



FOOTHILLS
EDUCATION
CHARTER HIGH SCHOOL

"Providing students an opportunity to earn a high school diploma"

STAFF HANDBOOK

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Established by the Georgia Board of Education 2015

Established as a State Chartered Special School 2015

Accredited by the Georgia Accrediting Commission-Fall 2015

Accredited by COGNIA Spring 2018

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

(Revised July 2021)

Foothills Education Charter High School Governing Board (Foothills)

Dr. Nathan Franklin, Walton-Foothills, Foothills Chairperson

Walton County School District, Superintendent – Large Sized District Partner

Dr. Beverley Levine, Oglethorpe Foothills, Foothills Vice-Chairperson

Oglethorpe County School District, Superintendent – Small Sized District Partner

Dr. Noris Price, Baldwin Foothills

Baldwin County District, Superintendent – Medium Sized District Partner

Dr. Keith Everson, At-Large Community

North East Georgia Regional Educational Center (RESA). Executive Director

Dr. Jennifer Irvin, Georgia Department of Corrections, Director of Education

School District Partner Advisors

Dr. Virgil Cole, Morgan County School District, Superintendent – Small Sized District

Mr. Chris Forrer, Franklin County School District, Superintendent – Small Sized District

Mr. Kenny Garland, Jasper County School District, Superintendent – Small Sized District

Dr. Robbie Hooker, Social Circle City Schools, Superintendent – Small Sized District

Dr. Chris Houston, Greene County School District, Superintendent – Small Sized District

Dr. April Howard, Jackson County School District, Superintendent – Medium Sized District

Dr. Curtis Jones, Bibb County School District, Superintendent – Heartland-Foothills

Dr. Tanzy Kilcrease, Bibb County School District, Assistant Superintendent – Heartland-Foothills

Dr. Chris McMichael, Barrow County School District, Superintendent – Large Sized District

Dr. Todd Simpson, Butts County, Superintendent – Heartland-Foothills

Dr. Xernona Thomas, Clarke County School District, Superintendent – Large Sized District

Mr. Michael Williams, Madison County School District, Superintendent – Medium Sized District

Foothills Education Charter High School (Foothills)

Vision

Foothills Education Charter High School strives to be an accessible high quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the people of Georgia and its communities.

Mission

Foothills Education Charter High School is a community and state resource for students who want to earn a high school diploma in order to be successful in post-secondary and career options.

Guiding Principles

Students learn in different ways and at different rates. Foothills will accommodate these differences when possible.

Students learn more when they are responsible for their learning and behavior.

Students are most successful when provided a safe and secure environment in which to excel and learn.

Students are most successful when teachers and staff have high expectations and are highly qualified and coexist in a collegial environment.

Foothills Education Charter High School will be more successful with ongoing communications and outreach to partner school districts, the Department of Corrections, and other community partners.

Foothills Education Charter High School will be most effective with consistent review of policies and procedures in order to ensure the highest quality work possible.

This handbook shall apply to all full-time and part-time employees of the Foothills Education Charter High School. Employees working for Foothills sites at the Georgia Department of Corrections and Youth Challenge Program have an employee handbook specific to them and it should be read in conjunction with this handbook.

Equal Opportunity

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

Emergency Operations Plan

The Foothills sites operate under the Emergency Operations 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 director's office.

Criminal Background Checks

A criminal record check will be conducted at or prior to employment on every person who is employed by the Governance Board for the first time to fill either a full-time or part-time certified or classified position with Foothills Education Charter High School (Foothills). 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 Foothills 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 Foothills 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 Foothills Site Director/Superintendent or designee.

Schedule

School hours for Foothills students are Monday through Thursday from 4:00 p.m. until 9:00 p.m. June and July hours 4:00-8:00 p.m. School hours may be adjusted by the Superintendent.

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 site director/designee must be informed in order to ensure that student coverage is assured. Should an employee be required to be absent during a scheduled work period, that employee must inform the site director/designee and, if appropriate, insure that another employee works in the place of the absentee.

The site director/designee must be informed when an employee arrives or departs the school. Part-time employees must sign in and out upon entering and leaving the school. Part-time employee monthly time sheets must be completed and signed by the employee, approved by their supervisor, and submitted at the pre-determined monthly cut-off date.

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.

Employee Pay

Certified/classified hourly employees will be paid an hourly salary as set forth in the position advertisement. Salaried employees will be paid in accordance with their offer letter. Employees are expected to provide Foothills the service for which they are paid regardless of whether the employee is hourly or salaried. The rate and basis of pay does not constitute an employment contract for a specified period of time or continued employment.

Previous Experience

Previous experience may be considered for employment reasons but pay for all employees will be based on the amount listed on each job application or most recent annual salary/hourly pay scale. For many administrative positions, the rate is salaried. For other positions, it is hourly. Check employment applications and the annual budget section of the Foothills website for rate of pay information.

Certification

It is the responsibility of the employee to inform the Human Resources Coordinator of any certificate upgrades or renewals not completed through Foothills Education Charter High School.

Leaves and Absences

All full-time employees earn leave. The normal K-12 leave types are earned and used. These include sick leave and personal leave where applicable. If you are a full-time employee, please make sure you review the employee leave policies and procedures in Simbli and the Business Operations Manual. It is the employee's responsibility to understand these policies and keep track of their leave balances.

Annual Leave

Foothills employees do not earn annual or non-work leave. Full-time employees will work 184 (10 hour) days. A 184 day work calendar is created each year. If a full time employee cannot work a day on the calendar, they will take personal/sick leave or have a deviated calendar form approved by their supervisor for another work day. Foothills employees will observe the holidays below without a reduction in pay as long as Foothills sites are not open.

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

Employee Benefits

The Governance Board will determine annually the employee groups that will be eligible for benefits. This will include participation in the Georgia State Health Benefit Plan, the Teacher's Retirement System and other employee paid benefits available to Georgia school educators. Contact the Human Resources department for further information.

Child Abuse/Neglect

State Board rule mandates all employees be briefed annually on identification and reporting procedures for suspected child abuse/neglect. All Foothills employees will immediately report all suspected cases of child abuse/neglect to the counselor and/or site director who will in turn report the incident to the proper authorities.

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.

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.

Drug Free Workplace

The Governance 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 public health, safety and welfare. With this in mind, the Governance 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 Governance Board. At a maximum, such an employee may be terminated from his employment with Foothills. 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 Site Director 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 Site Director 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 Governance Board or Superintendent within five days after any arrest on any drug-related criminal charge and further notify the same entities within five days of any conviction of a drug-related offense.

The Governance 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 Governance 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 Foothills 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 Foothills may not use the statement of any employee to the Site Director or designee requesting treatment as described in this handbook. Foothills 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 Foothills, or at any time in any Foothills-owned vehicle. In addition, this prohibition includes the use of other tobacco products by employees at all times when on duty for Foothills, including when such employees are directly instructing or supervising students.

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

Electronic Cigarettes/Vapors

Possession/use of electronic cigarettes or vaping products is prohibited. This prohibition includes any product with cannabidiol (CBD), whether hemp or cannabis and regardless of the amount of THC in the product or the extent to which it is legal or illegal under state law, and related paraphernalia while on school property.

Harassment & Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of Foothills that racial, sexual, or other forms of harassment or discrimination are strictly forbidden. Any student or employee who believes he or she has been subjected to

harassment or discrimination by other students or employees of Foothills based upon his or her race, color, religion, national origin, age, disability or sex should promptly report the same to the site administrator or designee.

If the alleged offending individual is the site administrator, the complaint should be made to the Site Director/Superintendent. If the alleged offending individual is the Site Director/Superintendent, the complaint should be made to the Governance Board chairperson.

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.

Computer and Internet Use

Foothills Education Charter High School (Foothills) 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 Foothills 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 Foothills 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. Foothills reserves the right to examine electronic mail messages, files on all types of Foothills computers, logs of websites visited, and other information stored on or passing through Foothills 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 Foothills 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 Foothills 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 Foothills are for instructional and record keeping purposes only. Personal passwords or locked files are prohibited.

Communication

The site director should approve all correspondence leaving the school. This includes correspondence to parents or community.

Agreements

The Superintendent has the sole authority to execute contracts, memoranda of understanding, or any other agreement that obligates Foothills funds, resources, or personnel. The Superintendent may, in limited circumstances, provide prior written authorization to another Foothills employee to execute a binding agreement on behalf of Foothills. An employee who executes a binding agreement purporting to obligate Foothills funds, resources, or personnel without proper authorization will be subject to disciplinary action and may be held personally liable for the terms of the contract.

CrisisGo Procedures

To fulfill your duties with Foothills, you must have access to the school's CrisisGo application. The CrisisGo application must be available to you on a device that you can readily access on an on-demand basis (such as your smartphone). If you do not have access to the Foothills CrisisGo application, you will not be able to fulfill your duties with Foothills and may be reassigned or terminated.

Personnel Procedures

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

Detailed personnel procedures can be found in the Business Operations Manual on the website. These procedures include but are not limited to the hiring process, employee benefits, reporting work time, personnel changes, termination, and state reporting,

Information and Forms

Employees may access all current hiring information, procedures, and forms through the Human Resources Department webpage at <http://www.foothillscharter.org>

Professional Conduct

The Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators applies to all staff. If Foothills determine that an employee acted in a manner that is inconsistent with the Georgia Code of Ethics for Educators, the employee shall be subject to disciplinary action including, but not limited to, termination.

Staff Development

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

Student Support Team (SST)

A student support team is a group of professionals assembled by the Site Director who identify, plan, and recommend alternative instructional/behavioral strategies for students who are failing to make adequate progress. Such students may be served through SST plans. Should this plan fail to be effective, a referral for psycho-educational evaluation may be warranted in order to determine whether the student has a disability. In these cases, contact with the special education teacher should be initiated.

Special Education

Foothills provides students with disabilities with a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). An Individualized Education Program (IEP) is developed for all eligible students.

Compliance Director

Foothills will utilize the Compliance Director module from Pioneer RESA to make sure all employees go through proper training. Each employee will be required to complete this module before the first day of school at their individual site.

Parental Notice of Right to Know Teacher Qualifications

As required by law, LEA's are required to notify parents that they may request information regarding the professional qualifications of your child's classroom teachers or paraprofessional, including the following:

Whether the teacher has met state certification criteria for the grade levels and subject areas in which the teacher provides instruction.

Whether the teacher is teaching under emergency or provisional status through which state certification has been waived.

The degrees earned by the teacher and the field of certification or degree.

Whether the child is provided services by paraprofessionals and, if so, their qualifications.

Parents may contact the site director to request such information.

Confidentiality of Student Records

All Foothills 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 other students.