

2025-2026 Principal Salary FAQ

Overview: This document addresses questions and topics related to the salary provisions for principals. The requirements outlined in the document below are in effect as of July 1, 2025.

Legislation for Principal Salary related provisions is based on S.L. 2024-39 Sec. 1.2, as modified by S.L. 2025-89, Sec. 3.3(4).

Requirements

The following annual salary schedule for principals is established in Section 1.2 of S.L. 2024-39 as follows:

2025-2026 Principal Annual Salary Schedule			
Avg. Daily Membership	Base	Met Growth	Exceeded Growth
0-200	\$77,792	\$85,570	\$93,350
201-400	\$81,681	\$89,849	\$98,017
401-700	\$85,570	\$94,128	\$102,685
701-1,000	\$89,461	\$98,406	\$107,353
1,001-1,600	\$93,350	\$102,685	\$112,020
1,601+	\$97,239	\$106,963	\$116,687

A principal's placement on the salary schedule shall be determined according to the average daily membership of the school supervised by the principal, as described in subsection (b) of this section, and the school growth scores, calculated pursuant to G.S. 115C-83.15(c), for each school the principal supervised in one or more prior school years, as described in subsection (c) of this section, regardless of a break in service, and provided the principal supervised each school as a principal for at least a majority of the school year, as follows:

Exceeded Growth

A principal shall be paid according to the Exceeded Growth column of the schedule as follows:

For the first six months of the applicable fiscal year, if the school growth scores show the school or schools exceeded expected growth in at least two of the prior three school years. Note: As growth data will be available for the most recent school year for the first six months of the school year, the principal's growth scores will be the same as used for salary purposes in the final six months of the previous school year.

- 1) For the second six months of the applicable fiscal year, if the school growth scores show the school or schools exceeded expected growth in at least two of the prior three school years.

Met Growth

A principal shall be paid according to the Met Growth column of the schedule as follows:

- 1) For the first six months of the applicable fiscal year, if any of the following apply:

2025-2026 Principal Salary FAQ

- a) The school growth scores show the school or schools met expected growth in at least two of the prior three school years.
- b) The school growth scores show the school or schools met expected growth in at least one of the prior three school years and exceeded expected growth in one of the prior three school years.
- c) The principal supervised a school in at least two of the prior three school years that was not eligible to receive a school growth score.

Note: As growth data will be available for the most recent school year for the first six months of the school year, the principal's growth scores will be the same as used for salary purposes in the final six months of the previous school year.

- 2) For the second six months of the applicable fiscal year, if any of the following apply:
 - a) The school growth scores show the school or schools met expected growth in at least two of the prior three school years.
 - b) The school growth scores show the school or schools met expected growth in at least one of the prior three school years and exceeded expected growth in one of the prior three school years.
 - c) The principal supervised a school in at least two of the prior three school years that was not eligible to receive a school growth score.

Base

A principal shall be paid according to the Base column, as follows:

- 1) For the first six months of the applicable fiscal year, if any of the following apply:
 - a) The school growth scores show the school or schools did not meet expected growth in at least two of the prior three school years.
 - b) The principal has not supervised any school as a principal for a majority of the school year in at least two of the prior three school years.

Note: As growth data will be available for the most recent school year for the first six months of the school year, the principal's growth scores will be the same as used for salary purposes in the final six months of the previous school year.

- 2) For the second six months of the applicable fiscal year, if any of the following apply:
 - a) The school growth scores show the school or schools did not meet expected growth in at least two of the prior three school years.
 - b) The principal has not supervised any school as a principal for a majority of the school year in at least two of the prior three school years.

Average Daily Membership

For purposes of determining the average daily membership of a principal's school, the following amounts shall be used during the following time periods:

- 1) For the first six months of the applicable fiscal year, the average daily membership for the school from the third year. If the school did not have an average daily membership in the third year, the projected average daily membership for the school for the applicable school year.

2025-2026 Principal Salary FAQ

- 2) For the second six months of the applicable fiscal year, the average daily membership for the school for the applicable school year.

Note: Effective January 1, 2025, ADM for determining school size includes Pre-K ADM

Growth Scores

For purposes of determining the school growth scores for each school the principal supervised in one or more prior school years, the following school growth scores shall be used during the following time periods:

- 1) For the first six months of the applicable fiscal year, the school growth scores from the first and second years.
- 2) For the second six months of the applicable fiscal year, the school growth scores from the first, second, and third years. If a principal does not have a school growth score from any of the school years identified in this subdivision, the most recent available growth scores, up to the third year, shall be used.

Longevity

As with previous fiscal years, in lieu of providing longevity payments to principals paid on the principal salary schedule, the amounts of those longevity payments are included in the annual amounts under the principal salary schedule.

A principal compensated in accordance with this section for the applicable fiscal year shall receive an amount equal to the greater of the following:

- 1) The applicable amount on the principal salary schedule for the applicable fiscal year.
- 2) For principals who were eligible for longevity in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the sum of the following:
 - a) The salary the principal received in the 2016-2017 fiscal year pursuant to Section 9.1 or Section 9.2 of S.L. 2016-94.
 - b) The longevity that the principal would have received as provided for State employees under the North Carolina Human Resources Act for the 2016-2017 fiscal year based on the principal's current years of service.
- 3) For principals who were not eligible for longevity in the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the salary the principal received in the 2016-2017 fiscal year pursuant to Section 9.1 or Section 9.2 of S.L. 2016-94.

For purposes of this section, the following definitions apply:

- 1) First year. – The school year immediately preceding the second year.
- 2) Second year. – The school year immediately preceding the third year.
- 3) The applicable fiscal year. – The current fiscal year.
- 4) The applicable school year. – The current school year.
- 5) Third year. – The school year immediately preceding the applicable school year.

Principal Salary Questions:

1. ***Is the above salary schedule in place throughout the entire year, or will the salary schedule change as of January 1, 2026 when the school growth scores and average daily membership are used to calculate a principal's salary change?***

2025-2026 Principal Salary FAQ

The above salary schedule is in effect as of July 1, 2025 and will be in place for the entire fiscal year. A principal's salary will be determined based on their placement on the salary schedule at two distinct time periods within the fiscal year – 1) the first six months (July 1 through December 31) and 2) the second six months (January 1 through June 30). The criteria to be used for each time period are outlined above. In general, for principals at the same school, their salary for the first six months would be the same as their salary for the last six months of the prior year.

2. *Is a principal's salary guaranteed to change on January 1?*

No. If the school average daily membership remains in the same range for last school year and current school year, and the principal's growth score does not change between two of the three previous school years, then the principal's salary will not change on January 1. However, if either (or both) of those factors change, then the principal's salary will need to be adjusted.

3. *If I am a principal at a school that ends up having a lower average daily membership (ADM) in the current school year than it had for last school year, will my salary potentially be reduced as of January 1 or will there be a hold harmless for ADM decreases?*

There is no hold harmless for ADM. As a result, if a school's ADM decreases in the current school year, the principal of that school could potentially have their salary decreased depending on the principal's original salary, scope of the ADM decreases and the principal's student growth score. As the overall salary is dependent on both ADM and student growth, an ADM decrease does not guarantee that the principal's salary will decrease.

4. *Will the growth scores used as of January 1 still be from two out of three years, or will it just be the growth scores from one out of two years?*

The school growth scores from the first, second, and third years will be used. If a principal does not have a school growth score from any of the school years identified in this subdivision, the most recent available growth scores, up to the third year, shall be used.

5. *I just became a principal, and I do not have any growth scores. The ADM of my school was 800 last school year and is projected to be 830 students in the current school year. What will I be paid from July 1 through December 31, and what will I be paid from January 1 through June 30?*

Principals who have not supervised any school as a principal in the two of the three most recent school years are to be paid from the base level from the salary schedule for the entire year.

Based on last school year ADM of 800, and assuming that the projected ADM becomes the actual ADM in the current school year, the principal in question would be paid on pay level B4 for the entire school year. If the actual ADM of the school for the current school year is either lower than 700 or greater than 1,000, the principal's salary would change after December 31.

6. *Will there be any sort of hold harmless for growth placement if my school growth score for last school year was lower than the school growth score in the previous school years?*

2025-2026 Principal Salary FAQ

No. **There will be no hold harmless for growth scores for the current fiscal year.** If the growth score for a principal's school is lower last year than in previous years, the principal's salary could decrease depending on the scope of the decrease in growth score and any change in ADM of the principal's school.