

Fiscal Year 2026–27 State Bonuses: Staff FAQ & Information Guide

All eligible Dare County Schools staff will receive their bonus payment in the regular October 2026 paycheck.

The bonus structure outlined in the General Assembly's budget is complex and can be challenging to navigate. To help clarify the details, DCS' finance team has broken down the information, including who is eligible for each bonus, how the amounts are determined and answers to frequently asked questions.

1. Eligibility & Bonus Amounts

Q: Who is eligible for a bonus, and how much will I receive?

Eligibility and payout tiers are determined by state legislation based on your position, funding source, and key employment benchmark date:

- Certified Staff (Teachers, Assistant Principals, Instructional Support): Must be employed in a permanent state-funded role as of October 1, 2026. Staff with 0–15 years of experience receive \$500; staff with 16+ years receive \$1,000.
- Principals, Central Office & Classified/Non-Certified Personnel: Must have been employed in a permanent state-funded role on June 30, 2026. Staff with annual gross salary of \$65,000 or less receive \$1,750; staff earning over \$65,000 receive \$1,000.
- School Nutrition & Custodial Personnel (Local/Federal Funds): Non-certified school nutrition and custodial staff paid partially or fully from local or federal funds receive \$1,750 if employed on October 1, 2026.

Q: Are substitutes, temporary employees, or contractors eligible?

No. Per state policy, only permanent employees qualify. Substitutes, temporary hourly workers, independent contractors, and MSA interns are excluded from receiving state bonus funds.

Employee Category	Qualifying Date	Salary / Experience	Bonus Amount
Certified Staff (Teachers & APs)	October 1, 2026	0–15 Yrs Exp	\$500
		16+ Yrs Exp	\$1,000
Principals, Office & Classified	June 30, 2026	Salary ≤ \$65k	\$1,750
		Salary > \$65k	\$1,000
School Nutrition & Custodians	October 1, 2026	Local/Federal Funded	\$1,750

2. Payout Timeline & Payment Method

Q: When will the bonus money be paid?

All eligible Dare County Schools employees will receive their state bonus payment included directly with their standard October 2026 paycheck.

3. Resignations, Retirements & Employment Status Changes

Q: What happens if I resigned or retired after the qualifying date?

If you were employed in permanent status on your position's specific benchmark date (June 30 or October 1), you remain fully entitled to receive the bonus. The district where you were employed on that benchmark date is responsible for issuing your check, regardless of subsequent resignation or retirement.

Q: How do effective retirement dates impact eligibility?

Because eligibility requires active permanent status on the benchmark date: based on your role an effective retirement date of October 1 means you were not employed on Oct 1 (and do not qualify for teacher/support bonuses). Conversely, an effective retirement date of July 1 means you were employed on June 30 (and qualify for non-certified/principal bonuses).

Q: What if I changed job classifications during the summer?

If you moved from an assistant principal role on June 30 to a principal role on July 1, state legislative dates result in ineligibility for either state bonus, though local boards may authorize local funds where applicable.

4. Part-Time Employees & Maximum Reward Cap

Q: How is bonus pay calculated for permanent part-time staff?

Permanent part-time employees receive a prorated bonus directly proportional to their Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) percentage or total hours worked.

For example, a part-time custodian working a 50% FTE schedule will receive 50% of the \$1,750 full-time rate (\$875).

Q: Can an employee holding multiple roles receive more than one bonus?

Employees with split positions may receive prorated portions across roles; **however, state law enforces a strict maximum cap**: no individual employee may receive more than \$1,750 in total bonus funds from their employing district.

5. Tax Withholding & Retirement Treatment

Q: Are taxes and retirement contributions deducted from the bonus?

- Income Taxes & FICA: Yes. State bonuses are treated as standard supplemental wages and are subject to state/federal income tax and Social Security (FICA) withholding.
- State Retirement (TSERS): No. Bonus funds are not considered retirement-eligible compensation under TSERS, so no retirement contributions will be withheld or matched.

For additional information, please refer to the [*FY 2026–27 Employee Bonus FAQ*](#) provided by the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.