



AIKEN COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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For Immediate Release

DISTRICT WELCOMES THE START OF THE 2019-20 YEAR WITH A BUDGET REFLECTIVE OF PREMIER PRIORITIES

As the day dawned on the morning of July 1, a new year began for Aiken County Public Schools, and with that a new budget reflecting a commitment to premier teaching and learning.

The school system's 2019-20 budget includes pay increases for all staff and additional pay for extra duty work, two new teaching allocations to serve students learning English as a Second Language (ESOL), extended contracts for secretaries in elementary schools to cover the summer months, and increased funds to support teacher supplies, among a number of other highlights.

"We're very pleased with our school board's continued commitment to attract the very best teachers and employees for our public schools," Aiken County Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Sean Alford commented. "All staff members received a 4% cost of living adjustment. In addition, those eligible for a step increase also received one, creating about a 6% overall salary increase for most employees."

Aiken County Public Schools was recently awarded the Aiken Standard's coveted Aiken's Choice Award for Best Place to Work. With a starting salary for teachers that is the highest in the state, Aiken County Public Schools is confident this additional increase will continue to position the District as the employer of choice in the education industry and across all industries within the Central Savannah River Area (CSRA).

"Aiken County Public Schools strives to create a work environment that's welcoming and collaborative," District Human Resources Director Jennifer Hart stated. "This year's budget reflects a continued effort to support, retain and reward our employees for the meaningful and vitally important work that they do."

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Aiken County Public Schools' 2019-20 Budget highlights include the following:

- A step increase for employees who are eligible.
- A 4% cost of living adjustment for all pay scales, including supplements, with an additional pay scale increase for the support I and support II pay scales.
- The reconfiguration and re-titling of the attendance aide position to provide additional support to schools at all levels. The new position will be titled "student information clerk."
- Guidance clerk positions increasing from 7.5 hours per day to 8.0 hours per day.
- Clerical aide positions (only allocated at the five large high schools) reclassified as secretaries.
- A second secretary allocation for Wagener-Salley High.
- \$94,000 in recurring fine arts funding for middle schools. [Stage two of a three-phase plan to provide recurring fine arts funding at all levels. Recurring fine arts funding for high schools was added to the budget in 2018-2019.]
- Increasing half-time media aide positions at 18 elementary and middle schools to full-time, ensuring that all schools at the elementary and middle level have a full-time allocation.
- \$75,000 for athletic events security.
- Funding for two new ESOL teachers.
- Increasing the 220-day secretary at elementary schools to 12-months to ensure front office coverage throughout the summer.
- \$25,000 for supplies to aid in the recruitment and retention of employees.
- Increases in the maintenance budget, including \$300,000 in non-recurring funds for vehicle replacements.
- Creations of a coordinator of employee relations (Human Resources department) and a budget specialist position (Business Services department).
- \$250 increases in school travel budgets.
- The hourly rate for teacher extra duty increasing from \$25 to \$30.
- The District will contribute an additional \$25 to each teacher supply check, above the amount funded by the State.

Superintendent Alford noted that the school board has not had a school operating millage increase since the 2013-14 school year.

"We're grateful for the work of our finance team for managing requests as well as school and employee needs within our existing budget," Alford continued. "Our resources are focused right where they should be – on our teachers and employees who challenge, support and encourage the students and families we serve."

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