



# EMPLOYEE HANDBOOK

*Equip. Engage. Excel.*

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## **Procedural Guide Policy Statement**

This Employee Handbook contains only general guidelines and information related to policy and procedures of the Autauga County Board of Education. It is not intended to be comprehensive or to address all the possible applications of, or exceptions to, the general policies and procedures described. The provisions and information set forth in this handbook are intended to be informational and not contractual in nature. Thus, this handbook is not intended, and shall not be construed, to constitute a contract between the School System and any employee; prospective employee; agency of the local, state, or federal government; or any other person or legal entity of any and every nature whatsoever. The School System hereby reserves and retains the right to amend, alter, change, delete, or modify any of the provisions of this handbook at any time, and from time to time, without notice, in any manner that the Administration of the School System deems to be in the best interest of the School System.

Every attempt will be made to inform all employees of changes as they occur. However, it is the employee's responsibility to keep current of all Autauga County Board of Education policies and procedures. It is each employee's responsibility to review the system policies and procedures in detail and to request any clarification needed from supervision or the Human Resources office.

Some of the subjects described in this handbook are covered in detail in official policy and procedure documents. Employees should refer to these documents for specific information, since this handbook only briefly summarizes those benefits. The procedures, practices, policies, and benefits described here may be modified or discontinued from time to time. Violation of system policies or procedures may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. The contents of this handbook apply to all regular employees (certified and classified) and to all part-time, temporary, and seasonal personnel in the School System and do not amend, abridge, or replace Board policies, administrative regulations, rules, procedures or employment contract conditions established by the School System. All employees are encouraged to refer to the ACBOE Policy Manual at [www.acboe.net](http://www.acboe.net).

## **Non-Discrimination Statement**

The Autauga County Board of Education (ACBOE) does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in employment or educational services, activities, and programs. This district complies with all federal and state laws and regulations regarding discrimination. Employment related inquiries and/or grievances and student/parent grievances should be directed to the Human Resources Director, Julie Harrington at 153 West Fourth Street, Prattville, Alabama, 36067 or call (334) 365-5706 extension 10004.

## **Mission Statement**

Autauga County Schools is dedicated to fostering the whole student in an academically rigorous environment, where everyone is known and valued, by creating pathways designed for success.

## **Vision Statement**

The Autauga County School system values its rich tradition of excellence in a rapidly changing world. ACS aims to consciously create an environment of respect and inclusion that prepares and motivates students to become lifelong learners by instilling the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and leadership traits necessary to succeed in life. In a safe and supportive environment, the district's schools provide for every student's intellectual, social and physical development by fostering an engaged, creative, and respectful community of learners, families, and community partners.

## **Employee Conduct and Responsibility**

Certified employees shall meet minimum requirements such as degree and professional certification, and demonstrate efficient performance skills in the area of assignment along with satisfactory accomplishment of their job requirements.

Classified employees (support employees) shall meet the minimum qualifications of their job description and demonstrate satisfactory performance of their job duties.

All employees are hired to perform certain tasks in exchange for their salary. These duties are determined by the job description and as directed by their supervisor.

- All employees must familiarize themselves with the ACBOE Policy Manual.
- Employees are to abide by federal & state laws, ACBOE policies and procedures, and local school administrative guidelines.
- Punctual, regular attendance is an essential job function of every job and position, and employees are expected to work when scheduled and to remain at work each working day.
- Employees are expected to effectively fulfill the duties specified in their job descriptions.
- ACBOE employees are expected to be professional at all times. They should conduct themselves in a manner that not only reflects positively on the school system, but that sets forth a model worthy of emulation by students.
- ACBOE employees are to know and follow the proper chain of command.

## **Staff Rights and Responsibilities**

As an employee of the Autauga County School System, you are due certain treatment:

- You deserve fair, equitable, professional, and courteous treatment from your supervisors and coworkers.
- You deserve to be free from discrimination, prejudice and ill will.
- You deserve to not be singled out of a group and treated differently because of personality conflicts.
- You deserve to have your performance evaluated honestly.
- You may have the right, as a tenured or non-probationary employee, to due process in regard to certain instances of a transfer or termination from your position.

As an employee of the Autauga County School System, you have certain responsibilities:

- You have the responsibility to treat your supervisors and co-workers in a fair, equitable, professional, and courteous manner.
- You have the responsibility to refrain from any discriminatory actions, prejudice, or ill will toward any other employee.
- You have the responsibility to satisfactorily perform the duties that are assigned to you in exchange for your wages.
- You have the responsibility to obey the lawful directives of your supervisors.
- You have the responsibility not to engage in or encourage others to engage in rude, disruptive or insubordinate behavior

## **Chain of Command**

The chain of command creates and allows for an orderly and sequential process of exchange of information; or corrective action; or the elimination of misunderstanding; or the clarification of issues; or to provide full information to concerned parties. In the case of school board employees, individuals employed by the Board are to first seek relief/remedy from their immediate supervisor; then if relief is not met, the Principal should be made aware of the matter and given time to resolve the issue/concern. If the matter continues to be unresolved, it may be referred to a central office director and finally the Superintendent.

## **General Requirements for All Employees**

### 1. Personal Appearance

All personnel are expected to dress in a manner becoming their status as Autauga County Public School System employees. It shall be the responsibility of the principal or immediate supervisor to discuss appropriate dress with employees.

Below are areas to consider as employees of the Board:

- Personal appearance must be clean and well-maintained.
- Personal apparel must reflect generally accepted "conventional dress" for the work assignment; clothing that is revealing is prohibited.
- No article of clothing may display any obscene language and/or anything that could be considered offensive by students, parents, or coworkers.
- Good personal hygiene is required at all times.

**Under no circumstances should employees wear clothing which would be a violation of the Student Dress Code.**

2. Perform satisfactory work – Carry out and complete your job duties in an acceptable manner and in a timely fashion.

3. Behavior – Act in a professional manner and be courteous to children, parents, supervisors and all other employees. We hope that you like your supervisors or co-workers and hope that they like you, but regardless, everyone is expected to be professional and courteous.

4. Drugs, Tobacco, and Alcohol – Report to work both drug and alcohol free. All employees who drive school system vehicles are subject to random drug tests. Results that are positive will lead to disciplinary action. Tobacco use, including vaping, is not allowed on ACS property.

5. Attendance and Absences – Work the days that you are scheduled to work and follow all ACS leave policies. Absences not authorized under ACS leave policies are unacceptable. Constant absences, particularly for sick leave, on Monday/Fridays or before/after holidays are suspect for abuse and may be subject to a request for additional documentation for the need for leave. It is each employee's responsibility to report absences in the ACS Absence Management System (AESOP). Notify your supervisor as soon as you know you will be absent, particularly if it is past the cut-off time for an absence to be entered.

6. Tardiness – Be at work when scheduled and on time on a regular basis. We understand that there are rare occasions when there is an unavoidable reason for you to be late. If so, notify your supervisor as soon as possible.

7. Schedule – Work the hours of your schedule. a. Report to work on time. b. Clock in and out as required. c. Do not leave work early or work overtime (non-exempt employees) unless authorized by your supervisor.

8. Time Reporting – Complete records relating to time worked accurately and honestly. If you do not work a full day, do not state or indicate that you did. If you miss a clock in or out, correct it immediately.

9. Computer and Internet access – Internet is provided for ACS operations only.

10. Social Media – Although social media sites such as Facebook are personal in nature, they can be considered public discourse or public comments. The posting or texting or emailing of comments or images about students, parents, employees, supervisors,

departments, schools, the system or your job that are of poor taste, unprofessional, untruthful, demeaning, derogatory racist, offensive, insulting, inflammatory, hateful, insubordinate or celebrating immoral, improper or illegal actions is not acceptable.

11. Personal calls and personal cell phone – Keep personal calls and cell phone use, including texting, to an absolute minimum during work time.

12. Compliance with directives – Comply with the directives of your supervisor. However, if there is a legitimate concern, you may state your objections in a concise and professional way before complying. Insubordination may include:

- a. Refusal or failure to follow a job assignment given by a supervisor or any authorized employee or system representative;
- b. Disrespect toward a supervisor or the school system;
- c. Threatening, intimidating, coercing, or interfering with a supervisor;
- d. Abusive language to any supervisor;
- e. Openly making or publishing false or malicious statements concerning supervisors; and
- f. Countermanding the order of a supervisor. Insubordination does not include a refusal to comply with:
  - Orders that endanger the health, welfare or safety of the employee, other employees, students, or anyone else;
  - Orders requiring the performance of an illegal, improper, or immoral act;
  - Orders that require action that is beyond the employee's capability; and
  - Orders having a nature of unlawful harassment.

## **Alabama Educator Code of Ethics**

### **Introduction**

The primary goal of every educator in the state of Alabama must, at all times, be to provide an environment in which all students can learn. In order to accomplish that goal, educators must value the worth and dignity of every person, must have a devotion to excellence in all matters, must actively support the pursuit of knowledge, and must fully participate in the nurturance of a democratic citizenry. To do so requires an adherence to a high ethical standard.

The Alabama Educator Code of Ethics defines the professional behavior of educators in Alabama and serves as a guide to ethical conduct. The Code protects the health, safety and general welfare of students and educators; outlines objective standards of conduct for professional educators; and clearly defines actions of an unethical nature for which disciplinary sanctions are justified.

### **Code of Ethics Standards**

#### ***Standard 1: Professional Conduct***

**An educator should demonstrate conduct that follows generally recognized professional standards.**

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Encouraging and supporting colleagues in the development and maintenance of high standards.
- Respecting fellow educators and participating in the development of a professional and supportive teaching environment.
- Engaging in a variety of individual and collaborative learning experiences essential to developing professionally to promote student learning.

Unethical conduct is any conduct that impairs the certificate holder's ability to function in his or her employment position or a pattern of behavior that is detrimental to the health, welfare, discipline, or morals of students. Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Harassment of colleagues or students.
- Misuse or mismanagement of tests or test materials.
- Inappropriate language or behavior on school grounds.
- Physical altercations.
- Failure to provide appropriate supervision of students.

### **Standard 2: Trustworthiness**

#### **An educator should exemplify honesty and integrity in the course of professional practice.**

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Properly representing facts concerning an educational matter in direct or indirect public expression.
- Advocating for fair and equitable opportunities for all children.
- Embodying for students the characteristics of intellectual honesty, diplomacy, tact, and fairness.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting professional qualifications, criminal record, or employment history when applying for employment or certification.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information submitted to federal, state and/or other governmental agencies.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information regarding the evaluation of students and/or personnel.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting reasons for absences or leaves.
- Falsifying, misrepresenting, omitting, or erroneously reporting information submitted in the course of an official inquiry or investigation.

### **Standard 3: Unlawful Acts**

#### **An educator should abide by federal, state and local laws and statutes.**

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the commission or conviction of a felony or of any crime involving moral turpitude. As used herein, conviction includes a finding or verdict of guilty, or a plea of nolo contendere, regardless of whether an appeal of the conviction has been sought or a situation where first offender treatment without adjudication of guilty pursuant to the charge was granted.

### **Standard 4: Teacher/Student Relationship**

#### **An educator should always maintain a professional relationship with all students, both in and outside the classroom.**

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Fulfilling the roles of trusted confidante, mentor, and advocate for students' growth.
- Nurturing the intellectual, physical, emotional, social, and civic potential of all students.
- Providing an environment that does not needlessly expose students to unnecessary embarrassment or disparagement.
- Creating, supporting, and maintaining a challenging learning environment for all students.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Committing any act of child abuse, including physical or verbal abuse.
- Committing any act of cruelty to children or any act of child endangerment.
- Committing or soliciting any unlawful sexual act.
- Engaging in harassing behavior on the basis of race, gender, national origin, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.
- Soliciting, encouraging, or consummating an inappropriate written, verbal, or physical relationship with a student.
- Furnishing tobacco, alcohol, or illegal/unauthorized drugs to any student or allowing a student to consume alcohol or illegal/unauthorized drugs.

### **Standard 5: Alcohol, Drug and Tobacco Use or Possession**

#### **An educator should refrain from the use of alcohol and/or tobacco during the course of professional practice and should never use illegal or unauthorized drugs.**

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Factually representing the dangers of alcohol, tobacco and illegal drug use and abuse to students during the course of professional practice.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Being under the influence of, possessing, using, or consuming illegal or unauthorized drugs.
- Being on school premises or at a school-related activity involving students while documented as being under the influence of, possessing, or consuming alcoholic beverages or using tobacco. A school-related activity includes, but is not limited to, any activity that is sponsored by a school or a school system or any activity designed to enhance the school curriculum such as club trips, etc., where students are involved.

**Standard 6: Public Funds and Property**

**An educator entrusted with public funds and property should honor that trust with a high level of honesty, accuracy, and responsibility.**

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Maximizing the positive effect of school funds through judicious use of said funds.
- Modeling for students and colleagues the responsible use of public property.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Misusing public or school-related funds.
- Failing to account for funds collected from students or parents.
- Submitting fraudulent requests for reimbursement of expenses or for pay.
- Co-mingling public or school-related funds with personal funds or checking accounts.
- Using school property without the approval of the local board of education/governing body.

**Standard 7: Remunerative Conduct**

**An educator should maintain integrity with students, colleagues, parents, patrons, or businesses when accepting gifts, gratuities, favors, and additional compensation.**

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Insuring that institutional privileges are not used for personal gain.
- Insuring that school policies or procedures are not impacted by gifts or gratuities from any person or organization.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Soliciting students or parents of students to purchase equipment, supplies, or services from the educator or to participate in activities that financially benefit the educator or his/her family members unless approved by the local governing body.
- Accepting gifts from vendors or potential vendors for personal use or gain where there appears to be a conflict of interest.
- Tutoring students assigned to the educator for remuneration unless approved by the local board of education.

**Standard 8: Maintenance of Confidentiality**

**An educator should comply with state and federal laws and local school board policies relating to confidentiality of student and personnel records, standardized test material, and other information covered by confidentiality agreements.**

Ethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Keeping in confidence information about students that has been obtained in the course of professional services unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.
- Maintaining diligently the security of standardized test content, supplies and resources.

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Sharing confidential information concerning student academic and disciplinary records, health and medical information, family status/income, and assessment/testing content or results unless disclosure is required or permitted by law.
- Violating confidentiality agreements related to standardized testing including copying or teaching identified test items, publishing or distributing test items or answers, discussing test items, and violating local school system or state directions for the use of tests or test items.
- Violating other confidentiality agreements required by state or local policy.



### **Standard 9: Abandonment of Contract**

**An educator should fulfill all of the terms and obligations detailed in the contract with the local board of education or educational agency for the duration of the contract.**

Unethical conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Abandoning the contract for professional services without prior release from the contract by the employer.
- Refusing to perform services required by the contract.

### **Reporting**

Educators are required to report a breach of one or more of the Standards in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics as soon as possible, but no later than sixty (60) days from the date the educator became aware of the alleged breach, unless the law or local procedures require reporting sooner. Educators should be aware of their local school board policies and procedures and/or chain of command for reporting unethical conduct. Complaints filed with the local or state school boards or with the State Department of Education Teacher Certification Section, must be filed in writing and must include the original signature of the complainant.

*Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2-.05*

(1)-5-c Each Superintendent shall submit to the State Superintendent of Education within ten calendar days of the decision, the name and social security number of each employee holding an Alabama certificate or license who is terminated, or non-renewed, resigns, or is placed on administrative leave for cause, and shall indicate the reason for such action.

### **Disciplinary Action**

Disciplinary action shall be defined as the issuance of a reprimand or warning, or the suspension, revocation, or denial of certificates. "Certificate" refers to any teaching, service, or leadership certificate issued by the authority of the Alabama State Department of Education.

*Alabama Administrative Code 290-3-2-.05*

#### **(1) Authority of the State Superintendent of Education**

(a) The Superintendent shall have the authority under existing legal standards to:

1. Revoke any certificate held by a person who has been proven guilty of immoral conduct or unbecoming or indecent behavior in Alabama or any other state or nation in accordance with Ala. Code §16-23-5(1975).
2. Refuse to issue a certificate to an applicant whose certificate has been subject to adverse action by another state until after the adverse action has been resolved by that state.
3. Suspend or revoke an individual's certificate issued by the Superintendent when a certificate or license issued by another state is subject to adverse action.
4. Refuse to issue, suspend, or recall a certificate for just cause.

Any of the following grounds shall also be considered cause for disciplinary action:

1. Unethical conduct as outlined in the Alabama Educator Code of Ethics, Standards 1-9.
2. Order from a court of competent jurisdiction.
3. Violation of any other laws or rules applicable to the profession.
4. Any other good and sufficient cause.

An individual whose certificate has been revoked, denied, or suspended may not be employed as an educator, paraprofessional, aide, or substitute teacher during the period of his or her revocation, suspension, or denial.

### **Equal Opportunity for Employment**

The Board recognizes that an effective educational program in the District depends on the quality of the personnel employed in the system and therefore will make every effort to employ the most qualified personnel available.

It is the policy of the Board to prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, race, ethnicity, national origin, color, sex, marital status, age, parental status or disability in all employment practices. Such employment practices include, but are not limited to, the recruitment, hiring, compensation, assignment, training, promotion, demotion, discipline or dismissal of employees.

The Board will immediately investigate any claim of discrimination in its employment practices and will take any remedial measures necessary. The grievance procedure established in Policy 4.13 shall be utilized to make a complaint of discrimination pursuant to this policy. The Board will not tolerate retaliation against any person making a good faith report of discrimination pursuant to this policy nor will retaliation against any individual who participates in an investigation or provides information regarding a claim of discrimination be tolerated.

To assist the Board in monitoring implementation of this policy, the Superintendent shall appoint a coordinator to maintain records pursuant to EEOC Guidelines and make reports as necessary regarding workforce information to the Board.

Legal Ref: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and amendments, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Age Discrimination Employment Act.

### **Drug Free Workplace (Policy 4.48)**

It is the mission of the Board to provide an educational environment which enables each individual to reach his or her fullest potential. Consistent with that mission lies an important system goal: to promote a drug-free environment.

It is the policy of the Board that the use of alcohol and other drugs (as outlined under the Standards of Conduct) and the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensation, possession, or use of illicit drugs is prohibited. Any employee violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary actions, up to and including termination of employment and referral to the appropriate authorities for prosecution. This policy has been adopted in accordance with the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988 and the Drug-Free Schools and Communities Act Amendments of 1989. Nothing in this policy should be construed as precluding the Board from adopting additional or alternative programs, procedures, and penalties in order to achieve the goal of a drug- and alcohol-free public school system.

### **Standards of Conduct**

1. The possession, use, transfer, sale, or distribution of alcoholic beverages by any employee while on the job or on school premises or off campus in connection with or affection any school related activity is strictly prohibited. Violation of this policy will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment and referral to the appropriate civil authorities for prosecution.
2. The Board does not differentiate between drug users or sellers. The unauthorized manufacture, possession, use, transfer, sale, or distribution of controlled substances is strictly prohibited. Any employee who violates this prohibition while on the job or off will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment and referral to the appropriate federal, state or local law enforcement agencies for investigation and prosecution.
3. The term "controlled substance" means any drug listed in 21 U.S.C. § 812 and other federal regulations. Generally, these are drugs which have a potential for abuse. Such drugs include, but are not limited to, heroin, marijuana, cocaine (including "crack"), methamphetamine ("ice"), LSD, and PCP. They also include drugs which are not prescribed by a licensed physician.
4. Each employee is required to inform the Superintendent or his designee within five days after he or she is convicted of a violation of any federal or state criminal drug statute (including but not limited to DUI), where such violation occurred either on or off the premises of the District. A conviction means a finding of guilt (including a plea of nolo contendere) or the imposition of a sentence by a judge or jury in any federal, state court or municipal court.
5. The Superintendent of the Autauga County School District must notify the State Department of Education within ten (10) days after receiving notice from the employee or otherwise receiving actual notice of a conviction of a violation of any federal or state criminal drug statute.
6. As a condition of further employment, the Board requires all employees to abide by this policy.

## **Payroll Information / Employee Benefits**

Contact the Payroll Department for any information regarding retirement, health care plan, COBRA, sick bank, cafeteria plan, and optional plans. [Heather.Gunn@acboe.net](mailto:Heather.Gunn@acboe.net) or [Stevie.Sowell@acboe.net](mailto:Stevie.Sowell@acboe.net) If you change addresses, log in to both your ESS account and RSA account to update your current address. To change your name, a copy of your driver's license and social security card showing your new name must be brought to Laurie Wesley, HR Assistant, at Central Office.

## **PEEHIP**

1. *Insurance Enrollment* – You are responsible for insurance enrollment with PEEHIP. Visit [www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov) and select PEEHIP at the top of the page, then click New Employees on the left side of the page. The PEEHIP Member Handbook provides information on employment benefits info and how to enroll.

You may choose basic Hospital/Medical insurance with Blue Cross/Blue Shield (\$30.00 single coverage; \$207.00 family without spouse; \$307 family with spouse; \$282 self and spouse only). You may also choose to add any of the 4 optional plans (Dental, Cancer, Hospital Indemnity, and Vision with Southland) which are \$38.00 each and \$50.00 for family dental per month. If you do not select hospital/medical insurance, you may select all 4 optional plans, and they will be free. You will need to make the effective date the first day of your employment, or September 1<sup>st</sup> or October 1<sup>st</sup>.

- In order to have immediate coverage if this is your initial enrollment with PEEHIP, you must pay PEEHIP a prorated amount for the month of August and the total amount for September if you choose your employment date as your effective date. If you choose September 1<sup>st</sup> as your effective date you will have to pay the total amount for September. If you choose an October 1<sup>st</sup> effective date the amount will be deducted from your September paycheck.

- If you were previously employed in another Alabama public school system and already have a PEEHIP account, you will need to give a check or money order for the September amount to the payroll office to maintain coverage. You should have received this amount in your August check from your previous employer.

## **BENEFITS AND PAYROLL**

### TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

Telephone: 1(877)517-0020 Website: [www.rsa-al.gov](http://www.rsa-al.gov)

All regular employees of the school system are required to be members of the Teachers' Retirement System of Alabama. The major portion of the contribution is provided by the State of Alabama through legislative appropriation.

Any member of the Retirement System who had service for which he or she received credit in the Employees' Retirement System or in the Teachers' Retirement System prior to January 1, 2013, is considered a Tier 1 plan member. The employee contribution (7.5% of contract salary) is tax sheltered. This means that employees do not pay income tax on their 7.5% contribution until such time as it is received by the employee as retirement income. The retirement program for Tier 1 employees provides for retirement at age 60 with ten (10) years or more of participation service credit OR at any age after accumulating 25 years of employment service credit.

A Tier 2 plan member is any member of the Retirement System who first began eligible employment with the Employees' Retirement System or the Teachers' Retirement System as a participating employee on or after January 1, 2013, and who had no

eligible service in the Employees' Retirement System or the Teachers' Retirement System prior to January 1, 2013. The employee contribution is 6.2%. The retirement program provides for retirement at age 62 with at least ten (10) years of employment service credit.

In addition to retirement benefits, the Retirement System also provides the beneficiary(ies) or estate of a deceased full-time active member or a full-time member who dies within ninety (90) days of being in active pay status is eligible to receive \$15,000 in term life insurance benefits. For members who are less than full-time, the benefit will be prorated. For example, if the member was a half-time employee, the benefit paid would be \$7,500.

### **Filing for Retirement**

A completed Retirement Application Packet Part I must be received by the State Retirement System no less than thirty (30) days no more than ninety (90) days before the effective date of expected retirement. For example, if you wish to retire on June 1, you must file your application with the State Retirement System by the end of April. A representative of the Retirement System conducts local retirement seminars periodically throughout the year for school system employees planning to retire. Information regarding these meetings is available on the RSA website. Employees who are contemplating retirement are highly encouraged to contact RSA prior to making a final decision concerning retirement. Any employee who decides to file for retirement is also required to submit his/her resignation in writing to the Autauga County Board of Education (Ala. Code § 16-25-1).

### **Medicare and Retirement**

If a member or dependent is already Medicare eligible due to age or disability on his or her retirement date, Medicare will become the primary payer and PEEHIP the secondary payer effective on the date of the member's retirement. Medicare-eligible members and/or dependents must have both Medicare Parts A and B on their retirement date to have coverage with PEEHIP and this coverage must be in effect no later than the date of retirement to avoid a lapse in coverage.

### **Resignations**

All employees must notify the Board 30 calendar days in advance of the next scholastic year if planning to resign. During the scholastic year, employee resignations require a 30-day written notice to the Autauga County BOE. Any employee resigning in any other manner than herein provided shall be deemed guilty of unprofessional conduct and the State Superintendent by authority of Section 16-24-1, *Code of Alabama*, is authorized to revoke or suspend the certificate of the employee.

### **Leave of Absence Process / Form**

If an employee needs to be absent from work for an extended period of time, he/she must request a leave of absence by submitting a Leave-of-Absence form (Signed by the Employee and the Principal/Supervisor) to the Payroll Office. A four week notice is recommended, when possible. Employees are to adhere to the following process for their leave request to be approved:

- Employee completes the "employee" section of the Leave-of-Absence form
- Employee meets with the principal/supervisor requesting his/her approval of leave by signing in the appropriate section of the form and if applicable, assign a substitute teacher
- Employee must schedule an appointment with the Payroll Bookkeeper to discuss the type of days to be utilized, insurance coverage, and pay, etc. (Employee will bring form to the meeting.)
- Payroll Bookkeeper will submit the completed Leave-of-Absence form to the Personnel Director for final approval
- Personnel Director will notify the employee the status of the leave request.

If an employee takes extended leave without having approval from the Central Office, the employee's pay may be affected without prior notice, causing him/her to have to pay the insurance premium.

### **Leave of Absence (Policy 4.38)**

Upon Board approval, tenured certified staff are eligible for unpaid leave of absence for any of the reasons established in Ala. Code § 16-24-13 for a period of one year; said period to be extended one additional year for valid reason per § 16-24-13.

As a condition of approval of such leave, the certified employee seeking a leave of absence of one semester or more recognizes he will not necessarily return to the same position he vacated but will be assigned to a position without a loss of status; and the Board may require the leave to coincide with a grading period.

All other rules of leave will be followed pursuant to federal and state law, and other policies implemented by the Board.

### **Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)**

The FMLA applies to employees of the Board who have been employed for at least twelve months and who have worked at least 1,250 hours during that twelve month of employment. Qualifying employees are eligible for up to twelve weeks of unpaid leave during a twelve month period for the following reasons:

- Birth and care of the employee's newborn child up to one year of age
- The placement with the employee of an adopted child or foster child
- The care for one's self or an immediate family member due to a serious medical condition

An employee requesting to use FMLA must provide the superintendent with a 30 days written notice if possible and provide certification from a healthcare provider. Accrued benefits before leave is taken will not be altered by the employee's absence.

The employee has the right to be restored to the same or equivalent position that the employee held at the time the employee's FMLA leave commenced, provided that the employee is able to perform the essential functions of the position. (For more information see ACBOE Policy Manual 4.43)

### **Leave (Sick, Catastrophic, Personal, Military, Legal)**

#### **Sick Leave**

All regular full time employees are eligible for paid sick leave. One sick leave day is earned per each month worked. Per Employee Leave Laws for Alabama Public School Employees, sick leave can be used for one of the following:

- Personal illness • Incapacitating personal injury
- Attendance upon an ill member of the employee's immediate family (parent, spouse, child, sibling); or an individual with close personal tie
- Death in the family of the employee (parent, spouse, child, sibling, parent-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law, nephew, niece, grandchild, grandparent, uncle or aunt)
- Death, injury, or sickness of another person who has unusually strong personal ties to the employee, such as a person who stood in loco parentis

If the principal or supervisor has reasonable suspicion to believe that an employee has abused or misused sick leave, a physician's excuse may be required. Abuse of sick leave may subject the employee to disciplinary action.

#### **Sick Leave Bank**

The Sick Leave Bank (SLB) is established to provide a loan of sick leave days for its participating members after their accumulated sick leave, personal leave and vacation days have been exhausted. Employees must donate five sick leave days to join the bank. No employee shall be allowed to borrow or owe a number of days in excess of 15 days.

#### **Catastrophic Leave**

The Board of Education provides Catastrophic Sick Leave to employee who are members of the Sick Leave Bank and who suffers a catastrophic illness. A catastrophic illness is defined as "Any illness, injury, or pregnancy or medical condition related to childbirth, certified by a licensed physician which causes the employee to be absent from work for an extended period of time." An employee must be a member of the sick leave bank to receive or donate sick leave days. An employee who is requesting catastrophic sick leave days must provide a written statement from the physician. The approval of catastrophic sick leave is based upon the decision of the SLB Committee.

## **Personal Leave**

All full-time employees earn two personal leave days at no cost each year. If the two personal days earned at no cost are unused by June 30th, they will convert to sick leave days. In addition, only full-time, "certified" employees earn a third personal leave day at the cost of a substitute teacher per year and this day does not convert to sick leave if unused.

## **Military Leave (Policy 4.39)**

### **GENERAL POLICY**

All employees are entitled to military leave of absence when ordered to active duty for training as members of the Alabama National Guard or any component of the U.S. Armed Forces. Professional employees who volunteer, are drafted, or are ordered to extended active duty with any component of the U.S. Armed Forces, shall be entitled to reinstatement to their former positions or comparable positions.

### **MILITARY LEAVE FOR TRAINING OR SHORT TERM DUTY**

Employees who are required to attend annual summer training or special active duty for training shall not suffer any loss of salary during the first twenty-one days of such absence in any calendar year. Such employees who are ordered for such duty shall provide one copy of their orders to the Superintendent. Such leave will be without loss of benefits. Such arrangements shall apply to any "military callups."

### **REINSTATEMENT TO POSITIONS AFTER EXTENDED DUTY**

Employees who volunteer, are drafted, or are called to active duty for extended periods, will be placed on "Military Leave of Absence" upon written application of such employees and be entitled to reinstatement to their former or similar positions.

## **Legal Service Absence/ Court (Policy 4.41)**

### **JURY SERVICES**

Employees will be excused without loss of pay for jury service. To be eligible for jury service leave with pay, employee must present the jury summons to their immediate supervisor as far in advance of the leave date as possible in order to secure appropriate substitutes.

### **COURT APPEARANCES**

Employees may be excused without loss of pay for serving as a witness under a subpoena in a court of law. To be eligible for court appearance leave with pay, employees must present the subpoena to his immediate supervisor as far in advance of the leave date as possible in order to secure appropriate substitute.

**Employees are not required to return to the School District the fee paid to them for jury or court service to the District.**

## **On-the-Job Injury Benefits**

On-the-job injury includes an accident or injury to an employee that occurs in the course of performing job duties for the Board or when the employee is directed or requested by the employer to be on the property of employer and which prevents the employee from working or returning to the job.

Employees who are accidentally injured on the job may be approved for paid "on-the-job injury" leave without using sick days, provided that:

- a. The injured employee submits written medical certification from the attending licensed physician stating that the employee was injured and cannot return to work due to a specified injury, if there is a reasonable expectation that the employee will return to work and, if so, the expected date of that return. The Board may require a second opinion from a Board specified physician, at its expense.
- b. The employee submits a signed written account (accident report) of the accident attested by a principal or department head within twenty-four (24) hours after the injury occurred. If the injured employee is not able to notify

the Board, another person reasonably knowledgeable about the employee's condition and circumstances leading to the injury may provide the required notification.

Upon a determination that the employee has been injured on the job and cannot return to work, the Board may maintain the employee's salary and benefits for the period of incapacity caused by the injury, not to exceed ninety (90) days. An employee who is injured on the job may file a request for unreimbursed medical expenses and costs with the State Board of Adjustment. The Board will provide such reasonable assistance to the employee in filing the Board of Adjustment claim as is required by law but assumes and will have no responsibility or liability for processing the claim or directly reimbursing the employee any unreimbursed medical expenses and costs. On-the-job injury leave will be administered in accordance with and subject to the requirements and limitations imposed by state law regarding such leave.

[Reference: ALA. CODE §16-1-18.1 (1975)]

## **AESOP**

AESOP is an automated attendance and substitute system that allows employees to schedule absences and assignments by phone or internet.

- Procedures developed for the utilization of substitutes in your school must be followed verbatim – no exceptions. If a person is not listed in AESOP he/she is not allowed to be a substitute teacher.
- All employees must enter his or her own absence in AESOP. This includes principals, assistant principals, counselors, media specialists, etc. Due to local bookkeepers entering payroll, it is very important that all employees enter their sick and/or personal days in AESOP and follow all bookkeeping and payroll procedures that have been implemented.
- ACBOE will only pay the substitute teachers that have a confirmation in AESOP. Schools will be held accountable for paying any substitute that was called by a staff member and AESOP guidelines were not followed.

## **Employee Self Service (ESS)**

ESS is a web based resource where employees can view their payroll checks, benefits, and leave information. In ESS, employees also have the ability to update or change personal information such as direct deposit, W-4 and home address. Employees will need to create an account at <https://ess.acboe.net>. Employees should use their personal email addresses when creating an account, NOT an ACBOE email addresses.

## **Grievance Procedure (Policy 4.13)**

It is the policy of the Board to reduce, as much as possible, the potential areas of grievances; to assure each Employee the opportunity for an orderly presentation and review of grievances; to establish and maintain appropriate channels of communication between the administration and employees; and to resolve each grievance at the most immediate level of administration.

It shall be understood that the Board is the final authority in all matters pertaining to grievances unless an employee should desire to exercise proper redress through the courts or utilize appeal procedures, if allowed by law.

With the ultimate objectives of serving the educational welfare of our students, the following grievance procedure is designed to accomplish an equitable and expeditious resolution of grievances:

### **DEFINITIONS**

**“Grievance”** - A “grievance” is a complaint by an employee based upon alleged violation, misinterpretation or inequitable application of any published policy, rule or regulation of the District. The term “grievance” should not apply to any matter in which the method of review is prescribed by law. “Grievances” are objections to a specific act or condition. Dismissals, terminations, transfers and any other procedures already established by law, as well as performance appraisals, including assessments, observations and evaluations are not subject to the grievance procedures herein described.

**“Grievant”** - Any employee of this District.

## **INFORMAL PROCEDURE**

The most desirable method of improving differences is for the aggrieved employee to discuss the matter with his immediate supervisor and reach an amicable solution without resorting to the written grievance procedure.

Employees

The District encourages all employees to engage in objective, simple, honest dialogue with the principal (or immediate supervisor) and/or Superintendent when attempting to resolve a grievance. If an employee feels a problem or complaint cannot be resolved through informal discussions with his supervisor/principal, then the employee must follow the Formal Procedures listed below.

## **FORMAL GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

1. File written grievance with principal or immediate supervisor that is signed by the employee (hereinafter "grievant"). The grievance shall be as detailed as possible, providing times, dates, names and specifics, where applicable.
2. A mutually agreeable time and place shall be established to discuss the grievance. This meeting should occur as soon as is reasonable and/or practical.
3. The principal/supervisor should gather all necessary information from the meeting and necessary sources and inform the grievant in writing what resolution or decision has been reached regarding the grievance within six working days of the meeting/ hearing. In the alternative, if more time is necessary, the principal/ supervisor shall inform the grievant within six working days of the meeting/hearing that additional time is need in which to render a decision and inform the grievant when he can expect a decision.
4. If the grievant is unsatisfied with the decision, an appeal shall be filed with the Superintendent within six working days of the grievant receiving a written decision from the principal/supervisor. The appeal shall be in writing and signed by the grievant. The grievant must provide a copy of the initial grievance, the principal/supervisor's decision, and any other relevant documentation should be provided to the Superintendent or his designee.
5. The Superintendent shall review all information presented and if necessary conduct, or appoint someone to conduct an investigation. The Superintendent or his designee may conduct a meeting with the grievant and any other necessary parties to render a decision regarding the grievance.
6. The Superintendent shall then render a written decision regarding the grievance within eleven working days of receiving the appeal. In the alternative, if more time is necessary, the Superintendent shall inform the grievant within eleven working days of receipt that additional time is needed in which to render a decision.
7. If the grievant is still unsatisfied, the grievant may appeal to the Board within six working days of the date of the Superintendent's written decision. The grievant shall send the appeal notice to the Superintendent with a copy of all materials previously submitted or received. The Superintendent shall set the matter on the agenda for the next board meeting (provided time constraints per Board policy are met for inclusion).
8. The Board shall review the original grievance and all materials related thereto. The Board at its discretion may hear directly from any individuals regarding the matters of the grievance.
9. The Board may uphold the Superintendent's decision or require the District to take some other action in response to the grievance.



## **RULES REGARDING PROCEDURES**

1. Meetings or hearings shall be scheduled by mutual consent of the individuals involved. In the event a meeting needs to be rescheduled, the grievant shall be so informed as soon as possible.
2. Any employee grievant shall be permitted to be joined by spouse or other representative, but the grievant must always be present to discuss the grievance.
3. This policy is not intended to deprive any individual of his right to file a discrimination or harassment charge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), file a complaint with the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) or any other federal or state agency, court or tribunal that regulates employment relations.

## **Employee Assistance Program (Uprise Health)**

The Autauga County Board of Education realizes the importance of taking care of our employees at work and in life. The system contracts with an employee assistance program called Uprise Health so employees can obtain assistance when issues arise in their life. This contract is paid for by the ACBOE and all services provided are free of charge to the employee. Uprise Health provides employee assistance services for our full-time employees and their families. Services are for work/life issues including family and marital, mental health, substance abuse assessment and referral, as well as legal, financial, childcare, and elder care referrals. All services provided are confidential. If you find you or a family member needs assistance in any of these areas please call Uprise Health at 1-800-925-5327 or visit the website [www.uprisehealth.com](http://www.uprisehealth.com).

## **Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect**

Under Alabama law, all public K-12 employees, including all school teachers and officials, are required to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect immediately, either by telephone or direct communication, followed by a written report, to a "duly constituted authority" (Ala. Code § 26-14-3[a]). A "duly constituted authority" under the law is "[t]he chief of police of a municipality or municipality and county; or the sheriff, if the observation of child abuse or neglect is made in an unincorporated territory; or the Department of Human Resources; or any person, organization, corporation, group, or agency authorized and designated by the Department of Human Resources to receive reports of child abuse and neglect; provided, that a 'duly constituted authority' shall not include an agency involved in the acts or omissions of the reported child abuse or neglect" (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[4]). A "child" is defined as someone "under the age of 18 years" (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[3]).

"Child abuse" under Alabama law is defined as the "[h]arm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare," which can "occur through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or attempted sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation or attempted sexual exploitation" (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[1]). "'Sexual abuse' includes the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any child to engage in, or having a child assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of the conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of the conduct; or the rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of children, or incest with children as those acts are defined by Alabama law" (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[1]). "'Sexual exploitation' includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution and allowing, permitting, encouraging, or engaging in the obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child for commercial purposes" (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[1]).

"Neglect" is defined by Alabama law as the "negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child, including the failure to provide adequate food, medical treatment, supervision, clothing, or shelter" (Ala. Code § 26-14-1[2]). Certainty that child abuse or neglect has occurred is NOT required to trigger your mandatory reporting responsibility. All that is required is a reasonable suspicion that a child is a victim of abuse or neglect. If you have a reasonable suspicion, you must report.

The mandatory reports required by Alabama law "shall state, if known, the name of the child, his or her whereabouts, the names and addresses of the parents, guardian, or caretaker, and the character and extent of his or her injuries. The written report shall also contain, if known, any evidence of previous injuries to the child and any other pertinent information which might establish the cause of such injury or injuries, and the identity of the person or persons responsible for the same" (Ala. Code § 26-14-5).

Failure to comply with Alabama's mandatory reporting law is a crime. Under Ala. Code § 26-14-13, "[A]ny person who shall knowingly fail to make the report required by [the law] shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and shall be punished by a sentence of not more than six months' imprisonment or a fine of not more than \$500.00.

## **Sexual Harrassment**

The Board recognizes that harassment on the basis of gender is a violation of federal law (Title IX and Title VII). The Board is committed to providing learning and co-curricular environments that are free from sexual harassment where all students and employees can work together comfortably and productively.

Sexual harassment will not be tolerated from students, employees or non-employees (including volunteers and suppliers), who have contact with employees and students in the workplace, school, school-sponsored events, or any event sanctioned by the Board.

All employees are assured that they may file a complaint or assist in an investigation without fear of retaliation by any Board employee, peer, or alleged harasser. Complaints of retaliation will be promptly investigated, and perpetrators will be subject to disciplinary action, whether or not the original complaint is substantiated.

Complaints and cases of sexual harassment will be investigated and handled promptly. Any employee found guilty of sexual harassment, or to be in violation of this policy, shall be subject to disciplinary action, according to the findings of the investigation.

### **Definition of Sexual Harrassment**

Sexual harassment consists of unwelcome advances, requests for sexual favors, and/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's job performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment at school or school-sponsored events or any event sanctioned by the Board.

### **Forms of Sexual Harrassment include:**

1. Verbal harassment, such as derogatory comments, jokes, or slurs;
2. Physical harassment, unnecessary or offensive touching, or impeding or blocking movement;
3. Derogatory or offensive posters, cards, cartoons, graffiti, drawings, or gestures;
4. Electronic communications, e.g., texts, online postings, emails, etc.

### **Procedures for Reporting Incidents of Harrassment (sexual and nonsexual)**

1. If any employee perceives comments, gestures, or actions from any student, employee, or non-employee to be offensive, the employee should notify the immediate supervisor.
2. The immediate supervisor or designee will promptly investigate any complaints of sexual harassment/harassment and will initiate immediate action to resolve such complaints. If the complaint is against the immediate supervisor, the employee shall contact the Director of Personnel for assistance. No individual will suffer reprisals for reporting any incidents of sexual harassment/harassment.
3. Employees reporting sexual harassment will be asked to write a written statement of the event and include witnesses to the event/events.
4. Any employee who is found to be responsible for sexual harassment/harassment will be subject to appropriate discipline; the severity of the disciplinary action will be based upon the circumstances of the infraction. All proven infractions will become part of the employee's personnel record.

### **Confidentiality Issues in Special Education**

Since the very beginning of federally-mandated special education, one of the major provisions has included safeguards that protect the confidentiality of individual students with special needs and their families. All staff members having access to records or knowledge of students with disabilities have an occupational, legal, and ethical responsibility to protect this right. Personally identifiable data, information, and records collected or maintained must be stored, retrieved, and utilized for the benefit of children with disabilities in a manner that will ensure confidentiality and privacy rights.

Please strive to ensure the following safeguards for all students enrolled:

1. Discuss individual students only with those who have a need to know.
2. Protect written information and records of students from the intentional and incidental view or possession by unauthorized students, staff members, and others. Only those who have a need to know or see such records shall have access to the records.
3. Protect pictorial and recorded records of students, including photographs, yearbooks, audio recordings, and videotapes which identify them as having disabilities.
4. Protect students from verbal identification and discussion of personal information, including:
  - mentioning names of students protected by confidentiality provisions;
  - discussing protected students in the presence or hearing proximity of others;
  - giving information to others having no need to know; and
  - discussing student information with, in front of, or in the hearing proximity of other students, except where the educational program/services for the student with a disability require such disclosure.

### **The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their child's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students."

- Parents or eligible students have the right to inspect and review the student's education records maintained by the school. Schools are not required to provide copies of records unless, for reasons such as great distance, it is impossible for parents or eligible students to review the records. Schools may charge a fee for copies.
- Parents or eligible students have the right to request that a school correct records which they believe to be inaccurate or misleading. If the school decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student then has the right to a formal hearing. After the hearing, if the school still decides not to amend the record, the parent or eligible student has the right to place a statement with the record setting forth his or her view about the contested information.
- Generally, schools must have written permission from the parent or eligible student in order to release any information from a student's education record. However, FERPA allows schools to disclose those records, without consent, to the following parties or under the following conditions (34 CFR § 99.31):
  - School officials with legitimate educational interest;
  - Other schools to which a student is transferring;
  - Specified officials for audit or evaluation purposes;
  - Appropriate parties in connection with financial aid to a student;
  - Organizations conducting certain studies for or on behalf of the school;
  - Accrediting organizations;
  - To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena;
  - Appropriate officials in cases of health and safety emergencies; and
  - State and local authorities, within a juvenile justice system, pursuant to specific State law.

Schools may disclose, without consent, "directory" information such as a student's name, address, telephone number, date and place of birth, honors and awards, and dates of attendance. However, schools must tell parents and eligible students about directory information and allow parents and eligible students a reasonable amount of time to request that the school not disclose directory information about them. Schools must notify parents and eligible students annually of their rights under

FERPA. The actual means of notification (special letter, inclusion in a PTA bulletin, student handbook, or newspaper article) is left to the discretion of each school.

## **Certification**

Administration Certification – Administrative certificates must be renewed every five years. Documentation of 5 PLUs is a requirement for recertification. Two of the PLUs must be state earned and the other three can be local PLUs. The employee is responsible for documenting professional development and submitting that information with the application when it is time for recertification. The application for recertification can be found at [www.alsde.edu](http://www.alsde.edu). The personnel staff will assist employees upon request but will not be responsible for notification of expiration of certificates for all employees.

Teacher Certification - Teaching certificates must be renewed every five years. Documentation of at least 50 clock hours of professional development activities is a requirement for recertification. Certified employees are expected to document all professional development activities through the use of PowerSchool, the school system's online professional development tracking system. At the close of each school year, individual professional development reports must be updated to reflect any activities attended during the school year. The requirements for renewal of a teaching certificate are 50 Professional Development hours and three years satisfactory teaching within the five-year period of the valid certificate being renewed. Please contact Julie Harrington in Human Resources with any questions. The personnel staff will assist employees upon request but will not be responsible for notification of expiration of certificates for all employees.

## **Conflicts of Interest (Policy 4.54)**

Generally, a conflict of interest exists when a board member, board employee, or agent of the board participates in a matter that is likely to have a direct effect on his or her personal and financial interests. A financial interest may include, but is not limited to, stock ownership, partnership, trustee relationship, employment, potential employment, or a business relationship with an applicant, vendor, or entity. A board member, board employee, or agent of the board may not participate in his or her official capacity in a matter that is likely to have direct and predictable effects on his or her financial interests.

A board member, board employee, or agent of the board will abide by the Federal and state laws and regulations that address conflict of interest standards. In general, the Federal rules provide that:

*No employee, officer, or agent of the board shall participate in selection, or in the award or administration of a contract supported by Federal funds if he or she has a real or apparent conflict of interest. Such a conflict would arise when the employee, officer, or agent, any member of his or her immediate family, his or her partner, or an organization which employs, or is about to employ any of the parties indicated herein, has a financial or other interest in or a tangible personal benefit from the firm considered for a contract. The board's officers, employees, or agents will neither solicit nor accept gratuities, favors or anything of monetary value from contractors, potential contractors, or parties to subcontracts.*

The board's conflict of interest policies include adherence to the Alabama Ethics Law, which defines conflict of interest as:

*A conflict on the part of a public official or public employee between his or her private interests and the official responsibilities inherent in an office of public trust. A conflict of interest involves any action, inaction, or decision by a public official or public employee in the discharge of his or her official duties which would materially affect his or her financial interest or those of his or her family members or any business with which the person is associated in a manner different from the manner it affects the other members of the class to which he or she belongs.*

A board member, board employee, or agent of the board may not review applications, proposals, or participate in the evaluation or selection process where his or her participation in the review process would create the appearance that he or she is: (a) giving preferential treatment; (b) losing independence and impartiality; (c) making decisions outside official and appropriate channels; or (d) harming the public's confidence in the integrity of the board.

Situations and circumstances presenting an actual conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest should be brought to the immediate attention of the superintendent. A board employee, board member, or agent of the board who has knowledge of a possible conflict of interest should identify the conflict and notify the superintendent. The superintendent will document his or her actions related to the reported conflict of interest. Resolution can consist of disqualification, recusal, waiver, or other appropriate measures. Appropriate measures may include reporting a conflict of interest to the State Ethics Commission, the Alabama State Board of Education, or the appropriate federal agency.

## **Employee Social Media Policy**

Autauga County Schools recognizes that social media is a tool that promotes and enhances communication by providing opportunities for district and school administrators to share information and knowledge with key stakeholders. When used effectively, it can be a powerful tool for positive communication, brand building, storytelling, and community engagement, providing a platform to engage in conversations, respond to feedback directly, and maintain an active dialogue with parents, guardians, teachers, administrators, and community members. For purposes of this policy, social media includes websites that incorporate one or more of the following:

**Blogs.** Web logs or journals where authors and users can post textual, audio, or video content, and permit others to post comments. Some websites allow individuals to create free standing blogs or use blog tools and message forums to engage users.

**Microblogs:** Websites and spaces that allow users to post short blog entries such as Twitter, and sites that invite users to post short status and location updates such as Facebook, Snapchat, etc.

**Social Networks:** Websites where users can create customized profiles and form connections with other users based on shared characteristics and interests. Websites are oriented toward personal social contact among “friends” such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Snapchat, etc.

**Media Sharing:** Websites where users post and share videos, audio files, and photos as well as tag them to enable searchability such as YouTube, Flickr, Google Video, etc.

**Wikis.** Resources or documents edited collaboratively by a community or users with the varying levels of editorial control by the website publisher such as Wikipedia.

**Virtual Worlds:** Web or software-based platforms that allow users to create representations of themselves to meet, socialize, and transact with other users such as Minecraft, Second Life, VRChat, etc.

Today’s stakeholders are deeply engaged in electronic forms of communication, and many have turned to these platforms to communicate with both students and parents. While Autauga County Schools encourages the use of electronic media for communicating, employees must use caution and always exercise the utmost professionalism. ACS currently has official district accounts with Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube which are managed in the district’s Communications Office. Individual school pages and groups on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube are also available and managed by school administrators in coordination with the district’s Communications Office.

In addition to the professional standards practiced in a face-to-face environment, there are also professional standards and expectations for social media and all virtual environments. Although digital means of communicating are dynamic, mobile, and quickly reach audiences, they may, in some circumstances, not meet the public and professional standards for communicating with students and parents. Autauga County Board of Education employees have a responsibility to the school system, colleagues, students, and stakeholders to depict a level of professionalism in all communications.

Autauga County Schools has developed the following guidelines to assist employees in using digital tools in a professional, safe, and responsible manner. These guidelines offer professional recommendations and best practices for communicating via electronic media.

### **Professional Use of Social Media**

Employees administering a social media account on behalf of a district class, team, club, group, department, organization or school, or the district, are expected to:

**Be responsible.** The key to social media success is honesty, thoughtfulness, and awareness of the audience. Above all, exercise good judgment and common sense. Remember, there is no such thing as a private social media site.

**Be accurate.** Make sure all the facts have been gathered prior to posting on the page or in the group. If an error is made, correct it quickly and visibly.

Employee Always. The lines between public and private, persona and professional, are blurred in the digital world. regardless of whether it is clearly communicated, you will be identified as an employee of the district in what you do or say online.

Respect copyrights and fair use. Always give the proper credit for other people's work. Make sure permissions are granted to use something prior to publishing it.

Protect confidential information. Never post confidential or proprietary information about the district, schools, students, parents, etc.

Do not use the district or school name to promote or endorse any event, activity, product, etc. before receiving the proper approvals. Also, linking to other sites is generally a good thing but it's important to consider the associations prior to posting.

Continually review pages or groups for comments and messages as it builds credibility and community.

Maintain Order: Administrators reserve the right to remove inappropriate user-generated content or comments posted on social media pages managed by the district or school that are not in keeping with the following guidelines. Other permissible comments based on viewpoint will not be removed.

- Contains obscene language
- Contains sexual content
- Contains information that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability, or sexual orientation
- Threatens or defames any person or organization
- Violates legal ownership interest of another party
- Supports or opposes political candidates
- Promotes illegal activity, commercial services or products
- Isn't topically related to the particular posting

Anyone interested in creating a social media account must complete the district's digital Social Media Account Request Form and await approval and further instructions.

### **Personal Use of Social Media**

When interacting with others on social media, employees are expected to follow the same behavioral standards they would in other communications. Employees are reminded of the following:

A personal social media account is not an appropriate venue to interact with students, parents, or guardians.

Confidential information should never be posted online.

Employees are expected to refrain from reporting, speculating, discussing, or giving any opinions on district topics or individuals that could be considered sensitive, confidential, or disparaging.

Build Community. Represent the district and the stakeholders you serve in the best light. Under no circumstances should offensive comments be made about others.

If you identify yourself as an Autauga County Board of Education employee online, it should be clear that the views you express are not necessarily those of the district.

Guidelines regarding use of student photographs or likenesses, information, and classwork apply to social media and other online publications, or venues.

Think before you post - regardless of privacy settings, always assume that anything posted online, especially social media platforms, is public information. Do not post anything you wouldn't feel comfortable saying publicly.

Violation of any of the conditions outlined in this policy could result in disciplinary action, including but not limited to, removal from social media pages, suspension, expulsion, or legal action based on offense. To report an offense, contact the district's Communications Coordinator.

### **Policy Manual**

It is the responsibility of every person working within the School System to be knowledgeable of and adhere to all applicable Board policies. The policy manual is available on the school system web site at [www.acboe.net](http://www.acboe.net).

### **School Calendar**

The current Autauga County School Year Calendar can be found at [www.acboe.net](http://www.acboe.net).

## **End of the Year Employment Information**

*Employment Renewal/Termination* – During the first two years of employment, all non-tenured teachers (excluding One Year Only and End of Year Only Appointments) will be rehired unless given notice by the superintendent before June 15<sup>th</sup>. However, in the tenure year, notice will be given by the last working day for teachers to report to duty. Certified employees must be hired by October 1<sup>st</sup> of a scholastic year to be counted towards acquisition of tenure.

Probationary classified employees may be terminated at the discretion of the employer upon written recommendation of the superintendent and majority vote of the Board. A written notice of termination to the classified employee may occur at any time on or before June 15<sup>th</sup>. After the employee's third consecutive, complete school year of employment, non-probationary status will be issued. Classified employees must be hired by October 1<sup>st</sup> of a scholastic year to be counted toward acquisition of non-probationary status. The employee will receive 15 days' notice before ending pay and benefits. Non-probationary status is no longer granted based on original hire date or 36 months of cumulative service. If any certified or classified employee leaves employment with Autauga County Public Schools, tenure/non-probationary status starts over.

If an employee is hired as a One Year Only Appointment or End of Year Only Appointment, his/her employment will automatically expire at the end of the academic school year. Future employment options must be directed to the principal/departmental supervisor. These finite appointments may or may not be counted towards tenure/non-probationary status depending on funding and other employment circumstances relevant to the position. Seek additional clarification from the Department of Human Resources or supervisor/principal.