

A Basic Right...

*A Great
Public School
for Every
Child.*

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Thinking of Retiring At the End of This School Year?

If So, Here's the Scoop on Resigning and Beginning Your Retirement Payments a Month Early

This year LEA and LPS entered into discussions about the feasibility of employees ending their contract and employment with LPS in May so that individuals could start receiving retirement benefits from the Nebraska State Retirement System in June rather than July. The obvious advantage to doing this would be to entitle retirees an additional month of retirement benefits. Because the school calendar has employees ending their work with students in May, the 2007-2008 school year appeared to be unique and to allow some flexibility for retirees that has not existed in the past and likely will not exist with next year's calendar.

Nothing is ever simple with working governmental bureaucracy, however.

LPS is required by the State Retirement System to annually submit a school-year calendar. This year LPS teachers have two non-student contract days that do not appear on the calendar for which employees are compensated. These are the two FLEX-days. Teachers have been given until March 21, 2008, to complete their district wide FLEX hours and until June 2, 2008, to complete their building FLEX time. On the calendar that was devised by LPS, March 21st is marked as a "Compensatory Day" for having fulfilled the seven hours of district flex time. June 3rd is marked as a "Compensatory Day" for having fulfilled the seven hours of building flex time. Because the LPS calendar for the year has long been submitted to the State Retirement System and cannot be amended at this late date, therein lies the rub.

Although no employees will be expected to actually work on June 3rd and the expectation is that all employees will have fulfilled their building FLEX requirement, the State Retirement System views June 3rd as a paid contract day for Lincoln teachers. Therefore, anyone wishing to retire this year and get early retirement benefits from the State in June *will need to cease their employment with the Lincoln Public Schools as of May 30th*. This is turn means that people who elect to do this, will be amending their contract with LPS and will have two days from their 191 contract days dropped as well as their pay for those two days (even though individuals will have "flexed" their time and will have earned

their pay for June 3rd in advance of the June 3rd Compensatory day).

So... What Should I do? Should I take the 2-Day Dock in Pay or Not?



Individuals need to decide on a *case-by-case basis* whether or not it is economically to their advantage whether or not to take the two-day dock in pay to get a month extra of benefits from the State or simply work June 2nd as they normally would and begin their retirement benefits in July.

Here is what you must take into consideration:

By signing the “May 30, 2008 Retirement and Resignation Agreement” prepared by the District’s law firm *to make the early benefits available and legal* to individuals, individuals will (1) be exchanging two days of pay for a month of extra benefits from the State Retirement System; and (2) actually will be reducing their income for the year which, in turn, has the *potential* for lowering their highest three years of salary upon which their retirement benefits will be based. For some people,

the dock of the two days may have little or no impact on their total retirement benefits.

The only way individuals can be sure whether or not taking advantage of the early resignation plan is to their financial advantage is to contact the State Retirement System and have them investigate the impact upon each individual’s retirement benefits of a lower salary for 2007-2008. Teachers should call the system at 471-2053 and identify themselves as a school employee to speak to someone in the correct office.

Neither the District nor the Association anticipated the need for employees to take a *two-day dock* in pay to take advantage of this plan (a one-day dock of pay was always assumed to be necessary). The two-day dock in pay is a legal technicality that needs to be respected in order for all parties, including the teachers taking advantage of the plan, to make *a clean break from their employment with the Lincoln Public Schools* in order to meet the requirements of the State Retirement System. The “May 30, 2008 Retirement and Resignation Agreement” is *optional* and, again, LEA stresses the need for members to make an informed, conscious decision regarding their benefits and whether or not they want to take advantage of this opportunity. Neither LEA nor LPS can provide individuals with their individual case analysis as only the State Retirement System has the necessary information to provide the appropriate details to members.

Got a Sick Student in Class?

Are You Wondering if They Should Really Be There?

Although LEA member Judith A. Zabel RN, MS, NCSN, and Supervisor of Health Services for the Lincoln Public Schools cautions that “nothing works 100% of the time,” policy is in place to protect the well being of students and staff from other sick students. The exclusion criteria for ill students include the following:

- 🚫** Temperature of 100 degrees or more
- 🚫** Undiagnosed rash
- 🚫** Inflamed red eyes and/or discharge
- 🚫** Vomiting and/or diarrhea
- 🚫** Frequent persistent cough
- 🚫** Questionable illness or injuries which may require evaluation by a physician
- 🚫** Sores that appear infected or are draining, and

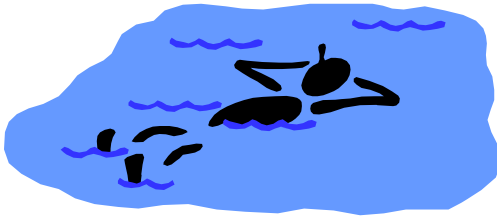


🚫 Other possible communicable conditions.

Students who have been excluded for any of the above reasons should report to the health office upon returning to school for evaluation before being readmitted to school. Students returning after a contagious disease may be admitted when free of symptoms (recommended temperature normal for 24 hours) at the discretion of the nurse. The general rule for students returning after a diagnosis of strep throat is they are to have been on antibiotic therapy 24-48 hours.

If you are concerned about a sick student in your class, for everyone's well-being please do not hesitate to contact or send them to your school nurse.

Urban Myths



Did you know that if you go swimming less than one hour after eating, you will develop cramps and drown?



Did you know that drinking Coca-Cola and taking aspirin at the same time can get you high or serve as an aphrodisiac?

Sorry, these are urban myths. Muscle cramps in the feet, hands, and calves are not uncommon among swimmers, but are hardly life threatening and can be tamed by tensing and then relaxing the affected muscles. Even if the cramp continues, one can always float until the cramp goes away. Unbelievably, the Coke and aspirin tale stems from an article in the *Journal of American Medical Association* from the 1930s that, although long debunked, has, perhaps, just remained wishful thinking on some peoples' (especially teens) part.

Here is another "urban myth" of which you should be aware:

Principals and District officials maintain files on employees which employees cannot see. **False.** Employees may see either or both their building or District file. An appointment needs to be made to have a District representative with you at the time. It is true that "confidential" references cannot and will not be shown to employees, but everything else is to be shown to employees upon request and employees may request copies of these materials. Further, nothing should ever be put into your file without your knowledge because you have the right to respond, in writing, to anything that is put into your file so that your response accompanies the original document.

Anyone with concerns regarding what might or might not be in their personnel file should ease their mind by making an appointment to review their file. **Individuals seeking a transfer**, in particular, might want to look at their file contents so they know if there are areas in which their file can be strengthened. Individuals can request that letters of accommodation from parents, students, peers, and/or supervisors and other such supportive documentary evidence be added to their file as well as new, updated letters of recommendation be added.