

# Atlanta Public Schools

## *Salary Administration Guidelines*



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<u>Section</u>	<u>Page</u>
I. COMPENSATION PHILOSOPHY .....	3
II. OBJECTIVES .....	5
III. PROGRAM OVERVIEW .....	6
IV. JOB EVALUATION .....	7
Definition and Purpose .....	7
Job Description.....	7
Format .....	8
Job Evaluation Process (Corporate HR) .....	9
Job Evaluation Steps (Corporate HR).....	11
System Review.....	11
V. DETERMINING STEP PLACEMENT WITHIN THE RANGE.....	13
VI. SALARY STRUCTURES .....	15
Salary Structure Overview – Salary Bands.....	15
The Concept of Salary Bands .....	16
Salary Bands .....	16

The information contained in this manual has been prepared as an aid to the Atlanta Public Schools employees responsible for compensation administration. While the Atlanta Public Schools fully intends to adhere to the policies and practices contained in this document, the statements and guidelines **are not** and **should not be considered a contract** of any kind expressed or implied. Although the manual reflects current policy, it may be changed or rescinded at any time at the Atlanta Public Schools' sole discretion.

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## **I. COMPENSATION PHILOSOPHY**

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### ***Compensation Philosophy***

The purpose of the Atlanta Public Schools' "APS" Classification and Compensation Program is to attract, reward and retain the most qualified employees by offering a equitable, competitive and attractive program which:

- Reflects market conditions
- Recognizes employees for their equivalent and relevant experience
- Includes appropriate fiscal responsibility
- Rewards strong senior leadership performance
- Is transparent and equitable

The Atlanta Public Schools is a large urban school district in the southern United States. As such, it most attract high quality employees to meet its students educational needs. While many employees who work for The Atlanta Public Schools intuitively agree to make some sacrifice in pay, we compete for highly qualified staff in a fiscally responsible manner and with an eye toward paying competitively with top School Districts in the area and the nation for some jobs.

The Atlanta Public Schools has chosen a compensation philosophy which targets the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the defined competitive market. The defined competitive market for most job classifications within the organization is Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton and Gwinnett school districts. These school districts have been identified as the primary competition for APS related to attracting, rewarding and retaining talented employees.

APS has also chosen to recognize employees for their experience in an equivalent and relevant level job. Employees will be placed on the salary structure step which reflects their actual experience in their job classification (whenever possible). APS has just undertaken a careful process to identify the appropriate step for each individual within the organization at the time of this publication.

The Atlanta Public Schools has also chosen to maintain fiscal responsibility throughout this process. Careful consideration has been taken to identify the appropriate implementation approach. Salaries have not been increased when competitive market data was not present to justify it. The largest salary adjustments have been granted to those employees who were determined to be the furthest askew to market. Market adjustments will be phased in to ensure the fiscal integrity of the new program.

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## **I. COMPENSATION PHILOSOPHY**

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APS has also chosen to reward key leadership employees for performance rather than award traditional step increases. The new Classification and Compensation Program includes incentives for leadership employees who go above and beyond what is asked of them. This approach encourages these employees to work harder and smarter.

APS has chosen to make the new Classification and Compensation Program transparent and equitable. One of the key goals of the new program is to allow employees to gauge their base salary to market competitive rates using their job title. Additionally, the step an employee has been placed on reflects their actual experience in the job or like job.

The Atlanta Public Schools continues to “Focus on Student Success.” The newly adopted Classification and Compensation Program supports this effort by providing the School District with the tools it needs to help it attract, reward and retain vital talent.

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## II. COMPENSATION OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAM

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### *Objectives*

The overall objective of the Classification and Compensation Program is to attract, reward and retain qualified employees who can help APS achieve its mission. In support of this broad objective, the program is designed to:

- Provide a fair and consistent framework for assigning jobs to the salary structures and specifically the salary ranges;
- Maintain the salary structures at market competitive rates;
- Reflect common market practice including job titles, salary supplements, the number of ranges and steps within a salary structure, experience credit granting, etc.
- Reward senior level employees for meeting and exceeding performance expectations;
- Reward employees for equivalent and relevant level experience;
- Support APS' planning and budgeting process; and,
- Ensure salary-related decisions are made without regard to religion/creed, race, color, age, handicap, gender, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, veteran's status, or other discriminatory factors.

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### III. COMPENSATION OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAM

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#### *Program Overview*

The program has five major components which, in combination, ensure the achievement of the program objectives:

- **A consistent approach to job documentation.** Job descriptions are developed using a Job Evaluation Survey “JES”. This document is then used as a tool to identify appropriate market data matches.
- **A job evaluation process.** Based on competitive market data and actual education, certification, job duties, responsibilities and other requirements, jobs are assigned to the salary structure and specifically a salary range.
- **A competitive salary structures.** APS’ salaries are compared with other organizations that pay for similar jobs performing comparable duties and responsibilities (specifically Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton and Gwinnett school districts). The salary structure is updated annually to maintain market competitiveness.
- **Performance management.** Senior level (Executive Director Level and above) employee's contribution to APS is evaluated on a regular basis to identify opportunities to strengthen performance, and as applicable, to determine additional compensation based on performance rather than traditional step increases.
- **Salary administration guidelines.** APS employees receive tools, information and guidelines to assist them in the consistent application of the program.

Subsequent sections of this manual address each of these components.

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## IV. JOB EVALUATION

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### *Job Evaluation*

#### **Definition and Purpose**

Job evaluation, simply defined, refers to the process of collecting and evaluating relevant information about jobs. This data should clarify the nature of work being performed (principal tasks, duties, and responsibilities) as well as the level of work being performed. In addition, data should also include the extent and types of education, certification, knowledge, skills and abilities required for the work being performed.

#### **Job Description**

A key element in APS' job evaluation process is the Job Evaluation Survey. The JES is a tool used by APS to gather pertinent job classification information. This information is used to develop a job description. A job description is the means by which job information is documented. It is a concise written document summarizing essential functions, knowledge/skills, minimum requirements (including education and certificates), and working conditions/physical effort. Job descriptions may be defined as narrative statements of the nature and level of work being performed by employees occupying a job and the qualifications necessary to satisfactorily perform the job. There are five major uses of job descriptions in the design and administration of APS' Classification and Compensation Program.

- Job descriptions are useful in evaluating **job content** - i.e., the nature, purpose and organizational level of the job as well as the principal duties and responsibilities, skill levels, mental and physical effort required, and the conditions in which the work is to be performed. These must be delineated clearly before the relative value of a job within an organization can be determined.
- Job descriptions provide accurate data for making **pay comparisons** with other organizations. In order to make accurate comparisons with the competitive market, it is first necessary to assess whether jobs described are comparable to jobs within APS.
- Job descriptions are also used to provide **job control**, whereby employees are evaluated on the basis of actual work performed, rather than their personal background or individual characteristics.

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## IV. JOB EVALUATION

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- Job descriptions with clear definitions of job content provide an **effective communications tool** so both employees and managers know what is to be accomplished.
- Job descriptions may help defend the organization when **third parties** request an explanation of an organization's decisions (e.g., to justify hiring, FLSA, and ADA decisions).

### **Format**

The job description is used to document all jobs throughout APS. The emphasis in creating a job description should be on **clarity** and **accuracy**; sentences should be short, simple and to the point. The document consists of essential functions, minimum job requirements, competencies/skills, working conditions and physical effort requirements of the employees in the job. The minimum requirements are broken down in the following manner;

- **Duties and Responsibilities of** - The specific tasks performed by the incumbents which constitute the job.
- **Formal Education** – The lowest level of education and/or training required for understanding and performing your job.
- **Working Experience** - The minimum amount of prior related work experience required of a person entering this job.
- **Impact of Actions** - The effect the job has on the functions of the Atlanta Public Schools. Impact is measured by the importance of the decisions made by the job on a typical basis. Consider the impact of the job when everything is running smoothly, not when unique situations arise or worst case scenarios are presented.
- **Decision Making** - The opportunity for independent action as well as the level of direction and supervision received.
- **Communication (Internal and External)** – This responsibility for working with or through other persons to obtain results. The contacts or relationships may be inside or outside of Atlanta Public Schools. Contacts which are not work-related should not be considered.



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## IV. JOB EVALUATION

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- **Managerial Skills** - The responsibility for directing others. Only the formal assignment of responsibility for directing others should be considered.
- **Information Technology** - The need to understand and use technology for the work activities of the job.
- **Responsibility for the Welfare of Others** - The responsibility for the physical and/or mental well-being of other employees, as well as members of the public.
- **Working Conditions/Physical Elements** - The normal conditions under which the work is performed and the physical demands of the job.

### **Job Evaluation Process**

Job evaluation is the overall process of internally comparing jobs to determine their relative value within the organization. APS has adopted a market-based, whole-job comparison job evaluation philosophy. Using this philosophy, jobs are evaluated considering both the external and internal value of a job. Once a job is evaluated it will be placed in one of the salary structures. The structures include ranges which contain minimums, midpoints and maximums linked to external competitive market. Employees will be placed on a salary range step within the range which corresponds to their experience in the job classification. Job evaluation is, therefore, a critical part of the compensation program, as the salary structure and range assignment of a job directly affect the employee's salary.

When evaluating jobs, it is particularly important to note that:

- **Jobs will be placed in one of the twelve salary structures. The salary structures include;**
  - **Administrative (A)** – Principals, Assistant Principals, Program Administrators, Project Administrators, Dean of Academics, etc.
  - **Bus (B)** - Bus Drivers and Bus Monitors
  - **Food Service (F)** – Food Service Assistants and Managers
  - **Information Technology (IT)** – Information Technology jobs such as Programmers, Network Administrators, Web Developers, IT Project Liaisons, Data Specialists, E-Learning Specialist, Low Voltage Technicians, Network Administrators, Student Information Specialist, Sr. Applications Programmer, Training & Development Manager, etc.

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## IV. JOB EVALUATION

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- **Instructional Technology Specialist(ITS)** - Instructional Technology Specialists
- **Learning Technology Specialist (LTS)** - Learning Technology Specialists
- **Nurse (N)** – Registered and Licensed Practical Nurses
- **Paraprofessional (Para)** – Paraprofessionals
- **Professional, Managerial and Administrative (PMA)** - Jobs which perform clerical, professional and/or executive level work such as Chief of Staff, Chief Information Officer, Chief Human Resource Officer, Executive Directors, Directors, Accountants, Accounts Payable Specialist, Accounting Assistants, Administrative Clerks, Benefits Supervisor, Communications Officer, Deputy Superintendents, Deputy Chief Financial Officer, Education Coordinators, Education Specialist, Employee Relations Officers, HR Generalist, Information Specialists, Child Care, Contract Administrators, Contract Compliance Liaisons, Coordinators, Assistant Directors, Administrative Assistants, Administrative Managers, Business Analysts, Professional Development Specialist, Project Managers, Research Associates, School Secretary's, Senior Accountants, Transportation Supervisors, etc.
- **Registrar (R)** - Registrar
- **Specialty Teacher (ST)** – instruction related jobs such as Audiologists, Counselors, Department Chairpersons, Model Teachers, Vocational Supervisors, Behavior Specialists, Academy Leaders, Instructional Coaches, Psychologists, Social Workers, Implementation Specialists, Instructional Specialists, etc.
- **Teacher (T)** – Various levels of Teachers (T2, T4,T5,T6,T7)
- **Trades (TD)** – jobs which perform or supervise skilled labor activities such as Carpenters, Electricians, Labors Maintenance Managers, Plumbers, Auto Mechanics, Building Service Manager, Building Systems Technician, General Maintenance Workers, Site Managers, HVAC Technicians, etc.

A detailed explanation of the salary structure design can be found in the Salary Structures Section of this document.

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## IV. JOB EVALUATION

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- **External Market Data plays a key role in the placement of a job within a salary structure.** Market data has been collected for the majority of jobs at APS. The competitive data for these jobs at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile has been used to develop the salary structures.
- **Jobs will be placed within the salary structure if market data is not available.** Jobs will be placed in the salary structure near other jobs which have a similar level of responsibility and require a comparable level of minimum qualifications, certification and skills. Job descriptions will be used to make comparisons.
- **Although it is difficult to separate the incumbent from the job, an individual's personal credentials and experiences or potential should not be considered when evaluating a job.** A weak or strong incumbent in a particular job should not influence the evaluation and the resultant band assignment unless the duties and responsibilities have changed significantly as a result.

### **Job Evaluation Steps**

The following steps should be taken to create a new job;

- 1) If a job classification cannot be matched to an existing job title, a job description should be written.
- 2) Determine in which of the salary structures the job should be placed.
- 3) Determine the appropriate salary range for the job classification within the salary structure. The following steps should be taken;
  - a) Perform a market assessment for the job.
  - b) If market data exists for the job, use the data to slot the job into a salary range. This will become the job classification's placement within the salary structure.
  - c) If market data is not available for the job, compare the job classification's description to job descriptions of other jobs within the salary structure. Place the job into the salary range with the most similar level job.

### **System Review**

Periodically, the placement of jobs within the salary structures will be reviewed by Human Resources and any necessary adjustments will be made to ensure equity is maintained. At this time jobs which are no longer in use will be removed. Human Resources will also conduct an audit to ensure the organization is in compliance with Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) and

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#### **IV. JOB EVALUATION**

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Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Approximately every three to five years, a complete assessment of the placement of jobs within the salary structure will be conducted. Additionally, on an annual basis, assessments will be conducted as needed and adjustments may be made.

## ***Determining Step Placement within the Salary Structure Range***

### **Overall**

The goal of APS Classification and Compensation Program is to place each individual on the salary range step which reflects their equivalent and relevant level experience. Equivalent experience is defined as at the same or higher level in terms of education, certification, duties and responsibilities as well a historical salary range documentation. Relevant is defined as within the same functional area such as education, maintenance or finance. Both equivalent and relevant experience must be present for the employee to receive credit.

All employees will receive credit for internal relevant and equivalent experience. Additionally, all employees will receive experience credit granted at the time of a promotion. In accordance with market practice, some job classifications will also receive external equivalent and relevant experience credit (a complete list of these jobs can be found in the table that follows). Employees can receive up to the maximum amount of service credit allowed within the salary structure range (ex. Employees in job classifications assigned to the PMA salary structure can receive up to 15 years of experience). Employees who have earned more experience credit than the salary structure allows will be placed on the highest step within the assigned range.

<b><i>Job Classification*</i></b>	<b><i>External Experience Credit Accepted</i></b>
Assistant Principal	21
Audiologist	21
Community School Administrator	21
Counselor	21
Department Chairperson	21
Instructional Facilitator	21
Instructional Specialist	21
Magnet Program Coordinator	21
Media Specialist	25
Model Teacher Leader	21
Ninth Grade Academy Administrator	21
Principal	21
Program Assistant	21
Psychologist	21
Social Worker	21
Teacher	25
Therapist	21
Vocational Supervisor	21

\*Includes all levels of these job classifications

## **Hire Rates**

The hire rate for a new employee with no equivalent and relevant level experience is step one of the salary range to which the job classification is assigned. School based instructional employees who have obtained equivalent and relevant level experience either internal (rehire) or external (one of the jobs for which external service credit is accepted) should be placed on the step corresponding to their experience. New hires for non-instructional positions should be hired at step 1 or the first step not resulting in a salary decrease if the positions are equivalent. The current salary of the new hire should be confirmed. Employees should not be hired below the minimum of the salary structure range.

## **Promotions**

Employees who are promoted will receive a 6% increase in base salary. Additionally, once the 6% increase is applied to the individual's current base salary, the employee's salary should be adjusted to the next closest step not resulting in a salary decrease.

## **Over the Maximum of the Range**

Employees with base salaries above the maximum of the salary structure range should maintain their base salary. Additionally, these individuals will be eligible for Cost of Living Adjustments should the Board approve them. Employees should maintain this base salary until such time as the individual's salary falls within the salary structure range.

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## **VI. SALARY STRUCTURE**

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### *Salary Structures*

#### **Overview**

The Atlanta Public Schools has developed twelve salary structures which reflect market competitive rates for each of the School Districts' classifications. The salary structures are the most visible component of the Classification and Compensation Program and the part most easily identified and understood by employees. They help Human Resources make equitable salary decisions. The number of salary ranges and steps within each has been developed to fit APS' Compensation Philosophy. Each salary structure has been designed to be market competitive at the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile of the defined competitive market. The defined competitive market is Cobb, Dekalb, Fulton and Gwinnett school districts for most APS jobs. For some executive jobs the market has been expanded to include regional and national comparisons.

#### **Salary Ranges and Steps**

A salary structure consists of salary ranges and steps. Ranges eliminate the need to identify extremely finite differences in value between similar jobs which require similar education, certification and skills. All jobs within the same range are considered of equal value to the APS.

Steps are contained within each salary range. The number of steps within a range is dictated by prevailing market practice for the job classifications within the salary structure. For example; the Teacher salary structure ranges contain 26 steps, while the Professional, Managerial and Administrative range contain 16. The following table displays the number of ranges and steps within each salary structure.

<i><b>Salary Structure</b></i>	<i><b>Number of Ranges</b></i>	<i><b>Number of Steps</b></i>
Administrative (A)	18	22
Bus (B)	2	16
Food Service (F)	4	16
Information Technology (IT)	5	16
Instructional Technology Specialist (ITS)	1	16
Learning Technology Specialist (LTS)	1	16

Nurse (N)	3	16
Paraprofessional (PARA)	1	16
Professional, Managerial & Administrative (PMA)	11	16
Registrar (R)	1	16
Specialty Teacher (ST)	4	22
Teacher (T)	6	26
Trades (TD)	9	16

Each salary range has a minimum, midpoint, and a maximum; for each range there is a "spread" and a certain amount of "overlap" with adjacent ranges. The ranges consist of a various number of steps depending on the job classifications within the salary structure.

- (a) Typically, the **minimum** of the salary range is the rate paid to an employee who is assigned to a job classification for which he or she possesses the minimum qualifications and who is expected to be able to perform basic duties and responsibilities after normal training.
- (b) The **midpoint**, or “market competitive point” of the range, is the middle point between the minimum and maximum of the grade. This part of the range is appropriate for an experienced and fully qualified employee whose performance fulfills the requirements of the job. This value typically represents the "going rate" for the job classification and is reached after 8 years of experience.
- (c) The **maximum** of the salary range is the highest salary level for an employee whose performance consistently exceeds most job requirements or for an employee with long service in the same job or grade. Once an employee reaches the maximum of the salary range, the base salary is not increased until the salary range changes the following year.



- (d) Salary range **spread** is defined as the maximum less the minimum, divided by the minimum. For example, a salary range with a minimum of \$16,000 and a maximum value of \$24,000 has a range spread of 50 percent.
- (e) The range spread and the difference between minimums and maximums define the **overlap** between two ranges. Overlap is the set of salaries shared by two consecutive ranges. Because of range overlap, an experienced employee or an employee performing well in a lower grade may be paid more than an inexperienced employee in a higher grade.