



# Alabama Department of Examiners of Public Accounts

## *Special Report on the* **Pickens County Board of Education** **Pickens County, Alabama**

October 1, 2022 through May 31, 2024

Filed: November 8, 2024

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ALABAMA STATE HOUSE

*Rachel Laurie Riddle, Chief Examiner*



Rachel Laurie Riddle  
*Chief Examiner*

State of Alabama  
Department of  
**Examiners of Public Accounts**

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Honorable Rachel Laurie Riddle  
Chief Examiner of Public Accounts  
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Dear Madam:

A special examination was conducted on the Pickens County Board of Education, Pickens County, Alabama, for the period October 1, 2022 through May 31, 2024. Under the authority of the *Code of Alabama 1975*, Section 41-5A-19, I hereby swear to and submit this report to you on the results of the examination.

Respectfully submitted,

Kerri G. Moss  
Examiner of Public Accounts

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Department of  
**Examiners of Public Accounts**

**SUMMARY**

**Pickens County Board of Education  
Pickens County, Alabama  
October 1, 2022 through May 31, 2024**

The Pickens County Board of Education (hereinafter referred to as the “Board”) is governed by a five-member body elected by the citizens of Pickens County. The Board is a governmental agency that provides general administration and supervision for Pickens County Public Schools, preschool through high school.

This report presents the results of a special examination of the Board and a review of the Board’s compliance with applicable laws and regulations of the State of Alabama in accordance with the requirements of the Department of Examiners of Public Accounts under the authority of the *Code of Alabama 1975*, Section 41-5A-5(a)(8).

An instance of noncompliance with state and local laws and regulations and other matters was found during the examination as shown on the Schedule of Findings and it is summarized below.

**FINDING**

- ◆ 2024-001: The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent and former Chief School Financial Officer were reimbursed for travel expenses in excess of allowable amounts.

**EXIT CONFERENCE**

Board members and administrative personnel, as reflected on Exhibit 1, were contacted by Shelley Patrenos, Audit Manager to discuss the results of this examination. The results of the special examination were discussed by telephone with Superintendent Jamie Chapman; Assistant Superintendent Vanessa Anthony; former Chief School Financial Officer, Jennifer Shirley and Board Members Annie Jackson, John Brandon, Frankie Spencer, Gene Dawkins and Sam Wiggins.

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## *Schedule of Findings*

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***Schedule of Findings***  
***October 1, 2022 through May 31, 2024***

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Ref. No.	Finding/Noncompliance
2024-001	<p><b><u>Finding:</u></b></p> <p>The <i>Code of Alabama 1975</i>, Section 16-9-12, states the county superintendent of education shall receive such compensation, including salary and travel expense, as the county board of education shall direct. The Board’s travel policy states the Board will reimburse necessary and reasonable expenses incurred by an employee in attendance at an approved reimbursable activity and the Board will reimburse actual expenses as approved by the Board, including travel by commercial carrier or by private automobile at the prevailing state mileage rate.</p> <p>The Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, and former Chief School Financial Officer (CSFO) were reimbursed for travel expenses for alternative accommodations that cost in excess of the hotel conference rates at conferences they attended. The Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent were also reimbursed for mileage between the alternative accommodation locations and the conference. Additionally, the Assistant Superintendent was reimbursed for unallowable expenses related to an out-of-state conference including excessive mileage due to taking a scenic route to the conference and lodging and meals that were unrelated to conferences.</p> <p>As a result, these individuals were reimbursed more in travel expenses than were allowable. When the amounts in question were brought to the attention of these individuals, the Superintendent repaid \$3,694.78; the Assistant Superintendent repaid \$7,179.41 and the former CSFO repaid \$428.40 to the Pickens County Board of Education.</p> <p><b><u>Recommendation:</u></b></p> <p>The Board should ensure travel expenses are reimbursed at a rate equivalent to the conference hotel rate and all mileage and meal reimbursements are for allowable purposes.</p>

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# *Additional Information*

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***Board Members and Administrative Personnel***  
***October 1, 2022 through May 31, 2024***

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<b>Board Members</b>		<b>Term Expires</b>
Hon. Annie Jackson	Member	November 2024
Hon. Frankie Spencer	Member	November 2024
Hon. Gene Dawkins	Member	November 2024
Hon. Sam Wiggins	Member	November 2024
Hon. Dr. John Brandon	Member	November 2024
Hon. Debbie Holley	Member	Deceased
<b><u>Administrative Personnel</u></b>		
Hon. Jamie Chapman	Superintendent	December 2024
Vanessa Anthony	Associate Superintendent	Indefinite
Jennifer Shirley	Chief School Financial Officer	Retired March 2024
LaTasha Straughter-Campbell	Chief School Financial Officer	Hired April 2024