

# Atkinson County Schools

*ATCO "Advancing Together Children's Opportunities"*



# Employee Handbook

August 2015

Welcome to the Atkinson County School District! You are now part of an outstanding school system with outstanding professionals that work relentlessly to help our students excel. Our mission in Atkinson County is “Excellence in Academics, Athletics, and the Arts” and we look forward to you joining our team and our commitment to EXCELLENCE!

The Atkinson County School District is a part of the Okefenokee Regional Educational Support Area (RESA) and consists of four individual schools, two elementary, one middle and one high. As you become acquainted with our district, please know that we are here to support you. We see you as a valuable resource and we recognize the tremendous difference you will make in the lives of our students.

This handbook contains a summary of important rules, policies, and procedures of the Atkinson County School District. It is not all inclusive. If ever you have any questions or concerns about this handbook or other rules or procedures not found in this handbook you need to communicate those concerns with your direct supervisor.

Please feel free to contact my office if you need any additional information of guidance. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy your experience working for the Atkinson County School District.

Sincerely,

*Tim Cochran*

Tim Cochran, Superintendent  
Atkinson County Schools

**Disclaimer**

*This handbook has been prepared to help familiarize you with some of our administrative rules and forms and to present the information in a form that will be readily available for reference. Although the contents of the handbook are based on the administrative rules and Board policies of the Atkinson County Board of Education, the actual policies and rules could be far more lengthy and detailed, so they have been summarized to make the handbook more readable. There are additional administrative rules and policies not discussed in the handbook. In the event of a conflict between the handbook and Board policy, the Board policy shall control. Nothing in this handbook is intended to create a contract of employment or an entitlement to any particular benefits or terms and conditions of work. The Superintendent has the right to change or modify any of its administrative rules or forms at any time. For additional, more detailed information or if you have questions, please refer to your immediate supervisor for more information or the Board of Education Policy Manual which can be found at the District’s web site ([www.atkinson.k12.ga.us](http://www.atkinson.k12.ga.us)), or contact the Central Office of the Atkinson County Board of Education, 98 East Roberts Ave, Pearson, GA. 31642.*

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## **Rules and Guidelines: Workplace/On-the-Job**

### **Accidents and Emergencies**

All employees are responsible for maintaining a safe working environment, and should report safety concerns to their supervisor so that corrective action can be taken. In the event of an accident sustained in the performance of job duties, employees should report the injury to their building level administrator as soon as possible and complete a Report of Injury with their building level administrator. All Atkinson County Schools have access to emergency services and resources.

### **Alcohol and Controlled Substance Testing**

The health and well-being of students and employees depends on the judgment, physical dexterity, reflex actions and unimpaired hearing and sight of all employees, including those engaged in safety sensitive functions. The Atkinson County Board of Education will not tolerate and specifically prohibits the unauthorized use, abuse, possession or sale of alcohol or controlled substances, as well as a measurable presence of alcohol in any employee. Employees participate in an alcohol and controlled substance testing program that also provides training, education and other assistance.

Policy/Rule reference: GAMA

### **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

The Atkinson County School District will not discriminate against any qualified employee because of a disability, as long as the employee can perform the essential functions of the job. Reasonable accommodations for qualified individuals with a disability will be provided, following the ADA guidelines.

### **Attendance**

Attendance is a part of performance, and employees are required to be at work, on time. Employees who will be late to work or absent should personally notify their supervisor in advance or as quickly as possible so that their responsibilities can be covered appropriately. Absences for reasons that are not approved by the Atkinson County Board of Education may be considered job abandonment. Employee absences without approval for three consecutive days will be considered a voluntary resignation by the employee.

Policy/Rule reference: GARH

### **Confidential Nature of Work**

Student and employee files, records, documentation and other information are private and confidential. Disclosure of such information is limited by applicable federal and state laws.

### **Conflict of Interest/Dual Pay**

All employees are expected to adhere to the highest ethical standards of conduct at all times. While the Atkinson County School District recognizes the right of employees to engage in private activities outside their employment with the school district, business dealings that create a conflict with the interests of the Atkinson County School District are not acceptable. Employees should disclose any potential conflicts of interest, including those where the employee's influence could result in personal gain for the employee or an immediate family member.

Employees who are paid for outside work they do during regular work hours must forfeit one of the salaries. Employees can be paid for outside work they do while on vacation leave, jury duty, or personal days, or for services performed outside the regular workday.

### **Dress Code**

Employees should maintain an appropriate level of personal hygiene, and dress appropriately for the school or workplace situation and level of formality. Employees should follow safety regulations concerning equipment.

### **Drug-Free Workplace**

A drug-free workplace encourages productivity and helps accomplish the Atkinson County School District mission and goals. The unlawful and/or unauthorized manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession or use of a controlled substance and/or alcohol is prohibited in the workplace for all employees, students and visitors. In addition, the Atkinson County School District will take appropriate personnel action against any employee convicted of a criminal drug offense. All employees are subject to drug and alcohol testing based on reasonable suspicion.

Policy/Rule reference: GAMA

### **Employee Fund Drives**

All fund-raising, product sales, and employee assistance campaigns must be approved by the Atkinson County Board of Education.

### **Employees with Communicable Diseases**

Employees who have or are suspected of having any communicable disease may be required to take any and all recommended precautions to ensure the health and safety of students and other employees. The Board of Education, the Atkinson County Health Department, and/or the Georgia Department of Human Resources may require quarantine or surveillance of carriers of diseases and persons exposed to or suspected of being infected with infectious disease during such period until they are found free of the infectious agent or disease.

Policy/Rule reference: GANA.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)**

All employees are entitled to equal treatment in decisions involving hiring, promotions, compensation, training, and discipline. The Atkinson County School District does not consider race, color, sex (including pregnancy and related conditions), religion, national origin, military status, disability, or any other legally protected status in any employment decision or employment practice. Further, the Atkinson County School District does not tolerate retaliation against employees for any legally-protected status or for engaging in legally-protected conduct. The District will consider requests for accommodation on the basis of religion, and will provide reasonable accommodation on the basis of ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) qualified disability if it can do so without undue hardship or safety threat. Also see Administrative Regulations, Superintendent's Statements, and EEO Procedures. Also see Responsibilities for Responses to Civil Rights Concerns.

Policy/Rule reference: GAAA

### **Ethics**

All employees must adhere to the high standards and expectations determined by the Atkinson County Board of Education and those described in the Professional Standards Commission Code of Ethics. As public employees expected to uphold the public trust, employees should not use their positions or professional relationships for personal gain. All

employees of the District are required to notify their immediate supervisor or other administrator by the end of the next business day following any arrest. Any misstatement or omission of required information may be reason for dismissal or non-employment. All employees are required to cooperate with any investigation.

### **Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy**

All employees have a right to be treated with respect and dignity, and to work in a professional environment that is free of bias, prejudice and harassment. The Atkinson County School District prohibits harassment, discrimination, or differential treatment of any employee, and encourages employees who believe they have been discriminated or harassed to promptly report the incident to the any school or district administrator.

Policy/Rule reference: GAEB

### **Responsibilities for Responses to Civil Rights Concerns**

All employees are required to fully comply with all federal and state non-discrimination laws, including Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Title IX of the Educational Amendments of 1972; the Age Discrimination and Employment Act (ADEA); Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Public Law 101-476, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); and the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA).

*Questions concerning these policies and procedures should be directed to the administrative offices of the Atkinson County Board of Education, 98 East Roberts Ave., Pearson, GA 31635.*

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment is unlawful and specifically prohibited. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature will not be tolerated. Examples of prohibited conduct include, but are not limited to, unwelcome intentional touching of intimate body areas; employees dating students; graphic or degrading comments about an individual or his/her appearance; the display of sexually suggestive objects, pictures, cards or letters; lewd or suggestive comments or gestures; and off-color language or jokes of a sexual nature. Individuals who believe they are being sexually harassed should immediately notify a building or system level administrator. Retaliation against a complainant for making a complaint is strictly forbidden.

Policy/Rule reference: GAEB

### **Social Security Number**

The Atkinson County School District reserves the right to use an employee's social security number in employment-related practices. All employees who handle documents containing employee identification data such as social security numbers should use reasonable precaution to preclude compromise or identity theft.

### **Certified Staff Complaints and Grievances**

When workplace problems or disputes cannot be resolved informally, employees can turn to the Atkinson County School District's internal grievance process. This process addresses alleged violations, misinterpretations or misapplications of the District's statutes, policies, rules, regulations or written agreements. It does not apply to performance ratings, job performance, termination, non-renewal, demotion, suspension and reprimands, or the revocation, suspension or denial of certification of any certified employee. The complaint must be sent in writing to a Level 1 Supervisor within 10 calendar days of the event/incident as stipulated in Board Policy.

Policy/Rule reference: GAE(2)

### **Tobacco-Free Schools**

Tobacco use is a health hazard and inconsistent with the concepts and principles taught in the Atkinson County School District. Employees and visitors are prohibited from using tobacco at all school-sponsored events and in/on all school property, including buildings, offices, trucks, automobiles, and buses.

### **Use of Equipment and Resources**

Employees entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy and responsibility. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, misusing school-related funds or property; failing to account for funds collected from students or parents; and submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses.

### **Computers**

Atkinson County School District computer hardware, software and data should be used for assigned responsibilities only, and should be protected from damage, destruction, viruses, theft and unauthorized access and use. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using Atkinson County Schools' electronic resources.

Policy/Rule reference: IFBG, IFBGC, IFBGE

### **Internet**

Electronic resources should be used to support assigned responsibilities. Employees should have no expectation of privacy when using electronic systems, and should minimize use of the Internet for personal reasons during working hours. Employees should never access pornographic or other sites prohibited by law or CIPA (Children's Internet Protection Act) compliance during working hours or any other time when using Atkinson County School's electronic resources.

Policy/Rule reference: IFBG, IFBGC, IFBGE

### **Telephone**

Personal use of telephones should be kept to a minimum during working hours. Personal phones should not be used during instructional time.

## **Rules and Guidelines: Employment**

### **Annual Performance Evaluation**

All employees are evaluated by their immediate supervisor, using approved evaluation plans and procedures. All employees should receive a copy of their annual evaluation. All certified employees and paraprofessionals are to be evaluated before May 1. Other classified employees are to be evaluated before June 30.

### **Assignment**

Employees are assigned to positions based on the needs of the Atkinson County School District as well as the employee's training, certification and other factors.

### **At-Will Employment**

Georgia recognizes At-Will Employment; that is, an employee is hired at-will and employment can be terminated at the will of either party, for any reason or no reason at all. Employees who are issued Board-approved contracts do not have At-Will Employment.



### **Background Check**

All new employees must pass a criminal background check as required by Georgia State Law. State law also requires employees to sign a consent form authorizing the District to conduct periodic criminal and/or driver's history record checks for the duration of employment.

Policy/Rule: GAK(1)

### **Certification Qualifications and Duties**

Certified employees must be eligible for certification before being employed and must maintain certification during employment. All coursework must be approved by the Professional Standards Commission (PSC) at [www.gapsc.com](http://www.gapsc.com).

### **Discipline**

Discipline is necessary and will be implemented when there is unsatisfactory and/or unacceptable employee performance and/or conduct of any type. Depending on the nature or severity of the offense, Atkinson County School District may provide employees with an opportunity to bring their performance up to standard through the use of the following: (1) immediate feedback regarding unsatisfactory performance, (2) factual documentation of performance, (3) employee input and commitment to improving performance, (4) final resolution of the performance issue(s), (5) Professional Development Plan, and/or (6) Progressive Discipline. The District utilizes progressive discipline in which disciplinary actions normally follow a gradually escalating path. However, depending on the seriousness of the offense, more than one Progressive Discipline Action may occur simultaneously or it may be determined that progressive discipline is not appropriate and any disciplinary action may be imposed. The action taken should be consistent with precedent in similar situations, appropriate to the offense, and documented. An employee who holds a certificate with the Georgia Professional Standards Commission may be reported at any time for a violation of the Code of Ethics for Educators.

### **Fair Dismissal**

According to the State of Georgia's Fair Dismissal Act [Act 20-2-940], Certified employees can be dismissed or suspended based on incompetence; insubordination; willful neglect of duties; immorality; inciting, encouraging or counseling students to violate state and local laws, regulations and ordinances, or policies and rules of the Atkinson County Board of Education; failure to secure and maintain necessary educational training; to reduce staff due to the loss of students or programs; and any other good and sufficient cause. Suspensions are without pay and can last up to 60 days. The Atkinson County School District Superintendent or his/her designee can relieve any employee from duty for up to 10 days if the employee's presence could cause serious harm or disrupt students, the school, or other employees. The Atkinson County School District Superintendent or his/her designee may also write letters of reprimand for any valid reason. These letters are placed in the employee's District personnel file. Demotions and non-renewal of contracts of certain certified employees are governed by Code Section 20-2-942. A demotion is a job with less pay, less responsibility and less prestige. Transfers are not covered by the Fair Dismissal Act.

### **Hiring**

Individuals are employed by the Atkinson County Board of Education on the recommendation of the Superintendent. Principals and/or system level administrators will make the offer of employment on behalf of the Superintendent after the individual has successfully completed the required employment and screening process, although some postemployment screening or testing may be necessary.

### **Interviewing**

Supervisors will interview the most qualified applicants for positions. Hiring decisions are recommended by the interviewing supervisor to the Superintendent and then approved by the Board of Education.

### **Job Abandonment**

Absences for reasons that are not approved by the Atkinson County Board of Education may be considered job abandonment. Employee absences without approval for three consecutive days will be considered voluntary resignations.

Policy/Rule reference: GARH

### **Job Descriptions**

Each position has a valid job description maintained by Human Resources. Job descriptions should be updated and maintained on a regular basis. Employees should see their supervisor regarding their job descriptions.

### **Job Posting**

Certified job vacancies will be posted electronically through [www.teachgeorgia.org](http://www.teachgeorgia.org) and posted on the system web page at [www.aktinson.k12.ga.us](http://www.aktinson.k12.ga.us). All classified positions will be run in the local paper and posted on the system web page.

### **Nepotism**

Employees cannot supervise or evaluate members of their immediate family.

### **Personnel Records**

Information contained in an employee's personnel file is not made public unless required by law or requested by the employee in writing. **It is the employee's responsibility to notify the District of any changes of personal information.** Employees must notify their Supervisor and the Payroll Department in when their name and/or home address and/or contact numbers change. Forms are available at the central office.

### **Reassignment**

Employees may be reassigned at any time by the Atkinson County School District. Some of the reasons for reassignments are reorganizations, changes in attendance zones, changes in approved programs, changes in student enrollment, and the opening or closing of schools. This list of reasons is not all inclusive.

### **Reduction in Force (RIF)**

A reduction in force may be caused by a number of factors, including reorganization, the elimination of or a change in programs or a loss of funding. If it becomes necessary to reduce the certified workforce, the Atkinson County School District will rely on a process that maintains the effectiveness and quality of the educational programs and services, and that minimizes the number of employees who are negatively impacted. The Superintendent will authorize a written plan that identifies the underlying conditions, as well as what positions are affected and why. Employees who receive written notice that their positions have been eliminated can choose to resign or accept separation under the RIF.

**Re-Employment**

The contracts for Administrative/Supervisory and Certified personnel are automatically considered for renewal each year. Individuals whose contracts will not be renewed are notified in writing. Administrative and Certified personnel who are employed after the contract year begins may be recommended for re-employment after April 15.

**Reference Checks**

Personal and professional references are checked for each prospective employee.

**Representation in Meetings**

All employees shall be allowed to have an individual of their choosing, excluding attorney, spouses, and immediate family members (as defined in Administrative Rule GARH-R), present in any Disciplinary Conference. A Disciplinary Conference is described as any conference held, whether requested by the administrator/supervisor or the Employee, related to a Suspension without Pay, Demotion, Reprimand by the Superintendent, Termination, or Nonrenewal. Annual performance evaluation conferences are not considered Disciplinary Conference.

**Resignations**

Certified employees who want to terminate their contracts for the new contract year must submit written notification to their immediate supervisor before June 1 of the current school year. Certified employees who want to resign during the contract period because of emergency situations should submit a statement of resignation at the earliest possible date. The contract cannot be terminated by the employee without the written consent of the Superintendent. Classified employees are asked to submit a letter of resignation at least two weeks prior to leaving the Atkinson County School District.

**Retirement Membership**

Teachers, Supervisors, Paraprofessionals, Administrators, Clerical, Campus Police Officer, and School Nurses who are employed one half-time or more are eligible and required to participate in the Teacher Retirement System of Georgia (TRS). Bus Drivers, Food Service Assistants, Custodians, and Maintenance Workers who work at least 60 percent of their normal work week, must establish membership in the Public School Employees Retirement System of Georgia (PSERS). Retirement contributions are payroll-deducted.

**Substitute Teachers**

A substitute can be used for up to 10 days in the same classroom. A vacancy that lasts between 11 days and 60 days may be filled with a Certified Teacher. Substitute Teachers must attend in-service training and meet other requirements. Work days for substitute teachers are 7 hours with a 30 minute break for lunch. After meeting all criteria and being placed on the Board approved substitute teacher list you may be called for work but are not guaranteed employment month to month, nor will there be any summer pay.

**Transfers**

Employees may voluntarily initiate a transfer to another school or department if they meet transfer requirements. A teacher is eligible to apply for a transfer if she/he has been recommended for employment for the next school year and has been in the Atkinson County School system for two years and is not on limited contract, or a professional

development plan due to poor job performance. In addition, the transfer must be approved by the current supervisor and the receiving supervisor in the new school or department.

Certified employees must submit applications for transfer between February 15 and May 15; transfers are finalized by May 30 and become effective with the new contract year. Classified employees may apply for a transfer at any time after they have served two consecutive years at the same work site.

### **Rules and Guidelines: Compensation**

#### **Contracts**

Certified employees receive written employment contracts that are signed by the employee and the Superintendent. Contracts are terminated if an employee cannot be properly certified. The Atkinson County Board of Education offers new contracts for the coming year to all certified employees on the payroll at the beginning of the current year, except those who have resigned, been terminated or notified in writing that their contract will not be renewed. All employees must have an Oath of Allegiance on file.

#### **Deductions**

Payroll deductions include, but are not limited to, federal and state taxes required by law; retirement systems contributions; Social Security; and medical, dental and other deductions authorized by the employee.

#### **Direct Deposit**

All new employees are required to participate in Direct Deposit for payroll checks.

#### **Extended Day/Year**

Supplemental pay may be provided to employees who work an extended school day or school year to meet program responsibilities or student needs. For example, some High School Teachers may be asked to work an additional hour beyond the normal eight hour day to provide student instructional services or to teach an additional period of instruction. Local school administrators must approve Extended Day/Year pay because of student and school needs; such pay cannot be based on tasks that would normally be performed during the regular work day.

#### **Overtime**

Overtime is defined as those hours worked by a public employee who qualifies for time-and-one-half overtime pay or time-and-one-half compensatory time as required by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Overtime for Atkinson County School District non-exempt employees refers to those hours or major fractions of hours beyond 40 hours within a work week. For non-exempt employees paid monthly, the work week begins at 12:01 a.m. on Monday and ends at 12 midnight on Sunday.

Employees classified under The Fair Labor Standards Act as non-exempt are compensated at a rate of one and one-half times their hourly rate after 40 hours within a work week and/or one-and-one half hours of compensatory time off for each hour over 40 hours within a workweek. Overtime for non-exempt employees must be approved in advance by their supervisor (except in emergency situations). Unauthorized (unapproved) overtime worked may subject the employee to disciplinary action. Nonexempt employees cannot waive their rights to overtime pay or volunteer to perform normal job

functions outside normal work hours. Employees classified under the Fair Labor Standards Act as exempt are paid a fixed rate and are not eligible for overtime pay.

### **Pay**

All employees are paid monthly. A schedule for exact pay days will be released by the central office payroll department prior to the fiscal year. Payroll will only be released on those dates and as approved by the Superintendent. Pay advances are not allowable.

Pay is calculated by multiplying the number of work days for the assigned position by the daily rate of the employee. That amount plus any supplements\* will then be divided into twelve to determine the monthly pay rate, and will run from September through August. First year employees pay may be divided by 13 and will run from August through August for their first year.

### **Salary**

Salaries for Certified employees are determined by the Georgia teaching certificate they hold and the years of experience approved by the Atkinson County Board of Education. Classified employees are paid based on classified pay scale approved by the Atkinson County Board of Education. An experience verification form must be sent to previous employers to verify years of experience. It is the employee's responsibility to mail these forms to previous employers, beginning with the most recent.

### **Teaching Experience**

Certificated employees new to the District will be placed at step one of the appropriate salary and certification level. Upon receipt of verified experience and a valid in-field certificate, the salary will be appropriately adjusted. Teaching experience gained outside the District in an accredited, Georgia-recognized program will be credited year for year. The daily rate of pay for certified employees can be adjusted if the District determines that an employee's initial certification status has changed.

### **Travel Reimbursement**

Personal and professional expenses associated with Atkinson County School District approved travel will be reimbursed at the approved District travel rates. To be reimbursed for travel an employee must submit an approved professional leave form, travel expense statement, confirmation and agenda from the meeting/training/workshop/conference, original hotel or lodging receipt for the date approved on the professional leave form, and a Google map with round trip mileage estimate from the assigned work location to the meeting location.

### **Tutoring for Pay**

Private tutoring for pay must be done off-campus and must not include students assigned to the teacher.

## **Rules and Guidelines: Benefits**

Your employee benefits can be a very important part of the total employment package you receive as an employee – and may add an additional 30% of your salary to your total compensation from the district. Like your personal auto and homeowners insurance, the insurance products offered to Atkinson County School employees are designed to protect you and your family members “when life happens”. The retirement and supplemental plans are provided to help you

prepare for your future. As a school district, several of the benefits we offer are developed and administered by the State of Georgia and rules are set in state law. The other benefits options are designed by Atkinson County Schools with assistance from our broker/consultant and contracted with various insurance companies and other providers.

The benefits information provided in this Employee Handbook is a simple summary of the benefits that may be available to you and how they work. More information is available upon request to the Atkinson County central office benefits department. However, the insurance policies, plan documents, and state regulations for each benefit are the only documents with accurate, specific and binding information about the actual details of the plan. These benefits are subject to change at any time. Nothing in this section of the Employee Handbook creates or implies a contract of employment or an entitlement to any particular benefit.

### **Benefit Eligibility**

Benefits coverage is available to employees, the employee's legal spouse under Georgia law, and the employee's natural children, adopted children, step-children, children in the employee's legal custody, and those children for whom the employee has a legal requirement to provide coverage. Children can be covered until the end of the month during which they turn 26 years of age. Children who are disabled by the 26th birthday may continue on coverage with proper documentation of the disability.

### **Effective Dates of Deductions and Coverage**

Benefits coverage starts on the first of the month following or coincident with one month of employment. Deductions are taken "in advance", so deductions will start with the paycheck(s) for the month before coverage starts. However, deductions for the Flexible Spending Accounts are "current" for the month during which they are deducted. Many benefits deductions are taken on a pre-tax basis. If you miss a paycheck due to being on leave without pay or other reasons, you must make payment directly to the Payroll Office or your coverage will be terminated.

### **Enrollment**

Employees may enroll in benefits upon employment, during the annual Open Enrollment period for the following year, or at the time of a Qualifying Event. Atkinson County Payroll office should be notified immediately following any qualifying event. Forms should be completed and received in the Payroll Office within 20 days of employment or the Qualifying Event so changes can be forwarded to the insurance companies by the 30-day deadline. Certain benefits or levels of coverage will require that you complete a personal health questionnaire and be approved by the insurance company before coverage and deductions will begin. All eligible employees should participate in the Open Enrollment process each year to learn about new benefits options or changes. Open Enrollment typically begins in October each year. Qualifying Events are those changes in family status that the Internal Revenue Service recognizes making you eligible to change your benefits elections for the year. Qualifying Events include but are not limited to, your marriage or divorce, the birth or adoption of a child, and you or your spouse's change in employment status that affects benefits eligibility (including your spouse's Open Enrollment period).

### **Benefit Options**

Eligible employees may participate in the State Health Benefit Plan for health coverage. Employees may purchase Supplemental Life insurance on themselves and family members, Dental insurance, Vision Care insurance, Short Term Disability insurance, Legal Services coverage, Cancer insurance, and Critical Illness insurance. Employees may also make pre-tax deferrals to Flexible Spending Accounts for medical expenses and dependent care expenses. The providers of

these products, the levels of coverage, and terms and conditions of coverage are subject to change. Employees receive notification of such changes, normally during the Open Enrollment period each year. It is the responsibility of the employee to notify the Atkinson County Payroll office of any changes that will affect their monthly payroll deductions.

### **Retirement Plans**

All eligible employees are required to participate in one of the state-provided retirement plans. New hires who are over 60 years of age upon employment may choose to not participate. The primary plans (TRS and PSERS) are defined benefit pension plans, meaning that your retirement benefit is defined in the plan materials and your contribution combined with Atkinson County School's contribution will fully fund your retirement benefit.

Teachers Retirement System (TRS) of Georgia – All regular employees who work at least half time in their position are required to participate in TRS. A portion of your salary will be contributed to the plan each payday. Covered positions include Teachers, Paraprofessionals, Administrators, Nurses, Clerical Staff, and Campus Police Officers. Refer to the guidelines and regulations at [www.trsga.com](http://www.trsga.com)

Public School Employees Retirement System (PSERS) of Georgia – All other nontemporary employees of the school district who are not eligible for TRS will participate in PSERS. Covered positions include non-supervisory positions in the Maintenance and Food Services departments, custodial employees, bus drivers and bus monitors, among others. Refer to the guidelines and regulations at [www.ers.ga.gov](http://www.ers.ga.gov)

### **403(b) and 457 Supplemental Plans**

The district offers pre-tax deferral to annuity plans under these sections of the Internal Revenue Code. These are supplemental retirement plans, so the funds are not readily or easily available until retirement. All regular employees and temporary employees who work at least 20 hours per week are eligible to participate.

### **Benefits Disclaimer**

*There are additional requirements and conditions for benefit plans not discussed in this handbook. In the event of a conflict between the handbook and a requirement and condition, the Plan Description will prevail. Nothing in this section of the handbook creates a contract or an entitlement to any particular benefits. Benefits are subject to change at any time.*

## **Rules and Guidelines: Attendance and Absences**

### **Attendance**

Daily attendance and punctuality are performance expectations for all employees. In the event that absence is necessary, employees are responsible for contacting their supervisor prior to the start of the workday. The specific call in protocol for each school or department will be discussed and reviewed during pre-service meetings at each school. Employees are expected to call in for each day of absence unless they are otherwise notified by their supervisor, or unless they are placed on an approved leave of absence. Employees who are excessively absent are subject to disciplinary action up to and including the recommendation to terminate employment. Employee absences without approval for three consecutive days will be considered a voluntary resignation by the employee.

### **Sick Leave**

Sick Leave is provided under Georgia law so employees can receive pay during absences related to medical issues for the employee or an immediate family member, as well as for certain other absences. Sick Leave is accrued at 1 ¼ days per working month for certified employees, bus drivers, and twelve month classified employees and 1 day per working

month for all other classified. Sick leave is meant to be used only when needed. If an employee accumulates more than five absences documentation can be requested by the administration validating future sick leave usage. Employees are not paid for unused sick leave when they separate from employment.

Policy/Rule: GARH

### **Sick Leave Bank**

The Atkinson County School District provides a sick leave bank for all contributing employees to utilize after their accumulated sick leave has been exhausted. Employees may join and utilize sick bank only in accordance with the administrative procedure set in Board policy. For more question regarding sick bank contact the payroll department at the Central Office.

Policy/Rule: GBRIB(1)

### **Personal Leave**

Georgia law allows school district employees to use up to three days of accrued, unused Sick Leave each school year to receive pay during absences due to personal reasons. The Atkinson County Board of Education allows employees to accrue a maximum of 5 days of personal leave at a rate of 3 per year. Advance approval of this Personal Leave is required except in emergency situations. Personal Leave will not be approved for the day immediately preceding or following school holidays, during pre-planning, post-planning, or on a teacher in-service day.

Policy/Rule: GARH

### **Bereavement Leave**

Georgia law allows school district employees to use accrued, unused Sick Leave as Bereavement Leave to receive pay for up to five days away from work due to the death of an immediate family member. Such leave must be approved by the immediate supervisor.

Policy/Rule: GARH

### **Vacation**

Employees who work a 12-month schedule accrue vacation hours to cover their pay for scheduled absences. Each employee will earn 5 vacation days after the completion of 1 year of employment. At the beginning of the sixth continuous year of employment an employee will earn an additional 5 days for a total of 10 days. Vacation days may not accrue to more than twenty days and must be approved prior to use.

Policy/Rule: GARH

### **Military Leave**

Employees who are member of the National Guard or Reserves may be granted up to 18 days of paid leave each federal fiscal year for training or active duty. Documentation of the duty and dates of service must be provided in advance.

Policy/Rule: GARH

### **Jury and Witness Duty**

Employees will receive regular pay when absent due to a jury duty summons. Employees who are subpoenaed as a witness and who have no direct personal interest in the legal proceedings will be allowed to be absent and will receive regular pay.

Policy/Rule: GARH



**Time for Voting**

Polls in Georgia are open from 7:00 a.m. until 7:00 p.m., and often advance voting is allowed before the day of elections. Therefore, it is unlikely that time away from work would be necessary for an employee to vote. Employees should consult their supervisor to arrange for time off when necessary.

**Professional Leave**

Employees who attend a conference, seminar or workshop at the direction of the district are considered to be absent for professional development purposes. This Professional Leave is not deducted from any of the employee's leave accounts as it is considered worked time.

Policy/Rule: GARH

**Administrative or Directed Leave**

During investigations or other situations, the district may direct that an employee remain off work. This administratively required leave will be paid at the employee's regular rate of pay. State law must be followed concerning administrative leave for certificated employees.

**Leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

Employees are eligible for a leave of absence under the FMLA once they have worked for the district for twelve months and a total of 1250 work hours. Leave under the FMLA can be approved for up to 12 weeks in a rolling 12-month period for the following reasons:

1. Birth of a son or daughter and to care for the newborn child;
2. Adoption or foster placement with the employee of a son or daughter and to care for the newly placed child;
3. To care for the employee's spouse, son, daughter or parent, if that person has a serious health condition;
4. Serious health condition of the employee that prevents the employee from performing his/her job functions;
5. Any qualifying exigency arising from the fact that the employee's family member (the covered service member) is on covered active duty. Qualifying exigencies are defined as short-notice deployment (seven or less calendar days); military events and related activities; child care and school activities; financial and legal arrangements; counseling; rest and recuperation (up to fifteen calendar days per instance); post-deployment activities; parental care; additional activities where the employer and employee agree that the leave is an exigency and agree to both timing and duration of the leave; and
6. Military caregiver leave to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness if the employee is the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of the service member.

Employees seeking FMLA leave must fill out the appropriate forms with the payroll department prior to or immediately following any extended absences.

Absences covered by Workers' Compensation are considered to be FMLA leaves of absence.

Employees who deliver a baby during the first twelve months of employment will be allowed to take a leave of absence for the period of disability after delivery (normally six to eight weeks).

Policy/Rule: GARH, GBRIG

**Benefits Deductions during a Leave of Absence**

While an employee receives Sick Leave pay, benefits deductions continue to be taken from the pay check. If the employee uses all available Sick Leave before the end of the FMLA period or if the employee is receiving payments from

Workers Compensation he or she must continue to pay for benefit deductions directly to the payroll office each month or any benefit coverage may lapse. In the event coverage lapses, deductions and coverage may begin again when the employee returns to work depending on the requirements of the particular coverage in question.

### **Return to Work**

Employees are expected to return to work at the end of the FMLA period with a full release to perform all duties. The employee will return to the same position and work location as prior to the leave of absence in most circumstances. Employees who are unable to return to work at the end of the approved leave of absence will resign and are eligible for re-employment when they are cleared to work by the physician.

## **Rules and Guidelines: Risk Management**

### **Workers' Compensation**

Employees are entitled to workers' compensation benefits for payment of medical treatment and wage loss of compensable on the job injuries. Employees must treat with a physician listed on the District's Panel of Physicians. A Traditional Panel of Physicians is posted in common areas e.g. break rooms, meeting areas for employees etc. If an employee sustains an on the job injury they are required to provide immediate notification to their building level Principal or district level administration. Delay in notification can result in denial of the workers' compensation claim. A completed Report of Injury should be completed and sent to District Office within 48 hours of the accident.



# Atkinson County Schools

## Strategic Plan

2015

**Mission/Vision:** Excellence in Academics, Athletics & Arts

**Motto:** "ATCO" Advancing Together Children's Opportunities

### Core Values & Beliefs

#### Values

- Children & Families
- Integrity
- Achievement
- Creativity & Innovation
- Diversity

#### Beliefs

1. We believe successful schools are a foundation of a community's stability, growth, and prosperity.
2. We believe family and community engagement is critical to student and district success.
3. We believe in a constant and purposeful focus on what is best for students.
4. We believe creativity and innovation are encouraged and embraced by all stakeholders.
5. We believe in cultivating a positive environment where students are provided pathways for success.

| <b>Strategic Goals &amp; Areas of Focus</b>   | <b>Strategic Measures</b>  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Area I. Teaching and Learning</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide a high quality instruction.</li> <li>2. Promote academic growth in all areas.</li> <li>3. Build student college and career readiness.</li> <li>4. Build capacity for global competitiveness.</li> </ol> <p>(Vision for Public Education Standards: 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3.)</p>  | <p><b>Area I. Teaching and Learning</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Percentage of exceeds on state test.</li> <li>2. Percentage of meets &amp; exceeds on state test.</li> <li>3. Overall score on CCRPI as compared with schools similar to Atkinson County Schools.</li> <li>4. SAT scores, number of AP classes, dual enrollment, advanced classes K-12, world language classes, STEM classes, and EOP completers.</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>Area II. Human Capital</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Acquire and retain high performing people for all positions.</li> <li>2. Increase capacity for in-house training and succession planning.</li> </ol> <p>(Vision for Public Education Standards: 6.1, 6.3, 6.5.)</p>  | <p><b>Area II. Human Capital</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annual turnover rate among staff.</li> <li>2. Number of trainings completed in house.</li> </ol>  |
| <p><b>Area III. Culture, Climate &amp; Organizational Efficacy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain safe, orderly, &amp; supportive environment for students, staff, &amp; community members.</li> <li>2. Build a positive environment for all.</li> <li>3. Develop a culture &amp; climate that fosters innovations.</li> </ol> <p>(Vision for Public Education Standards: 8.1, 8.2, 8.5, 8.6, 8.7.)</p> | <p><b>Area III. Culture, Climate &amp; Organizational Efficacy</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of discipline referrals.</li> <li>2. Student and staff surveys.</li> <li>3. Local technology ratio as compared to the state technology ratio.</li> </ol>   |
| <p><b>Area IV. Community Involvement &amp; Engagement</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Establish and build community perceptions of schools and school district.</li> <li>2. Increase opportunities for community members to be more active in Atkinson County Schools.</li> </ol> <p>(Vision for Public Education Standards: 8.3.)</p>  | <p><b>Area IV. Community Involvement &amp; Engagement</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community surveys.</li> <li>2. Number of activities presented as well as sign-in sheets for participation.</li> </ol>  |
| <p><b>Area V. Fiscal Management</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Maintain effective and efficient financial practices.</li> <li>2. Maximize federal, state, local, and alternate funding sources.</li> </ol> <p>(Vision for Public Education Standards: 9.3, 9.4, 9.6, 9.7.)</p>   | <p><b>Area V. Fiscal Management</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Annual audit report.</li> <li>2. Balanced budget, healthy fund balance, with local millage below state average.</li> </ol>   |

## **APPENDIX 2: School and System Contact Information**

### **Atkinson County Board of Education**

98 East Roberts Rd.  
Pearson, GA 31642  
Phone# 912-422-7373  
Fax# 912-422-7369

### **Atkinson County Schools Office Maintenance and Transportation**

162 E. Roberts Rd.  
Pearson, GA 31642  
Phone# 912-422-7317  
Fax# 912-422-7556

### **Atkinson County High School**

145 Rebel Ln  
Pearson, GA 31642  
Phone# 912-422-3267  
Fax# 912-422-3348

### **Atkinson County Middle School**

145 Rebel Ln  
Pearson, GA 31642  
Phone# 912-422-3267  
Fax# 912-422-3348

### **Pearson Elementary**

563 N King St.  
Pearson, GA 31642  
Phone# 912-422-3882  
Fax# 912-422-7024

### **Willacoochee Elementary**

430 S. Vickers St  
Willacoochee, GA 31650  
Phone# 912-534-5302  
Fax# 912-534-5337