

CHAPTER 15.1-15
CONTRACTS OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

15.1-15-01. Performance reviews - Written reports.

1. a. The school district shall conduct two performance reviews of each individual employed as a teacher, a principal, or as an assistant or associate superintendent during each of the first three years an individual holds such a position. The school district shall prepare written reports of the individual's performance. The school district shall make the first yearly report available to the individual on or before December fifteenth. The school district shall make the second yearly report available to the individual on or before April fifteenth.
- b. If an individual begins employment as a teacher, a principal, or as an assistant or associate superintendent after January first, the school district shall conduct one review of the individual's performance. The school district shall make the written report available to the individual on or before April fifteenth.
2. Beginning with the fourth year of an individual's employment as a teacher, a principal, or as an assistant or associate superintendent, the school district shall conduct at least one review of the individual's performance each year. The school district shall prepare a written report of the individual's performance and make the report available to the individual on or before April fifteenth.

15.1-15-02. Probationary teachers - Review of evaluations - Renewal and nonrenewal of contracts.

1. If the board of a school district contemplates not renewing the contract of an individual employed as a probationary teacher, the board shall review the individual's evaluations required by section 15.1-15-01 and meet with the individual in an executive session to discuss the reasons for the contemplated nonrenewal.
2. The individual employed as a probationary teacher may be accompanied by two representatives selected by the individual for the purpose of speaking on behalf of the individual and by the individual's spouse or one other family member.
3. No claim for relief for libel or slander may be brought regarding any communication made at an executive session of a school board held pursuant to this section.
4. If the board of a school district elects not to renew the contract of an individual employed as a probationary teacher, the board shall provide written notification of the decision, together with a detailed description of the board's reasons, to the individual no earlier than April fifteenth nor later than May first.
5. Failure by the board of a school district to provide the notification required by subsection 4 constitutes an offer to renew the individual's contract on the same terms and conditions as the individual's contract for the current year.
6. The board of a school district may waive probationary status for a teacher with at least two years of teaching experience in the state.
7. The board of a school district shall offer, as needed, based on the teacher's evaluation, a teacher mentoring program for probationary teachers.
8. For purposes of this section, "probationary teacher" means an individual teaching for less than two years in the school district.

15.1-15-03. Employment after January first - Review of evaluation - Renewal and nonrenewal of contracts.

Repealed by S.L. 2005, ch. 161, § 2.

15.1-15-04. Contracts - Renewals - Notice.

1. a. If the board of a school district elects not to renew the contract of a teacher, a principal, or an assistant or associate superintendent for the ensuing school year, the board shall provide written notification of the decision to the individual.

- b. The board may not notify the individual under this section earlier than March first nor later than May first of the school year in which the individual has been employed.
- c. The failure of a board to provide written notice under this subsection constitutes an offer to renew the individual's contract for the ensuing school year, under the same terms and conditions as the individual's current contract.
- 2. a. No earlier than March first nor later than May first, the board of a school district shall provide to each individual offered a contract renewal notification of the date by which the individual must accept or reject the contract.
- b. At least fourteen calendar days must pass between the notification required by this subsection, and the date by which the individual must accept or reject the contract.
- 3. a. In order to accept an offer to renew a contract, including an offer generated by the failure of a board to provide written notice as required by subsection 1, an individual shall provide written notification of acceptance to the board on or before the date required by the board or May fifteenth, whichever is earlier. An individual accepting an offer to renew a contract is entitled to a written contract for the ensuing school year.
- b. In order to reject an offer to renew a contract, including an offer generated by the failure of a board to provide written notice as required by subsection 1, an individual shall provide written notification of rejection to the board on or before the date required by the board or May fifteenth, whichever is earlier.
- c. If an individual fails to provide notification of acceptance or rejection of an offer to renew a contract, the board is relieved of any continuing contract provisions.
- 4. a. If negotiations are being carried on pursuant to chapter 15.1-16, the provisions of this section requiring the board of a school district to give an individual notice and requiring that the individual respond to the notice are suspended until the negotiations are completed.
- b. If negotiations do not begin as required by subsection 5 of section 15.1-16-13, the board of a school district may provide notification to each individual offered a contract renewal.

15.1-15-05. Contracts - Contemplated nonrenewal - Reasons - Notice.

- 1. If the board of a school district contemplates not renewing the contract of an individual employed as a teacher, a principal, or as an associate or assistant superintendent, the board shall, no earlier than March first nor later than April fifteenth:
 - a. Provide written notification of the contemplated nonrenewal to the individual.
 - b. Schedule a hearing to be held on or before April twenty-first for the purpose of discussing and acting upon the contemplated nonrenewal.
 - c. Provide written notification of the date, time, and place for the hearing to the individual.
 - d. Provide written notification of the reasons for the contemplated nonrenewal to the individual.
- 2. The reasons for the contemplated nonrenewal of the individual's contract must not be frivolous or arbitrary. The reasons must be sufficient to justify the contemplated nonrenewal and must:
 - a. Originate from specific findings documented in the report of the individual's performance required by section 15.1-15-01 and relate to the individual's ability, competence, or qualifications; or
 - b. Originate from the needs of the district in justifying a reduction in the staff.

15.1-15-05.1. Principal - Employed for less than two years - Notification of nonrenewal.

- 1. If the board of a school district elects not to renew the contract of a principal, an assistant superintendent, or an associate superintendent, who has been employed by the board in that position for less than two years, the board shall provide written notice

of the nonrenewal to the individual before May first. At the request of the individual, the board shall meet with the individual, in executive session, to convey the reasons for the nonrenewal.

2. No claim for libel or slander may be brought regarding any communication made at an executive session held in accordance with this section.

15.1-15-06. Contracts - Contemplated nonrenewal - Hearing.

1. At the hearing required by section 15.1-15-05, the school district superintendent or a designee of the board shall present testimony or documentary evidence regarding the reasons for the contemplated nonrenewal of the individual's contract.
2. The board of the school district contemplating the nonrenewal of an individual's contract may call additional witnesses to present testimony or documentary evidence regarding the reasons for nonrenewal.
3. The individual whose contract is subject to nonrenewal may call witnesses and produce evidence necessary to refute the reasons for the nonrenewal.
4. Each witness appearing on behalf of the board of the school district or the individual whose contract is subject to nonrenewal may be questioned for the purpose of clarification.
5. The board of the school district shall review all testimony and evidence presented at the hearing and make a determination regarding the nonrenewal. If the board determines that the reasons for nonrenewal have not been substantiated, the board shall dismiss the nonrenewal proceedings.
6. Unless otherwise agreed to by the board of the school district and the individual subject to the nonrenewal, the hearing must be conducted as an executive session of the board, except that:
 - a. The individual may invite to the hearing any two representatives, and the individual's spouse or one other family member; and
 - b. The board may invite to the hearing any two representatives, the school district business manager, and the school district superintendent.
7. The individual subject to the nonrenewal may request one continuance. If a continuance is requested, the board of the school district shall grant a continuance not in excess of seven days.
8. No cause of action for libel or slander may be brought regarding any communication made in an executive session of the board held for the purposes provided in this section.
9. A determination by the board of a school district not to renew an individual's contract is, if made in good faith, final and binding on all parties.
10. If the board of a school district elects not to renew an individual's contract, the board shall provide notice of its determination to the individual in writing on or before May first.

15.1-15-07. Discharge for cause - Grounds.

The board of a school district may dismiss an individual employed as a teacher, a principal, or as an assistant or associate superintendent prior to the expiration of the individual's contract for any of the following causes:

1. Immoral conduct.
2. Insubordination.
3. Conviction of a felony.
4. Conduct unbecoming the position held by the individual.
5. Failure to perform contracted duties without justification.
6. Gross inefficiency that the individual has failed to correct after written notice.
7. Continuing physical or mental disability that renders the individual unfit or unable to perform the individual's duties.

15.1-15-08. Discharge for cause - Hearing.

1. If the board of a school district contemplates the discharge for cause of an individual employed as a teacher, a principal, or as an assistant or associate superintendent before the expiration of the individual's contract, the board shall petition the director of the office of administrative hearings for appointment of an administrative law judge to preside over the hearing. The administrative law judge shall set the time and place of the hearing, direct the board to publish notice of the hearing, and direct the board to provide to the individual a list of charges at least five days before the hearing.
2. Except as otherwise provided in this section, the hearing must be conducted in accordance with chapter 28-32.
3. Unless otherwise agreed to by the board and the individual, the administrative law judge shall close the hearing, except for the parties, their legal representatives, witnesses, three invitees requested by the individual, and three invitees requested by the board.
4. The individual subject to the discharge may request one continuance. If a continuance is requested, the administrative law judge shall grant the continuance not in excess of seven days. Upon a showing of good cause by the individual, the administrative law judge may grant a continuance in excess of seven days.
5. No cause of action for libel or slander may be brought regarding any communication made in an executive session of the board held for the purposes provided in this section.
6. At the conclusion of the hearing, the administrative law judge shall provide all evidence presented at the hearing to the board in order that the board may make a determination regarding the discharge.
7. A determination of the board under this section may be appealed to the district court.
8. All costs of the services provided by the administrative law judge, including reimbursement for expenses, are the responsibility of the board.

15.1-15-09. Alleged child abuse - Discharge - Nonrenewal of contract - Limitations.

1. The board of a school district may not discharge or refuse to renew the contract of a teacher, a principal, or an assistant or associate superintendent solely because a report of suspected child abuse or neglect under section 50-25.1-05 alleges participation by the individual.
2. If a report of suspected child abuse or neglect under section 50-25.1-05 alleges participation by a teacher, a principal, or an assistant or associate superintendent, the individual may be suspended pending the outcome of the case by:
 - a. The board of the employing school district;
 - b. The superintendent of the employing school district, if authorized in accordance with subdivision b of subsection 22 of section 15.1-09-33; or
 - c. An individual charged with administering the district, if authorized in accordance with subdivision c of subsection 22 of section 15.1-09-33.

15.1-15-10. Suspension during discharge proceeding - Compensation.

1. The board of a school district may suspend an individual employed as a teacher, a principal, or as an assistant or associate superintendent if, by unanimous vote, the board determines that suspension is appropriate during the period in which a discharge for cause is pursued.
2. The board shall address the matter of the individual's suspension in an executive session, unless both the board and the individual agree that the matter may be addressed in the presence of others or at an open meeting of the board.
3. If the individual is ultimately discharged for cause, the board may determine the amount of compensation, if any, payable to the individual during the period of suspension. If the individual is ultimately not discharged, the board may not apply any reduction to the individual's salary for the period of suspension.

15.1-15-11. Discharge for cause - Report to education standards and practices board.

If the board of a school district discharges for cause an individual employed as a teacher, a principal, or as an assistant or associate superintendent, the board shall report the discharge to the education standards and practices board.

15.1-15-12. Nonapplicable provisions.

This chapter does not apply to:

1. Any individual employed to teach at an institution of higher education under the control of the state board of higher education;
2. Any individual employed to teach at the youth correctional center, North Dakota vision services - school for the blind, or the school for the deaf;
3. Any individual who replaces a teacher, a principal, or an assistant or associate superintendent while that teacher, principal, or assistant or associate superintendent is on a leave of absence or a sabbatical; and
4. Any individual employed by a school district as a teacher, a principal, an assistant superintendent, or an associate superintendent, provided the individual's term of employment begins on or after January first and does not extend beyond June thirtieth of the same school year.
5. Any individual employed by a school district in a position substantially funded by grant funds, overloads, or a temporary funding source, or an individual replacing a school district employee and who is employed by a school district in a position substantially funded by grant funds, overloads, or a temporary funding source, if the individual received advance notice of the defined contract term before accepting employment with the school district.