

CALIFORNIA STATE TEACHERS' RETIREMENT SYSTEM (CaSTRS)

CaSTRS provides retirement, disability and survivor benefits for full-time and part-time California public school educators through its Defined Benefit, Defined Benefit Supplement, and Cash Balance Benefit programs. The Teachers' Retirement Fund is a special trust fund established by law that holds the assets of the CaSTRS Defined Benefit, Defined Benefit Supplement, and Cash Balance Benefit programs. The assets come from contributions by employees, employers and the State of California.

Membership

If you are an educator or are performing other activities that are creditable service, you may be a member of the Defined Benefit Program as mandated by law or you may be eligible to elect membership. You are eligible for the Defined Benefit Program if you're an employee of a California public school system, prekindergarten through community college, in a position that requires you to:

- have a credential, certificate or permit; or
- meet the minimum standards adopted by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.

Only activities identified as creditable service count toward years of service for CaSTRS retirement.

Full-Time Educators

If you are employed to perform creditable service on a full-time basis, you will automatically become a member of the Defined Benefit Program on your first day of employment.

Part-Time Educators

If you are a part-time, substitute or temporary employee performing creditable service in the California public school system, you can choose to belong to the Defined Benefit Program or an alternative program offered by your employer, such as the Cash Balance Benefit Program. Your employer must formally notify you of your right to elect membership in the Defined Benefit Program, Cash Balance Program or Social Security within 30 days of hiring. You can elect membership only during a pay period in which you actually performed creditable service and on the appropriate form provided by your employer. The date of membership is the first day of the pay period in which you made your election. If you participate in the Cash Balance Benefit Program and later become a full-time employee, you automatically will become a member of the Defined Benefit Program.

Programs

CaSTRS administers the Defined Benefit, Defined Benefit Supplement, and Cash Balance Programs. A brief description of each program's benefits is provided. In addition, the District offers social security for part-time, substitute, adjunct, or temporary educators who elect not to participate in either the defined benefit or cash balance program.

Defined Benefit

The Defined Benefit Program is mandatory for full-time California public school prekindergarten–12 teachers, community college instructors and public school administrators. Part-time educators can choose to become members. With five years of service credit, individuals are eligible for a guaranteed lifetime retirement benefit based on a formula set by law.

Defined Benefit Supplement

The Defined Benefit Supplement Program is a supplemental cash balance plan that is payable at retirement.

Cash Balance Benefit

The Cash Balance Benefit Program is a cash balance retirement plan part-time, substitute, adjunct or temporary employees can choose as an alternative to the Defined Benefit Program or Social Security that is payable at retirement. The Cash Balance Benefit account balance includes member contributions, employer contributions, guaranteed interest and any additional earnings credits.

Social Security

Part-time, substitute, adjunct or temporary educators can elect to take social security in lieu of CalSTRS defined benefit or cash balance plans.

Membership Program Options

The following table shows membership program options by employee type.

CalSTRS Eligible Positions				
	Defined Benefit	Defined Benefit Supplement	Cash Balance	Social Security
Full-Time	Mandatory	Mandatory for certain compensation	N/A	N/A
Part-Time	Eligible, can opt-in if not in cash balance	Mandatory for certain compensation	Eligible, can opt-in if not taking defined benefit	Eligible, can opt-in if not taking defined benefit or cash balance

Switching or Retaining Retirement Systems

If you are a CalSTRS member and change to employment covered under certain other public retirement systems in California, such as the California Public Employees' Retirement System (CalPERS), you can continue your existing CalSTRS coverage or change to that other system.

If you are a Defined Benefit member and become employed by the same or a different school district, community college district, county office of education or have limited State of California employment to perform service that requires membership in CalPERS, you may elect to continue coverage under CalSTRS. If you do, service in your new position will be treated as creditable service under the CalSTRS Defined Benefit Program.

The election to stay within CalSTRS:

- must be made within 60 days of the date of hire into your new position;
- must be done on the appropriate CalSTRS form provided by the District;
- is effective as of the date of hire into your new position; and
- is irrevocable and applies to all service for that employer.

If election is not made pursuant to these parameters, the employee will be switched to the pension system assigned to his/her new position.

Working After Retirement

If you return to work after service retirement in a position with the California public school system as an employee, an employee of a third party, or an independent contractor, there are restrictions.

You cannot:

- work in a classified position except, under certain circumstances, as a teacher's aide;
- earn more than the annual postretirement earnings limit without affecting your CalSTRS retirement benefit;
- earn any pay without affecting your retirement benefit if you return to work before a 180 calendar day separation from service; or
- keep the additional service credit you received under the CalSTRS Retirement Incentive Program, if you return to work within five years of retirement with the employer that offered the incentive.

You can continue to receive your full CalSTRS retirement benefit, with no earnings limitation, if you take a job outside of CalSTRS-covered employment, including work in:

- private industry outside the California public school system;
- private schools;
- public schools outside California; or
- University of California or California State University system.

If the employee is also a member of another public retirement system, that system's earnings limitations may also apply.