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**GCPS Affirms Policies That Support Student Expression, Learning, and School Safety [\*\*\* External Email \*\*\*]**

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**From** Gwinnett County Public Schools via ParentSquare <donotreply+b112bf47-e028-56bf-b437-f6367add8652@parentsquare.com>

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## Gwinnett County Public Schools

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### GCPS Affirms Policies That Support Student Expression, Learning, and School Safety

In recent weeks, several Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS) campuses have experienced student walkouts in response to issues students care deeply about. These walkouts reflect that many students want their voices, questions, and concerns to be heard. GCPS is committed to honoring students' First Amendment rights while also ensuring the safety of our school communities and keeping teaching and learning at the center of each school day.

"Supporting student voice while maintaining a safe, non-disruptive learning environment requires balance," said Interim Superintendent Dr. Al Taylor. "Our school leaders work closely with students to help them express themselves in appropriate and meaningful ways, while families play an important role in talking with their children about current events and reinforcing expectations for attendance and learning. When we work together, students are better prepared to participate responsibly in our community."

Ahead of recent walkouts, school leaders worked with student representatives to identify designated times and locations on campus for student expression that maintain safety and limit disruption to teaching and learning. These activities are school-specific, and for safety reasons, participation is limited to students enrolled at that school; students from other schools and adults are not permitted to participate on campus. During those conversations, students were reminded that leaving school grounds or instructional spaces during the school day is not permitted. Doing so creates safety concerns and violates the [GCPS Student Behavior Conduct Code](#).

In alignment with that code, students who leave class or school grounds without authorization during instructional time will receive appropriate consequences focused on learning, accountability, and support—not punishment. Any disciplinary action is based solely on a student's conduct, not the viewpoint, cause, or issue a student may be supporting.

As GCPS continues to listen to students and engage in open dialogue across school communities, the district also wants to clarify that many of the concerns raised are already addressed through established district policies and practices. These procedures are designed to protect student safety, safeguard privacy, and ensure uninterrupted access to learning, and have been shared with families and discussed with student leaders.

Key areas of concern and the district's existing policies and practices include:

#### **Law Enforcement Access to Schools**

GCPS has clear procedures governing any visit by law enforcement agencies. Federal immigration officials are not permitted to enter non-public areas of GCPS schools without a valid judicial warrant signed by a judge. These procedures prioritize student safety, protect privacy, and minimize disruption to teaching and learning.

#### **Student Privacy and Records Protection**

GCPS does not ask for, collect, or maintain information about a student's or family's immigration status. Student records are protected under federal law, including the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and are not shared with outside agencies unless required by a specific court order. A student's right to attend public school is not affected by immigration status.

#### **Safe and Supportive Learning Environments**

All GCPS campuses operate with protocols that prioritize education, safety, and stability for students. District practices emphasize that schools are places for learning and care, with a focus on maintaining calm, secure environments and limiting disruptions during the school day.

#### **Student Support and Well-Being**

GCPS understands that conversations related to immigration enforcement may cause stress or anxiety for some students. Schools provide counseling and mental health supports, and families are encouraged to contact their child's school if additional assistance is needed. The district's Office of Student Services partners with schools to connect students with the resources needed to support their well-being.

GCPS appreciates teachers and school leaders who are responding to student questions and concerns by helping students learn age-appropriate, constructive ways to engage on issues that matter to them. Educators across the district are guiding students to learn about civic processes such as respectful discussion, research, writing, and communicating with elected officials, and other constructive forms of participation that can lead to positive, lasting impact beyond a single event.

GCPS remains committed to listening to students, partnering with families, and ensuring that schools remain safe, welcoming, and focused on teaching and learning. While the district does not take positions on political issues, it continues to follow all applicable laws and district policies while supporting every student's right to learn in a safe and caring environment.

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