

MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Regents
From: Board Office
Subject: Revised Special School Policy on Educational Reimbursements
Date: September 5, 2000

Recommended Actions:

1. Approve revisions to the Educational Assistance Program at Iowa School for the Deaf and Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School retroactive to January 1, 2000 --
 - to provide for permanent part-time staff to participate in the schools' Educational Assistance Program;
 - to modify certain aspects of the existing program pertaining to eligibility for courses, reimbursement for courses, and credit hours permitted per semester; and
 - to delete a redundant and inconsistent paragraph. (Attachment 1)
2. Approve revision of the Regent Procedural Guide §4.10 to include the changes in the Educational Assistance Program identified in 1, above.

Executive Summary:

The special schools provide an Educational Assistance Program (Program) for permanent full-time employees. The superintendents recognize that providing opportunities for all permanent staff to enhance their skills and knowledge is vital to the success of the schools. They propose to make the Program, with slight modification, available to permanent part-time staff. Part-time staff would have to remain in active employment with the school twice as long as full-time staff to avoid repayment of their reimbursed expenses.

The present Program appears ambiguous as to the requirement that the course of study be related to a current assignment. The revision provides the superintendents authority to look to future needs of the schools and provide for courses of study which are for the overall good of the school.

The revised Program would be available for not more than six credit hours per academic semester.

Background & Analysis:

Many K-12 schools offer to their employees an opportunity to participate in educational assistance programs in which the school pays a part or all of the costs of attaining higher education credits or attending educational programs. The Board has provided this opportunity to full-time permanent staff of the special schools for many years. As the work patterns of employees are changing, there are more part-time employees entering the workforce. In order to assure that the best qualified staff is available to the schools, employer-provided educational programs need to be available to permanent part-time staff. The revisions requested by the superintendents in Regent Procedural Guide §4.10.B.1 provide for permanent part-time staff to receive the benefits of the Program.

The superintendents believe there is some ambiguity as to whether the Program is available only for courses which relate directly to an employee's present responsibilities or if it is available to meet other school needs. In order to provide staff to the school who are versatile in meeting both the current and anticipated needs of the schools, the superintendents seek permission to provide the Program to employees for the overall good of the institution. The revision they propose to Regent Procedural Guide §4.10.C will provide this flexibility.

Many institutions of higher education now offer academic credit coursework on schedules different than the traditional academic semester. Courses are sometimes concentrated so that a three-credit course can be completed in less than a month. The superintendents believe that no employee should be engaged in more than six credits of academic work in any academic semester. The revisions to Regent Procedural Guide §§4.10.E.1 and 4.10.E.2 provide this limitation.

The superintendents request that these revisions be made retroactive to January 1, 2000 to enable them to reimburse staff who have completed coursework based on a superintendent's recommendation.

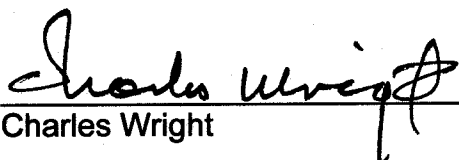
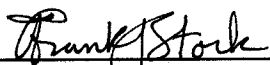
Regent Procedural Guide §4.10J contains two unnumbered paragraphs. Each purports to identify the continuing employment requirements of the Program. They are inconsistent. The first paragraph is "latest-in-time" and is the one the superintendents wish to remain in the Regent Procedural Guide, modified to reflect the continuing employment requirements for part-time staff. Therefore, the superintendents recommend deletion of the second paragraph.

Attachment 1 is the Board's policy for the Program with new language underscored and in bold type. Language proposed for deletion is stricken through.

As institutions, employees, and the public rely on the Regent Procedural Guide in determining procedural aspects of institutional operations, the Board Office recommends that the guide be revised to reflect these changes now even though the whole guide is under review for total revision.

The superintendents report there will be minimal financial impact in providing the Program to permanent part-time staff. Each school anticipates that it will cost less than \$3,000 per year to provide this benefit. No budget revisions will be required to provide this change.

The Board Office recommends approval of these revisions.

 Approved: 
Charles Wright _____ Frank J. Stork

Attachment 1

4.10 Educational Assistance Program (IBSSS and ISD)

A. The educational assistance program is designed to accomplish the following objectives:

1. To provide for institutional needs in relation to areas of staff development which will aid the schools in better accomplishing their objectives.
2. To fulfill each school's mission and accomplish goals and objectives to provide staff members who have knowledge and skill to fill needed critical positions for which there is a scarcity of qualified applicants.
3. To stimulate interest in and provide incentive to staff members who have special abilities in critical areas to increase their knowledge and skill so they may have the opportunity to achieve their potential in their current positions.
4. To provide added incentive to supervisory personnel to maximize their management potential. For purposes of this program supervisory personnel are those positions excluded from bargaining units due to their supervisory or management responsibilities.

B. Eligibility

1. Any full-time permanent employee of the Iowa Braille and Sight Saving School and the Iowa School for the Deaf who has completed one year of service with the school is entitled to consideration for the benefits provided under this program. **Part-time permanent employees who have completed one full year of service are eligible for benefits provided by this program. Determination of the amount of benefit shall be at the discretion of the Superintendent.**
2. An employee receiving other financial assistance, such as scholarship aid, GI funds, etc., will be eligible to receive educational assistance to the extent that the sum total of all methods of reimbursement does not exceed 100 percent of tuition.

C. Acceptable Courses of Study

This program is exclusively designed for school-related courses of study. Any course of study must be in an area which has a relationship to the tasks accomplished within the institution, the requirements of the position the individual currently holds and/or requirements for the learning of skills for which the institution has need. **At the superintendent's discretion, coursework may be approved that increases any individual's skills for the overall good of the institution.**

Each individual school shall work out a curriculum for basic courses and degrees needed by the agency in order to fulfill its missions.

D. Educational Institutions

A staff member may, under this program, attend any accredited institution of higher learning within the state. Attendance at out-of-state institutions may be approved on a limited basis, provided there are geographical or educational considerations which make attendance at a state institution impractical. In this statement, "accreditation" refers to accreditation as an educational institution and a specific program of study which is approved or accredited by the profession as meeting the standards of the "state of arts."

E. Educational Leaves

Tuition reimbursement courses, part-time school related courses.

1. Employees are required first to seek enrollment into evening and Saturday classes; tuition reimbursement may be granted for a maximum of six credit hours at one-time per academic semester.
2. If the necessary courses are not available during evenings and Saturdays, leave and tuition reimbursement may be granted for a maximum of six credit hours at any one-time per academic semester.
3. When leave is granted, the individual's work schedule will be modified to the extent feasible to accommodate class hours. However, as much as possible, the individual will be expected to make up the time.

F. Full-Time Educational Leave

1. Without Pay: At the discretion of the superintendent and with the approval of the Board of Regents, a permanent employee may be granted educational leave without pay to attend an accredited institution for courses that are school related. While all educational expenses are covered by the employee, the employee will have the right to return to the position at the same level with the same classification.
2. With Stipends: The school may, subject to the availability of funds, grant a tuition reimbursement (full or partial) or a stipend for an individual who is on leave without pay to attend an accredited educational institution for school-related courses. Stipend is defined as a specific sum of money sufficient to cover all or part of the cost of tuition, books, and other course-related materials.
3. With Pay: The school may, at the discretion of the superintendent and with the approval of the Board of Regents, approve applications for full-time leave of absence with pay for a limited number of employees based on institutional needs and the availability of funds.

Full-time educational leave may be granted for a period of one academic year, but may be extended upon request of the applicant, subject to the discretion of the superintendent and the Board of Regents, and based upon institutional needs, availability of institutional funds, and academic performance. Leave may

Attachment 1

be granted for one academic year at one-half pay, or the equivalent of one-half of an academic year at full pay.

G. Reimbursement

1. An employee will be reimbursed for tuition and fees upon submission of an original paid receipt from the academic institution to the designated agency representative.
2. Prior to reimbursement, the employee must provide proof of successful completion of the course.
 - a. Successful completion of undergraduate course shall require attainment of at least a "C" grade.
 - b. Successful completion of a graduate course shall require attainment of at least a "B" grade.
 - c. Successful completion of a vocational or correspondence course shall be recorded by submittal of an official certificate or diploma.

H. Selection of Applicants

While the selection of applicants is at the sole discretion of the superintendent, it is the express policy of the Board of Regents to offer all qualified applicants an equal opportunity to participate in the educational assistance program within the limitations imposed by the availability of funds and agency staffing requirements. The schools will also encourage continued education by allowing employees flexible work schedules and unpaid leaves of absence whenever possible, consistent with the efficient administration of the institution.

I. Reporting of Leaves

Requests for educational leaves may be granted by the superintendent and reported in the Register of Personnel Changes, except that full-time educational leaves shall be submitted to the Board by the superintendent for approval.

Each request for a full-time educational leave shall contain information as to the length of service of the individual and an estimate of additional net budgetary support necessary to finance all leaves.

Each institution shall submit a yearly evaluation and report or discussion and costs regarding educational leaves.

J. School Employment Requirements

Any full-time staff member who receives reimbursement for tuition shall agree to remain in the active employment of the school after the receipt of such benefit for a period of one month for every unit of credit earned or to repay to the state of Iowa such compensation as [the staff member] shall have received. Any part-time staff member who receives reimbursement for tuition shall agree to remain in the active employment of the school after the receipt of such benefit for a period of two months for every unit of credit earned or to repay the state of Iowa such compensation as the staff member shall have received. Months shall be counted beginning with the first full month of active employment following the official semester closing date of the institution wherein the employee is enrolled. (Board of Regents Minutes September 17-18, 1996, p. 277)

~~Any staff member granted such leave shall agree either to return to the institution granting such leave for a period of not less than two years or to repay to the state of Iowa such compensation as [the staff member] shall have received during such leave. (Code 262.9[12]; Board of Regents Minutes June 18-19, 1980, p. 703)~~