

Article 23.

Employment Benefits.

§ 115C-336. Sick leave.

(a) All public school employees shall be permitted a minimum of five days per school term of sick leave, pursuant to rules and regulations promulgated by the State Board of Education as provided in G.S. 115C-12(8).

(b) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules and regulations for the establishment of voluntary sick leave banks by local boards of education, from which an employee, upon exhaustion of accumulated sick leave and annual leave, when allowable, may withdraw sick leave days in the event of emergency or catastrophic illness. These rules may include, but not be limited to, (i) requirements of minimum service and minimum balance of sick leave before an employee may join the sick leave bank, (ii) enrollment periods for present employees and new hires, (iii) time limits for rejoining the sick leave bank, (iv) limitation on number of days which can be withdrawn by any employee, (v) waiting period before being eligible to withdraw sick leave, (vi) exclusion of illness or injury covered by Workers' Compensation Benefits, (vii) certification by physician attesting to member's illness or accident, (viii) administration of each sick leave bank by a Sick Leave Bank Committee to be made up of representatives of different classifications of employees, and (ix) other requirements to prevent any adverse selection by employees. The rules concerning the establishment of sick leave banks shall include provisions for notifying employees who donate sick leave to and employees who withdraw sick leave from the sick leave bank, of the State retirement credit consequences as to the donated sick leave.

(c) The State Board of Education shall also adopt rules and regulations to authorize an employee who requires a substitute to use annual leave on days that students are in attendance if the employee has exhausted all of the employee's sick leave and if the employee's absence is due to the catastrophic illness of the employee. The employee shall not be required to pay the substitute.

(d) The State Board of Education shall adopt rules relating to the reinstatement of unused sick leave when an employee who was employed on a 10-month contract at the time of separation returns to employment on a 10-month contract. Under these rules, the maximum period of separation after which unused sick leave is reinstated shall be three calendar months longer for school personnel employed on a 10-month contract than for school personnel employed on a 12-month contract. (1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1993, c. 321, s. 72(a); 1995, c. 324, s. 17.4; 2009-144, s. 1.)

§ 115C-336.1. Parental leave.

(a) In addition to paid parental leave authorized by G.S. 126-8.6, a school employee may use annual leave or leave without pay to care for a newborn child or for a child placed with the employee for adoption or foster care. A school employee may also use up to 30 days of sick leave to care for a child placed with the employee for adoption. The leave may be for consecutive workdays during the first 12 months after the date of birth or placement of the child, unless the school employee and the local board of education agree otherwise.

(b) To the extent funds are made available for this purpose, the Department of Public Instruction shall administer funds to public school units for the payment of substitute teachers for any public school unit teacher using paid parental leave as provided in G.S. 126-8.6. (2002-159, s. 37.5(b); 2023-14, s. 5.1(d); 2023-65, s. 13A.1(c).)

§ 115C-337. Workers' compensation for school employees.

(a) **Workers' Compensation Act Applicable to School Employees.** – The provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act shall be applicable to all school employees, and the State Board of Education shall make arrangements necessary to carry out the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act applicable to these employees paid from State school funds. Liability of the State for compensation shall be confined to school employees paid by the State from State school funds for injuries or death caused by accident arising out of and in the course of their employment in connection with the state-operated school term. The State shall be liable for this compensation on the basis of the average weekly wage of the employees as defined in the Workers' Compensation Act, to the extent of the proportionate part of each employee's salary that is paid from State funds. The State shall also be liable for workers' compensation for all school employees employed in connection with the teaching of vocational agriculture, home economics, trades and industries, and other vocational subjects, supported in part by State and federal funds, which liability shall cover the entire period of service of these employees, to the extent of the proportionate part of each employee's salary that is paid from State funds. The local school administrative units shall be liable for workers' compensation for school employees, including lunchroom employees, whose salaries or wages are paid by the local units from local or special funds. The local units may provide insurance to cover this compensation liability and to include the cost of this insurance in their annual budgets.

The provisions of this subsection shall not apply to any person, firm, or corporation making voluntary contributions to schools for any purpose, and the person, firm, or corporation shall not be liable for the payment of any sum of money under this Chapter.

(b) **Payment of Awards to School Bus Drivers Pursuant to the Workers' Compensation Act.** – In the event that the Industrial Commission shall make an award pursuant to the Workers' Compensation Act against any local board of education on account of injuries to or the death of a school bus driver arising out of and in the course of his employment as such driver, the local board of education shall draw a requisition upon the State Board of Education for the amount required to pay such award. The State Board of Education shall honor such requisition to the extent that it shall have in its hands, or subject to its control, available funds which have been or shall thereafter be appropriated by the General Assembly for the support of the school term. It shall be the duty of the local board of education to apply all funds received by it from the State Board of Education pursuant to such requisition to the payment of such award. Neither the State nor the State Board of Education shall be deemed the employer of such school bus driver, nor shall the State or the State Board of Education be liable to any school bus driver or any other person for the payment of any claim, award, or judgment under the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act or of any other law of this State for any injury or death arising out of or in the course of the operation by such driver of a public school bus. Neither the local board of education, the local school administrative unit, nor the tax levying authorities for the local school administrative unit shall be liable for the payment of any award made pursuant to the provisions of this subsection in excess of the amount paid upon such requisition by the State Board of Education, nor shall the local school board of education, the local school administrative unit, nor the said tax levying authorities be required to provide or carry workers' compensation insurance for such purpose. (1955, c. 1292; c. 1372, art. 18, s. 9; 1979, c. 714, s. 2; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1995, c. 324, s. 17(b).)

§ 115C-338. Salaries for employees injured during an episode of violence.

(a) For the purpose of this section, "employee" shall mean any teacher, helping teacher, librarian, principal, supervisor, superintendent of public schools or any full-time employee, city or

county, superintendent of public instruction, or any full-time employee of Department of Public Instruction, president, dean or teacher, or any full-time employee in any educational institution supported by and under the control of the State: Provided, that the term "teacher" shall not include any part-time, temporary, or substitute teacher or employee, and shall not include those participating in an optional retirement program provided for in G.S. 135-5.1. In all cases of doubt, the Board of Trustees, as defined in G.S. 135-1(7), shall determine whether any person is a teacher as herein defined.

(b) Any employee who while engaged in the course of his employment or in any activities incidental thereto, suffers any injury or disability resulting from or arising out of any episode of violence by one or more persons shall be entitled to receive his full salary during the shortest of these periods: one year, the continuation of his disability, or the time during which he is unable to engage in his employment because of injury. An episode of violence shall be defined to mean but shall not be limited to any acts of violence directed toward any school building or facility, or to any employee or any student by any person including but not limited to another student. These benefits shall be in lieu of all other income or disability benefits payable under workers' compensation to such employee only during the period prescribed herein. Thereafter, such teacher shall be paid such income or disability payments to which he might be entitled under workers' compensation. If the employment of a substitute is necessitated by the disability of the injured employee the salary of such substitute shall be paid from the same source of funds from which the employee is paid. This section shall in no way limit the right of the injured employee to receive the benefits of medical, hospital, drug and related expense payments from any source, including workers' compensation: Provided, further, that this section shall not apply to any employee who is injured while he participates in or provokes such episode of violence except as is incident to the maintenance or restoration of order or classroom discipline or to defend himself: Provided, further, that this section shall be given liberal construction and interpretation as to any and all definitions, conditions, and factual circumstances set forth herein.

(c) Any employee claiming the benefits of this section shall file claim with the board of education employing such employee within one year after the occurrence giving rise to his alleged injury. That board of education shall, within 30 days after receipt of such claim, decide whether and to what extent that employee is entitled to the benefits of this section and shall forthwith transmit its decision in writing to such employee. That employee shall, however, have the right to appeal the decision of that board of education to the North Carolina Industrial Commission by serving that board of education and the North Carolina Industrial Commission with written notice thereof within 30 days after receipt of the board's written decision. In determining all appeals under this section the North Carolina Industrial Commission shall constitute a court for the purpose of hearing de novo and passing upon all claims thereby presented in accordance with procedures utilized by the Commission in determining claims under the Workers' Compensation Act. The decision of the Industrial Commission in each instance shall be subject to appeal to the North Carolina Court of Appeals as provided in G.S. 143-293 and 143-294. (1971, c. 640, ss. 1, 2; 1973, c. 753; 1979, c. 714, s. 2; 1981, c. 423, s. 1.)

§ 115C-339. Retirement plan.

Provisions for retirement plans for public school employees may be found in Chapter 135 of the General Statutes. (1981, c. 423, s. 1.)

§ 115C-340. Health insurance.

(a) The State Board of Education may authorize and empower any local board of education, the board of trustees of any community college, or other governing authority, within the State, to establish a voluntary payroll deduction plan for premiums for any type of group insurance, including health insurance, established and authorized by the laws of this State.

(b) Any employee of any local board of education, any community college, or of any educational association, may enter into a written agreement with his employer for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this section. The State Board of Education is authorized and empowered to make and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the purposes of this section. (1969, c. 591; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1987, c. 564, ss. 12, 16.)

§ 115C-341. Annuity contracts from local boards of education.

Notwithstanding the provisions of this Chapter for the adoption of State and local salary schedules for the pay of teachers, principals, superintendents, and other school employees, local boards of education may enter into annual contracts with any employee of such board which provide for a reduction in salary below the total established compensation or salary schedule for a term of one year. The local board of education shall use the funds derived from the reduction in the salary of the employee to purchase a nonforfeitable annuity contract for the benefit of said employee. An employee who has agreed to a salary reduction for this purpose shall not have the right to receive the amount of the salary reduction in cash or in any other way except the annuity contract. Funds used by the local boards of education for the purchase of an annuity contract shall not be in lieu of any amount earned by the employee before his election for a salary reduction has become effective.

The agreement for salary reductions referred to herein shall be effected under any necessary regulations and procedures adopted by the State Board of Education and on forms prepared by the State Board of Education.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of this section, the amount by which the salary of any employee is reduced pursuant to this section shall be included in computing and making payroll deductions for social security and retirement system purposes, and in computing and providing matching funds for retirement system purposes.

In lieu of the annuity contracts provided for under this section, interests in custodial accounts pursuant to Section 401(f), Section 403(b)(7), and related sections of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended may be purchased by local boards of education for the benefit of qualified employees under this section with the funds derived from the reduction in the salaries of such employees. (1963, c. 582; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1989, c. 526, s. 1; 2011-310, s. 1.)

§ 115C-341.1. Flexible Compensation Plan.

Notwithstanding any other provisions of law relating to the salaries of employees of local boards of education, the State Board of Education is authorized to provide a plan of flexible compensation to eligible employees of local school administrative units for benefits available under Section 125 and related sections of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 as amended. This plan shall not include those benefits provided to employees under Articles 1, 3B, and 6 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes nor any vacation leave, sick leave, or any other leave that may be carried forward from year to year by employees as a form of deferred compensation. If a plan of flexible compensation is offered, then a TRICARE supplement shall be offered. In providing a plan of flexible compensation, the State Board may authorize local school administrative units to enter into agreements with their employees for reductions in the salaries of employees electing to

participate in the plan of flexible compensation provided by this section. With the approval of the Director of the Budget, savings in the employer's share of contributions under the Federal Insurance Contributions Act on account of the reduction in salary may be used to pay some or all of the administrative expenses of the program. Should the State Board decide to contract with a third party to administer the terms and conditions of a plan of flexible compensation as provided by this section, it may select such a contractor only upon a thorough and completely advertised competitive procurement process. (1989 (Reg. Sess., 1990), c. 1059, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 1044, s. 14(f); 1993, c. 561, s. 42; 1993 (Reg. Sess., 1994), c. 769, s. 7.28A; 1997-443, s. 33.20(a); 1999-237, s. 28.27(a); 2013-292, s. 1.)

§ 115C-341.2. Department of State Treasurer sponsored 403(b) option.

(a) In addition to the opportunities for local boards of education to offer section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 retirement annuities and/or mutual funds to their employees under G.S. 115C-341, the Department of State Treasurer may establish an approved third-party vendor of retirement offerings as described in section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as now and hereafter amended, pursuant to which employees of local school boards may enter into nonforfeitable 403(b) plan options by way of salary reduction through the auspices of the Department of State Treasurer. This statewide plan of 403(b) offerings shall be known as the "North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan." The vendor authorized under this section shall be selected by use of Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees procurement procedures under Article 5 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes, with the goal of attaining lower administrative fees and enhanced services for participants and employer compliance with applicable law and regulations. Eligible employees of local school boards shall all be allowed to use this vendor for the tax-deferred 403(b) option of their choice.

(b) The criteria in this subsection apply to the Department of State Treasurer's 403(b) offerings to employees of local school boards under this section.

(1) Annuity contracts, trust accounts, and/or custodial accounts shall be administered by a qualified third-party administrator that shall, under written agreement with the Department of State Treasurer, provide custodial, record-keeping, and administrative services. The third-party administrator may also be the selected vendor for the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan.

For employers choosing to participate in the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan, the third-party administrator shall, at a minimum, provide the following:

- a. Maintain a written plan document.
- b. Review hardship withdrawal requests, loan requests, and other disbursements permitted under section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.
- c. Maintain specimen salary reduction agreements for the employer and employees of that employer to initiate payroll deferrals.
- d. Monitor maximum contributions.
- e. Coordinate responses to the Internal Revenue Service in any case of an IRS audit.

- f. Generate educational communication materials to employees concerning the enrollment process, program eligibility, and investment options.
 - g. Maintain internal reports to ensure compliance with Section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code and Title 26 of the Code of Federal Regulations.
 - h. Provide compliance monitoring/oversight for all 403(b) plans established under G.S. 115C-341 within each participating local board of education plan by creating and establishing the necessary connections and processes with existing and future vendors.
 - i. Keep an updated schedule of vendor fees and commissions as to the Department's statewide plan of 403(b) offerings.
- (2) Governance and oversight of the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan will be performed under Article 5 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes by the Department of State Treasurer and the Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees established pursuant to G.S. 135-96. Because of the administrative and record-keeping duties enumerated in subdivision (1) of this subsection, any existing vendor of a 403(b) with a participating employer must either agree to share data with the State's 403(b) vendor under this provision (so as to permit oversight over contribution limits, loans, and hardship withdrawals) or be directed by the participating employer to cease accepting new contributions, loans, and hardship withdrawals.
 - (3) Investment options shall be solely determined by the Department of State Treasurer and the Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees consistent with section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.
 - (4) Investment staff of the Department of State Treasurer may make recommendations to the State Treasurer and the Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees as to appropriate investment options. Pursuant to G.S. 135-96, the State Treasurer and Board of Trustees shall have sole responsibility for the selection of the vendor, third-party administrator, providers of investment options, and any other service provider for the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan.
 - (5) All contributions made in accordance with the provisions of section 403(b) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, and this section shall be remitted directly to the administrator and held by the administrator in a custodial account on behalf of each participating employee. Any investment gains or losses shall be credited to those accounts. The forms of payment and disbursement procedures shall be consistent with those generally offered by similar annuity contracts, trust accounts, and custodial accounts and applicable federal and State statutes governing those contracts and accounts.
 - (6) Any local board of education may elect to make contributions to the employee's account on behalf of the employee. The employer shall take whatever action is necessary to implement this section.

(7) The design and administration of annuity contracts, trust accounts, and custodial accounts under this provision shall comply with all applicable provisions of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended.

(c) The administrative costs of the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan may be charged to members or deducted from members' accounts in accordance with nondiscriminatory procedures established by the Department of State Treasurer and Board of Trustees.

(d) If the Department of State Treasurer and the Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees elect to discontinue offering the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan, participating local school boards that continue sponsoring their 403(b) plan shall designate another investment provider in their 403(b) plan to receive any assets remaining in their 403(b) plan upon the discontinuation of the North Carolina Public School Teachers' and Professional Educators' Investment Plan. In the event that a local school board fails to designate another investment provider, the Department of State Treasurer and the Supplemental Retirement Board of Trustees may transfer the remaining assets, on behalf of the local school board, to an individual retirement account selected in a vendor solicitation pursuant to subsection (e) of G.S. 135-96. (2011-310, s. 2; 2016-108, s. 7(a); 2018-84, s. 5(b); 2022-14, s. 3.1.)

§ 115C-342. Group insurance and credit unions.

(a) The State Board of Education may authorize and empower any local board of education, the board of trustees of any community college, or other governing authority, within the State, to establish a voluntary payroll deduction plan for:

- (1) Premiums for any type of group insurance established and authorized by the laws of this State.
- (2) Amounts authorized by members of the State Employees' Credit Union or any local teachers' credit unions to be deposited with such organizations.
- (3) Loans made to teachers by credit unions.

(b) Any employee of any local board of education, any community college, or of any educational association, may enter into a written agreement with his employer for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this section. The State Board of Education is authorized and empowered to make and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out the purposes of this section.

(c) Any public school teacher who is a member of a credit union organized and established under Chapter 54 of the General Statutes may, by executing a written consent to the local school administrative unit by whom employed, authorize periodical payment or obligation to such credit union to be deducted from their salaries or wages, and such deductions shall be made and paid to said credit union as and when said salaries and wages are payable. (1969, c. 591; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; 1987, c. 564, ss 12, 16.)

§ 115C-343: Repealed by Session Laws 2011-210, s. 2, effective June 23, 2011.

§ 115C-344. Employment benefits for exchange teachers.

An exchange teacher is a nonimmigrant alien teacher participating in an exchange visitor program designated by the United States Department of State pursuant to 22 C.F.R. Part 62 or by the United States Department of Homeland Security pursuant to 8 C.F.R. Part 214.2(q). For purposes of determining eligibility to receive employment benefits under this Chapter, including personal leave, annual vacation leave, and sick leave, an exchange teacher shall be considered a

permanent teacher if employed with the expectation of at least six full consecutive monthly pay periods of employment and if employed at least 20 hours per week. An exchange teacher is not a teacher for purposes of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System of North Carolina as provided in G.S. 135-1(25). (2013-360, s. 9.7(u).)

§ 115C-345. Reserved for future codification purposes.

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