



A monthly publication of the  
Human Resources Department  
Northside Independent School District, San Antonio TX 78238

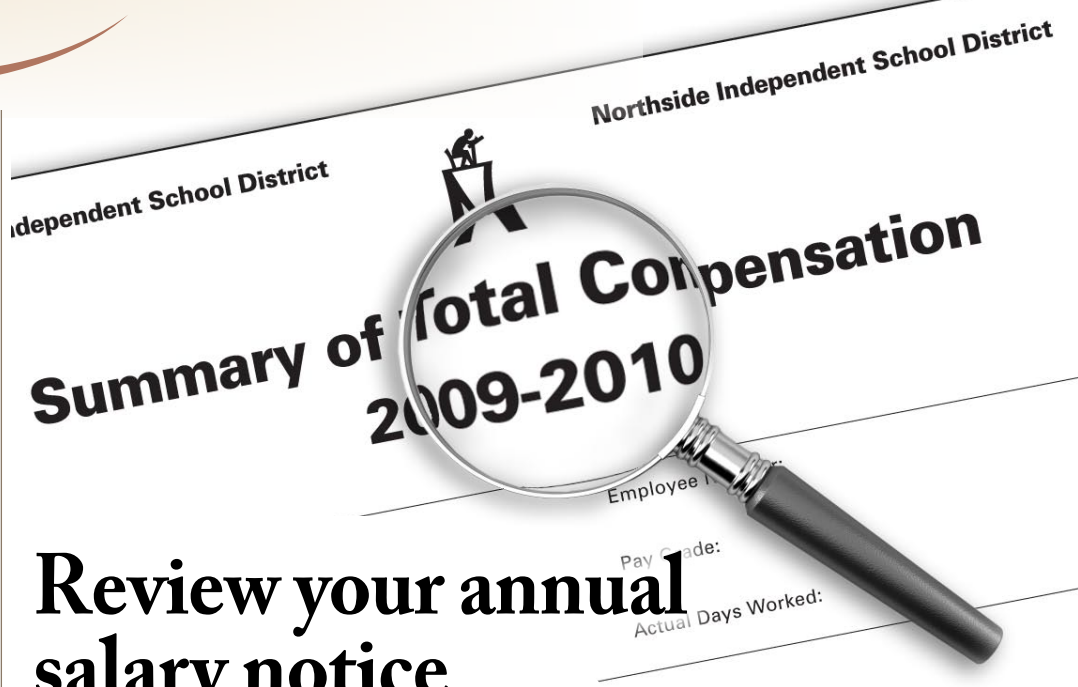
## BEHRT is having a blackout! What you can do to prepare



By now most NISD employees should know who (what) BEHRT is. BEHRT is the Northside name for the new Tyler-Munis "enterprise" technology system that has already begun supporting the business and finance operations of the District. In January 2010, it will also take over the automated functions of Payroll and Human Resources.

In preparation for the "go live" date of Jan. 5, 2010, the current system of posting JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS and taking JOB APPLICATIONS will be shut down on Dec. 12. We will not resume taking job applications again until Jan. 5, when the new Tyler-Munis system is in place. A notice to this effect will be posted on the HR web site, but be advised in advance of this job applications blackout period.

As of midnight Dec. 13, employees will be unable to make any changes to, or enroll in, their Benefits plans. Employees who experience a "Qualifying Life Event" will be unable to make changes to their insurance coverage through the Internet (see *Employee Handbook, Appendix E* for a list of Qualifying Events). If a Qualifying Life Event is expected – or new employee enrollment is needed – to occur between Dec. 12 and Jan. 5, the employee should contact the Benefits Office or consult the [Benefits Intranet site](#) for advice on how to proceed.



## Review your annual salary notice

All employees receive an annual salary notice in early fall. You should review this notice to ensure your salary and stipends are correctly shown and check the degree level (if applicable) to make sure any recently completed advanced degrees are being used in the calculation of your salary.

It is the responsibility of the employee to review the salary notice and to contact the Human Resources Department immediately if there is a discrepancy.

### Don't let your cafeteria money vanish!

Section 125 of the Tax Code, commonly referred to as the Cafeteria Plan, allows employees to have pre-taxed earnings placed into an account which reimburses the employee for qualified family health expenses or dependent care expenses such as childcare.

Claims for reimbursements from Flexible Health Spending Accounts or Dependent Care Accounts must be filed by March 31 for expenses incurred in the previous year, or within 90 days of an employee's separation from employment with Northside, whichever is earlier. Savings sheltered in one of these accounts not claimed within the specified period are forfeited by law. There are no exceptions allowed.

(NOTE: Contributions to a Health Savings Account by employees enrolled in a High Deductible Health Plan are not subject to these deadlines and accumulate from year to year.)

Last year, 17 Northside employees forfeited almost \$29,000 in contributions between these accounts. If you use a Flexible Health Spending Account or a Dependent Care Spending Account, make sure to file your claim by the deadline so you do not forfeit your tax deferred savings. Claims may be filed at any time, so make it a good practice to file throughout the year. Claim forms are available on the Internet at [www.sbsadmin.com](http://www.sbsadmin.com).

## Questions about your TRS annual statement?

The Texas Teachers Retirement System reports that every year around this time, they receive a high volume of inquiries concerning the annual statement of account that is sent to all members. Because TRS representatives seldom are able to answer all of these questions on the day they are received, they offer the following information to assist TRS members with their questions about their annual statement.

Annual statements are a snapshot of the member's account at the time of TRS year-end close; therefore, a corrected annual statement **can never be created**. At the time of retirement, salaries will be properly moved to the correct year so that the member's retirement estimate will be correct. If you need more information, you may call TRS toll-free at (800) 223-8778.

You may access your TRS annual statement of account online at [www.trs.state.tx.us](http://www.trs.state.tx.us). Click on "active members" and then "login." Annual statement information is updated shortly after statements are mailed out to members – generally by early November.



## “Quitting smoking is easy. I've done it a thousand times.”

This quote from Mark Twain captures the sentiment of many individuals who have tried to quit smoking. Help is available to those who want to quit smoking:

- The Employee Assistance Program (EAP), available to all NISD employees, offers information on a variety of programs designed to help a person quit smoking. The EAP can be accessed by calling (800) 854-1446 or (877) 858-2147 for Spanish language. You can also access the [EAP online](#). The user ID and password are lifebalance.
- Employees enrolled in a Humana health plan can receive information on smoking cessation methods and health coaching. The service can be accessed through [MyHumana.com](#) or by calling (866) 427-7478.
- Periodic Smoking Cessation classes are also offered by Spectrum Fitness Centers for employees who have membership through their Humana health plan.
- The federal government offers [online resources and information](#).
- Talk to your doctor about your desire to quit smoking.

Haven't quit yet? Give it that 1001st try. It's worth it.



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## HR Hound: At-Will Employment

Speaking on behalf of those who are perpetually “at-will” (and loving it!) I would like to take some time to explain the ins and outs and the ups and downs about At-Will Employment.

### Okay, who is an at-will employee?

Let's answer it from the inverse. Any employee who is employed under the terms of an employment contract is NOT an at-will employee. Teachers, librarians, counselors, campus administrators, and some central office administrators have employment contracts that dictate the terms of their employment, including the procedures that must be followed for evaluation, discipline, and separation. The rest of us are at-will employees and the rest of this column is about our terms of employment.

**But I thought I had a contract! When I was hired I was told that I would work under a 183-day contract.** Not likely. You were probably told that you would work under a particular calendar, not contract. Each full or half-time regular employee is hired to work a specific number of days each academic year. Some of us work 183 days, others work 187, 202, 213, 226, or 240 days based on the number of days needed to carry out the duties of the job.

### So what is an at-will employee?

Employees work “at the will” of the employer, without the protections afforded by an employment contract. Many of the rights and obligations that accompany at-will employment are listed in Board Policy [DCD Legal](#) and [DCD Local](#) and Administrative Regulation [HR-18](#).

### If I work at the will of the District, does that mean they can “let me go” at any time or for any reason?

Let's answer each question separately.

**ANYTIME:** According to NISD Board Policy DCD (Local), “Generally, at least two weeks' notice or salary shall be provided to a non-contract employee who is dismissed. The two-week requirement does not apply if the employee is being dismissed for misconduct (e.g., theft, sexual misconduct, etc.).”

**ANY REASON:** “At-will employees may be dismissed at any time for any reason not prohibited by law or for no reason, as determined by the needs of the District consistent with procedures approved by the Superintendent” (DCD Local). However, the District never takes employment action against an employee “for no reason,” even though it may have a legal right to do so. The District values its employees highly and does not discipline or dismiss an employee without a well-reasoned and legally-defensible cause that takes into account the employee's point of view and circumstances.

### How does “Progressive Discipline” fit into all this?

The District adheres to the procedure of Progressive Discipline when working with job behavior and performance issues. Administrative Regulation [HR-18](#) and [HR-32](#) explain the role of Progressive Discipline. HR 32 lists these three goals of progressive discipline:

- Promote standards of employee conduct and supervisory practices which will support the effective operations of the school district
- Promote fair and consistent employee discipline practices
- Address employee discipline problems constructively and avoid termination whenever possible

### If I am a professional employee like a teacher or librarian and am on a contract, why should I care about at-will employment?

For one thing, you need to be careful not to give advice to at-will employees regarding their rights to due-process and timelines that only apply to contract employees – not at-will employees. You also need to realize that their evaluation process is different from yours and does not require the same steps for improvement, like growth plans. They are your professional colleagues and certainly deserve your support and respect. But your advice to them based on your understanding of and experiences with contract law may be misleading at best.



**NEXT MONTH...** Education Opportunities for NISD Employees

The Resource is electronically published nine times a year by the Northside ISD Human Resources and Communications departments to help keep employees informed.

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