



Section: *Professional Employees*

Title: *Leave of Absence for Professional Development and Classroom Occupational Exchange*

Adopted: *8/19/99*

Revised:

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Section 1166 of the Public School Code, as amended by Act 66 of 1996 provides that any person employed in the public school system of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who has completed ten (10) years of satisfactory service as a professional employee, or member of the supervisory, instructional or administrative staff, or as a commissioned officer, of any board of school directors, shall be entitled to a leave of absence for professional development.

Policy

This Policy shall establish the District's parameters for granting professional development and classroom occupational exchange leaves for eligible professional employees.

(1) Professional Development Leave

Professional development leave shall be defined as a leave of absence granted for the purpose of improving professional competency or obtaining a professional certificate or commission (commission for the positions of Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent), subject to review and authorization by the Board of School Directors and upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools. Such leave shall be directly related to an employee's professional responsibilities, as determined by the Board, and be restricted to activities required by regulations of the State Board of Education and by the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a professional certificate or commission or to improve professional competency (including, but not limited to, the obtaining of a professional-related master's degree, college courses, attendance at a scheduled conference, attendance at lecture sessions or educational classrooms, curriculum development work, supervised classroom observations of other professional employees).

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(2) *Classroom Occupational Exchange*

Classroom occupational exchange shall be defined as a leave of absence granted for the purpose of acquiring practical work experience in business, industry, or government.

Authority to Adopt Policy

The Board shall have the sole authority to adopt and enforce policy establishing the conditions for approval of professional development leave. All requests for such leave shall be subject to review by the Board. The Board may approve or reject a proposed plan for professional development leave.

The Board may grant a leave to eligible employees for classroom occupational exchange leave for the specified purpose.

Professional Development Leave Eligibility

- (1) *To be eligible for professional development leave, an employee shall have completed ten (10) years of satisfactory service in the public schools of the Commonwealth; at least five (5) consecutive years of such service shall be in the Colonial School District.*
- (2) *A leave for professional development may be taken for half or full school term or for two (2) half school terms during a period of two (2) years, at the option of the employee, and shall further be subject to limitations on numbers of employees who may take a sabbatical leave or leave of absence, as well as the remaining timing requirements for taking sabbatical leaves as set forth in the Public School Code of 1949, as amended.*

Application

- (1) *Professional development leave shall only be granted if:*
 - (a) *The applicant certifies that he or she is enrolled in an approved program of studies entailing a minimum of nine (9) graduate credits or twelve (12) undergraduate credits or its equivalent per half school term in an approved institution of higher learning or eighteen (18) graduate credits*

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or twenty-four (24) undergraduate credits or its equivalent per full school term in an approved institution of higher learning;

or

(b) Completion of 180 hours of professional development activities per half school term or 360 hours of professional development activities per school term, as described herein.

- (2) Requests for professional development leaves shall be submitted in writing and forwarded with a detailed plan to the Superintendent or designee.*
- (3) All required application materials shall be submitted before May 1 for leaves to begin in September or on or before November 1 for leaves to begin in February (except in the case of an employee who is to be furloughed, when the deadline will be waived).*

Professional Development Leaves for Professional Development Activities

- (1) The hours which shall be counted for professional development activities shall meet the minimum requirement of 180 hours of actual professional development activities per half school term and 360 hours of actual professional development activities per full school term.*
- (2) The hours counted for a professional development activity relating to approved college courses may involve up to 90 hours per half school term and up to 180 hours per full school term. These hours may include a combination of both classroom hours and resource and/or preparation hours (e.g., 45 classroom hours and up to 45 resource and/or preparation hours per half school term). Travel time shall not be counted in meeting the hourly requirements.*
- (3) The hours counted for eligible professional development activities other than approved college courses must be actual hours of attendance at approved, scheduled conferences, attendance at lecture sessions or educational classrooms, and other study and professional activities approved by the Superintendent and the Board. Travel time shall not be counted in terms of meeting the 180 hours per half school term or 360 hours per full school term of professional development activities*

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- (4) *Other than the college course option which shall allow up to 90 hours, no other activity listed herein can exceed a total of 60 hours of total of 180 hours per half school term or no more than a total of 120 hours of the total 360 hours per school term (i.e., 90 hours for a college course plus 48 hours of professional meetings/conferences and 42 hours of classroom observation of other professional employees equals 180 hours).*

Documentation

- (1) *Applicants for professional development leave shall submit with the application a detailed plan describing the professional development activities to be undertaken and a statement specifying the benefits of the leave to the employee and the School District. The plan shall provide sufficient information to permit the Board and the Superintendent to adequately evaluate the request.*
- (2) *The Board may, at any time, require additional information from the employee in order to assist the Superintendent in evaluating the request and the leave's benefits to and impact on the employee and the School District.*
- (3) *In the event that the Superintendent and the Board approve the professional development leave application, the professional employee shall receive a copy of this policy in order to make the professional employee aware of the reporting obligations.*
- (4) *At the conclusion of an official collegiate or university time sequence, such as a semester, quarter, or other such designation, a record of the course work completed, together with marks earned therein shall be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools. In the event of incomplete or unsatisfactory work, the Board reserves the right to withdraw approval at the end of such period of time if the nature of the work indicates that a "good faith" performance of graduate work is not forthcoming. Written reports shall be submitted monthly to the Superintendent of Schools or designee. Such reports shall describe the nature of the graduate program of studies pursued and the accomplishments to date. Such reports shall also describe the nature of the professional development program of graduate or undergraduate study, as well as any of the professional development activities listed herein, the accomplishments to date, and the time expended on a day-to-day enumeration. Failure to submit required reports on time shall result in forfeiture of monies paid by the District.*

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Commitment of Employee

Acceptance of professional development leave incurs a commitment by the employee to return to active duty in this District immediately following the leave for one (1) full school year, unless prevented by illness or disability. Employees shall submit required reports on time or forfeit all compensation and benefits. The Board reserves the right to require, at its own expense, additional examinations and reports by physicians of its own choice to determine the employee's ability to return to work.

Compensable employment may not be engaged in while the employee is on professional development leave. A leave for professional development shall be considered a leave of absence without pay from all extracurricular activities and/or supplemental contracts.

Commitment of Employer

At the expiration of the professional development leave, the employee shall, unless agreed otherwise, be reinstated in the same position held at the time of the granting of the leave.

Time on professional development leave shall be counted as time on the job for the purposes of seniority, where applicable in the District, and for Retirement Fund purposes, but for no other purpose.

Compensation

During the period of the professional development leave, an employee shall be compensated one-half (0.5) of the salary to which he or she would have been entitled had the employee not taken the leave.

While on leave, the employee shall be entitled to benefits provided other professional employees of a similar class.

Professional Development Leave for Classroom Occupational Exchange

Application

Requests for classroom occupational exchange leave shall be submitted on the approved District form and forwarded with the appropriate documentation to the Superintendent. All required application materials shall be submitted as of the same dates applicable to the professional development leaves.

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Documentation

Applicants for classroom occupational exchange leave shall submit with the application form a statement from the employer agreeing to the terms and conditions of the leave, as specified in Board Policy. Upon return from such leave, the employee shall submit to the Board a final report detailing the work experience and its benefits.

Commitment of Employee

Acceptance of classroom occupational exchange leave incurs a commitment by the employee to return to active duty in this District immediately following the leave for one (1) full school year, unless prevented by illness or physical disability.

The Board reserves the right to require, at its own expense, additional examinations and reports by physicians of its own choice to determine the employee's ability to return to work.

Commitment of Employer

At the expiration of the classroom occupational exchange leave, the employee shall, unless agreed otherwise, be reinstated in the same position held at the time of the granting of the leave.

Time on classroom occupational exchange leave shall be counted as time on the job for the purposes of seniority, where applicable in the District, and for Retirement Fund purposes, but for no other purpose.

Compensation

The business, industry, or government to whom the employee is assigned during the leave shall fully compensate the School District for all salary, wages, pension, and retirement contributions and other benefits as if the employee were in full-time active service.

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