

**§ 115C-302.8. Small county and low-wealth signing bonus.**

(a) Definitions. – For purposes of this section, the following definitions shall apply:

- (1) Eligible employee. – A person who meets all of the following criteria:
  - a. Accepts employment as a teacher with an eligible employer.
  - b. Was not employed by the eligible employer identified in sub-subdivision a. of this subdivision in the prior fiscal year.
  - c. Is employed by the eligible employer identified in sub-subdivision a. of this subdivision as of October 1 of the school year for which the teacher accepts employment.
- (2) Eligible employer. – The governing board of a local school administrative unit that receives at least one of the following in the year in which the teacher accepts employment pursuant to sub-subdivision c. of subdivision (1) of this subsection:
  - a. Small county school system supplemental funding.
  - b. Supplemental funding for local school administrative units in low-wealth counties.
- (3) Local funds. – Matching funds provided by an eligible employer to enable an eligible employee to qualify for the signing bonus program established by this section.
- (4) Teacher. – Teachers and instructional support personnel.

(b) Signing Bonus Program. – To the extent funds are provided for this purpose, the Department of Public Instruction shall establish and administer a signing bonus program for teachers. Signing bonuses shall be provided each school year to all eligible employees who are employed by an eligible employer as long as they are matched on the basis of one dollar (\$1.00) in State funds for every one dollar (\$1.00) in local funds, up to one thousand dollars (\$1,000) in State funds.

(c) Limited Exclusion from Future Signing Bonuses. – A teacher who receives a signing bonus pursuant to this section is ineligible to receive another signing bonus pursuant to this section or a similar enactment of the General Assembly for at least two full school years. This section shall not apply to any legislatively mandated bonuses received by teachers that are not signing bonuses.

(d) Bonuses as Additions. – The bonuses awarded pursuant to this section shall be in addition to any regular wage or other bonus a teacher receives or is scheduled to receive.

(e) Not for Retirement. – Notwithstanding G.S. 135-1(7a), the bonuses awarded pursuant to this section are not compensation under Article 1 of Chapter 135 of the General Statutes, Retirement System for Teachers and State Employees. (2023-134, s. 7A.5(a).)