

Lower Merion School District

Policy No.: 438.1
Section: PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES
Title: SABBATICAL LEAVE – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
Date Adopted: 7/20/98
Date Last Revised:

438.1 SABBATICAL LEAVE – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of the Board Policy is to establish conditions for approval of leaves of absence for professional development. The Lower Merion School District Board of School Directors hereby adopts the following policy to comport with Act 66 of 1996 amending the School Code, 24 P.S. 1166.1 of the Public School Code of Pennsylvania, which extensively revised provisions concerning sabbatical leaves for professional employees.

The Board shall have the sole authority to adopt and enforce policies 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.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a 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 Lower Merion School District; thereafter, one full sabbatical leave of absence shall be allowed after each seven full years of service. A leave may be taken for one-half (1/2) or a full school term or two half school terms during a period of two years at the option of the employee.

Limitations

The number of sabbatical leaves granted in any school year shall be limited to ten percent (10%) of the number of persons eligible for sabbaticals and regularly employed by the school district.

Requests for professional development leave shall be submitted no later than April 1 for the fall semester and October 1 for the spring semester. All requests must be in writing and shall be forwarded to the Superintendent, or the Superintendent's designee, with a detailed plan of study describing the professional activities to be undertaken. Failure to meet the deadline shall result in the request being denied.

The minimum academic requirements for a leave for a half school term shall consist of any of the following or a combination thereof: nine (9) graduate credits; twelve (12) under-graduate credits; one hundred eighty (180) hours of professional development activities. The minimum academic requirements for a leave for a full school term shall consist of any of the following or a combination thereof: eighteen (18) graduate credits; twenty-four (24) undergraduate credits; three-hundred sixty hours (360) hours of professional development activities. Leave for professional development shall be approved when it consists of activities that are directly related to the teacher's certification or position in the school district.

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Upon return from professional development leave, the employee shall submit to the Superintendent, within the first month of return, a report describing the educational activities pursued and the benefits and relevancy. Such report shall include official transcripts of work taken, if applicable, unless prevented by illness or physical disability. Failure to receive passing grades or failure to submit required transcripts on time shall result in the forfeiture of all benefits paid by the district.

Acceptance of a professional development leave for the equivalent of a full school term incurs a commitment by the employee to return to active duty in the school district immediately following the leave for one full school term, unless prevented by illness or physical disability. Acceptance of professional development leave for the equivalent of a half school term incurs a commitment by the employee to return to active duty in the school district immediately following the leave for one half school term, unless prevented by illness or physical disability. The Board reserves the right to require, at its own expense, additional examinations and reports by a physician of its choice to determine the validity of leave requests.

At the expiration of the professional development leave, the employer shall, unless agreed otherwise, reinstate the professional on leave 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 school district and for retirement purposes.

During the period of professional development leave, an employee shall be compensated at one-half (1/2) the salary to which the employee would have been entitled had the employee not taken leave. The employee shall be entitled to benefits provided to other professional employees. During a professional development leave, the professional will not engage in any new paid employment of any nature. Graduate assistantships are permissible.

§§1166, 1166.1, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1170, 1171, 522.1