

Frequently Asked Questions: \$1,000 Retention Bonus for Georgia Teachers and School-Based Staff

What is the purpose of the \$1,000 retention bonus?

The bonus is being provided to all K-12 public school-level teachers and staff to support stronger recruitment and retention of teachers and school-level staff and as a gesture of gratitude for their work and sacrifices during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Who is eligible for the \$1,000 retention bonus?

The bonus payments are intended for all school-level faculty and staff in Georgia's K-12 public schools, including **but not limited to** teachers, paraprofessionals, school counselors, school psychologists, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, school nutrition staff, media specialists, clerical staff and administrative assistants, school principals, assistant principals, instructional coaches, and therapists. **A specific listing of eligible job codes will be distributed to school districts prior to allocation of the funding. Funding will be allocated to districts based on the number of employees with eligible job codes reported in the most recent CPI count.**

- **Are Pre-K teachers housed in public schools eligible for the bonus?** The CARES Act funding GaDOE is using to provide the bonuses is being used for initiatives in K-12 schools, but the Governor's Office and Department of Early Care and Learning are working together to provide a \$1,000 bonus for eligible Pre-K staff through a separate fund source. Information on those bonus payments will be provided by DECAL.
- **Are contracted staff eligible for the bonus?** No. Funding is being allocated for employees of the LEA. Contracted staff should reach out to their direct employers for bonus decisions.
- **Are substitute teachers eligible for the bonus?** We are not able to provide funding for temporary public-school employees. However, we are exploring the possibility of providing funding to each LEA to provide the bonus payment to long-term substitutes.
- **Are part-time employees eligible for the bonus?** Yes. School-based part-time employees will receive a \$500 bonus.
- **Are any former/retired educators eligible for the bonus?** Educators who are not currently employed by a local school system in Georgia are not eligible for the bonus.
- **If an employee that is included on the list of eligible employees has since resigned, should the LEA locate the employee and pay the bonus?** No. Since a key purpose of the bonus is employee retention, individuals who are no longer school-based employees with an LEA are not eligible.



- **If an employee that is included on the list of eligible employees has since transferred to another district, should the LEA send the funds to the receiving LEA for payment through the payroll system?** Yes. If an eligible employee has transferred to another LEA, please contact that LEA and transfer the funding for the individual so the receiving LEA can process through payroll.
- **If a new employee was hired after the CPI report was submitted for October 2020 and is employed in an eligible position, should that employee receive the payment of \$1,000?** Yes. The LEA can use local or CARES funding for the payment. If the LEA has an employee that has resigned and did not relocate to another LEA in Georgia, the grant allocation can be used for the new employee who is not currently funded. If an LEA has this situation, please reach out to your district CARES Grant contact for guidance on how to document the individuals paid.

Will the LEA be required to submit a detail of employees paid with the allocation?

Yes. Because we recognize employees may retire or resign, and the position may be filled by an employee not reported on the CPI report, we request that districts submit a list of all employees funded with the allotment. The list will include job code and description. GaDOE will provide a pre-populated report to be completed by districts prior to submission of the completion report for the bonus grant award.

How will LEAs receive the funds for the \$1,000 retention bonus? Like all other CARES grants from the SEA Reserve, funds will be budgeted by the LEA in the consolidated application and districts will provide the bonus to qualifying employees in the same manner in which all other payments are made to employees.

A new program code for the allocation will be provided, and the LEA will draw down the funds using the same reimbursement method as with other federal grants. A report will be created in the MyGaDOE Portal that details the employees that are eligible for the grant, based on the 2021-1 (October 2020) CPI Report. More technical instructions will be provided once the funding is allocated.

Can an LEA use the funds allocated for the \$1,000 retention bonus for another purpose?

No. All funds allocated for the \$1,000 retention bonuses must be used for that purpose. That purpose will be stated in the grant award notification each LEA receives.

Should the bonus payments be issued in the current fiscal year, or could districts provide them in FY22?

Once funding for the \$1,000 retention bonuses is allocated, districts should work to provide the payments to employees within the 2021 Fiscal Year. Payments should not be held until FY22.

Can an LEA expand the bonus to additional staff using local funds?

Yes. An LEA can use local funds – including LEA CARES funds – to expand the bonus to additional staff. LEAs should consult with their GaDOE CARES contact regarding use of local CARES funds, and LEAs should consult with their Local Board of Education (LBOE) Attorney to determine the allowability of other funds used to expand the bonus payments. We

recommend that LEAs hold on expanding the bonus until the list of job codes funded by GaDOE has been released, to avoid double-funding any individual's retention bonus payment.

Will taxes be taken out of the bonus amount?

The bonus is intended to support stronger recruitment and retention of teachers and school level staff. Therefore, the bonus is considered taxable income. We are exploring the possibility of covering the employer portion of Medicare taxes (1.45%) in the allocation to school districts. All applicable taxes based on the LEA's participation in social security and each employee's withholdings are required. Each school district should consult their tax attorney regarding specific questions about the payment of the bonus.

Will the TRS contribution be taken out of the bonus amount? No. The Teachers Retirement System of Georgia has determined that this income is not "normal" earnable compensation based on Title 47 in state law and, therefore, will not be considered earnable compensation for TRS purposes.