



# Working in North Carolina Public Schools

## A LOOK AT EMPLOYEE BENEFITS



This publication summarizes benefits generally available to state paid public school employees and most federally paid and locally paid personnel. It does not contain the detailed regulations governing the various benefit programs. Contact the agencies administering these programs to obtain the official regulations, or see the North Carolina Benefits and Employment Policy Manual online at:

[www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/humanresources/district-personnel/key-information/policymanual.pdf](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/humanresources/district-personnel/key-information/policymanual.pdf)

Job classification, years, of service, full-time or part-time employment, source(s) from which salaries are paid, and the number of months worked each year determine the kinds and levels of benefits available. Some local school systems provide salary supplements and additional benefits from local funds. Local personnel directors can provide more detailed information regarding local benefits and compensation.



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# COMPENSATION

## Salary

Teachers and other licensed staff (e.g. media specialists, psychologists, audiologists, speech-language pathologists, counselors and social workers) are paid on state-adopted salary schedules based on licensure, years of experience, and degree held.

Assistant principals are paid on a state-adopted salary schedule based on licensure, years of experience, and degree held.

Principals are paid on a state-adopted salary schedule based upon years of experience in education, years as a school administrator, and number of state-funded teachers supervised. Salaries for all other public school employees are determined by the position. Contact the local personnel office of the school system to obtain salary information or visit [www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary) to view the state salary schedules.

Note: In addition to the state salary schedules, a local supplement may be provided by the school system.

Contact the local personnel office for information regarding local supplements.

## National Board Certification

Teachers are encouraged to become certified by the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS). Certification by the NBPTS results in a 12 percent salary increase. The state supports state-funded teachers who have completed three full years of teaching in North Carolina public schools by providing low interest loans to pay the portfolio assessment fee and providing three days of paid leave to prepare for certification. Teachers completing the certification receive credits toward the renewal of their professional license To learn more about NBPTS contact the Program Coordinator for National Board Certification in the Educator Recruitment and Development Division at 919-807-3371, or visit the web at [www.ncpublicschools.org/recruitment/nationalboardcertification](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/recruitment/nationalboardcertification). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards can be reached at 800-228-3224 or by visiting their web page at [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org).



## Mentor Teachers

Mentor teachers are assigned to provide support and assistance to initially licensed teachers. Beginning (novice) teachers are required to participate in a three-year induction program. During the induction period beginning teachers are to have a formal orientation, mentor support, and both formative and summative evaluations. For additional information on resources for beginning teacher support visit [www.ncpublicschools.org/recruitment/beginning](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/recruitment/beginning).



## Longevity Pay

Permanent full-time or part-time employees receive annual longevity payments after completing 10 years of qualifying state service. Longevity payments are made no later than the end of the month following the person's anniversary date. The table below reflects the longevity rates.

### Longevity Rates

#### TEACHERS AND OTHER PERSONNEL

YEARS OF STATE SERVICE	LONGEVITY PAY RATE %
10 but less than 15 years	1.50 %
15 but less than 20 years	2.25 %
20 but less than 25 years	3.25 %
25 or more years	4.50 %

# EARNED LEAVE

## Vacation Leave

Permanent full-time and part-time employees earn annual vacation leave. To earn vacation leave in a given month, employees must be working or on paid leave during one-half or more of the workdays in a monthly pay period. Eligible part-time permanent employees earn leave equal to their percentage of full-time employment.

State regulations and policies established by local school systems govern when vacation leave may be taken. Unused vacation leave can be accumulated and a maximum of 30 days carried forward to the next fiscal year which begins on

July 1st. On June 30th of each year, any accumulated days of vacation leave in excess of 30 days are converted to sick leave days. When employees transfer among local educational agencies, vacation leave will also be transferred. Vacation leave may be transferred to a state agency if that agency is willing to accept it.

Employees leaving the public schools will be paid for up to 30 days of accumulated leave. In case of death, the employee's estate will receive payment for any accumulated vacation leave up to 30 days.

### Vacation Leave Accrual Rates

YEARS OF STATE SERVICE	MONTHLY FULL-TIME ACCRUAL RATES	12-MONTH FULL-TIME ACCRUAL RATES
Less than 5 years	1.17 days (9.33 hours)	14 days (112 hours)
5 but less than 10 years	1.42 days (11.33 hours)	17 days (136 hours)
10 but less than 15 years	1.67 days (13.33 hours)	20 days (160 hours)
15 but less than 20 years	1.92 days (15.33 hours)	23 days (184 hours)
20 years or more	2.17 days (17.33 hours)	26 days (208 hours)

## Sick Leave

Permanent full-time and part-time employees who are working, or are on paid leave for one-half or more of the workdays in a monthly pay period, earn sick leave at the rate of one day per month. Eligible permanent part-time employees earn sick leave equal to their percentage of full-time employment. Sick leave may be granted for the following:

1. Personal illness, injury, or other temporary disability, or
2. Illness in the employee's immediate family that necessitates the employee's attendance, or
3. Death in the immediate family, or
4. Medical appointments.

Sick leave may be accumulated indefinitely and is transferable among local school systems, and may be transferred to a state agency, community college or technical institute if the receiving agency is willing to accept the leave. Upon retirement accrued sick leave may be applied toward creditable state service. If an employee separates from service prior to retirement, the sick leave balance will be held for 60 months (63 months for 10 and 11-month employees).



## Extended Sick Leave

Classroom teachers are provided up to 20 days each year of extended sick leave, less a \$50 per day deduction to help defray the cost of substitutes. Extended sick leave may be used for personal illness, personal injury, or other personal temporary disability. Extended sick leave can be used only when all sick leave and available vacation leave has been exhausted. Unused extended sick leave does not carry forward to subsequent school years.

# EARNED LEAVE

## Voluntary Shared Leave

Voluntary shared leave is intended to provide economic relief for employees who face financial hardship due to a prolonged absence or frequent short-term absences caused by a serious medical condition. Voluntary shared leave may also be used during the required waiting period for short-term disability. An employee who is receiving benefits or is eligible to receive benefits from the Disability Income Plan is not eligible to receive donated leave.

Permanent full-time and part-time employees are eligible to receive donated leave. The employee must exhaust available sick leave and vacation leave before using donated leave. Employees who are approved by their superintendent to receive donated leave may receive vacation leave and/or sick leave from any employee in the same school system. With the approval of the superintendent, annual vacation leave may be received from an immediate family member and coworkers in any school system or state agency (the immediate family member may also donate sick leave).

Public school employees cannot donate or receive leave from employees or family members in county agencies. For more information on voluntary shared leave, visit the Benefits Manual section 4.3 at [www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/humanresources/district-personnel/key-information/policymanual.pdf](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/humanresources/district-personnel/key-information/policymanual.pdf).

## Holiday Leave

Twelve-month employees normally observe 11 holidays per year. Ten-month employees normally observe 10 holidays per year. When Christmas falls on a Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday an additional day of holiday leave is provided. Local boards of education determine when holidays are scheduled. Most local boards of education incorporate the holiday schedule adopted for state employees when developing the school calendar. To view the holiday schedule for state employees, visit [www.osp.state.nc.us/holsched.htm](http://www.osp.state.nc.us/holsched.htm).



## Personal Leave

Teachers in permanent positions earn two days of personal leave during the ten-month school term (.2 days per month). When used on a student attendance day or protected workday, a salary deduction of \$50 per day is assessed.

Personal leave in excess of 5 days rolls to sick leave on June 30 and is transferable among school systems. Personal leave cannot be advanced and is granted upon authorization of an employee's immediate supervisor. This type of leave is not normally provided on the first day of school, a required teacher workday, or the last day before or the next working day after a holiday or scheduled vacation day. In special situations, supervisors may approve leave which does not conform to these stipulations.

## Compensatory Leave

Only employees classified as nonexempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) who work more than 40 hours in a work week are eligible for overtime pay. Compensatory time off in lieu of overtime pay may be given if agreed to by the employee and employer prior to the performance of the work. Compensatory time off is calculated at the rate of one and one-half hours for each hour of overtime worked. Compensatory leave may be accumulated to a maximum of 240 hours. When the maximum is reached, additional overtime work must be paid. If a non-exempt employee terminates employment, he/she must be paid for any unused compensatory leave.

# EMPLOYEE CONDITIONS

## Working Conditions

The 1999 session of the North Carolina General Assembly passed legislation ensuring novice teachers the opportunity to learn and grow professionally during their initial certification period. Job assignments of beginning teachers should be in their area of licensure, mentors should be assigned, and orientation should be provided that includes state, district and school expectations. In addition, beginning teachers are not to be assigned extracurricular activities unless they request the assignments in writing. The local board of education determines what activities fall into the categories of extracurricular and non-instructional. Local boards of education have the ability to temporarily suspend the rules and policies relating to non-instructional duties and extracurricular activities for individual schools if there is a compelling reason.

## Beginning Teacher Support Program

The Beginning Teacher Support Program is a three-year program designed to provide beginning teachers direction, support, and feedback during their first years in the classroom. Teachers with three or more years of appropriate experience, student service personnel, administrators, and curriculum instructional specialists do not participate in the Beginning Teacher Support Program.



## Obtaining Career Status

Career status (tenure) provides job security by assuring that a tenured teacher cannot be dismissed except for proper cause. It also provides for due process before a tenured teacher is dismissed.

Probationary teachers are certified individuals who have not obtained career status (tenure) and whose major responsibility is to teach or to supervise teaching. Administrators and teachers with emergency permits, alternative entry licenses, temporary permits, or lateral entry licenses are not classified as probationary teachers. During the term of their contract, probationary teachers have the same due process protections as career teachers.

Probationary teachers who are employed by the same North Carolina public school system for four consecutive years are eligible for career status. Teachers who have obtained career status in any North Carolina public school system need not serve another probationary period of more than one year.



## Evaluations

In compliance with the Excellent Schools Act of 1997 and Senate Bill 1126 of the 1998 Session of the North Carolina General Assembly, each beginning teacher must be observed at least three times annually by a qualified school administrator or designee, and at least once annually by a teacher. The Beginning Teacher Support Plan (BTSP) must specify the role of the beginning teachers' mentor in the observations. Whether or not the assigned mentor may conduct one of the required observations is a local decision. All other teachers who have not obtained career status (tenure) must also be observed at least three times annually by a qualified school administrator or designee and at least once annually by a teacher. All other teachers must be evaluated at least once annually unless the local board adopts a different schedule. Local boards may adopt rules requiring the annual evaluation of other employees. All observers and evaluators must be appropriately trained. (See G.S. 115C- 333, -334, and -335).

# SPECIAL LEAVE



## Jury Duty

When permanent school employees are absent from work to serve on a jury, no deduction is made from their regular salaries. Employees are entitled to their regular compensation plus any fees received for jury duty.

## Court Attendance

When employees are absent from work to attend court in connection with their official duty or because they were subpoenaed as a witness to a crime, no salary deduction is made. Except for travel reimbursement, any fees received in an official capacity must be returned to the local school system. If, however, an employee must be absent from work as a defendant, plaintiff, or witness in a case for personal matters, no salary is received unless the employee uses appropriate vacation leave or personal leave.

## Parental Leave

Permanent full-time and part-time school employees may request a leave of absence using appropriate paid leave and/or leave without pay for up to one calendar year immediately following the birth or adoption of a child. The 12 months of leave may be extended for the remainder of the school year when this leave would otherwise end in the latter half of the school year.

## Military Leave

Leave with pay is granted to members of reserve components of the U.S. Armed Forces for certain periods of active duty training and for state military duty. Leave with pay is extended to full-time or part-time permanent school employees, normally not to exceed 15 working days during the federal fiscal year (October 1st – September 30th), for training and military maneuvers. Military leave without pay can be granted for one enlistment period of active service, not to exceed five years plus 90 days. For those called to active duty whose military pay is less than their school system pay, North Carolina provides differential pay.

## Family Medical Leave Act

The Family Medical Leave Act of 1993 provides eligible employees with family and medical leave without pay for up to 12 weeks for the birth or adoption of a child; to care for a spouse, son, daughter, or for a parent who has a serious medical condition; or a serious health condition of the employee. During the 12 weeks, the employer-paid portion of health benefits will be maintained. The 12 weeks provided by FMLA are not in addition to the parental leave of absence. It is part of this leave if it is requested and approved. Special provisions in the federal legislation regarding instructional personnel should be discussed with your employer or the U.S. Department of Labor.

The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 amended the FMLA to allow eligible employees to take up to 12 workweeks of job-protected leave during a 12-month period for any “qualifying exigency” arising out of the active duty or call to active duty status of a spouse, son, daughter, or parent. It also amended the FMLA to allow eligible employees to take up to 26 workweeks of job-protected leave in a “single 12-month period” to care for a covered service member with a serious injury or illness.

The 2010 National Defense Authorization Act amends the military family leave entitlements of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA). The amendments expand coverage for “qualifying exigency” leave to eligible employees with covered family members in the Regular Armed Forces and coverage for “military caregiver leave” to eligible employees who are the spouse, son, daughter, parent, or next of kin of certain veterans with a “serious injury or illness.” The December 21, 2009 Airline Flight Crew Technical Corrections Act, modifies the FMLA eligibility requirements for flight crew members.

These two types of FMLA leave are known as the military family leave entitlements.

## Leave of Absence Without Pay

Public school employees may be granted leaves of absence without pay for periods determined by the local administrative unit. This leave should be requested in advance and must comply with regulations adopted by the local school system. Local school systems will assist with the proper procedures for applying for a leave of absence.



# INSURANCE

## State Health Plan

The State Health Plan administered by the State Health Benefits Office provides coverage for hospital and medical expenses. The employer pays the base amount for the individual coverage of any permanent full-time employee wishing to enroll. Health coverage for dependents and for part-time employees who work at least 20 hours per week may be added at the employee's expense.

## Disability Income

The Disability Income Plan of North Carolina provides short-term and long-term disability benefits at the employer's expense for permanent employees who are members of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System, and who meet certain eligibility requirements.

Short-term disability benefits are available to disabled employees who have at least one year of contributing retirement membership service earned within the 36 calendar months preceding the disability, and who meet all eligibility requirements. Short-term disability benefits are payable after the conclusion of a 60-day waiting period, and therefore generally begin on the 61st day of disability. Short-term disability benefits are paid by the employer and provide monthly income equal to 50 percent of one-twelfth of the annual base salary, including longevity and local supplements, if any, for up to 365 calendar days subject to a monthly maximum of \$3,000, and also subject to certain offsets or reductions for benefits received from other programs. The employer's portion of the cost of the member's State Health Plan coverage is provided at the same level as during active employment if the employee has at least five years of Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System membership service.

Long-term disability benefits are payable to employees who meet all eligibility requirements after the conclusion of the short-term disability period or after salary continuation payments cease, whichever is later. In order to be eligible, the member must

- have at least five years of contributing retirement membership service earned within the 96 calendar months prior to becoming disabled or upon cessation of continuous salary continuation payments, whichever is later,
- be approved by the Plan's Medical Review Board to be mentally or physically disabled for the further performance of his/her usual occupation,
- have a disability that has been continuous, is likely to be permanent, and was incurred at the time of active employment,

- terminate employment as a full time teacher or State employee, and
- not be eligible to receive an unreduced retirement benefit from the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System

Long-term disability benefits are paid by the Retirement Systems Division and provide monthly income equal to 65 percent of one-twelfth of the annual base salary that was last payable to the member prior to the beginning of the short-term period, including longevity and local supplements, if any, subject to a monthly maximum of \$3,900, and also subject to certain offsets or reductions for benefits received from other programs. Long-term disability benefits continue until the earliest date the member becomes eligible for unreduced retirement benefits, or otherwise no longer meets the requirements to receive the benefits.

For additional information about Disability Income Plan benefits, please visit the Retirement System's website at [www.myncretirement.com](http://www.myncretirement.com).

## Unemployment Insurance

Public school employees are entitled to unemployment insurance. Benefit amounts are based on a percentage of a person's earnings, up to the allowable maximum.

## Workers' Compensation

All public school employees are entitled to receive Workers' Compensation under the North Carolina Workers' Compensation Act. Employees must have suffered an accidental injury or contracted an occupational disease in the course of employment to be eligible for medical payments, compensation for lost salary or death benefits under this program.

## Episode of Violence

Any permanent full-time employee who suffers an injury or disability while engaged in the course of his or her employment can receive full salary if the injury or disability arose from an episode of violence, as defined by General Statute 115C-338, and the employee did not participate or provoke the violence. Salary compensation continues for one year, the continuation of the disability or time during which the employee is unable to engage in his or her employment because of the injury, whichever period is shortest. While receiving the benefit, an employee is not eligible to receive workers' compensation income benefits. However, the employee may receive medical, hospital, drug, and related expense payments from workers' compensation. The employee is not required to use paid leave for absences due to an episode of violence.

# RETIREMENT

## Retirement

Permanent full-time employees are covered by the North Carolina Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System. For the 2010-2011 fiscal year, employees contribute 6 percent of their monthly salaries, and employers currently contribute 10.51 percent of employees' salaries to the Retirement System. Employee contributions are paid with pretax dollars, thereby reducing current state and federal income taxes. Employees who are involuntarily terminated or who resign after five or more years of Retirement System membership service may withdraw their retirement contributions, plus any statutory interest earned. Persons who voluntarily resign with less than five years of membership in the Retirement System may withdraw only their own contributions. Persons leaving public school employment may elect to leave their contributions in the Retirement System. Please visit the Retirement System's website at [www.myncretirement.com](http://www.myncretirement.com) for more information.

## Death Benefits through the Retirement System

If a member of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System dies while in active service, the beneficiary(ies) for the return of contributions living at the time of the member's death is entitled to receive a lump sum payment equal to the member's contributions plus interest in his/her account at the time of death.

## Survivor's Alternate Benefit

Provided the member has not retired, if the member has one and only one eligible beneficiary for the return of contributions living at the time of his/her death, and the member dies while in active service or within 180 days from his/her last day of service after:

- completing 20 years of creditable service (not including credit for unused sick leave) regardless of age, or
- reaching age 60 with five years of membership service,

this beneficiary may choose to receive a monthly benefit (known as the Survivor's Alternate Benefit) for life instead of a return of contributions. The Survivor's Alternate Benefit does not apply if the member has two or more eligible beneficiaries for the return of contributions living at the time of his/her death, if the member's estate is his/her eligible beneficiary at the time of his/her death, or if the member has retired. The benefit equals the same monthly amount the member would have been entitled to receive under Option 2 had the member retired on the first of the month following the member's death.

## Death Benefit

In addition to the return of contributions, if the member dies while in active service after one year as a contributing member of the Retirement System or within 180 days of his/her last day of service, the beneficiary(ies) for the death benefit living at the time of the member's death will receive a lump sum payment equal to the member's highest 12 months of salary in a row during the 24 months preceding death, subject to a minimum payment of \$25,000 and a maximum payment of \$50,000.

Please visit the Retirement System's website at [www.myncretirement.com](http://www.myncretirement.com) for more information.

## Supplemental Retirement Plans

State-sponsored supplemental retirement plans are available to school employees. The NC 401(k) and NC Deferred Compensation (457) Plans, currently administered by Prudential Retirement, offer school employees the opportunity to save additional funds for retirement through tax sheltered programs. Please visit the NC 401(k) and NC 457 Plans website at [www.NCPlans.prudential.com](http://www.NCPlans.prudential.com) for more information. Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System retirees with NC 401(k) or NC 457 accounts have the option to make a one-time election to transfer all or part of their NC 401(k) and/or NC 457 funds to the Retirement System, at or after retirement, and receive an additional separate monthly lifetime benefit based on these transferred funds. To learn more about the Transfer Benefit, visit the Retirement System's website at [www.myncretirement.com](http://www.myncretirement.com).

Other optional tax sheltering retirement plans are available in many school systems. Local personnel directors can provide more information on the availability and details of these plans.

## Social Security

School employees are members of the federal Social Security System and both employees and employers make contributions. Benefits include retirement income, disability payments, and survivor's insurance. Social Security contributions have two parts, Social Security and Medicare. The 2011 rate for employees for Social Security is 4.2 percent and employers is 6.2 percent on salaries up to \$106,800. The rate for Medicare is 1.45 percent and is paid by employees and employers on all salaries.

The Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010 reduced the 2011 Social Security tax rate for employees from 6.2 percent to 4.2 percent. Without further changes in the law, the tax rate will return to 6.2 in 2012.

# WEB ADDRESSES



## DPI HOME PAGE

[www.ncpublicschools.org](http://www.ncpublicschools.org)

## PUBLIC SCHOOL SALARY INFORMATION

[www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/fbs/finance/salary)

## HOLIDAY SCHEDULE FOR STATE EMPLOYEES

[www.osp.state.nc.us/holsched.htm](http://www.osp.state.nc.us/holsched.htm)

## NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BENEFITS AND EMPLOYMENT POLICY MANUAL

[www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/humanresources/district-personnel/key-information/policymanual.pdf](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/docs/humanresources/district-personnel/key-information/policymanual.pdf)

## NC PUBLIC SCHOOL LAWS

[www.ncga.state.nc.us/gascripts/statutes/statutelookup.pl?statute=115c](http://www.ncga.state.nc.us/gascripts/statutes/statutelookup.pl?statute=115c)

## TEACHERS' AND STATE EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM

[www.nctreasurer.com/dsthome/RetirementSystems](http://www.nctreasurer.com/dsthome/RetirementSystems)



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