

# **SURRY COUNTY SCHOOLS**

## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **For Immediate Release**

#### **Surry County Schools Welcomes New Board Member**

The Surry County Schools Board of Education appointed Melissa Key Atkinson, mother of two, and wife of the former sheriff, Graham Atkinson, to fill its empty board seat on Friday night.

Atkinson will finish out the term for the South District seat, holding the seat until the next election, at which point she will be eligible to run. The seat was left open when former board member S. Earlie Coe resigned in November.

Mamie Sutphin, board chair, said Atkinson was “extremely qualified,” citing her numerous years of experience in education. “She has had a critical role in empowering students to achieve academic and personal success. With this in mind, I am confident that Mrs. Atkinson will help us continue to prioritize education and put students, staff, and our community at the forefront of all decisions made.”

Melissa Key Atkinson is a long-time member of the community, having resided in Surry County her entire life. Atkinson attended Copeland Elementary, kindergarten through eighth grade before attending Surry Central High School. After graduating in 1986, Atkinson attended the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, majoring in Psychology. In 1991, she continued on to the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and received her Master’s Degree in Counseling.

Prior to retiring, Mrs. Atkinson was employed by Surry Community College for 28 years in various roles. Over the course of her career, she has worked with high school students, middle school students, as well as adults. She has remained committed to improving communication between teachers at the middle & high school levels and college personnel.

Throughout her life in Surry County, Atkinson has been active in her community; serving as PTO President at Copeland Elementary, volunteering at Copeland, Central Middle, and Surry

Central High Schools, and also serving her church and youth program at Blackwater United Methodist Church.

Looking ahead, Atkinson said “I am honored to serve the people of Surry County as a member of the Board of Education. I am excited to follow in the tradition of Mr. Coe who, as an educator and community leader, is respected for his knowledge and experience, but even more so for the way he treats people. I am eager to work hard and continue your ongoing efforts to guide Surry County Schools forward so that our students are best prepared for their futures.” Atkinson continued on, “I want the community to know that I have a passion for the students of this district and maintaining the quality of education that Surry County Schools has, and I am approachable and eager to listen.”

