



# Employee Handbook

Adopted: January 2015

Revised: August 2016

Dear Employee,

Welcome to the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts!*

On behalf of our Administration and Board of Trustees, let me thank you for joining our staff. You have joined us at an exciting time as we continue on our journey of start-up and implementation, heading through our third school year.

It is not every day that one gets the opportunity to be a part of the development and implementation of a new public charter school. Make no mistake about it; the challenges will be tough, but the rewards will certainly be worth the effort of producing graduates who excel in both academics and the arts with the knowledge, creativity and inquisitive nature that foster a lifelong love of learning.

We are very fortunate to have an amazing team of teachers and staff supported by a solid management team. As an employee of the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts*, you are helping write a page in history for the school, but more importantly you will be transforming the lives of the children who you will come in contact with each day. There is no greater a contribution to make to the education of children and we sincerely hope that you will find your employment at the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* to be a professionally rewarding experience.

Again, welcome to the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts*. We look forward to working together to create opportunities for education in and through the arts that nurture creativity and inspire lifelong learning.

With Kindest Regards,



Karin Cevalco  
Executive Director

## **Purpose of Handbook**

This *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* Employee Handbook provides a guideline reference for all *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* employees as a condition of their employment at the school. This Employee Handbook is not a contract of employment nor is it intended to create contractual obligations for the school of any kind. The approved policies and procedures for *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* take precedence over the Employee Handbook.

*Gate City Charter School for the Arts* values the talents and abilities of our employees and seeks to foster an open, cooperative, and dynamic environment in which employees and the school alike can thrive. Employees are encouraged to take problems to the next level of management if they are unable to resolve a situation with their direct supervisor. The last resort for internal grievances is the Board of Trustees.

If any conflict should exist between the Employee Handbook and a written Employee Agreement between the Employer and Employee, the Employment Agreement shall prevail. If in doubt, please consult with your immediate supervisor.

### ***Mission Statement***

The mission of the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* is to use an arts-integrated curriculum to educate all interested students in grades K-8, to produce graduates who excel in both academics and the arts and have the knowledge, creativity and inquisitive nature that foster a lifelong love of learning.

### ***Guiding Principle***

The arts, in all their media, can be an invaluable tool in the education of our children, building problem-solving skills, enabling students to express unique ideas, fostering critical thinking and enhancing overall learning.

### ***Vision***

The vision of the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* is to become a transformative leader in the education of students who will be prepared to successfully advance into the complex economy of the 21st century.

We envision a school where creativity is at the center of all we do. Curriculum will be designed to encourage students to recognize their creative potential and express ideas through music, dance, movement, visual arts, and drama. Students and teachers will be encouraged to ask questions about the world around them, make discoveries and solve problems.

Our arts-integrated model that infuses the arts across the curriculum assists in the definitive development of innovative, flexible, creative people who look at solving complex problems in a unique manner and have the skills necessary to engineer new, transformative, solutions to the challenges that face the future of New Hampshire and the global economic market.

## *What is a public charter school?*

A charter school is an independent public school that operates with a mission defining a certain target student population or educational pedagogy. RSA 194-B defines the establishment of charters schools in New Hampshire. GCCSA is authorized by the NH State Board of Education. GCCSA is tuition-free for any NH resident to attend.

Funding comes directly from the State of NH at approximately \$6500 per student in grades 1-12, which is less than 40% the average cost to educate a public school student in our state. Funding per kindergarten student is roughly \$4000. In NH, charter schools do not receive local tax funding.

A NH charter school is its own LEA for every purpose, except special education. The responsibility of special education services for students qualifying for an IEP falls on the sending district (the public school district assigned to the student's home address).

The charter that defines the contract with the State of New Hampshire is in effect for a period of five years, at which time the Board of Trustees must submit a charter renewal request to the State Board of Education. All requirements related to fiscal responsibility, sustainability, standardized test scores, educational goals and outcomes, and school accountability must be met for charter renewal to be granted.

In 2018, Gate City Charter School for the Arts will begin the charter renewal process, where the DOE will conduct a site visit, survey parents and students, review the school's annual accountability reports, and review SBAC scores and academic outcomes. Each year as we learn together, we are preparing for our charter renewal and the long term operation of our school.

## **General Policies and Procedures**

The *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* has published policies and procedures, a printed copy of which is available in the School Office. It is the responsibility of all employees to be familiar and comply with them.

Below are some general policies and procedures that are applicable to all employees:

### ***Accidents***

Report all student and staff accidents immediately to the Executive Director, or designee. The office staff will make a phone call home regarding a student's injury or accident. Depending on the severity of the injury, teachers are expected to follow up with a phone call or in-person conversation regarding the incident.

First Aid supplies are kept in the school office and in each classroom emergency backpack, and minor first aid may be administered by the teacher. Depending on the nature of the illness/injury, a child should be accompanied to the office by a teacher or another adult for additional care as necessary.

You must complete a written injury report for each accident/injury that occurs. There is a form available for student injuries and a different form (available on the staff portal) for employee injuries. Please submit all completed forms to the Executive Director.

### ***Employee Dress Code***

Please dress comfortably in order to be engaged with the children. Dress is designated business "casual". Employees should remember their role as a school representative and role model to children when choosing their work clothing.

### ***Expense Reimbursement***

All expenses must be pre-approved by the Executive Director. To be reimbursed for all authorized expenses, you must submit an expense report, accompanied by original receipts, to be approved by the Executive Director. Please submit your expense report as you incur authorized reimbursable expenses. There is usually

a two to four week waiting period from submission of expense report to receipt of the reimbursement check.

Each classroom teacher may spend up to \$30.00 a month on incidental classroom/curriculum expenses. Receipts for all purchases need to be kept and submitted to the Executive Director, along with an expense report. Teachers may spend up to \$90.00 over a three month period on classroom supplies.

### ***Communication***

Professional Development (PD) on Wednesday afternoons occurs from 1:15 to 3:30. The purpose of this time is to foster a professional learning community through team meetings, curriculum development, and professional development. The Executive Director and Deputy Director share the responsibility to oversee PD and the implementation of the school's arts integrated mission. It is the responsibility of all classroom teachers, as well as support staff, to participate and contribute to a professional learning community through thoughtful conversation with colleagues, reflecting on curriculum, student work, and student needs.

The *Staff Portal* is a page within the school's web site and contains links to valuable employee information, including a link to this Employee Handbook, a link to *View My Paycheck*, procedural information, blank forms, and curriculum links. Important operational and procedural information will be shared with staff via the Staff Portal or via email. It is the responsibility of each employee to check the portal and their GCCS email on a regular basis.

### ***Mail Boxes***

Mailboxes are located in the main office. Please check your mail in the morning and before leaving for the day. Please do not send students to pick up your mail as it may contain confidential information.

### ***Morning Announcements***

Staff members wishing to have announcements made are to hand them to the office staff in writing form prior to 8:15 am.

### ***Telephones***

Telephones are present in each classroom to serve as an intercom and to make outside phone calls in the case of emergency only. The office staff will field all incoming phone calls. Messages will be taken in order that you may return phone calls outside of instructional time. Only urgent or emergency communication will be routed to the classroom during the school day.

### ***Personal Phone Calls***

Our telephones are a vital tool in communicating with parents, community resources, and to conduct official *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* business.

GCCSA recognizes the value of a personal cell phone as a clock, stopwatch, calendar, calculator, or other similar tool in everyday professional or personal life and can appreciate an employee utilizing their cell phone for such professional educational purposes.

However, personal cell phone calls and texting should not take place during instructional time. Personal phone calls should be made during your scheduled lunch break; they must not interfere with your work, interfere with your duty to supervise and ensure student safety, or prevent access to your classroom.

### ***Voicemail/Email***

Each teacher has voicemail and email capabilities. Please review all communications on a daily basis and respond to parent queries within 24 hours.

### ***Confidentiality***

Comment and discussion regarding student personalities and records should only be discussed with appropriate people in the educational setting. Student behavior problems should not be part of public discussions. Professional discretion and courtesy should be used in discussing all staff and management concerns.

### ***Fire Drills / Disaster Preparedness***

Fire drills will be held monthly. Disaster Preparedness drills will be held in accordance with state and local regulations. Maps and specific evacuation directions will be given to all employees.

## **Grievances**

The school provides a grievance procedure with appropriate due process rights. The Executive Director is charged with coordinating efforts to comply with the policy on grievances.

The *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* encourages all concerns and complaints to be resolved at the lowest level possible. First, seek a meeting with the person with whom you directly have a conflict and seek a resolution. If resolution is not reached, speak with the Executive Director, who will mediate and determine a resolution. Should your grievance remain following the Executive Director's decision, you may file a formal grievance with the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. All grievances must be filed within 90 days of the event and must be filed in writing.

## **Public Relations**

The success of the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* depends upon the quality of the relationships between its employees, students, parents and the general public. The public impression of the school will be formed, in part, by you – the employee of the school. *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* employees are ambassadors. The more goodwill an employee promotes, the more employees, students, parents and the general public will respect and appreciate the employee, *Gate City Charter School for the Arts*, and *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* services.

Below are several things employees can do to help leave people with a good impression of

*Gate City Charter School for the Arts*.

- Communicate with parents regularly
- Act competently and deal with others in a courteous and respectful manner
- Communicate pleasantly and respectfully with other employees at all times
- Follow up on requests and questions promptly, provide businesslike replies to inquiries and requests, and perform all duties in an orderly manner
- Respond to e-mail and voicemail within 24 hours during the workweek
- Take great pride in their work and enjoy doing their very best

**All official communication with the Press will occur through the Executive Director or Chairman of the Board of Trustees**

## ***Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence***

Sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination which violates Section 703 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, 42 U.S.C. §2000e, et seq. Sexual violence is a physical act of aggression that includes a sexual act or sexual purpose.

It is the policy of the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* to maintain a learning and working environment that is free from sexual harassment and sexual violence and prohibits any form of sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Any person who believes he or she has been the victim of sexual harassment or sexual violence by a student or an employee of the school or any third person with knowledge or belief of conduct which may constitute sexual harassment or sexual violence, should report the alleged acts immediately to an appropriate school official.

## ***Staff Ethics and Employee Conflict of Interest***

### ***STAFF ETHICS***

An employee speaking or writing as a citizen should be free from institutional censorship or discipline, but his or her special position in the community carries special obligations. The employee must remember that the public may judge the profession and institution by his or her utterances. Hence the employee should at all times, be accurate, exercise appropriate restraint, show respect for the opinion of others, and make every effort to indicate that he or she is not a school spokesperson.

### ***EMPLOYEE CONFLICT OF INTEREST***

Employees will not engage in, or have a financial interest in, any activity that raises a reasonable question of conflict of interest with their duties and responsibilities as employees. This includes, but is not limited to:

1. Employees will not participate for financial remuneration in outside activities wherein their position on the staff is used to sell goods or services to pupils or their parents.
2. Employees who have patented or copyrighted any device, publication, or other item will not receive royalties for use of such item in the school.

3. Employees will not engage in any type of work where the source of information concerning customer, client, or employer originates from the information obtained through the school.

4. School employees will not solicit or sell for personal gain any educational materials or equipment in the attendance areas served by the school. Nor will any employees make available lists of names of students or parents to anyone for sale purposes.

### ***Staff Conduct***

All employees have the responsibility to make themselves familiar with, and abide by, the laws of the State of New Hampshire as they affect their work, the policies and decisions of the Board, and the administrative regulations designed to implement them.

All employees shall be expected to carry out their assigned duties, enforce Board policies and administrative regulations, submit required reports, protect school property, provide oversight of students, and contribute to the education and development of students.

All Employees shall obey the rules and decisions of their supervisors.

### ***Drug Free Workplace***

*Gate City Charter School for the Arts* is a drug free workplace. Employees will be at risk of dismissal or other disciplinary action if he or she:

1. Uses alcohol or drugs (other than those prescribed by a physician) in the school or on school grounds
2. Exhibits behavior that is harmful or potentially harmful to students or other employees
3. Does not obtain professional treatment
4. Refuses to provide documentation of treatment
5. Does not meet the goals of the treatment plan in a timely fashion
6. Refuses to submit to independent testing at school expense when requested to do so by school authorities, or
7. Has a recurrence of chemical or alcohol abuse after treatment

### ***Public Use of School Property***

To use *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* facilities or equipment for personal benefit, during or after work hours, you must have written authorization from

the Executive Director. As an employee of Gate City Charter School for the Arts, you accept full responsibility for any and all liabilities for injuries or losses, which might occur. You are responsible for returning the equipment in good condition and agree that you will pay for any damages that occur while using the equipment for personal projects. Employees must have written authorization from the Executive Director before removing equipment from school premises.

### *Use Of The Computer System*

Use of *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* computers and software is limited solely to appropriate business use. Employees are not allowed to use the computer system for their personal benefit. Employees are strictly forbidden from installing software on the system. Further, this policy reaffirms that the *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* employees have no reasonable expectation of privacy with respect to any computer hardware, software, electronic mail or other computer or electronic means of communication or storage, whether or not employees have private access or an entry code into the computer system. The *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* reserves the right to monitor the use of its computer system.

### *Security*

Maintaining the security of Gate City Charter School for the Arts is every employee's responsibility. Develop habits that ensure security. Below are general measures you should follow:

- Always keep cash properly secured
- Know the location of all alarms and fire extinguishers, and familiarize yourself with the proper procedure for using them, should the need arise
- Do not leave exit doors propped open or compromise the locked security of the facility
- When you leave the Gate City Charter School for the Arts premises, make sure that all entrances are properly locked and secured

## *Teacher Policies and Procedures*

The role of the teacher is to provide a high quality education for children, in an environment that is safe and promotes opportunities to expand their educational horizons.

The teacher will report directly to the Executive Director. The Executive Director and Deputy Director will share the responsibility for the ongoing evaluation and monitoring of classroom teaching.

Gate City Charter School for the Arts strives to meet the needs of all children regardless of their physical or developmental challenges. Under federal law, all children are entitled to “a free and appropriate education” regardless of special needs or disabilities. If a teacher feels it is necessary, s/he should inform the Special Education Case Manager and a Student Assistance Team (SAT) will be called together as needed (Teacher, Executive Director or Deputy Director, Special Education Case Manager) based on each child’s special circumstances, and the referral process will initiate.

In the event a learning or physical challenge is hindering a student’s progress significantly and is documented through appropriate observation and testing, a student may qualify for participation in a formal Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Under NH RSA 194:B:11,III, the responsibility of funding and educational decision making for a child with disabilities attending a public charter school belongs to the student’s resident LEA. This process designates a clearly identified group of professionals who, along with the parents, implement a specifically designed education program complete with formal methods, time frames, and documentation procedures. All GCCSA teachers should familiarize themselves with RSA 194:B and the charter school laws, particularly those that relate to special education.

Students may enter the public charter school with an active IEP. In these cases, the Executive Director, Special Education Case manager, and Classroom Teacher, in cooperation with the student’s resident LEA, together will determine the best way to provide continuity of service.

## ***Attendance***

Each classroom teacher is responsible for recording student attendance in the *Sycamore* school management system at 8:35 AM each school day. If you need assistance in using the *Sycamore* system, please contact the Office Manager. The teacher's responsibility is to enter attendance for the students present in class at 8:35 AM. The Office Manager will reconcile student tardies and excused or unexcused labels in attendance after 8:35 AM.

## ***Daily Lesson Plans***

Each teacher is issued a Plan Book at the beginning of each school year. Teachers must keep written lesson plans in the method most familiar for the individual teacher. The Deputy Director will review weekly plans. Your plan book should contain assessment goals, the standard addressed by the lesson, the learning target as it will be communicated to students, instructional methodology and arts integration targets.

## ***Grade Book***

Each teacher must keep a gradebook to record benchmark, formative, and summative assessment information for each student. The gradebook will be kept in a method as instructed by the Deputy Director.

## ***Report Cards and Parent/Teacher Conferences***

Each teacher must complete a report card for each student assigned to his/her class. The report card will be distributed to parents according to the schedule on the school calendar.

Parent-teacher conferences will be conducted twice a year according to the school calendar. Teachers are responsible for disseminating information to each parent to schedule a conference. In addition to the conferences on the school calendar,

## ***Curriculum***

The Board of Trustees has approved the use and implementation of the following published curriculum:

Great Minds English / Wit & Wisdom

Wilson Foundations (Early Literacy)

Reading A-Z (Early Literacy)

Eureka Math

Foss/Delta Science

It is the expectation that each classroom teacher follow the curriculum as approved by the Board, with reasonable adaptations to meet the needs of the students in each classroom. The teacher is to use professional judgement in making adaptations and is to incorporate the Arts (music, movement, drama, visual arts) as a means of both understanding and expression.

The Deputy Director is responsible for overseeing curriculum and instruction. Teachers are to seek and accept guidance from the Deputy Director in regard to lesson planning, instruction, and assessment.

## ***Teacher Arrival and Dismissal Times***

Teachers are expected to be in the building from either 7:30 am to 3:30 PM.

The office opens at 7:30 AM and closes at 5:00 PM. Teachers are welcome to work in their classrooms any time the school facility is open.

Teachers are expected to be in their classrooms and prepared to greet students at 8:20 am. Each classroom teacher is expected to dismiss their class at the end of the school day, according to school procedure.

## ***Employee Absences***

Please observe the following steps when requesting time off:

- In advance of a scheduled absence, please use the time-off request form that is available via the *Staff Portal*. Please complete this form and submit it to the Executive Director at least five (5) days prior to your scheduled request. The Director will approve or deny your request. If the request is approved, it will be listed on the sub calendar in the office. If the request is denied, you will receive a written explanation from the Executive Director.

- When needing time off due to illness or emergency, please call the Executive Director as soon as you are aware of the need for an absence, but no later than 6:30 AM on the day of the event. The Executive Director will supply for all employees her telephone number and it will be listed for easy reference on the *Staff Portal*.
- Each day that you are absent, you must notify the Executive Director by 2:00 PM to indicate whether or not you will report to work the next day. Your call will give us a chance to possibly secure that same substitute for the next day. Consistency is important for student success.

### ***Substitute Folder***

When the classroom teacher is absent, s/he must submit sub plans. Sub plans should be submitted in person or via email to the Executive Director

Sub plans should contain the following:

- Team teacher name(s)
- Lesson plans
- Daily schedule
- Lunch schedule
- Map of school with evacuation route clearly labeled
- Safety drill procedures
- Seating chart
- Names of dependable students
- Names of students requiring extra attention
- Names and times for students needing medication to go to the office
- School telephone roster
- Assembly procedures
- Dismissal procedures
- Specific information that you want to receive from the substitute

### ***Emergency Lesson Plans***

Emergency Lesson Plans are separate plans that are kept in the office in case of your unexpected absence. In the event that an emergency occurs and you are unable to prepare lesson plans for a substitute, it is required that every teacher file two days of emergency lesson plans with the front office. It is expected that these plans will also include the same items in the substitute folder, though

lessons and activities can be general for your given age group, not necessarily tied to the in prescribed curriculum. These plans should be easy for any substitute or parent volunteer to follow in your unexpected absence.

### ***Field Trips***

The Gate City Charter School for the Arts supports the following types of field trips:

- Trips which supplement and enrich the regular curriculum with relevance to the school's charter.
- Trips which are designed to develop students' social skills and/or reward positive student achievement.

A teacher may request a field trip using the form available via the *Staff Portal*. Please submit your field trip request to the Executive Director at least four (4) weeks prior to the date when you would like the field trip to occur.

The Executive Director will approve or deny your field trip request. If approved, the Executive Director will create and give to the teacher to distribute to parents the field trip permission form. If denied, the field trip request form will be returned to the teacher with written explanation of the denial.

The Executive Director, or designee, will secure bus transportation for the field trip.

The classroom teacher is responsible for securing adequate chaperone coverage for the field trip. Please provide the Executive Director with a list of chaperones at least 24 hours prior to the field trip.

All school rules, regulations, and consequences are in force on all field trips. These may generally be found in the school handbook and will be reinforced by chaperones prior to departure.

Students disciplined during a field trip may lose the privilege of participating in other field trips.

### ***Fund Raising***

No request for funds should go to parents or to other members of the community unless first cleared through the Executive Director. Any funds or gifts-in-kind that come into the school, solicited or unsolicited, should be reported to the Director. As a common courtesy, any contributor of money, gifts-in-kind, or special gifts to teachers should receive a thank-you note from both the Director and the teacher.

### ***Tutoring***

To avoid any misunderstandings or conflicts of interest, the Board of Trustees has decided that teachers may not tutor students enrolled at *Gate City Charter School for the Arts* unless part of a school sponsored tutoring program.