

## ARTICLE 15 TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

Tuition reimbursement is provided to enhance professional development and growth opportunities. The tuition reimbursement plan will provide funding assistance to eligible employees who pursue work-related training programs and/or conferences, course work or professional growth programs that include certifications and/or testing, and accredited trade and/or degree programs upon completion of the event.

### 15.1 POLICY

It is the policy of the District to offer tuition reimbursement to each eligible employee who successfully completes courses which are work-related courses.

### 15.2 PRACTICE

- Work-related courses or programs taken at colleges and universities, professional conferences, or District in-services, may be reimbursed for tuition or tuition equivalent. If classes are part of a college degree program, they must be taken at colleges and universities accredited by the regional association of colleges and universities.
- Reimbursement for taking courses and/or modules which involve primarily television or video viewing, correspondence work, independent study, distance learning and/or other alternative methods of independent study, distance learning and/or other alternative methods of instructional delivery may be reimbursed for tuition subject to approval by the Director of Professional Learning or their designee.
- It is not the intention of the District to fully subsidize the educational pursuits of its employees. Rather, it is its intention to provide financial assistance to help defray the costs of educational programs to promote educational achievement in a manner which will benefit the individual and the District.

### 15.3 PLAN COMPONENTS

- The tuition reimbursement plan will provide assistance for eligible employees who pursue work related training programs and/or conferences, course work or professional growth programs that include certification and/or testing, and accredited trade and/or degree programs.
- The classes, training or degree programs must be either work-related or must be a part of a bona fide degree program at an accredited college or university. The tuition reimbursement will be subject to a fiscal year cap for each individual.

Reimbursement will be made after evidence is presented of successful completion of the class or training requirement. These and other definitions are explained below.

#### a. Program Eligibility

This program is available to part-time regular status ESP and full-time regular status ESP who have completed their initial 89 days of employment.

- It is not available to dependents of employees or to employees on an extended leave of absence from the District.
- It is available to employees on an extended leave of absence for educational reason (student teaching, bachelor's degree, etc.)

#### b. Work-Relatedness or Degree Pursuit

- Only those programs or classes which have been pre-approved by Professional Learning will be eligible for the reimbursement program.
- The classes must meet one of two criteria.
  - They must be work-related or be part of a degree program which is offered by an accredited college or university.
  - To be work-related, the class or program must have a direct relationship to the attainment or enhancement of skills specifically required for the employee position or be directly related to improving performance on the existing job.
- The employee will submit a request for the approval of the course under this plan prior to enrolling in the course. The determination of work-relatedness will be made by the respective department head, administrator or principal and the Director of Professional Learning or their designee.
- To be considered eligible under the requirement for pursuit of a degree program, the employee must submit an educational plan outlining the courses, which will be included in the degree program.
- This plan must be submitted prior to inclusion in the tuition reimbursement program and should be inclusive of all classes, which will be considered a part of the degree program.
- The cost of the SWEEP (Student Work Experience Evaluation Program) or other such programs which allow an employee to “test out” of a course requirement will be included in this policy, provided that a passing grade is achieved and prior approval has been granted.
- Only those programs which have been pre-approved will be eligible for the reimbursement program.

**c. Reimbursement Process**

Employees will be reimbursed 100% of the tuition rate after providing evidence of a 70% grade or above.

- One hundred percent reimbursement will also be provided for a “Pass” or certificate of completion in a non-graded class.
- The employee will pay for the class and submit a request for reimbursement upon completion. Reimbursement will be on a first come, first served basis, until funds have been expended.
- The only reimbursement will be for tuition. The program will not include books, travel costs, or other costs associated with the course or program. The reimbursed tuition will not exceed the state’s standard rates for credit hours.
- The reimbursement will be subject to a fiscal year cap of \$700.00 of tuition for pre-approved courses, except that any employee enrolled in a college degree program will be eligible to be reimbursed up to \$2000.00 per fiscal year.

**d. Application Process**

To apply for educational assistance, the employee should complete an Employee Tuition Reimbursement Pre-Approval Form and submit it to the Professional Learning Department prior to enrolling in the course. If applying for assistance for a work-related course, the justification should be included on the form, with the supporting approval provided by the respective department head, administrator, or principal.

If the class is part of a degree program, an educational plan should first be filled with the Professional Learning Department. Individual requests for approval of classes should refer to those classes which are on the approved educational plan.

If approved, the employee will enroll in the course and pay the required tuition. Upon successful completion of the course, the employee should submit evidence of completion, "proof of payment," and a copy of the approved "Employee Tuition Reimbursement Pre-Approval Form" to request reimbursement.

**e. Additional Requirements**

- Reimbursement will be made only for those classes completed during the current fiscal year. Any reimbursement submitted after the cap has been met will be considered for approval during the next fiscal year if funds are available.
- Under this policy, employees will not be provided release time for pursuing degree programs. It is anticipated that degree programs and courses included in this policy will require time outside of normal working hours.
- Employees are eligible to attend work related training when offered during their regular scheduled hours. If a substitute is required, the absence may need an approved funding source through the Supervising Administrator to cover the substitute cost.
- An employee resigning employment or discharged for cause prior to completion of an approved course shall not be entitled to reimbursement.
- Dual payments of benefits for classes are not permitted, such as when an employee is eligible for educational benefits from a governmental agency, grants, or through scholarships.

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