

**LEAVES OF ABSENCE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND SABBATICAL LEAVES FOR RESTORATION OF HEALTH**

**Background**

Leaves of absence for professional development and sabbatical leaves for restoration of health are granted to professional employees by the Mt. Lebanon Board of School Directors in accordance with Sections 1166-1171 of the Public School Code of 1949, as amended (“Code”). The District, when considering requests for leaves of absence for professional development, recognizes potential benefits may accrue to students and the District through the increased quality of teaching as the result of granting such leaves.

**Definitions**

The term “professional employee” shall be as defined in Section 1101 of the Code.

The term “sabbatical leaves for restoration of health” shall mean a leave of absence granted to an eligible professional employee under Sections 1166-1171 of the Code for medical or health reasons.

The term “leaves for professional development” or “professional development leaves” shall be defined as a leave of absence granted for the purpose of improving professional competency or obtaining a professional certificate or commission. Such leave shall be directly related to an employee’s professional responsibilities, as determined by the School Board, and be restricted to activities required by State regulation or law or to improve professional competency.

**Objective**

To provide for orderly and equitable regulations controlling the granting of leaves for professional development and/or sabbatical leaves for restoration of health to professional employees in accordance with Sections 1166-1171 of the Code and in conformity with these regulations.

**Policy**

It shall be the policy of the Board of School Directors that leaves for professional development and sabbatical leaves for restoration of health shall be granted to eligible employees in accordance with Sections 1166-1171 of the Code and in conformity with this policy.

**Eligibility Requirements**

1. All requests for leaves for professional development and sabbatical leaves for restoration of health shall be subject to review and approval by the School Board. The School Board shall have sole authority to adopt and enforce the conditions for approval of leaves of absence for professional development and has the sole authority and discretion to approve or reject applications or plans for professional development leaves and sabbatical leaves for restoration of health.
2. The years of service required for eligibility for leaves for professional development or sabbatical leaves for restoration of health shall be the maximum set forth in the School Code as may be amended from time to time. At the present, in order to be eligible for a leaves for professional development or sabbatical leaves for restoration of health, the professional employee must have

completed a minimum of at least ten (10) years of satisfactory service in the public schools of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and at least five (5) consecutive years of such satisfactory service must be with the Mt. Lebanon School District. Once an employee has received a leave for professional development or sabbatical leave for restoration of health, he or she will not be eligible to apply for another such leave until seven years of full-time service after returning from the previous leave.

3. A leave for professional development may be granted for: (i) a half school term at full pay; (ii) a full school term at half pay; or (iii) for two (2) half school terms (each at half pay) during a period of two (2) years. A half school term leave at full pay may be granted only once during a teacher's career at the Mt. Lebanon School District. A sabbatical leave for restoration of health shall be granted at either: (i) half pay for a half or full school term; or (ii) for two half terms during a period of two years.
4. Approval of leaves for professional development shall be within the exclusive discretion of the School Board, and such leaves shall be granted only to employees participating in an academic program for the purpose of retaining a professional certificate or commission, further preparation and improvement in his/her area(s) of certification, attaining additional certification or eligibility for other appropriate and identifiable educational positions within the School District, or as the School Board may require, and upon the recommendation of the Superintendent. Requests for leaves for professional development shall be submitted to the Superintendent's Office, according to the prescribed administrative guidelines, on the appropriate District form along with 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 School Board to adequately evaluate the request. The School Board may at any time require additional information from the employee in order to assist the School Board in evaluating the request and the leave's benefits to and impact on the employee and the School District.
5. The minimum requirement for leaves for professional development of a half school term shall consist of any of the following or a combination thereof: (i) nine (9) graduate credits; (ii) twelve (12) undergraduate credits (only if approved by the Board to pursue another certificate); and/or (iii) one hundred eighty (180) hours of professional development activities. The minimum requirements for leaves for professional development of a full school term shall be any of the following or a combination thereof: (i) eighteen (18) graduate credits; (ii) twenty-four (24) undergraduate credits (only if approved by the Board to pursue another certificate); and/or (iii) three hundred sixty (360) hours of professional development activities. Applicants for leave for professional development who propose to take graduate or undergraduate credits shall submit notification of acceptance and enrollment from an accredited institution of higher learning for study in courses approved by the Superintendent. The employee shall successfully complete the approved courses and receive satisfactory grades. The employee shall submit to the Superintendent, within the first month after completing any approved course(s), an official transcript of all courses completed. In the event that an official transcript is not available to the employee within one month after completing the course(s), the employee shall provide the District with a statement from the institution at which such courses were taken indicating when a transcript will be available. Failure to receive satisfactory grades or to submit required transcripts on time shall result in forfeiture of all monies paid by the District to or on behalf of the employee while such employee was on leave. Applicants who propose to undertake professional development activities shall submit to the School Board for consideration a detailed plan listing the specific professional development activities to be undertaken on such leave.

6. Within 30 days from returning from a leave for professional development, the employee shall submit to the Superintendent a formal report describing the educational activities pursued and their benefits and relevancy and, more specifically, how he/she will utilize what was learned in the classroom. Failure to submit required reports on time shall result in forfeiture of any and all monies paid by the District to or for the benefit of the employee while on such leave.
7. The limit on the number of professional employees on sabbatical leaves for restoration of health and leaves for professional development in any one semester shall be within the discretion of the Board and not to exceed 10% of the number of eligible professional employees, as determined by the Board in its discretion. In addition, the following conditions apply to leaves for professional development:
  - a. all requests for leaves for professional development for a half or full school term are to be filed with the Superintendent's office starting September 1, but by no later than November 15, of the school year prior to the school year during which the leave is to be taken, or in the case where two half school terms are being requested, starting September 1, but by no later than November 15, of the school year prior to the beginning of the next two-year period in which the two half term leaves are to be taken;
  - b. all requests for a leave for professional development, which requests are in compliance with the School Code and the requirements set forth herein, will be acted upon by the School Board prior to the January 30<sup>th</sup> before the date of the beginning of the school year during which the leave is to be taken;
  - c. when granting approval of a leave for professional development requests, the School Board may give preference according to: (i) whether or not a half term request is the second half term of a leave for professional development; (ii) years of service since the previous leave for professional development of the applicant; (iii) reasonable numerical limits on the number of employees who, during each school semester, may be granted leave from each school building and, in addition, from each department of a school (such numerical limits will be based upon the teaching needs within each building or department); and (iv) the quality of the plan of activities and its value to the District, as determined by the District; and
  - d. the maximum number of full-pay, half-year leaves for professional development will not exceed ten in any given school year. In the event that more than ten applications are received for a school year, regardless of which semester, the District will consider all of the following criteria in order to determine which ten applicants will receive a full-pay, half-year leave for that school year: (i) the number of years of service in the District; (ii) the number of years of public school service; and (iii) the quality of the plan of activities and its value to the District, as determined by the District.
8. The leaves for professional development request form will have space in which the employee will summarize plans for the use of the leave. The employee shall be required to submit with such request form a detailed written plan of professional development activities to be undertaken while on such leave including a complete description of any and all compensable employment to be undertaken while on such leave. In order to clarify the employee's plans the Administration or the School Board may request additional material to support the request.

9. The Board of School Directors shall have the right to implement /enforce such procedures as it deems necessary to ascertain and/or ensure that employees on leave shall utilize such leave properly for the purpose for which it was granted, requiring reports from the employee or employees on leave in such manner as they may deem necessary.
10. Requests for sabbatical leaves for the restoration of health may be filed with the Superintendent's office on the District approved application form at any time. Such request must be accompanied by a medical doctor's verification of the necessity for such leave.
11. Cancellation of a previously approved leave for professional development requires the professional employee to give the Superintendent at least sixty (60) days notice in writing prior to the beginning of the semester in which the leave was to have been taken.

#### Obligation to Return to Employment

Acceptance of a leave for professional development or the sabbatical leave for restoration of health imposes a requirement on the employee to return to active duty in the District immediately following the leave for one (1) full school year, unless precluded from doing so by illness or physical disability (as confirmed by a medical doctor's verification). Employees shall submit required reports on time or forfeit all compensation and benefits. The School 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. Employees who fail to return from a leave for professional development or sabbatical leave for restoration of health, unless prevented by illness or physical disability, shall forfeit all benefits to which said employee would have been entitled under this policy and the School Code for the entire period of the leave, including, but not limited to, the amount contributed by the School District to the School Employees' Retirement Fund under Section 1170 of the School Code.

#### Compensation

During the period of a professional development leave or a sabbatical leave for restoration of health, an employee shall be compensated at one-half the salary to which s/he would have been entitled had the employee not taken leave (unless the option of a leave for professional development for one half term at full pay is approved by the School Board).

#### School Board Responsibility

It shall be the responsibility of the School Board to approve or deny recommendations from the Superintendent for all leaves for professional development and sabbatical leaves for restoration of health in accordance with Sections 1166-1171 of the Code and this policy.

#### Administration Responsibility

It shall be the responsibility of the Administration to:

1. Adopt such rules and regulations as it or the School Board may determine to be necessary or desirable to implement this policy.

2. Prepare application forms for the use of professional employees who wish to request a sabbatical leave for restoration of health or leave for professional development.
3. Obtain supporting documentation to substantiate the employee's reasons for requesting sabbatical leaves for restoration of health or leaves for professional development.
4. Prepare a form for the use of professional employees to report on their accomplishments and how these accomplishments will be used in their respective teaching/classrooms as a result of having had a leave for professional development.
5. Prepare a monthly list of requests for both sabbatical leaves for restoration of health and/or leaves for professional development recommended for consideration by the School Board.
6. Notify all applicants in writing of the School Board's action on the professional employee's requests for sabbatical leaves for restoration of health and/or leaves for professional development.
7. Secure qualified substitutes for professional employees on sabbatical leaves for restoration of health or leaves for professional development.

Communication

This policy shall be communicated to:

1. The professional employees of the Mt. Lebanon School District.
2. All administrators involved in the implementation of this policy.

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