No. 4520
SECTION: PERSONNEL
TITLE: PROFESSIONAL LEAVES OF ABSENCE

ADOPTED: 9/20/71
READOPTED: 1/29/14;11/15/16;8/20/19;
5/18/21;9/16/25
REVISED: 4/18/78;2/18/86;3/25/97;
4/23/02;5/15/06;6/21/10

OXFORD AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

It shall be the policy of the Oxford Area School District that leaves of absence shall be granted consistent with provisions of the Public School Code of Pennsylvania and the laws of the Commonwealth. For purposes of this policy, professional leaves of absence shall be limited to sabbatical leaves for the restoration of health, professional development leaves, and classroom occupational exchange leave.

A. The following guidelines shall apply to the leaves of absence provided in this policy:

1. All professional employees including instructional staff, administrative staff and commissioned officers who have completed satisfactorily ten (10) years of service in the public schools of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, at least five (5) consecutive years of such service being in the Oxford Area School District and who have completed seven (7) years of service since their last sabbatical leave of absence shall be eligible for a leave of absence as provided in this policy.

2. The total number of professional staff on leave at any one time shall not exceed 10% of the number of those employees eligible for leave. If more than 10% of those eligible apply for a leave of absence selection of those to receive the leave of absence shall be made on the basis of the benefit to the Oxford Area School District derived from the leave. The Board of School Directors will be the sole determiner of to whom the leave is granted.

3. Professional leaves of absence may be taken for a half or full school term or for two (2) half terms during a period of two years.

4. While on a leave of absence for restoration of health or professional development a professional employee shall be compensated at one-half the salary to which he/she would have been entitled had the employee not taken the leave. Salary while on leave will be paid in the same manner as salaries are paid to all employees. Persons on leave shall pay their contributions to the state retirement fund. This payment shall be made by payroll deduction.

5. While on a leave of absence either for restoration of health or professional development the employee shall be entitled to benefit coverage provided other employees in the same class. Persons on leave shall pay their normal contributions to any group health benefit plans. This payment shall be made by payroll deduction. Sick leave will not accrue while on leave of absence as provided in this policy.

6. Time on sabbatical leave for the restoration of health, professional development or occupational exchange shall be counted as time on the job for purposes of seniority and for retirement fund purposes.

7. At the completion of the leave the employee shall be returned to the same position held at the time when the leave was granted.

8. Professional employees on a sabbatical leave for the restoration of health or professional development may not be engaged in employment or any activity which provides compensation to the employee unless that employment or activity has been approved by the Board of School Directors. A leave of absence for professional development or the restoration of health shall be considered a leave without pay from all other school activities.

9. Acceptance of a leave of absence as defined in this policy by a professional employee establishes a commitment on the part of the employee to return to their position in the school district immediately following the leave of absence for at least one (1) full year of service unless physically or mentally unable to do so as determined by a licensed physician. The Board of School Directors reserves the right to require at its own expense any examinations and reports by physicians of its choice to determine the employee's ability to return to work. Otherwise failure to return to work for one (1) full year of service following the leave of absence will result in the forfeiture of all monies paid by the school district. The employee will then be required to immediately refund the District all monies paid on the employee's behalf during the leave of absence.

B. Sabbatical Leave for the Restoration of Health:
   1. An eligible employee requesting a sabbatical leave for the restoration of health must provide a complete statement from his/her physician explaining the nature of the illness and the medical reasons supporting the requested leave of absence for the restoration of health.

   2. The Board of School Directors reserves the right to require at its own expense additional examinations and reports by physicians of its choice to determine the validity of the request for a sabbatical leave for the restoration of health.

C. Professional Development Leave:

   1. Professional development leave shall be a leave of absence granted for the purpose of improving professional competency or obtaining a professional certificate or commission. Such a leave shall be directly related to an employee's professional responsibilities as determined by the Board of School Directors

   2. The Board of School Directors shall have the sole authority to establish the conditions for the approval of a professional development leave. All requests for such leave are subject to board review and may be approved or rejected consistent with this policy. The board at its discretion may require additional information from the employee to evaluate the request and the benefit to the employee and the school district.

3. The minimum requirements for activities while on a leave for professional development shall be as follows:

   a. For a one half year leave, nine (9) graduate credits, twelve (12) undergraduate credits or 180 hours of professional development activities.
   b. For a full year leave eighteen (18) graduate credits, twenty-four (24) undergraduate credits or 360 hours of professional development activities.
   c. The Board of Directors reserves the right to reject applications for professional development leave in cases where the program of instruction to meet the requirement includes correspondence, video, distance learning and in-service courses. All course work to fulfill this requirement must have the approval of the Superintendent of Schools.

4. Those professional employees who propose to take graduate or undergraduate credit while on a professional development leave must submit notification from a college or university of acceptance and enrollment at an accredited institution of higher learning.

5. A report of the completion of professional development activities undertaken during the leave, including transcripts of course work completed at a college or university must be submitted prior to the employee's return to work. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in the forfeiture of all monies paid to the employee during the leave.

6. Failure to comply with all of the terms and conditions of the professional development leave shall require the repayment of all salary and benefits received while on the leave of absence unless the employee is excused from these requirements by the Board of School Directors.

D. Classroom Occupational Exchange Leave:
   1. Classroom occupational exchange leave shall be defined as a leave of absence granted for the purpose of acquiring practical work experience in business, industry or government.

   2. Applicants for classroom occupational exchange leave shall submit with the application form a statement from the employer agreeing to the terms and conditions of the leave, as specified in board policy.

   3. Upon return from such leave, the employee shall submit to the board a full report detailing the work experience and its benefits.

   4. The business, industry or government agency to which the employee is assigned during the leave shall fully compensate the school district for all salary, wages, pension and retirement contributions and other benefits as if the employee were in full-time active service.

   5. Professional employees who participate in an occupational exchange leave shall be entitled to full salary and benefits coverage so long as all the provision of this policy are met.

E. Administrative procedures shall be developed to ensure the proper implementation of this policy.