

Gulfport School District

Educational Tuition Assistance Grant

Purpose: To attract and retain qualified classroom teachers in the Gulfport School District and provide and ultimately improve student learning by strengthening instruction by building teacher capacity.

Tuition Assistance Grant - Educational Master's or Doctorate Degree

- Master's in Education
 - Requires 30 hours –
 - Approximately \$360 per hour or \$1,080 per course
 - 90% of the total cost up to a maximum of \$10,000
- Doctorate in Education
 - Requires 66 hours
 - Approximately \$515 per hour or \$1,545 per course
 - 90% of the total cost up to a maximum of \$34,000

The degree earned must be from a regionally or nationally accredited institution of higher learning in Mississippi or the University of South Alabama. The institution's Accreditation status must be verified using the United States Department of Education website (<http://www.ope.ed.gov/accreditation/>) or the Council on Higher Education Accreditation website (<http://www.chea.org/search/default.asp>).

Legal Authority to provide educational assistance to teachers – Section 37-7-301(mm) and AG Opinion No. 2007-00533

Procedures:

1. Guidelines:
 - a. Eligibility
 - Complete three (3) consecutive years of service with Gulfport School District to apply for a Master's Degree grant, or
 - Complete five (5) consecutive years of service with Gulfport School District to apply for a Doctoral Degree grant.
 - b. Applicants must have demonstrated success in the classroom by:
 - Above average teacher evaluations and
 - Sustaining a student achievement rate that meets or exceeds the Gulfport School District's growth and proficiency rates on district or state assessments, and
 - Sustaining a 95% personal attendance rate (excluding professional leave); and
 - Securing a letter of recommendation from your current supervisor. The letter must also include verification that the applicant has met all of the above expectations in section A and B of the Guidelines.
 - c. The degree must be in an area of education to enhance the teacher's success in the classroom. Degrees in administration will not be considered. A copy of the courses required must be included with the application.
 - d. Failing to meet either of the following conditions will require the teacher to reimburse the District's full contribution within 90 days from demand by the Gulfport School District:

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- Grantees must complete the degree within the IHL's recommended timeline plus one year for completion of your designated graduate program, or
 - Grantee must complete three (3) years of employment in the Gulfport School District upon completion of the Master's Degree or five (5) years upon completion of the Doctoral Degree.
2. Application
 3. Approval Process:
 - a. Committee will review and recommend applicants to Superintendent;
 - b. Committee will meet quarterly before the start of each semester to review the status of current participants. New applications will be accepted annually.
 - c. A committee will include the following members at a minimum:
 - Director of Instructional Programs
 - Director of Federal Programs
 - Chief Financial Officer
 - One (1) Secondary Administrator
 - One (1) Elementary Principal
 - Three (3) Teachers
 4. Upon the Superintendent's approval, the Personnel Department will obtain a signed Memorandum of Understanding.
 5. Form of payment:
 - a. Complete an accounts payable check request form.
 - b. Checks will be made payable to the applicant and the IHL.
 - c. Attach a schedule to indicate enrollment.
 - d. Provide a transcript for the previous semester to indicate completion with a grade C or higher or a pass or fail status for ungraded courses.
 - e. Agree to notify the District if the applicant's tax status is "married filing separately" so that the District can determine tax consequences.
 - f. Payments will be processed three times per year. Payments of more than \$5,250 for a calendar year will be included on Form W-2 as wages in compliance with IRS guidelines.
 6. Default:
 - a. The district will issue a demand when it is determined that the grantee has failed to meet the terms of the agreement.
 - b. If payment has not been received within 90 days of the default date, Gulfport School District will explore all legal options to recover the funds.