

## Exceptional Children Teacher Vacancies

### Guidance Document

The intent of this document is to provide critical points to consider when problem-solving the scenarios that have become apparent because of the teacher/related service provider vacancies across the state. It is critical that all problem solving efforts result in *reasonable* and *appropriate* decisions considering *the unique circumstances of the students impacted* by the teacher/related service provider vacancy.

While reviewing the document, please be mindful of the following:

- Compensatory education services for EC students must always be considered for vacancies and when positions are filled by unlicensed teachers or related service providers.
- Careful monitoring of alternative licenses should be frequent, ongoing, and not left exclusively to self-reporting by the employee.
- If an employee does not meet the criteria to be assigned an NCID or access to other student information systems, permitting access to ECATS is unlikely to be possible or appropriate.

## Recruitment and Retention

PSUs across the state strive to provide a high-quality education to every student. To do so, there must be qualified individuals who are willing to serve as teachers and PSUs must have policies and practices in place to attract these individuals. Therefore, recruitment and retention policies at the PSU level are paramount in decreasing the teacher vacancies.

The resources in this section can be used to help PSUs:

- Establish and revise policies related to recruitment and retention
- Post vacancies across various job sites
- Take additional action after vacancies are posted

### Recruitment Strategies

[Past NCDPI Recruitment Summit Sessions](#)

[NCDPI Recruitment Resources for Related Service Providers](#)

[Recruitment Strategies from The National Coalition on Personnel Shortages in Special Education and Related Services \(NCPSSERS\)](#)

[IDEAS that Work from the Office of Special Education Programs \(OSEP\)](#)

[Educator Shortages in Special Education Toolkit from the CEEDAR Center](#)

## Posting Job Vacancies

[Teach NC](#) - Teach NC is a site for prospective teachers that allows them to research the profession, get licensed, and apply to vacancies. To post a vacancy with Teach NC, email the request and posting to [nc@teach.org](mailto:nc@teach.org).

[K12JobSpot](#) - K12JobSpot is a job site designed to help educators find available teaching jobs, administrative jobs, and other related positions across the nation. To post a vacancy on this site, visit [k12jobspot.com/Employers](http://k12jobspot.com/Employers).

[National Association of Special Education Teachers \(NASSET\)](#)- NASSET is a national organization that supports people interested in teaching in the special education field. [Post a Job National Association of Special Education Teachers](#).

Due to the limited number of professionals in the low-incidence areas of Deaf/Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and Visual Impairment, the Sensory Support and Assistive Technology Section posts job vacancies to their listservs for the following professionals:

- Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- Teachers of the Visually Impaired
- DeafBlind Interveners
- Educational Interpreters/Transliterators
- Braillists
- Orientation and Mobility Specialists

If you would like a job vacancy in one of these areas to be posted, please contact Sherri Vernelson, [sherri.vernelson@dpi.nc.gov](mailto:sherri.vernelson@dpi.nc.gov).

Additional job posting sites not specific to Special Education:

[Indeed](#); [Monster](#); [Simplyhired](#); [ZipRecruiter](#); [Glassdoor](#)

## Additional Actions to Consider after Vacancies are Posted

Posting vacant positions is necessary but may not be sufficient for fulfilling vacancies. Below are actions that can be completed in addition to posting vacancies. Please note that these suggestions may be implemented concurrently to provide special education services.

- PSUs should review licensure of staff who are not currently assigned an instructional role within the PSU (e.g., instructional coach, mentor teacher, case manager, program specialist, etc.) and consider reassignment to cover vacant positions.
- Explore if there are any people already working in the district that may be eligible for a Permit to Teach, Emergency License, or Residency license. See below for more information about these licenses.
- Determine if there are any retirees with an EC license that may be willing to work. Policies regarding rehiring retirees can be found on the [OSHR website](#).
- Connect with neighboring Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to locate recent graduates. Teacher Preparation Programs as well as Career Services at an IHE may be a beneficial resource.
- Identify Teacher Assistants that may be interested in becoming an EC teacher. There are programs available to help TAs receive the degree needed to become a teacher. DPI supports this effort through the Teacher Assistants to Teachers Tuition Reimbursement Program. More information about this program can be found on the [DPI Website](#). Please note, some IHEs in the state also have TA to Teachers programs that can also be utilized.
- Consider participating in the Troops to Teacher Program. This program assists eligible military personnel and veterans transition to new careers as public school teachers. PSUs interested in this program, may visit the [NC Troops to Teachers](#) website for more information.
- Consider the use of Long-Term Substitutes with an EC license.
- Temporary solutions and staffing agencies may be utilized to assist in locating short-term substitutes, long-term substitutes, and full-time professionals.
- Contracting EC teachers may be considered as a last resort if needed. PSUs should consult with their local HR department and School Board Attorney to determine if a contracted employee is allowable. If a contracted employee is hired, PSUs need to be familiar with how to support them, which is addressed later in this guidance.

## Compensatory Education Services

Compensatory education services must be considered for students with disabilities experiencing an interruption (e.g., vacancy, no EC license, no related service license) to receiving specially designed instruction and/or related services. Information in this section can be used to help PSUs:

- Stay in compliance with NC policies while working to fulfill a vacancy
- Address potential compensatory education services during vacancies

It is important to remember that during program compliance monitoring, a PSU may be permitted a window of time to post and secure (recruit and retain) an EC licensed teacher prior to providing compensatory education services during their corrective action timeline. However, posting the vacant position alone does not remedy the overall noncompliance for failing to implement IEPs by appropriately licensed staff or protect the PSU from corrective action.

## Document Services

It is highly recommended that data is collected on IEP goals through progress monitoring at the beginning of any teacher vacancy. At a minimum, progress monitoring the same IEP goals should be conducted again when the vacancy is filled. These data points will be used to determine whether there was educational harm because of the prolonged teaching vacancy and whether compensatory education services are required.

## Communicate with Parents and Guardians

It is best practice to communicate any vacancies and mitigation plans to parents at the beginning of each vacancy. Provide frequent updates if vacancies are prolonged. Communicate when vacancies are filled.

Consider a communication plan that clearly identifies with whom parents should address concerns during vacancies. Consider identifying an individual that will be in possession of current information, authorized to provide details regarding vacancies and intervention prior to the escalation of disputes, and can consistently respond to parent concerns.

## Maximize the Use of Existing EC Teachers

If a building has multiple EC teachers, consider rotating one licensed EC teacher with the substitute in the vacant classroom. The licensed EC teacher plans the instruction based on the IEPs of students in their classroom (Class A) and the substitute classroom (Class B). The licensed EC teacher also serves as case manager for IEP Team meetings, developing IEPs and progress reports, and communicating with parents for Class A/B. However, the implementation of the IEP, providing direct instruction by the licensed EC teacher, alternates between Class A or Class B daily; while the substitute supports the ongoing learning opportunities of students not working with the licensed EC teacher.

*Please be reminded that this option potentially mitigates the scope of compensatory education services; but does not waive the PSU's responsibility to meet with the parent to discuss whether compensatory education services are required.*

## Contracting Services

As PSUs work to fulfill vacancies, contracting services may become necessary. There are no policies that prohibit the use of contracted services; however, PSUs should be knowledgeable about how to support contracted employees.

Additionally, the PSU should review requirements for contracting personnel with their local human resources department and in compliance with local school board policy. Please keep in mind that “teacher contracts” in general statute and “contracting for additional personnel” may have unique and unrelated requirements best addressed by collaboration with local human resources personnel.

Further, the contracting agency may have requirements that are either negotiated or agreed to by the PSU. As contracts are negotiated, it may be important for PSUs to consider training requirements, length of employment, and use of EC systems that are used to generate funding and compile other data (e.g., ECATS, Powerschool, CCIP). If a PSU allows contracted employees access to these systems, a NCID will be required. Once a NCID is assigned, user roles are assigned at the local PSU level.

*Please note, if an employee is unable to be assigned an NCID, they will not be able to access ECATS or other student information systems.*

The resources below can be used to onboard employees who are contracted with the PSU.

## ECATS

[Acquiring Staff UID for Non-Payroll Staff](#)

[ECATS User Access](#)

[EC Process and ECATS Courses](#)

[ECATS: Onboarding for New EC Staff](#)

[ECATS User Type Permissions](#)

## Powerschool

Accessing the Home Base tool, PowerSchool, is based on user roles and at the discretion of the PSU. The contracted employee can use the following steps to request user access:

**Step 1:** Contact the school, school district, or charter school and request access.

**Step 2:** Once access has been granted, [claim the account](#).

**Step 3:** Bookmark the [NCEdCloud site](#) for easy access in the future

Each public school unit has identified a lead person to help with questions around the key components of Home Base/Powerschool. [Identify the support personnel](#) in your PSU.

## Comprehensive, Continuous Improvement Plan (CCIP)

To access CCIP, contracted personnel must have a valid NCID user account. District, Charter and Lab school personnel must go through their NCID Administrator, then the CCIP User Access Administrator (UAA) listed in CCIP for access.

Directions for adding CCIP users are located on the homepage of the [CCIP website](#).

## Virtual Instruction

In rare, time-limited circumstances, a virtual EC licensed teacher might be a viable option. Although not ideal, PSUs should consider the following when virtual instruction may be needed to mitigate prolonged teacher vacancies and interruptions to EC services.

### Considerations for Virtual Instruction

- The students to be served were successful and made progress in remote learning during pandemic-related school closures;
- The IEP Team has discussed the remote learning arrangement with the parent and reviewed and revised the IEP to consider any accommodations or additional supplementary aids and services necessary to participate;
- The IEP goals can be implemented as written for all students instructed by the virtual teacher;
- Adequate in-person staff are supporting the learning environment;
- Routine classroom observations are conducted to review appropriateness for the students;
- The virtual teacher's role is to provide direct instruction, not observational or to supervise non-EC, unlicensed, or paraprofessional staff;
- Progress monitoring of IEP goals is possible;
- Class size/caseload waivers are not required; and
- Instruction is accessible to all students.

It is important to note, that if a PSU cannot be certain that a virtual teacher is providing specially designed instruction, the PSU should not use virtual teachers. Additionally, it may not be a good idea to utilize virtual instruction if any of the following are true:

- There is a need to change a student's IEP to align with the resources that are currently available;
- The PSU is unable to adequately and effectively communicate a service delivery plan with parents/guardians;
- Remote learning was unsuccessful for the student(s) during the COVID pandemic;
- Virtual teacher is being used for supervision of paraprofessionals;
- There are concerns regarding student's ability to access the virtual learning environment;
- The licensed teacher is not able to provide specially designed instruction.

*Please note, remote learning plans/contingency plans that were added to the IEP during COVID-related closures are not to be used for the purposes of documenting the use of a virtual EC teacher.*

*If accommodations or supplementary aids and supports need to be added for the class in which the virtual EC teacher is used, the accommodations and implementation specifics should be added to the student's current IEP as an addendum.*

## Licensure for Exceptional Children Teachers

All North Carolina teachers, student services personnel and administrators must be licensed to serve in the public schools. Moreover, all EC Teachers in public schools must hold an EC professional educator's license. There are several types of licenses that may be utilized when hiring EC teachers. The policy for general license requirements can be found in the [State Board of Education policy manual](#).

### **Residency License**

At the request of an employing Public School Unit, an individual, including one who holds a Permit to Teach or Emergency License, may qualify for a one-year Residency License in a teaching area. An individual who holds a Residency License cannot hold a Permit to Teach or Emergency License.

An individual may renew a Residency License twice within three-years of the date the original Residency License issued. All requirements to convert a Residency License to either an IPL or CPL must be completed before the expiration of the second renewal of the Residency License.

*Please note, once an individual holds a Residency License, the individual may not hold a Permit to Teach or an Emergency License.*

A Residency License is an alternative pathway to licensure allowing an individual to teach during the pursuit of a professional license. An individual must be in pursuit of a special education license and have the appropriate credentials (bachelor's degree in special education and coursework in special education or passed the Praxis in special education) and be enrolled in a recognized educator preparation program to meet special education license requirements.

### **Permit to Teach**

NCDPI may issue a permit to teach for a teaching assignment at the A-00 pay level to persons who hold at least a baccalaureate degree but who do not qualify for a license under any other approach. The permit to teach shall be valid for one year and may not be renewed. When an LEA requests a permit to teach, the LEA must document that no appropriately licensed professionals or persons who are eligible for a residency license are available to accept the position.

### **Emergency License**

NCDPI may issue Emergency Licenses for a teaching assignment at the request of the PSU or charter school. The Emergency License is a one-year nonrenewable license issued to an individual who holds a baccalaureate degree with 18 hours of coursework relevant to the requested licensure area but has not completed a recognized educator preparation program and does not qualify for a Residency License.

***Permits to Teach and Emergency Licenses only meet special education licensure requirements if the degree / coursework is relevant to special education.***

*Please note that each licensure type has its own unique requirements and expiration dates. Partnering with your local human resources personnel to actively monitor and submit applications in advance of license expiration dates is highly encouraged.*

It is also highly recommended that a representative from Human Resources or EC keep track of license expiration and be proactive in keeping it up to date. When working to transition from a permit to teach, or emergency license, applicants will need to consider the time it takes for license approval and should not provide service with an expired license. Processing of licensure applications is taking longer than usual and may exceed 8-12 weeks; please plan accordingly.



## **Regional Assistance Licensing Centers**

If human resources offices within PSUs need licensure assistance, [Regional Assistance Licensing Centers](#) are available to help!

There are four Regional Assistance Licensing Centers (RALCs) in North Carolina. RALC's assist public school systems' Human Resource personnel with licensure situations, applications, questions, and training.

During staff shortages, there may be an increase of applicants from other states. Hired staff who are in the process of receiving a NC license, may have access to ECATS and other EC information systems at the discretion of the PSU. Ultimately, The PSU makes the decision regarding the permission type to provide its users, please see user access information above to determine the appropriate access for your new hire.

In addition to new hires from other states, some PSU may employ long-term substitutes. Teacher assistants may fill this role if it meets the requirements for substitute teaching by local board policies. However, compensatory education services may still be needed when teacher assistants who do not meet licensure requirements are utilized.

## **More Options for Assistance**

We appreciate your diligent efforts and support as we work together to decrease the exceptional children teacher vacancies in our state. If you have unique questions that are not addressed in this guidance, please contact the Office of Exceptional Children Regional Coordinator for further assistance.