



SAMPSON
County Schools
Dedicated to Continuous Improvement

Employee Handbook 2026-2027

Sampson County Schools
Employee Handbook
Table of Contents

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 SCS Board of Education Members
- 1.2 Central Office Staff Members
- 1.3 SCS Employee Handbook Disclaimer
- 1.4 SCS Vision, Mission, and Beliefs
- 1.5 Equal Employment Opportunity
- 1.6 Staff Expectations

2.0 CLASSIFICATION OF PERSONNEL

3.0 EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

- 3.1 General Guidelines
- 3.2 Criminal Records Check
- 3.3 Reporting Arrest(s)
- 3.4 Recruitment and Selection of Personnel
- 3.5 Application Information
- 3.6 Drug and Alcohol-Free Learning Environment and Workplace
- 3.7 Drug and Alcohol Testing
- 3.8 Tobacco Free Schools
- 3.9 Staff-Student Relations
- 3.10 Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources
- 3.11 Social Media Communications Involving Students
- 3.12 Employee Dress Code
- 3.13 Employee Transfers
- 3.14 Conflict of Interest
- 3.15 Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying; Sexual Harassment; Retaliation
- 3.16 Crowdsourcing
- 3.17 Threats to Child Safety

4.0 WORK ENVIRONMENT

- 4.1 Grievance Procedure
- 4.2 Workday
- 4.3 Inclement Weather
- 4.4 Evaluation of Licensed Employees; Growth and Improvement Plans
- 4.5 Teacher Contracts
- 4.6 Evaluation of Non-Licensed Employees; Improvement Plans
- 4.7 Personnel Files
- 4.8 Resignations
- 4.9 Reduction in Force
- 4.10 Demotion or Dismissal of Licensed Employees
- 4.11 Suspension and Dismissal of Classified Employees
- 4.12 Non-Renewal of Non-Career Teachers

5.0 BENEFITS 24

- 5.1 State Health Plan
- 5.2 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

- 5.3 Retirement Plan
- 5.4 Annual Vacation Leave
- 5.5 Sick Leave
- 5.6 Extended Sick Leave
- 5.7 Voluntary Shared Leave
- 5.8 Disability Income Plan; Short and Long-Term Disability
- 5.9 Personal Leave
- 5.10 Parental Leave
- 5.11 Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA)
- 5.12 Return to Work Policy
- 5.13 Worker's Compensation
- 5.14 Military Leave for Extended Active Duty
- 5.15 Vision Insurance
- 5.16 Dental Insurance
- 5.17 Flexible Benefits Plan
- 5.18 Supplemental Retirement Plans

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document has been developed by the Human Resources Department (HR) in order to familiarize employees with Sampson County Schools (SCS) and to provide information about working conditions, key policies, procedures, and benefits affecting employment with our school district.

1.1 SCS Board of Education Members

Eleanor Bradshaw
Michael Elmore
Glenn Faison
James Jones
Krystin McPhail
Jennifer Naylor, Vice-Chair
Daryll Warren, Chair

1.2 Central Office Staff Members

Cabinet

Dr. Jamie King, Superintendent
Mrs. Cynthia Mesimer, Chief Finance Officer
Dr. Wendy Cabral, Executive Director of Personnel Services and Federal Programs
Miss Jennifer Daughtry, Executive Director of High School Education
Mr. Mark Hammond, Executive Director of Auxiliary Services
Dr. Beth Metcalf, Executive Director of Elementary School Education
Vacant, Executive Director of Middle School Education

Directors

Cheri Pollock, Exceptional Children
John Goode, Career and Technical Education
James Lewis, Athletics
Belva Lovitt, Technology & Media Services
Melissa Smith, School Nutrition
Mary Stevens, Upward Bound Program
Lauren McMahon, Accountability & Student Services
Vicki Westbrook, Transportation
Dr. Shakisha Young, Teacher Support

Administrative Staff

Hannah Byrd, Assistant Finance Officer
Tiena Smith, Supervisor, School Nutrition
Erica Faircloth, Coordinator, Instructional Technology
Kaylan Dudley, Coordinator, PowerSchool / Accountability Assistant
Frankie Lasalle, WAN Engineer
Cindy McLamb, Supervisor, Payroll
Amy Pope, Coordinator, Instructional Technology
Dennis Raynor, Technology Technician III
James Raynor, Supervisor, Transportation
Lakevia Underwood, Coordinator, Upward Bound
Jan Usher, Coordinator, Transportation Information Management System

Program Assistants

Shelby Bryant, School Nutrition
Jacqueline Chabot, Superintendent's Office
Cathy Cottle, Transportation
Angela Ellis, Exceptional Children/CTE
Jason Elmore, Auxiliary Services
Deborah Howard, Finance
Valerie Owens, Instructional Services
Donna Johnson, Finance
Donna Jones, Finance/Personnel Services
Tiffany Matthis, Federal Programs
Tawanda Murphy, School Nutrition
Darcilla Owens, Front Desk Receptionist
Valerie Owens, Instructional Services
Connie Pearson, Licensure Specialist
Maria Rose, Auxiliary Services
Angela Williams, Technology

1.3 SCS Employee Handbook Disclaimer

This handbook is intended to be a guide for all employees regarding policies and procedures utilized by SCS. The Sampson County Board of Education reserves the right to unilaterally change, terminate and/or make exceptions to the policies in this handbook at any time to the extent permitted by law. Nothing in this handbook grants employment rights beyond those granted by state laws.

In addition, this handbook and acknowledgement statement should not be considered an agreement, a contract of employment, either expressed or implied, or a promise of treatment in any particular manner in any given situation.

All Board of Education policies can be found at www.sampson.k12.nc.us under the Board of Education tab.

1.4 SCS Motto, Vision, and Mission

Motto

Dedicated to Continuous Improvement

Vision

Together we support every individual in achieving their fullest potential through our core values.

Mission

Sampson County Schools prepares every student and staff member to thrive through safe learning environments, strong connections, and opportunities to lead and serve their community.

1.5 Equal Employment Opportunity

Sampson County Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities.

Reference: Board Policy 7101

1.6 Staff Expectations

Each Sampson County Schools employee shall:

1. Report to work on time in an acceptable state for duty and remain so whenever on duty.
2. Prepare for and perform all duties required by one's job description(s) and as assigned.
3. Comply with reasonable directives issued by established lines of authority.
4. Identify, report, and take action to maintain safe and secure working and learning environments.
5. Demonstrate respect and integrity when interacting with students, families, staff, community members, and other stakeholders.
6. Comply with federal laws, state statutes, contractual obligations, Board policies, and/or related regulations/procedures that prohibit coercive, harassing, threatening, retaliating, or discriminating conduct.
7. Communicate in an honest, appropriate, and timely manner using established chain of command.
8. Acquire, use, maintain, report, and dispose of District assets and other assets funded on behalf of the district by other sources in accordance with federal laws, state statutes, Board policies, and/or related regulations/procedures.
9. Maintain confidentiality of information as required under federal laws, state statutes, Board policies, and/or related regulations/procedures.
10. Refrain from any activity that may negatively interfere with either one's ability to effectively perform one's duties as assigned or the legitimate operational interests of the District.
11. Comply with all other federal laws, state statutes, Board policies, and/or other district and/or school related regulations/procedures.
12. Report actions of both self and others that may represent violations of federal laws, state statutes, contractual obligations, Board policies, and/or related regulations/procedures.

Reference: Board Policy 7300

2.0 CLASSIFICATION OF PERSONNEL

Due to the many nuances of public school employment, it is best to contact the HR Department to fully understand your classification.

Employees of SCS are classified as either exempt or non-exempt from Fair Labor Standards. This is necessary because, by law, employees in certain types of jobs are entitled to overtime pay for hours worked in excess of forty (40) hours per workweek. Public schools are allowed to provide compensatory time in lieu of overtime pay for non-exempt (classified) employees.

Permanent Employee: A permanent employee is an employee who is employed to fill a position that is to be permanent if needs and funds continue or is employed for at least six full consecutive months either to replace one or more employees who are on an approved leave of absence without pay or to fill a vacancy until a qualified replacement is employed. A person employed for at least six full consecutive months is eligible to receive full or pro-rata benefits. Therefore, the eligibility for benefits must be determined at the time of the initial assignment or when the assignment status changes.

Permanent employees may be employed full-time or part-time. The regular work week of a permanent employee must be at least 20 hours per week. Permanent employees who work at least 30 hours per week must be enrolled in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS) and will receive employer-paid medical insurance for self.

Part-Time Employee: A part-time employee is an employee who regularly works at least 20 hours per

week, but less than the number of hours set as full-time for that class of work. The part-time employee is not eligible to earn paid leave and does not participate in the retirement system. He/she does not receive nor can he/she purchase health benefits through the State Health Plan. Part-time employees may not use leave earned during any previous employment.

Full-Time Employee: A full-time employee is an employee whose regular work week is the number of hours established as full-time for the class of work assigned but not less than 30 hours per week. Two or more part-time assignments with the same school district may be combined to satisfy requirements to become a full-time employee. An employee working in two or more positions may not earn more benefits than those allowed for a single, full-time position.

Temporary Employee: A temporary employee is a person who is either employed to fill a position whose work week is less than 20 hours per week or is employed for less than six full consecutive months of employment. Temporary employees may be classified as full-time or part-time. They are not eligible to earn paid leave and do not participate in the retirement system. They do not receive nor can they purchase health benefits through the State Health Plan. Temporary employees may not use leave earned during any previous employment.

Interim Employee: An interim employee is a person employed to fill a position that is temporarily vacant and/or is being held for an incumbent who is expected to return from an approved leave. An interim employee is not eligible to earn paid leave and does not participate in the retirement system. He/she does not receive nor can he/she purchase health benefits through the State Health Plan. Interim employees may not use leave earned during any previous employment.

At-Will Employees: Employees who are not required to be employed under contracts or who are not offered contracts by the Board's prerogative are at-will employees. Examples include most non-certified personnel such as custodians, bus drivers, teacher assistants, clerical staff, maintenance supervisors, and transportation coordinators. Administrators not required by statute to be employed under contract are also at-will employees (unless the Board has chosen to offer contracts).

3.0 EMPLOYEE CONDUCT

3.1 General Guidelines

All school system employees hold positions of public trust. They are responsible for the education of students and also serve as examples and role models to students. Each employee is responsible for both the integrity and the consequences of his or her own actions. Each employee must exhibit the highest standards of honesty, integrity, and fairness when engaging in any activity concerning the school system, particularly in relationships with vendors, suppliers, students, parents, the public, and other employees. Employee conduct should be 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. It shall be the employee's responsibility to familiarize him/herself with the rules and procedures associated with this handbook and all SCS policies.

3.2 Criminal Records Check

All employees recommended for hire are subject to criminal records and sex offender registry checks.

Reference: Board Policy 7100

3.3 Reporting Arrest(s)

Employees must notify the Assistant Superintendent of HR immediately and in writing if they are arrested, charged with, or convicted of a criminal offense (including entering a plea of guilty or *nolo contendere*) other than a minor traffic violation (i.e., speeding, parking or a lesser violation). Reporting must occur within 24 hours.

Reference: Board Policy 7100 and 7300

3.4 Recruitment and Selection of Personnel

All applicants selected for employment must be recommended by the superintendent and approved by the Board. State guidelines must be followed in selection and employment procedures. The superintendent shall develop procedures for verifying new employees' legal status or authorization to work in the United States as required by IRS form I-9. No administrative or supervisory personnel may directly supervise a member of his or her immediate family.

Criminal history checks of child care providers

After September 30, 2019, no person shall: (1) be employed, continue to be employed, or be permitted to volunteer as a child care provider, or to otherwise have unsupervised contact with students enrolled in a licensed classroom or program operated by the school system; or (2) be counted in the staff/child ratio of such classroom or program unless the person holds a current valid qualification letter issued by DCDEE. However, a child care provider with provisions status may be employed pending final results of the criminal background check but shall be subject to the restrictions established by 10A N.C.A.C 09.2703(f). For individuals who are employed or are seeking employment as a child care provider with the Sampson County Board of Education, whether in temporary or permanent capacity including substitute providers, the application fee and cost of fingerprinting associated with the DCDEE criminal history check process shall be paid by the Board. Individuals who wish to volunteer, as defined by policy 5015–School Volunteers, in a licensed child care facility shall be responsible for the application fee and cost of fingerprinting associated with the DCDEE criminal history check process. All volunteer applicants must comply by signing Policy 5015-R-School Volunteer Expectations and Guidelines prior to volunteering at the specified school location.

Reference: Board Policy 7100

3.5 Application Information

Information entered on applications shall be true and accurate. Falsifying information or concealing the truth will lead to termination of the application process or result in termination of employment.

Reference: Board Policy 7110

3.6 Drug and Alcohol-Free Learning Environment and Workplace

It is the policy of the Sampson County Board of Education that a drug-free workplace be maintained. Procedures for handling suspected drug and/or alcohol use are outlined in Board policy.

Reference: Board Policy 7240

3.7 Drug and Alcohol Testing

SCS conducts post-accident drug and alcohol testing. All employees subject to this policy, all employees who would become subject to this policy by virtue of a change or expansion of duties, and all applicants who would be subject to this policy if employed by the board must consent in writing to the release of any information gathered pursuant to Part 382 by any previous employers and must give written or electronic consent to any query by school officials of the federal Commercial Driver's License Drug and Alcohol Clearinghouse ("Clearinghouse").

Reference: Board Policy 7240 and 7241

3.8 Tobacco Free Schools

The use of tobacco products on school grounds, in school buildings and facilities, or on any other school property owned or operated by the school board, or at school-related or school-sponsored events are prohibited. This includes but is not limited to staff and students.

Reference: Board Policy 7250

3.9 Staff-Student Relations

The Board of Education expects all employees to maintain the highest ethical, moral, and professional standards in their interactions with students, including electronic communications. Employees and students must report inappropriate conduct.

Reference: Board Policy 7310

3.10 Acceptable Use of Electronic Resources

SCS makes appropriate electronic information resources available to employees to assist in furthering educational goals, to support valid business uses, and to provide for efficient work-related communication. The acceptable use policy governs the utilization of SCS electronic information resources and defines employees' proper conduct and responsibilities while using any SCS electronic information resource. Electronic information resources include all Sampson County Schools' computer equipment, including any desktop or laptop computers or other hardware owned or leased by the school system; the SCS computer network; e-mail accounts; any computer software licensed to SCS; and stored data. Inappropriate use of electronic resources subjects employees to disciplinary matters.

Reference: Board Policy 7335

3.11 Social Media Communications Involving Students

Employees are to maintain professional relationships with students at all times. All electronic communications with students who are currently enrolled in the school system must be school-related and within the scope of the employees' professional responsibilities. School employees may use only school-controlled social media or approved video-conferencing platforms to communicate directly with current students about school-related matters. Employees are prohibited from knowingly communicating with current students through personal social media without parental permission. However, an employee may communicate with a student using personal social media to the extent the

employee and student have a family relationship or other type of appropriate relationship which originated outside of the school setting. An employee seeking to utilize and/or establish a non-school-controlled social media website for instructional or other school-related purposes must have prior written approval from the principal and the superintendent or designee

Reference: Board Policy 7335

3.12 Employee Dress Code

Employees must adhere to standards of dress that are compatible with learning and work environments. Guidelines apply to times that students are in school and when employees are representing the school district.

Reference: Board Policy 7340

3.13 Employee Transfers

The Superintendent, with full but legal discretion, is responsible for transfers and work assignments. In-school transfers are the Principal's responsibility. Transfers are either voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary transfers follow specific guidelines and occur during a specific time for the following school year.

Reference: Board Policy 7440

3.14 Conflict of Interest

Employees want to avoid any type of conduct or behavior that could create the perception of a conflict of interest. Examples include, but are not limited to, soliciting or receiving gifts from a vendor that could influence contract selection; outside work that interferes with primary employment with the SCS; or leading a private business during school time or on school property.

Reference: Board Policy 7730

3.15 Discrimination, Harassment, and Bullying; Sexual Harassment; Retaliation

The Board acknowledges the dignity and worth of all students and employees and strives to create a safe, orderly, caring, and inviting school environment to facilitate student learning and achievement. The Board prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age. The Board will not tolerate any form of unlawful discrimination, harassment (including of a sexual nature), or bullying in any of its educational or employment activities or programs. Procedures to file a complaint are contained in Board policy. Furthermore, the Board does not tolerate reprisal or retaliation against any employees who report violations of law, policies, or regulations.

Reference Board Policies 1710, 1720 and 1760

3.16 Crowdsourcing

Any employee who wants to crowdsource a project for the benefit of any Sampson County School must submit a proposal of the crowdsourcing project to the school principal. The employee must obtain prior

written approval from the school principal (if \$5000 or less) and/or the superintendent/board of education (if more than \$5000) before launching the fundraising page, including posting on the platform.

Reference: Board Policy 7360/8225

3.17 Threats to Child Safety

North Carolina has two separate systems that mandate reports to state authorities of suspected child abuse, neglect, dependency, or maltreatment and a third system for mandated reporting of certain crimes against juveniles to local law enforcement. When a parent or other caretaker is suspected to have caused a child to be abused, neglected, or dependent, this information must be reported to the county child welfare agency. In addition, state law mandates reports to local law enforcement when a child is a victim of certain violent offenses, sexual offenses, or misdemeanor child abuse. An adult who knows or reasonably should have known of any of these offenses inflicted upon a child must report that information immediately. The board of education supports all employees who in good faith make a report under North Carolina's mandated reporting laws.

Reference: Board Policy 4240/7312

4.0 WORK ENVIRONMENT

4.1 Grievance Procedure

SCS offers a detailed procedure to all employees as a means to resolve difficulties and problems that may arise in work sites between an employee and his/her supervisor. The difficulties or problems must have an adverse effect on the employee.

Reference: Board Policy 7220

4.2 Workday

Licensed employees' regular workday is 7.5 hours; however, conferences, meetings, and/or extracurricular activities require workdays beyond the previously stated minimum. Classified, part-time, temporary, or hourly employees work the hours for which they were hired, not to exceed 40 hours/week. Classified or hourly employees work under the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA).

Reference: Board Policy 7500

4.3 Inclement Weather

The Superintendent is responsible for procedures related to the temporary closing of schools due to inclement weather, taking into consideration the health, safety, and welfare of all students and employees.

Reference: Board Policy 7550

4.4 Evaluation of Licensed Employees; Growth and Improvement Plans

Licensed employees are evaluated according to State Board Policy on standards through

state-developed format. Ratings range from Not Demonstrated to Distinguished. A Professional Development Plan (PDP) is part of the evaluation process also. For teachers with less than three (3) years of experience, there is a peer observation component. When deficiencies exist, monitored/directed PDPs and/or Mandatory Improvement Plans may be developed and implemented to help the employee reach at least a proficient level of performance.

Reference: Board Policy 7810 and 7811

4.5 Teacher Contracts

The term “teacher” is defined as a person who meets the requirements of G.S. 115C-325.1 (6). An individual who is employed under a part-time teacher contract (less than 100%) or employed under a temporary teacher contract does not meet this definition of teacher, however, the board’s performance expectations established in this policy apply to such individuals. Teachers are responsible for facilitating student learning in a safe and orderly environment in which students become college and career ready. The board will employ teachers and renew contracts upon the recommendation of the superintendent. A new or renewed contract will be for a term of one school year for teachers.

Reference: Board Policy 7410

4.6 Evaluation of Non-Licensed Employees; Improvement Plans

Non-licensed employees are evaluated on locally developed instruments. When deficiencies exist, improvement plans (Action Plans) may be developed and implemented to help the employee reach at least a satisfactory level of performance.

Reference: Board Policy 7815

4.7 Personnel Files

Employees can view their personnel files with three (3) days’ notice. Conversely, employees are not able to review confidential information, such as pre-employment information. Some information contained in a personnel file is available to the public, upon request. A process is available to employees to request that documents be removed from their personnel file.

Reference: Board Policy 7820 and 7821

4.8 Resignations

A. Professional Employees

Professional employees who intend to resign for any reason are encouraged to indicate their plans in writing as early in the school year as possible, such as when plans become firm and/or the decision to leave the school district is made. Resignation forms should be signed by the employee’s supervisor and submitted to the HR Department. A resignation typically becomes effective at the end of the school year in which it is submitted. A resignation for any other time requires a 30 calendar days’ notice unless the superintendent consents to a shorter notice period.

B. Other Employees

Resignation forms should be signed by the employee's supervisor and submitted to the HR Department. To help ensure the smooth operations of the schools, a 30-day calendar notice is requested whenever possible.

Each employee who is leaving the school district may arrange to meet with any director, supervisor or administrator to discuss his or her reasons for leaving and to identify any practices or policies which he or she feels are detrimental to the objectives of the school district. To the extent possible, statements made by employees will be confidential.

Reference: Board Policy 7900

4.9 Reduction in Force

When there is a decline in enrollment, reorganization, or financial emergencies, a Reduction in Force (RIF) may be implemented. Criteria and procedures are presented to the Board and to employees before implementation.

Reference: Board Policy 7920 and 7921

4.10 Demotion or Dismissal of Licensed Employees

With adequate assistance, documentation, and written notices to an employee, there are fifteen (15) reasons for which a licensed employee can be demoted or dismissed.

Reference: Board Policy 7930

4.11 Suspension and Dismissal of Classified Employees

When performance problems arise, supervisors must notify classified employees in writing along with documented opportunities to improve. Depending on the misconduct or infraction, employee suspension and/or dismissal are possibilities. Remembering that North Carolina is an "at will" state, classified employees can be dismissed for non-discriminatory reasons.

Reference: Board Policy 7940

4.12 Non-Renewal of Non-Career Teachers

The Board may refuse to renew the contract of any non-career status teacher for any cause it deems sufficient, so long as the cause is not arbitrary, capricious, discriminatory, prohibited by state or federal law, or for personal or political reasons.

Reference: Board Policy 7950

5.0 BENEFITS

SCS sponsors a comprehensive benefits program for eligible employees, and each benefit plan has specific eligibility conditions. All full-time permanent employees will enjoy all of the benefits described below as soon as they meet all of the eligibility requirements for each particular benefit. Permanent part-time employees may be eligible for certain benefits if they meet the eligibility

conditions.

5.1 State Health Plan

The State Health Plan, administered through Blue Cross Blue Shield, offers several plans from which to choose. Costs vary, depending on the plan selected. The premium is deducted monthly from your paycheck. Ten-month employees pay for twelve months of insurance coverage in ten (10) equal payments during the August-May paychecks.

5.2 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

SCS is committed to maintaining and strengthening its most important resource - its employees. The Board recognizes that many kinds of personal problems that affect job performance can be readily resolved if they are properly identified, diagnosed, and treated. To accomplish this goal, the Board has made available an Employee Assistance Program through National Insurance Services (NIS) to provide confidential short-term counseling and referral services for eligible employees. The establishment of this program reflects the Board's concern for the well-being of its employees, as well as its dedication to the effective accomplishment of the objectives of the school system. For confidential and professional assistance call NIS at 866-451-5465 or www.niseap.com.

5.3 Retirement Plan

The State of North Carolina provides a solid retirement plan to eligible permanent public school employees. This is a defined benefit retirement plan. This means, after an employee meets the eligibility requirements to retire, and retires, a benefit will be calculated, which the employee will receive every month until his/her death. There is a 6% pre-tax deduction. Information is available at www.myncretirement.com.

5.4 Annual Vacation Leave

The purpose of paid annual vacation leave is to allow and encourage all employees to renew their physical and mental capabilities and to remain fully productive. Employees are encouraged to request annual vacation leave during each year in order to achieve this purpose. Annual vacation leave is earned as outlined:

Years of State Service	Monthly Full-Time Accrual Rates
Less than 5 year	1.17 days
5 but less than 10 years	1.42 days
10 but less than 15 years	1.67 days
15 but less than 20 years	1.92 days
20 years or more	2.17 days

Using Annual Vacation Leave

- (a) For 10-month employees, the first 10 days of annual vacation leave must be scheduled in the school calendar and must be taken as scheduled.
- (b) Approval: All annual vacation leave taken by a public school employee must be with the authorization of the employee's immediate supervisor and must conform to policies established by the State Board of Education and the local school district.
- (c) Units of annual vacation leave: Annual vacation leave may be used in one-half days or whole days, as determined for earning purposes by the local Board.

(d) Restrictions on use by instructional personnel and teacher assistants: Classroom teachers who require a substitute, school media coordinators who require a substitute, and teacher assistants who require a substitute may not take annual vacation leave at any time that students are scheduled to be in attendance except as provided in Leave for Catastrophic Illness or Leave for New Parents. Teachers who do not require a substitute may, with their supervisor's approval, take annual vacation leave on any day school is in session.

(e) Annual vacation leave in lieu of sick leave: Annual vacation leave may be used in lieu of sick leave. Instructional personnel who require substitutes are subject to the restrictions set forth in paragraph (d) above.

(f) Adverse weather: Employees may elect to use annual vacation leave for absences due to adverse weather conditions only on days when students are not required to attend school due to the adverse weather conditions.

(g) Disability: Employees may elect to exhaust annual vacation leave during the 60-day waiting period or in lieu of short-term disability benefits. Instructional personnel who require substitutes may use this leave only on days that students are not scheduled to be in regular attendance or in accordance with the provisions of Leave for Catastrophic Illness or Leave for New Parents. This election does not extend the 365-day duration of short-term disability.

Accumulating and Converting to Sick Leave

Annual vacation leave may be accumulated without any applicable maximum until June 30 of each calendar year. On June 30 or upon retirement, accumulated annual vacation leave in excess of 30 days will be converted to sick leave so that only 30 workdays of annual vacation leave are carried forward.

Upon separation in order to retire, annual vacation leave over 30 days may be converted to sick leave for creditable service toward retirement.

Upon separation from service due to service retirement, resignation, (if not transferring to another school district within 31 calendar days), dismissal, reduction in force or death, an employee shall be paid in a lump sum for accumulated annual vacation leave not to exceed a maximum of 30 days. Employees going onto disability may exhaust annual vacation leave rather than be paid in a lump sum.

5.5 Sick Leave

Who is eligible to earn Sick Leave and how much is earned?

(a) Full-time employees: All permanent, full-time employees working or on paid leave (including paid holidays and workers' compensation) for one-half or more of the workdays in any monthly pay period earn one sick day per month or the number of hours worked daily by a full-time employee in that class of work up to a maximum of eight hours.

(b) Part-time employees: All permanent, part-time employees working or on paid leave (including paid holidays and workers' compensation) for one-half or more of the workdays in any monthly pay period earn sick leave computed on a pro rata basis of the amount earned by a full-time employee in that class of work. Permanent, part-time employees previously employed in a full-time position retain the balance of sick leave earned in the prior position upon transferring to a part-time position.

(c) Units: Sick leave must be used in one-half days or whole days. Only sick leave taken on an employee's workday shall be deducted from the employee's sick leave balance.

(d) Accumulation: Sick leave may be accumulated indefinitely.

When can Sick Leave be used?

Sick leave may be used for:

(a) Any actual period of temporary disability caused by or contributed to by personal illness or injury, which prevents an employee from performing his or her usual duties. Sick leave due to pregnancy, miscarriage, abortion, childbirth, or postnatal recovery must be treated in the same manner as any other temporary disability. Sick leave may be used during the 60-day waiting period for short-term disability to supplement, or in lieu of, short-term disability benefits. Sick leave may also be used to supplement, or in lieu of, workers' compensation to maintain 100% salary.

(b) Up to 30 days of earned sick leave may also be used to care for a child placed with an employee for adoption. (These days should be consecutive and within the first 12 months following the adoption, unless otherwise agreed upon between the employee and the school district administration.) Note: the foster care benefit is afforded under FMLA and is not designated in state policy.

(c) Medical appointments of the employee.

(d) Illness in the immediate family and medical appointments related to the illness that necessitates the employee's attendance. The length of leave granted for illness in the immediate family is determined by the school district based on individual employee need.

(e) Death in the immediate family. The length of leave granted for death in the immediate family is determined by the school district based on individual employee need.

(f) Whenever possible, employees should give 30 days' advance notice of plans to take sick leave for elective medical or surgical procedures or for childbirth.

(g) Military caregivers may choose to exhaust available sick and/or vacation/bonus leave, or any portion, or go on leave without pay to care for an injured family member.

(h) Employees may use vacation leave or go on leave without pay for military exigencies subject to the terms and conditions of the employer's normal leave policy. Military exigencies do not qualify for the use of sick leave, unless medically necessary.

Verification of Needing Sick Leave

The superintendent or designee may require a statement from a medical doctor or other acceptable proof that the employee was unable to work due to personal illness, medical appointment, illness or death in the family, or adoption.

Sick Leave Limitations

Sick leave may not be used while on leave without pay or on holidays and annual vacation leave days scheduled in the school calendar. An absence covered by workers' compensation is not considered to be a leave without pay. Sick leave may be used on any workday or student day including the first day employees in permanent positions report to work. An employee, who is not eligible to earn leave, cannot use previously accumulated leave.

What happens to my Sick Leave when I leave SCS?

(a) Pay for unused sick leave is not permitted, except when an employee has been approved for long-term disability.

(b) Accumulated sick leave counts as creditable service towards retirement. One month of credit is allowed for each 20 days of unused sick leave upon retirement. One more month is allowed for any part of 20 days left over. Sick leave converted from excess annual vacation leave is also creditable.

(c) From the date an employee resigns or moves to a temporary position, the sick leave balance is retained for 60 or 63 months. (In order to have 63 months, the individual must have separated under a 10 months' contract and returned to employment under a 10 months' contract.) If the person is re-employed in a full-time or part-time permanent position, or retires within this 60 or 63 months, the sick leave balance is reinstated. After this point, the sick leave balance cannot be reinstated.

(d) Unused sick leave must be transferred between local school districts.

(e) Sick leave may be transferred in whole or in part to and from a state agency, institution, community college, technical institute, or position covered by the State Personnel Act in county agencies of mental health, public health, social services, or emergency management if the receiving agency is willing to accept the leave. If the government agency refuses to accept sick leave earned by a school system employee, there is no lump-sum payout to the employee.

(f) There is no provision for public school employees to transfer leave to or from charter schools. The sick leave will be retained by the school district and reinstated if the employee returns to work there.

Reference: Board Policy 7510

5.6 Extended Sick Leave

Who is eligible for Extended Sick Leave and how much is earned?

Extended sick leave is available to classroom teachers and media coordinators who require substitutes if they are absent due to their own personal illness or injury and have exhausted all available accumulated paid leave (sick leave, annual vacation leave, and bonus leave). In order to be eligible, the employee must be in a permanent full- or part-time position. Those qualifying are allowed extended sick leave of up to 20 workdays throughout the regular (annual) term of employment.

How can Extended Sick Leave be used?

(a) In order for a newly hired employee to be eligible for extended sick leave, he or she must have reported to work.

(b) The local school system may request appropriate medical verification of the need for extended sick leave.

(c) Extended sick leave days do not have to be used consecutively.

(d) Unused extended sick leave days do not carry forward to succeeding school years. (e) Extended sick leave is not available beyond the waiting period of Workers' Compensation or Short-Term Disability.

Is there a payroll deduction for using Extended Sick Leave?

Employees on extended sick leave receive full salary less the required substitute deduction. The deduction is mandatory whether or not a substitute is employed. The standard deduction is \$50 per day.

Reference: Board Policy 7510 and 7520

5.7 Voluntary Shared Leave

What is the purpose of Voluntary Shared Leave?

The purpose of voluntary shared leave is to provide economic relief for employees who are likely to suffer financial hardship because of a prolonged absence or frequent short-term absences caused by a serious medical condition.

Who is eligible for Voluntary Shared Leave?

Only full-time and part-time permanent employees who have exhausted all available accumulated paid leave (sick leave, annual vacation leave, and bonus leave, if applicable) are eligible to receive donated leave. An employee need not exhaust personal leave and the 20 days of extended sick leave to be eligible for voluntary shared leave. Only employees in permanent (leave earning) status can participate in the voluntary shared leave program. An employee who is receiving benefits or is eligible to receive benefits from the Disability Income Plan is not eligible to receive donated leave. Voluntary shared leave may be used only during the required waiting period. The superintendent shall approve or deny all requests for receipt of donated leave.

If needed, how would I apply for Voluntary Shared Leave?

An employee, who, due to a serious medical condition of self or of his or her immediate family and faces prolonged or frequent absences from work, may apply to the superintendent for donated leave. Application may also be made by a third person acting on the employee's behalf, if the employee is unable to complete an application. An employee may complete an application for shared leave at such time as medical evidence is available to support the need for leave beyond the employee's available accumulated leave.

The following items must be included in the application:

1. A doctor's statement and
2. An authorization for release of medical information signed by the person who is suffering the medical condition (or parent or guardian of a minor). This release may also be signed by any legally authorized party.

Can immediate family members donate Voluntary Shared Leave?

An employee of an NC public school system may donate vacation/bonus or sick leave to an immediate family member, who is eligible to receive shared leave, in any public school, state agency, or community college. An eligible employee of a public school system may receive vacation/bonus and/or sick leave from an immediate family member in any NC public school system, state agency, or community college. Bonus leave may also be donated. There is no provision for public school employees to donate leave to or receive leave from employees or family members in charter schools or in county agencies of mental health, public health, social services, or emergency management including those covered by the State Personnel Act. Employees who donate sick leave shall be notified in writing of the State retirement credit consequences of donating sick leave. Donors may not reduce their leave balance(s) below one-half of what can be earned in a year.

Are non-family members eligible to donate Voluntary Shared Leave?

A school district employee may donate the following leave to a non-family member:

1. An employee may donate vacation or bonus leave to an employee of the same or another school district. (Sick leave can be donated under the provisions of #3 below.)
2. An employee may donate vacation or bonus leave to a coworker's immediate family who is an employee in a state agency or community college.
3. An employee of a school district may donate sick leave to a non-family member in the same or another school district under the following provisions:

- i. The donor shall not donate more than five days of sick leave per year to any one non-family member;
- ii. The combined total of sick leave donated to a recipient from non-family member donors shall not exceed 20 days per year;
- iii. Donated sick leave shall not be used for retirement purposes;
- iv. Donors may not reduce their sick leave balances below one-half of what can be earned in a year; and
- v. Employees who donate sick leave shall be notified in writing of the State retirement credit consequences of donating sick leave.

There is no provision for public school employees to donate leave to or receive leave from employees in charter schools or in county agencies of mental health, public health, social services, or emergency management including those covered by the State Personnel Act.

Are there special facts I need to know about Voluntary Shared Leave?

Approved school district employees may receive sick leave from both family members and non-family in NC public school districts. The combined total of sick leave received from non-family members shall not exceed 20 days per year. Approved NC public school district employees may receive sick leave only from immediate family members in community college institutions and state agencies. Donated sick leave shall not be used for retirement purposes. All donations must be in writing and must be signed by the donating employee. The employee receiving the leave must be named and the amount and type of leave donated must be specified. The minimum amount of leave donated must be one-half of a day. The donating employee may not receive compensation in any form for the donation of leave. Local boards shall adopt policies stating that acceptance of remuneration for donated leave will result in dismissal. An employee may normally receive no more than 130 workdays of donated leave, either continuously or for the same condition on a recurring basis. After 130 workdays have been used, the superintendent may extend this limit on a month-to-month basis until the maximum number of working days occurring between the first day of use of donated leave and twelve months have been used. (This provision is only available for those that are not eligible for short term disability).

Do I earn annual vacation and sick leave while using voluntary shared leave? Do I get paid for holidays?

Holidays occurring while the employee is using donated leave will be paid. Annual vacation and sick leave will continue to be earned by the employee while he or she is using donated leave. Available earned leave accrued during this period must be used by the employee prior to continued use of any voluntary shared leave.

What happens to leftover voluntary shared leave?

At the expiration of the period approved for voluntary shared leave as determined by the superintendent, any unused donated leave must be returned on a pro rata basis to the donors.

Reference: Board Policy 7510 and 7540

5.8 Disability Income Plan; Short and Long-Term Disability

The Disability Income Plan of North Carolina is administered by the North Carolina Department of the

State Treasurer and the Board of Trustees of the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS) within the terms and conditions of the Plan as set forth in the North Carolina General Statutes.

For employees vested in the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System after July 1, 2003, definitions of disability and disabled have been revised. Employees and employers need to contact the Retirement System to determine whether situations meet the requirements for the Disability Income Plan.

What is short-term disability and who is eligible for the benefit?

Employees with at least one year of contributing membership service with the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS) earned within 36 calendar months preceding the disability are eligible for short-term disability benefits.

After a waiting period of 60 continuous calendar days from the onset of a disability, an eligible employee may receive a monthly short-term benefit equal to 50% of 1/12th of his or her annual base rate of compensation plus 50% of 1/12th of his or her annual longevity payment, if any, to a maximum of \$3,000 per month. A person in receipt of short-term disability benefits is covered under the Teachers' and State Employees' Comprehensive Major Medical Plan, with the State contributing the cost of employee-only coverage, provided the person had contributed to the Retirement System at least five years as a public school or state employee at the time of disability. A person in receipt of benefits who did not meet the five-year requirement at the time of disability may elect to continue coverage under the Major Medical Plan by paying the full premium required. Short-term disability benefits may be extended for as many as 365 days beyond the original short-term period in cases where the Medical Board finds that the disability continues to be temporary and is likely to end during the extended period.

What is long-term disability and how does it work?

Employees with at least five years of contributing membership service with the Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement System (TSERS), earned within 96 calendar months prior to the end of the short-term disability period, are eligible for long-term disability benefits. Long-term disability payments are payable after the conclusion of the short-term disability period. During the first 36 months of the long-term disability period, the monthly long-term benefit will equal 65% of 1/12th of the employee's annual base rate of compensation that was last payable prior to the beginning of the short-term benefit period to a maximum of \$3,900 per month. After the first 36 months of the long-term disability period, the long-term benefit is reduced by an amount equal to the primary Social Security disability benefit to which the employee might be entitled had he or she been awarded Social Security disability benefits. A person in receipt of long-term disability benefits is covered under the Teachers' and State Employees' Comprehensive Major Medical Plan, with the State contributing the cost of employee-only coverage. An employee approved for long-term disability benefits must terminate employment as a permanent employee prior to receiving long-term disability benefits. An employee approved for long-term disability benefits who has not exhausted accumulated sick leave must be paid a lump sum for any available sick leave, if the employee is unable to apply the sick leave toward retirement.

5.09 Parental Leave

Who is eligible for parental leave and how much is provided?

(a) A permanent, probationary, or time-limited full-time public-school unit employee shall, at the time of the qualifying event, have met the 12-month employment requirement (and 1,040 hours) in any North Carolina PSU, NC state agency, or other public entity providing paid parental leave under G.S. 126-8.6, with the exception of charter schools that opt not to provide paid parental leave. Temporary employees, and independent contractors are not eligible for paid parental leave. Part-time employees receive the same amount of leave as full-time employees. Employees who work less than full-time hours will receive compensation for paid parental leave based on the percentage of the total wages for

that job that reflects the actual time worked.

(b) An employee who meets the definition above and becomes a parent to a child under the age of 18 years by birth, adoption or placement in foster care may take paid leave after the qualifying event, up to 8 weeks if the qualifying event is prior to 10/1/26 and up to 12 weeks if the qualifying event is on or after 10/1/26.

How and when can the leave be used?

(a) Paid parental leave may be used only once for a qualifying event within a rolling 12-month period. Multiple births, adoptions, or other legal placements does not increase the total amount of paid parental leave granted for a qualifying event

(b) Paid parental leave shall not be counted against or deducted from the eligible employee's accrued leave balances.

(c) Paid parental leave may be used at any time during the twelve months following the birth or placement of a child with the eligible employee. The leave must be taken consecutively unless otherwise requested by the employee. Unused paid parental leave is forfeited twelve months from the date of the qualifying event.

(d) Paid parental leave shall run concurrently with the Family Medical Leave Act job-protection benefit.

5.10 Personal Leave

Who earns personal leave and how much is earned?

(a) Personal leave is earned by classroom teachers and others who require substitutes (called "teachers" in this section). In order to be eligible, the teacher must be in a permanent full- or part-time position. Personal leave is earned at the rate of .20 days for each full month of employment not to exceed two days per year. Part-time personnel earn a pro rata share of the rate for full-time teachers. Unused personal leave may be carried forward from one year to another and may be accumulated without limitation until June 30th. On June 30, personal leave in excess of 5 days is converted to sick leave so that a maximum of 5 days of personal leave are carried forward to July 1st. Upon retirement, any personal leave may also be converted to sick leave.

How and when can personal leave be used?

(a) Personal leave may be used only upon the authorization of the immediate supervisor.

(b) An eligible teacher shall not take personal leave on the first day that he/she is required to report for the school year; on a required teacher workday; on days scheduled for State testing; or on the day before or the day after a holiday or scheduled vacation day, unless the request is approved by the principal.

(c) An eligible teacher who requests personal leave at least five days in advance shall be automatically granted the request subject to the availability of a substitute teacher. An eligible teacher or media coordinator making the request cannot be required to provide a reason for the request if the request is made at least five days in advance.

(d) Personal leave may be used on any instructional day or workday except as noted in paragraph (b) above.

(e) Eligible teachers using personal leave receive full salary less the required substitute deduction unless a reason for the personal leave is provided, except when using personal leave on teacher workdays. Eligible teachers using personal leave on teacher workdays shall receive full salary. Eligible teachers may use up to their accrued amount of personal leave on teacher workdays in accordance with paragraphs a, b, c, and d above.

What are some of the special points I need to know about personal leave?

(a) Personal leave should be used with due and proper consideration given to the welfare of the students and teachers alike and shall not be advanced.

(b) When an eligible teacher resigns or separates from service, personal leave cannot be paid out in lump sum.

(c) Personal leave must be used in one-half or whole day units.

(d) Eligible teachers using personal leave receive full salary less the required substitute deduction unless a reason for the personal leave is provided or personal leave is used on teacher workdays.

(e) Personal leave must be transferred between NC public schools.

Reference: Board Policy 7510

5.11 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 (parent, spouse or child). In addition, 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.

Which employees are covered under and eligible for FMLA?

An employee's eligibility for FMLA shall be made based on the employee's months of service and hours of work as of the date leave is to commence. Generally, employees are eligible for FMLA if they have been employed by the employer for at least 12 months, and have been employed for at least 1,250 hours of service during the 12-month period immediately preceding the commencement of the leave.

Because each employee's situation is different, it is best to contact an HR Specialist about your situation.

Reference: Board Policy 7520

5.12 Return to Work Policy

The board supports the practice of bringing employees back to work after a work-related injury or illness as soon as they are medically able in order to enhance the employee's recovery while minimizing the impact of work-related injuries on school system operations.

Reference: Board Policy 7635

5.13 Worker's Compensation

North Carolina Public School Law, G.S. §115C-337, states that provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act shall be applicable to all school employees and the State Board of Education shall make such arrangements as necessary to carry out the provisions of the Workers' Compensation Act. When an on the job accident/injury occurs, the employee must:

- (a) Immediately report the incident to your supervisor
- (b) See the Worker's Compensation Site Representative (usually the bookkeeper)
- (c) If medical attention is necessary after reporting the incident, visit Simple Clinic at 1515 Sunset Avenue in Clinton (M-F 8:00 AM-5:00 PM; Closed 1-2 PM). Other hours report to the Emergency Room at Sampson Regional Medical Center. Reporting to any other facility for workers' compensation will result in the employee being responsible for payment and/or filing medical insurance.

If an employee refuses an approved transitional duty assignment or other suitable employment offered under this policy or under the return-to-work program by this policy, the Superintendent or designee shall direct the workers' compensation administrator to apply to terminate the employee's workers' compensation benefit payments in accordance with the North Carolina Workers' Compensation Act. In addition, the employee will be subject to disciplinary action to the extent consistent with the law.

Due to its intricacies, you should direct your worker's compensation questions to the Worker's Compensation Administrator in the Finance Department.

Reference: Board Policy 7530

5.14 Military Leave for Extended Active Duty

All permanent, probationary, and trainee employees who enter active military service are eligible for military leave for extended active duty. Military Leave is guided by USERRA. Because of its complexities, questions should be directed to an HR Specialist.

Reference: Board Policy 7530

5.15 Vision Insurance

Vision insurance, an optional benefit, is provided by Superior Vision. Contact our Benefits Specialist with your questions or call (800) 507-3800 and press Option 3. Find more information at www.superiorvision.com.

5.16 Dental Insurance

Another optional employee benefit is dental insurance that is provided by Sun Life. Contact our Benefits Specialist should you have questions about this benefit or call (800) 442-7742. For more information, email www.sunlife.com.

5.17 Flexible Benefits Plan

Eligible employees have access to the Flexible Benefits Plan that permits voluntary participation in cancer policies; flexible spending accounts for medical purposes and dependent care; disability benefits;

life insurance; accident benefits; and medical bridge indemnity. Visit <http://piercегroupbenefits.com/client/sampsoncountyschools> for more specifics or contact our Benefits Specialist.

5.18 Supplemental Retirement Plans

Optional supplemental retirement plans are available through Prudential and Horace Mann in the form of a 401(k), 457 or 403B. Contributions are pre-tax and deducted from payroll checks.