

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
 - Maximum of \$10,000
- Doctorate in Education
 - Requires 66 hours
 - Maximum of \$20,000
- Licensure Endorsement in High Needs Instructional Shortage Area
 - District need must exist as identified by Superintendent
 - Maximum of \$5,000

The degree or endorsement 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, Licensure Endorsement, 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 or licensure endorsement 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. Course work towards a licensure endorsement may be considered when recommended as an immediate need by the Superintendent for instructional positions in high needs shortage areas.

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- e. 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:
 - Grantees must complete the degree or endorsement within the IHL's recommended timeline plus one year for completion of your designated graduate program, or
 - Grantees awarded a Licensure Endorsement or Master' Degree must complete three (3) years of employment in the Gulfport School District upon completion of the program and Doctoral Degree grantees must complete five (5) years of employment upon completion of degree.
2. Application
3. Approval Process:
 - a. Committee will review and recommend applicants to Superintendent and Board of Trustees;
 - b. Committee will meet before the start of each semester to review the status of current participants. New applications will be accepted monthly.
 - c. A committee will include the following members at a minimum:
 - Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Programs
 - Director of Federal Programs
 - Chief Financial Officer
 - One (1) Secondary Administrator
 - One (1) Elementary Administrator
 - One (1) Teacher
4. Upon the Superintendent and Board of Trustees' 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.

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APPLICATION

Name:		
Address:		
Experience in Gulfport School District:		
School:	Date From:	Date To:
Instructional Area, i.e. Elementary, Biology, etc.		
Institution of Higher Learning:		
Degree Sought:		
IHL's Recommended Completion Date for Degree:		
Estimated Total Cost:		
Do you qualify for any other tuition assistance? If yes, please explain.		
Briefly explain why you should be considered for this program.		

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Please provide an estimated cost based on your anticipated schedule.

Calendar Year	Fall	Winter	Spring	Summer	Total
2024					
2025					
2026					
2027					
2028					
Total					

- ☐ Attach a copy of your courses for the program of study.
- ☐ Submit the completed application to your principal or immediate supervisor.
- ☐ The principal or supervisor will forward to the Gulfport School District Assistant Superintendent of Instructional Programs each of the following:
 - Grant application with Program Study
 - Principal's Verification of Expectations
 - Principal's Letter of Recommendation

Signature of Employee

Date Signed

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Principal's Verification of Expectations

Applicant's Name: _____ School: _____

Institution of Higher Learning: _____ Degree: _____

The applicant has met the following expectations:

- Years of Service Expectations:
- Applicant has served a minimum of three (3) consecutive years of service with Gulfport School District to apply for a Master's Degree grant, or Licensure Endorsement, or
- Applicant has served a minimum of five (5) consecutive years of service with Gulfport School District to apply for a Doctoral Degree grant.
- Teacher Evaluations have been Above Average
- Student achievement rates meet or exceed the Gulfport School District's growth and proficiency rates on district or state assessments
- Personal Attendance Rate has been at 95% or higher (excluding professional leave)

I, _____ certify the applicant has met all of the requirements outlined in the guidelines of the Educational Tuition Assistance Grant. I recommend that he/she should be considered for the Educational Tuition Assistance Grant. I have attached a letter of recommendation.

Principal's Signature

Date