances, the Lamar County Board of Education may implement a reduction in force. Reasons may include:

- Drop in student enrollment;
- Cutback in state or federal funding;
- Revenue shortfall;
- Cancellation of programs;
- closing or consolidation of schools; or
- other similar circumstances

Should the Board of Education implement a reduction in force, it will do so in a manner that serves the best interests of the school system and causes minimal disruption to students.

Personnel will be selected for separation based on objective, readily ascertainable factors that are applied in a fair, consistent and evenhanded manner without bias or discrimination.

Terminations occasioned by a reduction in force shall be carried out in accordance with any applicable board policies or procedures and the Georgia Fair Dismissal Act.

Reference: Policy GBKA

Resignation

Certified employees are expected to honor their contracts except in emergency situations or because of promotion to a higher-level position; certificated employees shall not break their contracts during the school year or after June 1 for the next school year without written consent.

While the employee may be given an immediate release, the system also may grant a release by a specified date or hold the employee accountable to the terms of the contract. Certificated employees who do not appropriately obtain release from their contracts or who abandon their

contracts shall be reported to the Professional Standards Commission for abandonment of contract. Non-contracted employees are expected to give at least two weeks' notice, in writing, when resigning.

Reference: Policy GBO

Suspension/Termination

The employment contract of any teacher, principal or other professional employee having a contract for a definite term may be terminated, suspended or placed on administrative leave for any of the following reasons:

- incompetence;
- insubordination;
- willful neglect of duties;
- immorality;
- inciting, encouraging or counseling students to violate any valid state law, municipal ordinance or policy rule of the Board of Education;
- reduction of staff due to loss of students or cancellation of programs;
- failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training; or
- any other good and sufficient cause.

Employees who do not receive an employment contract are considered “at-will” or classified employees. Employment-at-will means that, in general, an employer may terminate the employment relationship at any time for good and sufficient cause. Misconduct that may lead to disciplinary action against classified (non-contracted) employees includes:

- incompetence;
- insubordination;
- willful neglect of duties;
- immorality;
- conviction of any crime involving moral turpitude;
- failure to comply with all reasonable orders, requests or directions of the superintendent or other supervisors; or
- any other good and sufficient cause.

The procedure for suspension/termination of any employee must come as a recommendation from their principal or director. The Board of Education makes the final decision on suspensions and terminations.

Tobacco Products

The use of tobacco products is prohibited by employees, students and visitors at all system-sponsored events and on all school system property, including, but not limited to, athletic venues, parking lots, buses and vehicles owned by the system, at all times. All employees are required to sign an acknowledgement of receipt form of this policy.

Reference: Policy GAN

Transfers

Employees of the school system may be transferred involuntarily according to the needs and requirements of the school system. Employees may be transferred for a variety of reasons, including:

- opening/closing of schools;
- loss/gain in funding;
- restructure/reorganization;

- budget loss/gain; or
- reduction in force (RIF).

Dress Code

The Lamar County Board of Education recognizes that professional attire helps set the tone of an educational system. Teachers should at all times be distinguishable from students in their attire. These standards are applicable to all administrators, teachers, clerical staff, members of the instructional staff (including paraprofessionals assigned to the classroom), substitute teachers, and employees at the Central Office.

1. All employees should dress appropriately and in good taste.
2. Spirit Days will be designated by the principal.
3. The following attire is prohibited:
 - a. Blue jeans except on Spirit Days
 - b. T-shirts except on Spirit Days
 - c. Form-fitting or revealing clothing, including leggings worn as slacks and low cut blouses
 - d. Short skirts (skirts should reach top of knee)
 - e. Flip flops (dressy sandals are allowed)
4. Certain areas of instruction such as special education/severe and profound are exempted from dressy attire in the classroom. (Scrubs may be worn).
5. Male administrators are encouraged to wear ties and dress slacks.

By enacting this policy, Lamar County Board of Education recognizes that there are occasions when individuals may need to wear specific clothing due to medical reasons. When such is the case, the employee should provide documentation to his or her supervisor of the medical necessity.

Any employee whose attire or dress is not professional in the opinion of the building administrator shall be directed to conform to this policy. An employee, who is inappropriately dressed, in the opinion of the principal/supervisor, may be sent home, with the approval of the superintendent and required to return to work in acceptable attire.

The superintendent or school principals are responsible for implementing this policy and may approve attire that meets the minimum requirement of the system policy.

BENEFITS

The school system offers a comprehensive benefits package to employees. New employees have 31 days to select their benefits options. All employees can make changes to benefits plans during the annual Open Enrollment period, held each fall. Below is brief information on benefits that are available to employees.

Health Insurance

The System's Health Insurance Program is administered by the State of Georgia, Department of Community Health. Employees may choose from the program that best meets his/her needs. Single or family coverage is available. A portion of the health insurance is paid by the school system.

An employee going on unpaid leave may be able to continue health insurance for a limited time. Employees who retire (and will be receiving a monthly pension check) may continue their health insurance coverage. Employees whose health insurance is terminated for other reasons, or covered dependents of employees whose health insurance is terminated, may continue their coverage for a limited period under COBRA.

Vision Insurance

The vision plan offers both in and out of network benefits for your eye care needs. Coverage is available for your spouse and eligible dependents.

Group Life Insurance

The Board of Education provides \$25,000 of basic life insurance and Accidental Death and Dismemberment coverage to employees less than age 65. Employees over the age of 65 receive a reduced benefit amount. Basic Life and AD&D coverage is provided at no cost. Employees can purchase up to seven times annual salary of voluntary life insurance not to exceed \$200,000. Voluntary life insurance is based upon employee's age and coverage amount. Coverage is available for employees spouse and eligible children.

Dental Insurance

The dental plan provides preventative, basic, major, and orthodontic services for employees and their eligible dependents. Premiums vary based on the service level chosen.

Short Term Disability

This provides weekly income while totally disabled due to an accident, illness or pregnancy. Two Disability plans are available, one with benefits payable after 15 days and the other with benefits payable after 30 days. Both plans cover 60% of weekly income. Premiums are based on employee's monthly salary.

Long Term Disability

This provides monthly income while totally disabled due to an accident, illness or pregnancy. The plan covers 66 2/3% of monthly income. Benefits begin after three months of disability. Benefits are payable to a maximum age of 65. Premiums are paid by the Board of Education.

Cancer Insurance

This plan provides a basic cancer expense protection that will pay benefits regardless of other insurance employee may own. Coverage is available for employee and their eligible dependents.

403(b)/457 Retirement Savings

This supplemental retirement vehicle allows salary deferred contributions on a pre-tax basis. Employee may elect to have salary reduced the lesser of \$18,00 or 100% of compensation for the tax year. An additional catch-up contribution of \$5,500 is available for employees who are age 50 or older.

LEAVE

Employees are expected to maintain regular attendance. School principals and directors are expected to monitor their employees' attendance and take action when attendance problems occur. When leave is required, the following options are available

Reference: Policy GARH

Sick Leave

Employees may use paid sick leave for absences due to their own illness, injury or exposure to contagious disease, or due to illness or death in their immediate family. Unused sick leave is accumulated from one contract or assignment year to the next, up to a maximum of 45 days. Accumulated sick leave is forfeited when employment is terminated.

For TRS members, unused sick leave credit can be counted towards creditable service at the time of retirement. You may establish sick leave credit at the time of retirement provided you have a minimum of 60 days of unused sick leave for which you have not been paid.

Regular full-time employees are entitled to sick leave with full pay at 1^{1/4} sick days for each completed month up to a maximum of 15 days per year (3 of which may be used for personal reasons.)

Part-time employees are entitled to paid sick leave in proportion to the amount of time worked.

In the case of anticipated or foreseeable absence (for example, scheduled surgery, childbirth, etc.), requests must be given at least 30 days in advance. In the case of a sudden or unexpected need for sick leave, requests must be given as far in advance as possible.

Employees who come to Lamar County Schools from another Georgia public school system or the State Board of Education may transfer up to 45 days of unused sick and personal leave accumulated in their previous employment. Verification from the previous employer is required.

Personal Leave

Prior approval of the principal or immediate supervisor is required before a personal day may be taken. In cases of anticipated or foreseeable need for personal leave, requests for personal leave must be submitted at least 30 days in advance. Except in extreme emergencies and with the prior written approval of the employee's immediate supervisor, personal leave is not allowed at the following times:

- the work day immediately prior to or after a holiday or vacation;
- the first day of the school year and the following five working days thereof;
- the last work day of the school year and the preceding five work days thereof;
- pre-planning, conference, professional development, registration and post-planning days;
- other critical days identified by the principal or department head.

Family Medical Leave (FMLA)

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) is a federal law which helps employees balance work responsibilities with family and medical needs. At times, employees may need to take leave from their jobs for a temporary period to address certain family responsibilities or their own serious health conditions. FMLA requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave. In some circumstances, the leave may be taken

intermittently. To be eligible for FMLA, an employee must have worked for Lamar County Schools for at least one year and must have worked at least 1,250 hours over the previous 12 months.

Qualified FMLA leave includes:

- incapacity due to pregnancy, prenatal medical care or childbirth;
- care for employee's child after birth, or placement for adoption or foster care;
- care for the employee's spouse, child, or parent who has a serious health condition;
- serious health condition that makes employee unable to perform his/her job;
- any qualifying exigency that arises from a spouse's, child's or parent's active duty in the Armed Forces including an order or call to duty; or
- care for a spouse, child, parent or next of kin (defined as the nearest blood relative) who are service members with serious illnesses or injuries incurred during active duty in the Armed Forces-up to 26 weeks may be approved for this category.

All requests for leave must be documented via the current prescribed system for requesting leave in the school system. When an employee requests leave for any purpose covered under the FMLA (whether the employee identifies the leave as such or not) the employee will be notified that the leave will be treated as FMLA.

In certain cases, intermittent leave may be approved. Special restrictions apply under the FMLA to intermittent leave on a reduced leave schedule for instructional employees. "Instructional employees" are those whose principal function is to teach and instruct students in a class, a small group, or an individual setting, and includes special education assistants.

The school system reserves the right to require a "fitness for duty" certificate prior to return to work from any leave protected by Federal law. The failure to provide any medical certification or a "complete and sufficient" medical certification may result in the denial of any FMLA leave request. The system reserves the right to request periodic written updates from the employee about his or her medical condition.

Bereavement

Employees are allowed up to three days of paid leave in the event of the death of a member of his/her immediate family. Immediate family is defined as employee's parent, sibling, spouse, child, grandparent, grandchild, spouse's parent, spouse's sibling or a relative of the employee living in the employee's household. The employee may be required to submit written substantiation of the need to be absent for this reason.

Professional and Duty Leave

An employee may be granted paid or unpaid professional leave to engage in activities associated with professional organizations related to the employee's position in the school system (e.g., annual conferences, state meetings, etc.). Professional or duty leave requires approval in advance by the employee's immediate supervisor.

Jury Duty

All employees 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 employee's accumulated personal, professional or sick leave. Employees who serve on juries or who are subpoenaed for reasons arising out of their employment with the school system can choose from the following two options:

Option (1): Report to jury duty and, if released early, do not report to work and receive a full day's pay by turning in to the central office the check received for serving on jury duty.

Option (2): Report to jury duty and, if released early, report back to work (for a minimum of 4 hours per day served) and receive a full day's pay and keep the check received for serving on jury duty.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Payroll Procedures

Supervisors will report payroll information to the business office. Generally the reporting period will cover a period from the 16th of one month through the 15th of the next month. Holiday months are exceptions, and the business office may request a different reporting period in order to prepare payroll.

The Board authorizes payroll to be released based on a calendar developed by the Superintendent and Administrative Staff. The day payroll is released is subject to adjustment depending on the receipt of state funds. Pay for employees who work a schedule based on the school year will be prorated over a 12 month period.

All paychecks are direct deposited and vouchers and other payroll forms are available online using Softdocs on Demand (SOD).

A pay day schedule will be published annually.

Workers Compensation

If employees are injured on the job, they have certain rights, benefits, and responsibilities. Employees are entitled to weekly income benefits if they have more than seven days of lost time due to an injury. The first day of absence is counted against their available sick leave. Sick leave continues to be reduced until the seventh day from occurrence. After the seventh day, employee will be placed on a Leave without Pay status, and Worker's Comp will pay 60% of their salary. This continues until the physician submits a written release form.

EMPLOYEES ARE REQUIRED TO REPORT ALL ACCIDENTS TO THEIR PRINCIPAL/DIRECTOR.

Employee E-mails

Most Lamar County employees are given an email account to be used for school system purposes only. Employees may access their email from any computer with internet access by going to www.lamar.k12.ga.us, clicking on the staff e-mail link. All employees must follow the system's Internet Acceptable Use policy agreement when using email and all other electronic network programs.

Reference: IFGB

Personally-owned Digital Equipment Use

The Lamar County Board of Education does not support or allow for the use of personal desktops or laptops at any time.

Personally-owned equipment may be used only with authorized approval from the Technology Department. The process of approval will include making a HelpDesk ticket for approval. The decision for use will be based on the product's age, quality, and its impact on the public network. Technology support for any of the equipment will be limited. For mobile devices, only the connection will be supported.

The following is a list of equipment that may be approved.

- Mobile communication devices, Tablets, smartphones
- Printers
- Scanners

The Lamar County Board of Education will not be held responsible for any damage to personally-owned equipment.

Digital Resources Malfunction

Lamar County employees having difficulty with a district-owned digital resource may contact the technology department via the Lamar County School System's website www.lamar.k12.ga.us and complete a ticket through the Help Desk link under the Technology Tab.

Other Technology Procedures

Employees are asked to turn off computer(s) each night. This will allow your computer to be updated and will keep worms from entering into the email system. Technology teachers are asked to check the computer labs as well.

Employees are encouraged to check their email accounts regularly throughout the summer. Employees should also check their email "Spam" folder to make sure important emails aren't mistakenly classified as spam.

Below are frequently requested phone numbers for various Lamar County School System personnel and departments.

CENTRAL OFFICE PERSONNEL
(770) 358-5891

Dr. Jute Wilson Superintendent
 Barbara Horne Superintendent Secretary
 Mr. Cleve Hendrix Deputy Superintendent
 Mrs. Jessie Smith Support Services and Special Education
 Mrs. Norma Greenwood Assistant Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
 Mrs. Susan Dalianas Teaching and Learning Secretary
 Mrs. Mona Faulkner Director of Finance
 Mrs. Kay Mulling Payroll
 Mrs. Fay Fletcher Accounts Payable
 Mrs. Donna Martin Associate Accountant
 Mrs. Sherrelle Ogletree Director of Personnel
 Ms. Cindy Green Benefits Manager
 Mrs. Sharon Manley Director of School Nutrition
 Mr. Bill Baker Director of Maintenance
 Dr. Kiana Battle School Social Worker
 Ms. Amy Banks Coordinator of Parent Involvement
 Mrs. Patti Hitson System Coordinator of Instruction & Assessment
 Mrs. Shannon Reeder Director of Special Education
 Mrs. Alice Stephens Receptionist

Schools and Facilities

Lamar County Primary School (770)358-8661
 Lamar County Elementary School (770) 358-5556
 Lamar County Middle School (770) 358-8652
 Lamar County Comprehensive High School (770) 358-8641
 Maintenance (770) 872-2457
 Technology (770) 358-8668
 Transportation (770) 358-8670