

# ***Mitchell County Schools***

## ***Employee Handbook***



***[www.mcsnc.org](http://www.mcsnc.org)***

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## **ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK**

The Mitchell County Schools' Employee Handbook has been prepared for all employees. It is designed to include general information on policies, benefits, and procedures. This handbook is purposely limited in size and scope to those matters which are of immediate and recurring concern to teachers, principals, and other staff members. The intent has been to keep it as brief and concise as possible without impairing its usefulness.

Other means of communication will supplement the handbook at appropriate times throughout the year. Copies of the *Mitchell County Schools Policy Manual*, curriculum guides, school improvement plans, and school policies and procedures are available on the Employee Information Disk given to all employees, in school media centers or principals' offices, and in the office of the Director of Personnel and Curriculum.

Also, school personnel are expected to seek additional information whenever they need it from the superintendent's office and the supervisory staff.

Since this handbook summarizes many detailed provisions about employment, benefits, and other related matters, the official policies, regulations, and procedures will always govern when questions arise. Additionally, nothing in this handbook is intended to create or imply any contract rights.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE MITCHELL COUNTY SCHOOL SYSTEM**



Mitchell County Schools is comprised of over 2100 students and over 350 employees and is the largest employer in the county.

There is 1 high school, 1 middle school, 1 5-8 school, 1 K-2 school, 1 K-4 school, 1 3-5 school, and 2 K-8 schools serving our community.

### **BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES**

School district employees and interested individuals may access Board of Education policies via the school district's web site at [www.mcsnc.org](http://www.mcsnc.org).

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

### ***Equal Employment Opportunities***

In compliance with federal law, Mitchell County Schools administers all education programs, employment activities, and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender.

### ***Sexual Harassment***

Mitchell County Schools believes that employees and students are entitled to work and study in an environment which is free from sexual harassment. Employees are prohibited from engaging in sexual harassment. If evidence of sexual harassment is established, an employee will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Although not an all inclusive list, some examples of sexual harassment include the following: deliberate, unwelcome touching; suggestions or demands for sexual involvement accompanied by implied or overt promises of preferential treatment or threats; pressure for sexual activity; continued or repeated offensive sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions; continued or repeated verbal remarks about an individual's body; sexually degrading words used toward an individual to describe an individual; or the display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures.

Board of Education **Policy 1755/7237, "SEXUAL HARRASSMENT,"** and **Policy 1750/7220 "STAFF COMPLAINTS, CONCERNS, AND GRIEVANCES"** are accessible via the school district's web site at [www.mcsnc.org](http://www.mcsnc.org). If you have complaints or concerns refer to page 35 in this handbook.

### ***Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control***

Each school has a Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Control Plan designed to minimize employee exposure to potentially infectious blood and other bodily fluids. All employees must be aware of the provisions of the Plan. Some employees are classified as occupationally exposed because they can reasonably anticipate coming into contact with blood or bodily fluids in the normal performance of their assigned work duties. These employees will receive appropriate training, be offered the Hepatitis B vaccination free of charge, and use specific work precautions to minimize contact with potentially infectious bodily fluids.

Employees designated as occupationally exposed will be notified regarding training and HBV vaccinations. Copies of the Exposure Control Plan are available in each school. Questions may be referred to the Associate Superintendent for Student Services.

### ***Communicable Diseases***

The school system, in an effort to provide a safe and secure environment for all students and employees, will make decisions regarding the employment of persons with a communicable disease on a case-by-case basis. All employees must follow regulations regarding the handling and cleaning up of potentially infectious bodily materials (universal precautions) to prevent the

spread of communicable diseases.

An employee suffering from a communicable disease or condition is encouraged to inform his/her principal or supervisor so that appropriate accommodations may be made and appropriate precautions may be taken.

### ***Drug-Free Workplace***

Due to the commitment to a drug and alcohol free workplace, it is the policy of the Board of Education that the work environment shall be free of the presence of alcoholic beverages or unlawful controlled substances and that employees shall perform their job assignment safely, efficiently, and without the adverse influence of alcohol or controlled substances. Therefore, the Board of Education prohibits all employees from possessing, using, manufacturing, dispensing, selling, distributing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs and from the use, sale, distribution or possession of drug paraphernalia. All employees are prohibited from unlawfully possessing, using, manufacturing, dispensing, selling, distributing, or being under the influence of alcohol.

Violation of this policy shall subject an individual to personnel action including, but not limited to, termination of employment or the requirement that the employee participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by the Administration, suspension with or without pay, conditional continuation of employment, or any combination of these enumerated actions.

### ***Drug and Alcohol Testing***

The purpose of drug and alcohol testing is to promote and maintain a drug-free environment in the workplace and to protect employees, students, and the public by ensuring that employees of the Board of Education are physically and mentally fit to perform their assigned duties.

To help insure for the safe operation of school vehicles, all applicants for bus driver, bus mechanic, or other transportation positions directly involving the safe transportation of students, or positions which require that the employee hold a valid CDL license are required to submit to a drug assessment prior to final consideration for employment and will be subjected to random drug testing during employment under the guidelines set forth in Board of Education policy and the 1995 Omnibus Federal Drug and Alcohol Testing Act.

Any employee who refuses to submit to any diagnostic test to detect alcohol and/or drug use after reasonable suspicion is established may be suspended immediately pending consideration of a decision to terminate employment.

### ***Tobacco-Free School System***

On October 1, 2005, Mitchell County School implemented a 100% tobacco free policy (5026-7250). All persons, including school district personnel, volunteers, contractors, other persons performing services or activities on behalf of the school district, students and visitors, are prohibited from using any tobacco products at any time (1) in any school building, in any school facility, in any school vehicle, on school grounds or on any school property, owned, leased, borrowed or otherwise used by the school district for school purposes or (2) at any school-sponsored or school-related activity, including athletic events, on or off school grounds. In addition, school district employees, school volunteers, contractors or other persons performing

services on behalf of the school district also are prohibited from using tobacco products at any other time while on duty and in the presence of students, either on or off school grounds.

## ***Employee Evaluation***

Employees are evaluated according to guidelines established by the State Board of Education based on regulations set forth in the Excellent Schools Act of 1997. The Excellent Schools Act is a comprehensive plan for improving student academic achievement and reducing teacher attrition with three specific goals: (1) concentrate student learning in the core academic areas; (2) improve teacher skills and teacher knowledge as those skills and knowledge relate to improved academic achievement; and (3) reward teachers for their improved skills and knowledge and for improved student academic achievement.

### **Licensed Personnel:**

The Excellent Schools Act directed the State Board of Education to "... revise and develop uniform performance standards and criteria to be used in evaluating professional public school employees including school administrators." Mitchell County Schools uses four evaluation instruments based on these standards and criteria:

**TPAI-R Evaluation Instrument:** This instrument is used for all teachers

**Other Instruments** The State Board of Education has approved specific evaluation instruments for the purpose of evaluating licensed employees in support positions such as school counselor, media specialist, school psychologist, social worker, and speech/language pathologist.

**Administrative Evaluation Instrument:** This instrument is used for all school and central office administrators.

Time lines and procedures that will be explained in detail by the licensed employee's direct supervisor accompany each instrument.

**Classified Personnel:** The Board of Education places a high priority on employing the most competent personnel available and on assisting them to develop throughout their term of employment. Classified employees, who are at-will employees, are evaluated once every year by the principal, supervisor, or designee using the appropriate evaluation instrument.

## ***Personnel Files***

The school system shall maintain a personnel file on each employee that includes employment records and documents collected and retained by the school system. An employee may review his/her personnel file during regular office hours. No evaluation, commendation, complaint, or suggestion may be placed in a personnel file unless it is signed, dated, and a written copy is provided to the employee at least five days before it is placed in the file. An employee may offer a written denial or explanation of any written document which will also be placed in the personnel file.

The superintendent may elect not to place in an employee's file a letter of complaint that contains invalid, irrelevant, outdated, or false information when there is no documentation of an attempt to resolve the issue.

### ***Corporal Punishment***

Corporal punishment will not be administered in the presence of other students and will only be administered in accordance with the system-wide policy. Teachers must secure specific directions from the principal and have a clear understanding of this policy before administering corporal punishment.

### ***Health Examination Certificates***

All public school employees upon initial employment and those who have been separated from public school employment more than one school year must have on file in the Human Resources Department a completed copy of the Health Certificate before assuming his/her duties.

## **EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES**

### ***Compliance with Board of Education Policies***

It is the responsibility of all employees to familiarize themselves with the printed policies of the Board of Education. Employees will be held accountable for compliance with these policies.

### ***Code of Ethics and Standards of Conduct***

Each employee is instructed to be responsible for both the integrity and the consequences of his or her own actions. The highest standards of honesty, integrity, and fairness must be exhibited by each employee. Employee conduct should be such as to protect the person's integrity and/or reputation and that of the school system. Employees shall perform their jobs in a competent and ethical manner without violating the public trust or applicable laws, policies, and regulations.

### ***Licensure***

State law requires all employees in licensed positions to hold an appropriate license for their subject, grade level, or professional assignment. "Appropriate" can mean initial license, continuing license, lateral entry license, alternative license, or provisional license.

**Standard Professional I License:** This license is issued to individuals who are required to complete an Beginning Teacher Licensure Program, or are teaching in North Carolina for the first time..

**Standard Professional II License:** This license is issued to graduates of North Carolina approved education programs who have at least three years of public school experience. This license is also available to out-of-state career teachers who have completed one year of successful teaching experience in North Carolina. A Standard Professional II license is valid for up to five years and may be renewed.

**Lateral Entry License:** This license is issued to skilled individuals who hold non-teacher education four-year degrees. Lateral entry licenses are issued in licensure areas that correspond to the individuals' areas of academic study. Lateral entry license holders are subject to the regulations that apply to other beginning teachers in North Carolina, ten-days of intense training before entering the classroom, and they must meet program and testing requirements within three years.

**Provisional License:** Provisional Licenses are no longer issued by the state of North Carolina.

The maintenance of a valid license in the area of assignment is the individual responsibility of the employee. Employees who hold licenses that expire during a particular year must furnish documentation to the Human Resources Department that the required renewal credits, test scores, course work, etc., have been completed by June 30 of the renewal year.

### ***Absence Due to Inclement Weather***

A decision to delay opening or to close school will affect all schools throughout Mitchell County. Parents, teachers, and staff are urged to ensure that the schools/system has a current phone

number for the telephone notification system. Area radio or television stations will also carry announcements late in the evening and early morning concerning school closings. When schools are closed for students due to hazardous conditions, employees may elect not to report to work. However, he/she should call his/her principal/designee or supervisor immediately to let them know of their decision concerning the options listed:

- Report to work as soon as it is safely possible
- Request a day of emergency personal leave if personal leave is available
- Request sick leave for legitimate reasons
- Utilize a day of accumulated annual leave beyond the 10 days that are specifically designated in the calendar
- Request a make-up arrangement, to be mutually agreed upon by the employee and his/her immediate principal/designee or supervisor. Mutually agreed upon make-up days may be scheduled within the annual employment period but must be scheduled within the current fiscal year (July 1 – June 30).

When it becomes necessary to dismiss students earlier than the normal closing time due to hazardous conditions, the regular daily schedule shall remain in effect for all employees. After all students and buses have exited the school campus, an employee may elect not to complete the school day using the following options:

- Request emergency personal leave, if such leave is available to the employee
- Utilize accumulated annual leave
- Request a make-up time arrangement; request 1 day or ½ day without pay

**Employees are responsible for their own safety and should use their best judgment when deciding which option(s) to choose.**

### ***The Workday***

**A normal day of employment for all full-time, permanent employees is eight hours. (Exception: For regular teacher assistants, regular full-time employment is seven hours. For some child nutrition positions, full-time, permanent is six hours.) This excludes lunch for maintenance and bus garage staff.**

Due to such things as program development, professional growth activities, faculty meetings, bus duty, parent conferences, special help for individual students, and care of school property and equipment, licensed personnel may be required to extend their professional service beyond the normal working hours. Each work site determines its own working hours.

### ***Administration of Medication***

The administration of medication to students by employees shall be permitted only upon the proper authorization by a physician and the student's parent or guardian. Please refer to the medication administration policy (6125). Specific medication administration questions should be directed to the school nurse.

### ***Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect***

Any school employee who has reason to suspect that a child is the victim of child abuse or neglect has a legal responsibility and duty to report the case in accordance with the following procedures:

The employee must promptly report the case to the principal, designee, or supervisor. When a principal, designee, or supervisor receives a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, the report must then be transmitted immediately to the Department of Social Services.

### ***Teacher Responsibilities***

The teacher is directly responsible to the principal. The primary functions are to direct the growth and development of pupils and to assume definite responsibilities toward the efficient operation and the improvement of the total program of the school. Examples of additional responsibilities which may be assigned include, but are not limited to the following: bus duty, cafeteria supervision, playground duty, supervision of extracurricular activities, and service on committees.

### ***Teacher Assistant Responsibilities***

The primary functions of the teacher assistant are to assist with instructional activities and free the teacher from some of the routine duties. Teacher assistants shall also be assigned for the purpose of providing services to meet the unique needs of identified special needs students. Teacher assistants perform all duties under the supervision of teachers and principals.

### ***Other Classified Staff Responsibilities***

Each classified employee is directly responsible to a designated supervisor. Each employee has a responsibility for the smooth and efficient operation of the school system. Additional responsibilities may be assigned by the designated supervisor.

## ***EMPLOYMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES***

### ***Employment Contracts***

Eligible licensed personnel are issued contracts upon their employment with Mitchell County Schools. Listed below are the types of contracts given to licensed employees.

**Probationary Contracts:** Newly licensed instructional employees who hold a North Carolina license are eligible for a probationary contract for a maximum of four consecutive years. After four consecutive years with a license, the employee is eligible to receive a career contract, if approved by the local board of education.

Licensed employees who come to Mitchell County Schools having career status from another North Carolina school systems must teach for one year on a probationary contract before becoming eligible for a career contract.

Former licensed employees who held career contracts with Mitchell County Schools and who are re-employed in the school system must remain on a probationary contract for one year before becoming eligible for a career contract.

Licensed employees who come to Mitchell County Schools from out-of-state school systems must teach for four consecutive years on a probationary contract before becoming eligible for a career contract.

To earn credit for a probationary year, a licensed employee must work 120 days (student days and workdays).

Probationary contracts may be non-renewed by the Board of Education at the end of the contract term; however, the employee must receive notice of non-renewal by June 15 of a given contract year.

**Career Contracts:** Career contracts and career status (tenure) are given to licensed employees who have met the requirements established under the probationary contracts and who have received approval by the Board of Education. Upon approval, career contracts become effective immediately. Teachers must be notified of the board's decision in writing by June 15.

A teacher with career status cannot be dismissed, demoted, or employed on a part-time basis without his/her consent except for reasons outlined in the North Carolina General Statute 115C-325 and 115C-333.

**Interim Contracts:** Interim contracts are issued to licensed personnel who fill positions that are temporarily vacant, or short-term for a specific period of time, not to exceed one school year.

**Administrative Contracts:** Principals, assistant principals, and certain directors and supervisors who are not eligible for career status under the provisions of GS 115C-325 will be issued contracts.

### ***Retention***

The Board of Education's intent is to employ, re-employ, and grant career status to only those teachers who strive for and have exhibited excellence in their preparation and performance.

Satisfactory performance is considered the minimum acceptable standard of performance; however, satisfactory performance does not assure any teacher of rights to or consideration for employment, re-employment, or career status.

### ***Changes in Employment Records***

Change forms should be completed with the Human Resources Department for any changes in name, address, or telephone number. Your prompt notification will help maintain accurate employment records for pay, leave, salary verification, and other purposes.

### ***Job Postings***

Job vacancies within the school system are posted during the school year on a regular basis in each school, the Central Office, and on the school system web site at [www.mcsnc.org](http://www.mcsnc.org).

### ***Promotions***

When current employees apply for vacancies which would constitute a promotion, they will be given full consideration in light of their qualifications.

### ***Employee-Initiated Transfer***

A request by an employee for transfer to a different school or position must be made in writing (transfer form) to the Human Resources Department. The request shall set forth the reasons for the transfer, the school and/or position sought, and the applicant's qualifications where appropriate. Vacancies occurring during the school year are posted in accordance with policy.

### ***Dismissal***

Licensed employees included within the definition of "teacher" under North Carolina General Statute 115C-325 are subject to the dismissal procedures outlined in that law and in General Statute 115C-333.

Although classified employees are not entitled to the protections of North Carolina General Statute 115C-325 and are considered employees-at-will, the school system is committed to fair employment practices that assure there is reasonable basis for dismissal or termination.

### ***Resignation***

Licensed staff must give a 30 day written notice prior to resigning from the system. The 30 days are counted from the date of receipt of the resignation by the Personnel Office. Failure to give a 30 day written notice may result in license revocation. Classified support staff must give at least two weeks written notice prior to resigning from the school system. The superintendent may accept an employee's resignation on behalf of the Board of Education.

### ***Reduction in Force***

The Board of Education recognizes that circumstances may require the reduction in the number of persons employed by the school system because of district reorganization, decreased enrollment, or decreased or discontinued funding. When circumstances require such a reduction in the work force, the Board of Education follows the appropriate procedures set forth in its policy.

### ***Substitute Teachers***

Mitchell County Schools is committed to making every effort to hire licensed teachers to serve as substitutes. Substitutes may be employed on all days students are present. Substitutes may not be employed on teacher workdays, holidays or on annual vacation leave days scheduled in the calendar.

An approved list of substitute teachers will be kept on file in the Human Resources Department. **Only those names that appear on the approved substitute list are eligible to be used as substitutes.**

Minimum requirements for substitute teaching are as follows:

- Recommendation by a principal
- High school diploma (Individuals with teacher certification, college training, and/or Effective Teacher Training are preferred.),
- Completed application packet on file in the Personnel Office,
- Current health certificate on file,
- Criminal records background check prior to substitute teacher orientation,
- Substitute teacher orientation (including crisis response and seclusion and restraint training), and
- Approval of the Board of Education.

The daily rate of pay for a substitute who currently holds or has held a teaching license is \$84.00. The daily rate of pay for a substitute teacher not holding a teaching license is \$65.00. The rate of pay is established by the State Legislature and is subject to change each year.

A principal, who feels it appropriate to do so, may assign a teacher assistant to serve as a substitute teacher. When a teacher assistant acts as a substitute teacher, the salary for the day will be the same as the daily salary of an entry-level teacher with an "A" license.

Employment of substitute teachers will be in units of half-days or full days. If teaching responsibilities are for a half day or less, the deduction for a substitute will be for a half-day.

When a deduction is required to be made from the teacher's salary, the deduction shall be \$50.00 per day, regardless of the substitute used.

## **EMPLOYEE RELATIONS**

### ***Communications***

The school system considers good communication essential in creating a positive work environment that will retain motivated staff who can work together to achieve goals. A number of publications, both electronic and paper, are produced to keep employees and school communities informed.

Additionally, if a staff member needs information or clarification about a matter affecting them, he/she is encouraged to discuss the subject with their immediate supervisor or principal. If the problem cannot be handled by the supervisor, he/she should contact a Central Office administrator for assistance.

### ***Orientation***

New employee system-wide orientation meetings are scheduled on a regular basis throughout the year. Orientation meetings will be scheduled as needed for new employees hired after August. New employees will be notified about these sessions. Orientations are designed to assist new employees to make a successful transition to their job by acquainting them with personnel policies, procedures, and benefits related to their employment. Additional orientations are also conducted at school and department levels to address specific job responsibilities and procedures.

### ***Employee Suggestions***

The school system welcomes employee suggestions and ideas for improvement. Employees are encouraged to share suggestions with a supervisor or principal.

### ***Resolving Formal Complaints and Grievances***

The Board of Education encourages the administration to actively attempt to resolve differences and to reduce the potential sources of conflict among employees. Open, effective channels of communication among all employees, administrators, and the Board of Education shall be established and maintained. Any employee who has a grievance against the school district or against another employee within the district shall have the opportunity for an orderly presentation and impartial review of the grievance.

A grievance is a formal written claim by an employee that there has been a violation, misapplication, or misinterpretation of a law, policy, or regulation. All grievances shall be in writing and the written statement of grievance shall remain the same throughout all steps of the grievance procedure.

**Step 1:** The employee(s) shall present the grievance in writing on an approved form to his/her immediate supervisor or supervisor's designee, or if that is not appropriate, to the Director of Personnel. The formal grievance shall be filed as soon as possible, but in no event longer than thirty days after the occurrence giving rise to the grievance. A meeting will take place at a mutually agreed-upon time within five days after receipt of the grievance. The immediate supervisor or designee shall provide the aggrieved employee(s) with a written response to the

grievance within ten days after the meeting.

In the event the immediate supervisor or designee determines at the outset that a Step 1 review is inappropriate, or if the immediate supervisor is the person against whom the grievance is being brought, the grievance procedure will originate at Step 2.

**Step 2:** If the grievance is not resolved at Step 1, within five days of receipt of the Step 1 decision, the employee(s) may refer the grievance for review by the Superintendent or designee.

**Board of Education Policy 1750/7220, "STAFF COMPLAINTS, CONCERNS, AND GRIEVANCES, is accessible via the school district's web site at [www.mcsnc.org](http://www.mcsnc.org). If you have complaints or concerns refer to page 35 in this handbook.**

### ***Removal of Information from the Personnel File***

Any employee may petition the Board of Education to remove from the personnel file information that he/she deems invalid, outdated, or irrelevant. To do so the employee must make this request in writing to the Human Resources Department.

### ***Exit Interviews***

Upon separation from employment, employees can be sent a survey to complete regarding their employment conditions while working for Mitchell County Schools. In addition, any employee desiring to give feedback to the school system will be granted an exit interview. Employees desiring an exit interview should contact the Human Resources Department.

### ***Recognition***

Several awards programs are conducted each year to recognize outstanding service or achievement. Those include but are not limited to the following: Teacher of the Year and Principal of the Year. In addition, the school system provides service appreciation awards for employees who are retiring.

## **LEARNING AND GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES**

### ***Licensed Staff***

Professional personnel, by State Board of Education policy, must periodically update their professional license. Certification of renewal credit is required to assure that professional personnel update their professional knowledge and technical competency.

Continuing licenses are valid for a period of five years and reinstatement of licenses is based on 15 units or 10 semester hours of renewal credit earned within the current 5-year period. Renewal credits must include 3 technology credits and 3 in the teachers' specific related area. Three reading methods credits are also required for individuals teaching in grades K-8 and include special subject teachers (physical education, art, music, workforce development, etc.) and exceptional children's teachers with K-8 teaching assignments. It does not include school administrators or student services personnel (school social workers, school counselors, school media coordinators, etc.).

Renewal credit can be counted in increments of no less than 0.5 credit. It must be directly related to the licensure field(s) and/or professional responsibilities and align with state, district, and school priorities. The Personnel Director must approve and sign all renewal credit before it is sent to the Human Resources Department for posting to the employee's record.

For licensed employees with continuing licenses, a five-year Individualized Growth Plan (IGP) is used for completing this process. The plan is developed in collaboration with the principal or designee and the peer review committee.

For beginning teachers, the IGP is an annual plan focusing mainly on the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium standards. It is used to identify goals and strategies for improving professional skills rather than for licensure renewal. The plan is developed in collaboration with the beginning teacher, the principal or designee, and the mentor teacher.

It is the responsibility of each licensed employee to keep up with his/her earned renewal credit and to make sure all credits are sent to the personnel office for processing. Keep a personal file of all earned credit. Course credits can be earned through the following:

#### **Workshops, Conferences, and Activities**

Many opportunities for renewal credit are offered by outside agencies and organizations. Prior approval must be obtained through the SEA System for all professional development activities.

#### **College or University Courses**

Courses may be taken through any accredited college or university, including technical or community colleges. One semester hour of credit is the equivalent of 1.5 renewal credits.

#### **Experience**

One renewal credit is earned for each year of teaching completed in the 5 year renewal cycle. Renewal credit for experience is recorded by the Personnel Office.

#### **In-system Courses or Workshops**

Workshops and courses are offered regularly through the school system. These activities generally offer approved renewal credit of at least 5 hours in length.

## ***Professional Development Procedures***

1. Enter your request on the SEA System at least two weeks before the activity. Your principal will approve (or not) and forward to the central office.
2. Once you receive the email that your proposal has been approved, print out the approval email and save it. Mail your registration in with your check for the workshop.
3. Once you return from the workshop, please submit for reimbursement through the post-activity survey. Send the following to the professional development coordinator:
  - Email you receive when submitting reimbursement (signed).
  - Receipt for your registration
  - Motel bill, if applicable (required for meal reimbursement)—You will not be reimbursed for lodging if a professional development activity is less than 100 miles from your school site.

**Reminder:** If two or more people share a room, the cost of the room must be split and show each person's name on their own bill—DO NOT have one person pay for the room for everyone. This causes the hotel bill to exceed the allowable state rate. (Hotels where workshops are held are used to doing this, but you must tell them when you check in).

### **Directions for entering a proposal in the SEA System**

(Prior approval for a staff development activity)

- Click on the "New or Edit/Review Activity Proposal" link at the bottom of this page.
- Click on the "New Proposal" button.
- Select your school in the school drop-down menu.
- Insert the title of the professional development activity.
- Complete all items on the "Activity Proposal" form.
- NOTE: Select the correct funding source for your activity, or select "Un-Specified Program."
- Click on the "Place Proposal On-Hold" button for approval by your principal.
- Your On-Hold proposal was accepted into the SEA System when a printable copy appears on your screen. Print this page for your record. You will receive an e-mail when your proposal has been

## ***Beginning Teacher Support***

The Beginning Teacher (BT) Support Program is a three-year program for beginning teachers that extends professional education preparation and offers the assessment and support necessary for an individual's professional growth. Student services personnel (media coordinators, counselors, and speech pathologists), administrators, and curriculum-instructional specialists are issued continuing licenses and do not participate in the Beginning Teacher Support Program.

Out-of-state applicants are not subject to Beginning Teacher requirements if they have a NC license based on interstate reciprocity or completion of an NCATE approved education program, and have three or more years of teaching experience (as determined by the Licensure section).

The fundamental purpose of beginning teacher support is to offer support for an individual's professional growth during the first three years of employment. Support consists of the following:

- A mentor
- BT Coordinator

- Periodic meetings throughout the first year
- Periodic assessment of skills
- Evaluations of performance
- An Individual Growth Plan (IGP)

Beginning teachers are eligible for a continuing license based on three years teaching experience and satisfactory evaluations.

The requirements for BTs by year are as follows:

**First Year (BT-1):**

- Three formal observations by the principal or designee
- One formal observation by a mentor other than the BT's mentor
- Summative evaluation by the principal
- Completion of the Individual Growth Plan
- A log of all professional development including name and date of workshop, number of hours credit
- A log of all meetings with the BT's mentor

**Second Year (BT-2):**

- Three formal observations by the principal or designee
- One formal observation by a mentor other than the BT's mentor
- Summative evaluation by the principal
- Completion of the Individual Growth Plan
- A log of all professional development including name and date of workshop, number of hours credit
- A log of all meetings with the BT's mentor

**Third Year (BT-3):**

- Three formal observations by the principal or designee
- One formal observation by a mentor other than the BT's mentor
- Summative evaluation by the principal
- Completion of the Individual Growth Plan
- A log of all professional development including name and date of workshop, number of hours credit

Teachers must serve three years within a five-year period from the date of enrollment to complete the licensure process and all three years must be in the same licensure area. In addition, the BT must be on the payroll for six consecutive months in order for the year to count for licensure requirements. A teacher who is employed for less than 50% of the time is not eligible to participate in the beginning licensure program.

The year-to-year employment decisions and the awarding of career status to probationary teachers are local decisions. These decisions are made at the end of the third BT year. Teachers not recommended for continuing licensure have three options:

- Have the recommendation reviewed by filing a contested case petition in accordance with Article 3 of Chapter 150B of the General Statutes of North Carolina.
- Contact an approved teacher education program and complete a program of study to correct deficiencies.
- Exit the profession.

## ***Beginning Teacher Induction Program***

The Beginning Teacher Induction Program for first, second and third year teachers (to include teachers with a Standard Professional I or lateral entry license) is a comprehensive program to support the growth and development of beginning teachers in Mitchell County Schools. Components of the program include:

- Formal Orientation
  - A three-day orientation program is held for all first year teachers on the three days before teacher workdays began. After the orientation program at the beginning of the school year, the first-year teachers meet as a group with the ILT Coordinator six times during the year. Various topics to assist new teachers and of interest to them are covered in these sessions.
  - In addition, lateral entry teachers, required to have 10 days of training, will attend/document 80 hours from the prescribed activities/workshops in order to meet that requirement.
  - Second year teachers will meet quarterly for training and support in the INTASC Standards, lesson planning, and classroom management as indicated by their observations. Other identified areas of need may also be addressed. Mentors will be required to attend these sessions, which will be held after school on selected afternoons. The New Teacher Support Coordinator will set the agenda and notify the beginning teachers, their mentors and principals.
- Optimum working conditions for beginning teachers:
  - All beginning teachers shall be assigned to their area of licensure.
  - All beginning teachers shall be assigned a mentor early, in their licensure area, and in close proximity to the beginning teachers.
  - Provide orientation for beginning teachers that includes state and school expectations
  - Assign beginning teachers a limited number of exceptional or difficult students.
  - Require no extracurricular assignments of beginning teachers (unless specifically requested by that teacher in writing).
- Mentor Teacher Selection Criteria
- Mentor Training
- Principal Support
- Observations
- Individualized Growth Plan
- Technical Assistance
- Cumulative File of the Beginning Teacher
  - At the end of the school year, the school principal will submit the following to the Human Resource Office:
    - The Summative Evaluation;
    - All Formative Evaluations compiled during the year.
    - The IGP
- Institutions of Higher Education Involvement

## COMPENSATION

### ***Definitions of Terms***

**Permanent Employee:** An employees who ais either: (a) employed with the expectation of permanent employment to fill a position that is to be permanent if present needs and funds continue, or (b) employed with the expectation of at least six full consecutive monthly pay periods of employment to replace one or more employees who is on leave of absence without pay. Eligibility for benefits must be designated at time of initial employment or upon change of employment status.

Employees in this category shall be eligible for membership in the State Employees' Retirement System, coverage under the North Carolina hospitalization insurance program, holidays, annual leave, and sick leave according to approved earning rates. Employees in this classification are earning state service toward annual leave and longevity pay.

**Part-Time Employee:** Employees who regularly work at least 20 hours per week, but less than the number of hours set as full time for that class of work.

Employees in this category are entitled to earn annual leave, sick leave, and holidays on a *pro-rata* basis. A part-time employee does not receive retirement and hospitalization benefits. However, an employee in this category is eligible for hospitalization coverage by assuming full costs (employee and employer charges) of coverage, but is not eligible for retirement system membership. Persons in this category are earning state service toward annual leave and longevity pay. A part-time employee is eligible to receive longevity pay.

**Full-time Employee:** Employees whose regular work week is the number of hours set as full-time in his or her class of work, but not less than 30 hours per week. Two or more part-time positions may be combined to produce full-time employment.

Employees in this category shall be eligible for membership in the State Employees' Retirement System, coverage under the North Carolina hospitalization insurance program, holidays, annual leave, and sick leave according to approved earning rates. Employees in this classification are earning state service toward annual leave and longevity pay.

**Temporary Employee:** Employees who are employed less than 6 full pay periods or an employee whose regular work week is less than 20 hours per week.

Employees in this category are not eligible for membership in the State Employees' Retirement System, coverage under the North Carolina hospitalization insurance program, holiday, annual leave pay, or sick leave. Persons in this classification are not earning state service toward annual leave and longevity pay.

**Instructional Personnel:** This classification includes all classroom teachers, school media specialists, and instruncts.

**Substitute Teachers:** Persons employed on a day-to-day basis and who are replacing regular employees who are absent shall be considered as substitutes. Substitutes are not eligible for membership in the State Employees Retirement System, coverage under North Carolina hospitalization insurance program, sick leave, annual leave, holidays, or state service.

## **Salary**

Licensed employees are paid according to the licensure level and years of experience as determined by the Department of Public Instruction when the North Carolina license is issued plus any local supplement approved by the local Board of Education.

Classified staff is paid based on the scale and pay grade assigned to the position.

**National Board Certification:** Teachers are encouraged to become certified by the National Board for Professional Teacher Standards. Certification by the NBPTS results in a 12% salary increase. To learn more about NBPTS, go to [www.ncpublicschools.org/nbpts](http://www.ncpublicschools.org/nbpts) or [www.nbpts.org](http://www.nbpts.org).

**Mentor Teacher Pay:** Mentor teachers are assigned to provide support and assistance to Beginning teachers. Mentors are eligible for compensation at the rate of \$100 per month for a maximum of 10 months. To qualify as a paid mentor, 24 hours of mentor training is required, as well as submission of the monthly mentor log.

Questions about pay should be referred to either the Human Resources Department or the Finance Department.

## **Fair Labor Standards Act/Compensatory Time**

**Policy Code: 7500**

### **A. WORK SCHEDULES**

The length of the school day for licensed and professional staff shall begin at least 20 minutes prior to the normal opening of school for students and will continue until professional responsibilities to the student and school are completed. Administrative meetings, curriculum development, pupil supervision, assigned duties, parent conferences, group or individual planning and extra-curricular activities may require hours beyond the stated minimum. Work schedules for other employees will be defined by the superintendent or his/her designee, consistent with the Fair Labor Standards Act and the provisions of this policy.

### **B. WORKWEEK DEFINED**

Working hours for all employees not exempt under the Fair Labor Standards Act, including secretaries, cafeteria, janitorial and maintenance personnel, will conform to federal and state regulations. The superintendent will ensure that job positions are classified as exempt or non-exempt and that employees are made aware of such classifications. Supervisors will make every effort to avoid circumstances which require non-exempt employees to work more than 40 hours each week. For purposes of Fair Labor Standards Act Compliance, the workweek for school district employees will be 12:00 a.m. Saturday until 11:59 p.m. Friday. A copy of the Fair Labor Standards Act and any administrative procedures established by the superintendent will be available to employees in the personnel office.

The board of education discourages overtime work by non-exempt employees. A non-exempt employee shall not work overtime without the express approval of his/her supervisor. All supervisory personnel must monitor overtime use on a weekly basis and report such use to the superintendent or his/her designee. Principals and supervisors shall monitor employees' work, shall ensure that overtime provisions of this policy and the FLSA are followed and **shall ensure that all employees are compensated for any**

**overtime worked.** (Note: Employees who intentionally work unauthorized overtime may be subject to disciplinary action.) Principals or supervisors may need to adjust daily schedules to prevent non-exempt employees from working more than 40 hours in a workweek. Accurate and complete time sheets of actual hours worked during the workweek shall be signed by each employee and submitted to the finance officer. The finance officer will review work records of employees on a regular basis to make an assessment of overtime use.

In lieu of overtime compensation, non-exempt employees may receive compensatory time off at a rate of not less than one and one-half (1.5) hours for each one hour of overtime worked, if such compensatory time is agreed to by the employee before the overtime work is performed and is authorized by the immediate supervisor. Employees must be allowed to use compensatory time within a reasonable period after requesting such use (see policy 7510, Leave of Absence). Employees may accrue a maximum of 240 compensatory time hours before they must be provided overtime pay at the appropriate rate. In addition, upon leaving the school district, an employee must be paid for any unused compensatory time at the rate of not less than the higher of the average regular rate received by the employee during his/her last three years of employment or the final regular rate received by the employee.

Non-exempt employees whose workweek is less than 40 hours will be paid at the regular rate of pay for time worked up to 40 hours. Such employees will be provided overtime pay or compensatory time as provided above for working more than 40 hours in a workweek.

Employees will be provided a copy of this policy and will be required to sign this policy to acknowledge their understanding of overtime and compensatory time provisions. Such signed policy will constitute the written agreement required in this section.

#### **D. ATTENDANCE EXPECTATIONS**

All employees are expected to be present during all working hours. Absence without prior approval, chronic absences, habitual tardiness or abuses of designated working hours are all considered neglect of duty and will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

Legal References: The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, as amended, 29 U.S.C. 201, *et seq.*; G.S. 115C-47(18), -288, -307; *North Carolina Public School Personnel Employee Salary and Benefits Manual (2002-2003)*, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Division of School Business.

Cross References: Leave of Absence (policy 7510)

Adopted: January 17, 2005

#### **Volunteering to Perform Regular Work**

Employees cannot volunteer to perform their regular work duties off the clock and without compensation (29 U.S.C. 2003(e)(4)(A)). The Department of Labor considers teaching/supervising students and coaching duties to be the same type of work. Mitchell County Schools will not employ any non-exempt employee to coach if the coaching responsibilities will cause the employee's workweek to be greater than 40 hours.

The employee is considered a bona fide volunteer if the employees' services are offered freely and without pressure or coercion, direct or implied, from the employer and if the volunteer's work is not a continuation of the same or similar work for which the employee is normally employed.

The employee must also sign the volunteer agreement form.

### **Training**

Principals, supervisors and bookkeepers will be trained annually on record keeping requirements with regards to FLSA. A copy of the FLSA policy will also be included in the MCS Employee Handbook.

### **Agreements**

All non-exempt employees must sign an agreement stating that they have been provided a copy of the Board of Education's policy on work time, have reviewed it and agree to follow the policy. The agreement further states that any overtime worked over 40 hours will be compensated with time and a half compensatory time rather than overtime pay. (Bus drivers will be paid 1 ½ times their normal hourly pay for all hours worked beyond 40 hours during a single workweek). (*Agreement to Receive Compensatory Time Off*)

### **Use of Compensatory Time**

An employee who asks for the use of compensatory time must be allowed to use the time "within a reasonable period after making the request if the use of the compensatory time does not unduly disrupt the operations of the school system". When an employee acquires at least 4 hours of compensable time, that time shall be used before annual leave is permitted.

### **Federal and State Required Employment Posters**

All employment posters must be posted in areas that are accessible to all employees, especially non-certified employees, i.e. lounge, school office, cafeteria kitchen, bus garage, maintenance offices, custodian's closet and other places where employees gather.

### ***Longevity Pay***

All permanent, full-time or part-time employees receive longevity pay after completing ten years of qualifying service. Longevity is an annual payment based on a percentage of the employee's yearly base salary. This percentage increases as years of state service increase.

Longevity payments are paid during the pay period following the anniversary date of employment.

<b>YEARS COMPLETED</b>	<b>PERCENTAGE</b>
10 but less than 15	1.50%
15 but less than 20	2.25%
20 but less than 25	3.25%
25 or more	4.50%

## **LEAVES OF ABSENCE**

### ***Holiday Leave***

The number of holidays is determined by the State Personnel Commission. Ten holidays per calendar year are scheduled for permanent, full-time and part-time 10-month employees. Eleven holidays are scheduled for 12-month, permanent employees. Local boards of education determine when holidays are scheduled when a holiday comes while school is in session.

### ***Annual (Vacation) Leave***

Permanent, full-time and part-time employees earn vacation leave. Eligible part-time permanent employees earn leave equal to their percentage of full-time employment. On June 30 of each year, employees with more than 30 days of accumulated leave will have the excess accumulated leave converted to sick leave so that only 30 days are carried forward to the next fiscal year which begins on July 1. Requests for annual leave must be approved by the employee's supervisor.

Annual leave will be transferred when employees transfer among local educational agencies and may be transferred to state agencies if they are willing to accept the leave; otherwise, 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. The following chart shows the number of days of vacation earned each month based on years of state service.

<b>WHEN YOU HAVE</b>	<b>YOU ARE GRANTED</b>			
Years of State Service	Days per Month	10 Month Employees	11 Month Employees	12 Month Employees
Less than 2 years	1.00	10.00	11.00	12.00
2 but less than 5 years	1.15	11.50	12.65	13.80
5 but less than 10 years	1.40	14.00	15.40	16.80
10 but less than 15 years	1.65	16.50	18.15	19.80
15 but less than 20 years	1.90	19.00	20.90	22.80
20 years or more	2.15	21.50	23.65	25.80

Instructional personnel who require a substitute and bus drivers are not permitted to take vacation leave on days when students are scheduled to be in attendance unless the employee's absence is due to a catastrophic illness and all sick leave has been exhausted. Instructional personnel who do not require a substitute may, with their supervisor's approval, take annual vacation leave on any day school is in session.

## ***Sick Leave***

Permanent employees who are working or who are 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: (1) personal illness, injury, or other temporary disability, (2) illness in the employee's immediate family that necessitates the employee's attendance, (3) death in the immediate family, and (4) medical appointments.

Sick leave may be accumulated indefinitely and is transferable among local school systems. It may be transferred to a state agency, community college, or technical institute if they are willing to accept the sick leave.

Any time an employee is absent more than five consecutive days, or knows he/she will be absent more than five consecutive days, a Leave Request Form and doctor's note is required. Please see your principal for the appropriate form.

## ***Twenty-Day Extended Sick Leave***

Instructional personnel (excluding teacher assistants) may request 20 days of additional sick leave each year, less \$50.00 per day, for personal illness. This extended sick leave may be used after all accumulated sick leave has been exhausted. A doctor's statement is required to initiate the use of extended sick leave and should be sent to the Human Resources Department for approval. Extended sick leave cannot be accumulated.

## ***Voluntary Shared Leave***

The purpose of voluntary shared leave is to provide economic relief for employees who, by reason of prolonged absence caused by serious medical conditions of self or immediate family, are likely to suffer financial hardship. Only permanent, full-time and part-time employees who have exhausted all accumulated paid leave (sick leave and annual vacation leave, if applicable) are eligible to receive donated (shared) leave.

An employee must complete Voluntary Shared Leave forms and send them to the Human Resources Department for approval. Application may also be made by a third party acting on the employee's behalf.

Any eligible employee in the school system may donate annual vacation leave to any approved employee in the same school system. Only family members may donate annual vacation leave to an immediate family member in another LEA.

Sick leave may be donated only to an employee who is an immediate family member of the donor. Sick leave may be donated to an immediate family member in the same or another North Carolina school system or state agency.

### ***Personal Leave***

Teachers earn two days of personal leave during the 10-month school term with a standard salary deduction of \$50.00 for the cost of substitute teachers. These days must be used in one-half or whole day units and can be accumulated to a maximum of five days and are transferable among school systems. Personal leave is granted upon authorization of an employee's immediate supervisor. This type of leave is not normally provided on the first day teachers are required to report for the school year, required teacher workdays, the last working day before or the next working day after holidays or scheduled vacation days.

### ***Educational Leave***

Educational leave is intended to enhance an individual's knowledge, ability, skills, and/or professional growth in a field of education or employment related to the employee's duties or responsibilities in this school system.

Short-term educational leave for participation in workshops and meetings is available if approved by the principal or supervisor. Any request for travel or workshop expenses must be made within 30 days of the conclusion of the approved educational activity.

Long-term educational leave of up to one year may be requested by employees who have been employed with the system for three years. A request for educational leave should be made in writing to the Human Resources Department. Long term educational leave is non-paid and is subject to approval by the principal or supervisor, superintendent, and the Board of Education.

### ***Professional Leave***

Permanent public school employees who have professional responsibilities or who need to attend meetings of professional associations may be absent with pay minus a salary deduction for substitute teachers. Such absences must be approved by the immediate supervisor and will be allowed for a period not exceeding three successive days for in-state meetings or five successive days for out-of-state meetings.

### ***Community Responsibility***

Upon approval of the supervisor, full-time or part-time school employees may be granted leave to represent the school or administrative unit at community functions such as the funeral of a school child or his parent. Employees absent for these reasons shall retain full salary during the time absent.

### ***Jury Duty***

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

### ***Court Attendance***

When permanent employees are absent from work to attend court in connection with their official duty, no salary deduction is made. Any fees received when serving in an official capacity as a witness must be returned to the local school system. Employees who are absent for appearance in court as defendants, plaintiffs or witnesses for personal matters, even if subpoenaed, shall not be entitled to receive any salary payment for those days, unless they are using appropriate, approved earned leave.

### ***Parental Leave Without Pay***

Male or female school employees may be granted a leave of absence without pay for up to one calendar year from the date of birth or adoption of a child.

### ***Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)***

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) allows eligible employees to take 12 workweeks of unpaid, job-protected leave for their own serious medical condition or that of an immediate family member. In addition, the FMLA allows eligible employees to take the same job-protected leave for the birth of a child or the placement of a child with the employee through adoption or foster care. Employers must maintain any employer-paid health benefits while the employee is on FMLA leave.

To be eligible for FMLA benefits, an employee must be employed by the employer for at least 12 months (not necessarily consecutive) and work at least 1,250 hours during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave.

Accumulated sick leave is considered as part of Family Medical Leave for the purposes of employer-paid health insurance.

### ***Parental Involvement Leave***

Any employee who is a parent, guardian, or person in *loco parentis* may take up to four hours per fiscal year to attend or otherwise be involved at his/her child's school. Leave granted for the purpose shall be at a mutually agreed upon time between the employer and employee.

### ***Military Leave***

Leave with pay is granted to members of reserve components of the US 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 days each calendar year, for annual training.

## ***BENEFITS***

### ***Income Tax Withholding Forms***

Federal (Form W-4) and state (Form NC-4) forms may be obtained from the school office or Finance Office for the purpose of changing income tax withholding information. Changes in exemptions and deductions may be made at any time during the year. Employees must complete a new form each calendar year.

### ***Health Insurance***

All permanent, full-time employees of Mitchell County Schools are eligible for group insurance. Enrollment is not automatic. Employees may elect to have their spouses and/or children covered by the same plan by paying a set, monthly premium. This premium is collected by payroll deduction and is handled as a "before tax" salary reduction unless the employee rejects this benefit by October 1st of each year. For employees who are paid in 10 installments, additional premiums are deducted in April and May to cover the summer months. Permanent, part-time employees working a minimum of 20 hours per week may purchase health insurance if they pay the total premium.

The State Health Plan of North Carolina, currently administered by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina, provides coverage for hospital and medical expenses.

Claims under the State Health Plan should be filed as soon as possible after services are received. The "year" for purposes of meeting the deductible is July 1-June 30. It is the employee's responsibility to file claims for providers not on the approved list.

Changes in coverage can be made only during the open enrollment period or within 30 days of a documented "qualifying event." Examples of "qualifying events" include, but are not limited to, birth of a child, change in marital status, etc.

### ***Retirement***

Permanent, full-time employees are covered by the North Carolina Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System. Employees contribute 6% of their monthly salary and employers contribute a percentage set by the state of the employee wages to the Retirement System. Employee contributions are paid with pretax dollars, thereby reducing the current state and federal income taxes. Employees who are involuntarily terminated or resign after five or more years of retirement system membership may withdraw their retirement contributions plus any interest they have earned. Persons who voluntarily resign with less than five years of membership in the Retirement System may withdraw only the funds they contributed. Persons leaving public school employment with five or more years of membership credit in the Retirement System may elect to leave their contributions in the Retirement System and receive future retirement benefits.

Full, unreduced retirement benefits may be received at

- any age with 30 years of service,
- age 60 with 25 years of service, or
- age 65 with 5 years of service.

Early, reduced benefits may be received at

- age 50 with 20 years of service or
- age 60 with 5 years of service.

All retirements are effective the first day of the month; applications must be received in Raleigh by the last day of the preceding month.

Change of retirement beneficiaries is possible at any time prior to retirement and under certain option provisions after retirement. Refund of accumulated contributions is also possible after the employee terminates employment with the state as an alternative to a monthly pension.

### ***Death Benefit***

A death benefit between \$25,000 and \$50,000 is payable to a designated beneficiary after an employee has completed one year as a contributing member of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System. The amount paid is determined by the employee's annual salary. Employee retirement contributions are also paid to the designated beneficiary.

### ***Employee Disability***

A comprehensive short-term and long-term disability income plan is provided at the employer's expense for permanent, full-time employees who are members of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System and meet certain state service requirements.

**The Short-Term Disability Plan:** This plan is available to disabled employees with at least one year of contributory retirement service. It begins on the 61st day of disability and provides monthly income equal to 50 percent of one-twelfth of the annual base salary and longevity for up to 365 calendar days, with a maximum of \$3,000 per month. Short-term disability benefits may be extended for as many as 365 days beyond the original short-term period if approved by the State Medical Board. Employees must have at least five years of membership service in order for the school system to continue paying the employee's portion of their hospital insurance.

**The Long-Term Disability Plan:** This plan begins after the short-term plan ends for the totally and permanently disabled permanent full-time employee with five years of contributory retirement service. The benefits provide monthly income equal to 65% of one-twelfth of the annual base salary and longevity, up to \$3,900 per month until the employee qualifies for unreduced retirement benefits. Long-term benefits, however, are coordinated with Social Security disability payments and Workers' Compensation benefits. Employees interested in applying for disability need to contact the Finance Department for forms.

### ***Supplemental Retirement Income Plan of NC (401K)***

Participation is available in the 401(K) Supplemental Retirement Income Plan of North Carolina. Prudential Retirement is the state administrator of the plan. For information, contact the Payroll Department.

### ***Tax-Sheltered Annuities (403B)***

Tax-sheltered annuities are available for interested employees. Employees are provided payroll

deduction for the purchase of a tax sheltered annuity from approved vendors.

### **457(b) Deferred Compensation Plan**

457(b) deferred compensation plan is available for interested employees. Employees may complete the appropriate enrollment materials for payroll deduction to defer compensation and divert it to the approved vendor.

### ***Credit Union***

Mitchell County Schools allows voluntary monthly deductions from permanent full-time or part-time employees for financial obligations incurred with the State Employees' Credit Union. State Employees' Credit Union payroll deductions may be made for savings, checking, and/or loan accounts.

### ***Direct Deposit***

Direct deposit is required for all employees. Each new employee will need a checking account, saving account, or a credit union account to facilitate the deposit of their monthly salary. It is imperative that employees notify the payroll department when any change is made in financial institutions.

### ***Cafeteria Benefits Plan***

Mitchell County Schools offers all full-time employees a comprehensive Cafeteria Benefits Program. The Cafeteria Benefits Program allows employees to save money by paying for non-reimbursed medical expenses, day care expenses, vision, dental, and cancer insurance with pre-tax dollars. The open enrollment for cafeteria benefits is held during the month of August each year. The effective date of coverage is September. Once enrolled, **NO** changes in coverage options may be made for one year unless there is a qualifying event as outlined on your election form for cafeteria benefits. Additional information is available from the Payroll Department.

### ***Continuation of Insurance Coverage Following Employment Separation***

Continuation of group health insurance coverage is available to employee, spouse and/or dependents under the Consolidated Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act (COBRA) and the Public Health Service Act (PHSA) as required by federal law. Certain qualifying events are governed by these COBRA regulations. Continuation of this coverage is paid by the members at a rate two percent higher than the normal group rates, as allowed by Federal law. For more information concerning the COBRA regulations, please contact the Payroll Department.

## ***Liability Insurance***

All employees are covered by the Board of Education's School Professional Legal Liability Insurance Policy. Each claim has a limit of liability of \$1,000,000 and an aggregate limit of \$1,000,000. The program covers legal liability for an act, error, or omission in services rendered in the discharge of school system duties. The school system also carries general liability insurance coverage.

## ***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 a weekly compensation benefit equal to 66.66% of the employee's average weekly earnings for the year prior to the injury, up to a maximum established by the Industrial Commission each year.

When an employee is injured on the job, he/she must ensure that the immediate supervisor has knowledge of the injury immediately following the accident. A "Notice of Accident to Employer" must be completed by the employee and the "Employer's Report of Injury to Employee" must be completed by the employee's supervisor and forwarded to the Finance Office within five days.

Eligible employees receive the workers' compensation weekly benefit after the required regular waiting period of seven calendar days. It becomes effective on the eighth day of the disability. During the seven day waiting period, the employee may choose to use available sick leave or take leave without pay. If the injury results in disability of more than 21 calendar days, the workers' compensation weekly benefit is allowed from the date of disability.

Compensation benefits are not automatic. A doctor's excuse must be submitted to the Payroll Department if the employee wants to receive compensation benefits.

While on workers' compensation leave, an eligible employee continues to accumulate vacation and sick leave if the employee earned such leave while working. Leave days earned while on workers' compensation leave will be added to the employee's leave account upon return to work. Absences for workers' compensation shall count as part of the employee's Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) entitlement for that year.

The school system does not approve claims or make payments for medical bills or compensation. An outside agency is employed to administer this plan.

**Workers' compensation claims must never be filed with a health insurance carrier.**

## ***Paydays***

Employees are paid monthly. Each paycheck will include earnings for all work performed through the end of the previous payroll period. In the event that a regularly scheduled payday falls on a day off such as a weekend or holiday, employees will receive pay on the last day of work before the regularly scheduled payday.

## ***Local Supplement***

Mitchell County Schools pay a local supplement of \$100 to all permanent employees. The supplement is paid annually in December.

**Mitchell County Schools  
Notice of Nondiscrimination**

In compliance with federal law, Mitchell County Schools administers all state-operated education programs, employment activities, and admissions without discrimination because of race, religion, national or ethnic origin, color, age, military service, disability, or gender, except where exemption is appropriate and allowed by law.

Inquiries or complaints should be directed to:

Dr. Morgen Houchard  
Mitchell County Schools  
72 Ledger School Road  
Bakersville, NC 28705  
P: 828.766.2220  
F: 828.766.2221