

Lower Merion School District

Policy No.:	311
Section:	EMPLOYEES
Title:	SABBATICAL LEAVES (PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES)
Date Adopted:	8/24/87
Date Last Revised:	5/17/21; 7/20/98

311 SABBATICAL LEAVES (PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES)

This policy shall establish the District's guidelines for granting sabbatical leaves of absence for professional development or restoration of health ("sabbatical leaves").

The Board shall have the sole authority to adopt and enforce policies establishing the conditions under which sabbatical leaves may be taken, consistent with applicable law and applicable collective bargaining agreement.

Eligibility

To be eligible for a sabbatical 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.

Sabbatical leaves may be taken (a) for one-half (1/2) or a full school term or (b) for two (2) half school terms during a period of two years at the option of the employee. Thereafter, one full sabbatical leave shall be allowed after each seven full years of service.

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.

Application

Requests for sabbatical leave shall be submitted in accordance with the timelines set forth in the accompanying Administrative Regulation.

Documentation

A. Restoration of Health. Requests for sabbatical leave for restoration of health shall include a certificate from the employee's treating physician, setting forth the reason for the request and a recommendation regarding the duration of the leave.

Periodic reports concerning the progress of the employee must be submitted by the attending physician.

At the end of the leave, an additional statement from the physician shall be submitted to the Superintendent, or the Superintendent's designee, indicating the extent to which the purpose

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of the leave has been achieved and evaluating the health status of the employee relative to the employee's ability to return to employment.

The District reserves the right to require, at its own expense, additional examinations and reports by a physician of its choice to determine the validity of the leave request.

B. Professional Development. Applicants for professional development leave shall submit 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 District. The plan shall provide sufficient information to permit the Board to adequately evaluate the request.

The Board may at any time require additional information from the employee in order to assist the Board in evaluating the request and the leave's benefits to and impact on the employee and the District.

The minimum requirements for leave for a half school term shall consist of any one or a combination of the following:

- (a) Nine (9) graduate credits;
- (b) Twelve (12) undergraduate credits;
- (c) One hundred eighty (180) hours of professional development activities.

The minimum requirements for leave for a full school year term shall consist of any one or a combination of the following:

- (a) Eighteen (18) graduate credits;
- (b) Twenty-four (24) undergraduate credits;
- (c) Three hundred sixty (360) hours of professional development activities.

These minimum requirements for leave for professional development must be undertaken during the school term for which the employee has been granted such a leave. In other words, these minimum requirements shall not be undertaken during the breaks between terms.

Applicants 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 or designee. The employee shall successfully complete the approved courses and receive passing grades. Upon return from professional development leave, the employee shall submit to the Superintendent or designee within the first month an official transcript of all courses completed. Failure to receive passing grades or to submit required transcripts on time shall result in forfeiture of monies paid by the District.

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Applicants who propose to undertake **professional development activities** shall submit to the Board a detailed plan listing the specific activities. Upon return from professional development leave, the employee shall submit to the Superintendent within the first month a formal report describing the educational activities pursued and their benefits and relevancy. Failure to submit required reports on time shall result in forfeiture of monies paid by the District.

Under no circumstance shall credit received in connection with a course or class sponsored by any Intermediate Unit count toward the minimum requirements set forth above.

Commitment of Employee

Acceptance of a sabbatical 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 a sabbatical 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 employee's ability to return to work.

Commitment of the District

At the expiration of the sabbatical 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 sabbatical 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 purposes unless required by applicable law or collective bargaining agreement.

During the period of restoration of health, 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.

While on sabbatical leave, an employee is prohibited from engaging in any new enterprise or employment or any other enterprise or employment inimical to the disability. Employees on sabbatical leave are not eligible for any other paid position in the District such as substitute teacher or extra-duty position.

Legal References:

Pennsylvania School Code §1166, 1166.1, 1167, 1168