

TUITION ASSISTANCE AND EMPLOYMENT OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS

Under the guidelines of West Virginia Code §18A-3-3a, and also [West Virginia Board of Education Policy 5202](#), §126-136-23.1, state tuition reimbursement for educators is available on a first-come, first-served, limited basis for those taking coursework in a verified critical shortage area, as verified by the county of employment. Coursework for those required to complete renewal hours for professional teaching, student support, or administrative license renewal is also available under the renewal area option. However, please note that coursework completed in a verified critical shortage area has been made a legislative priority.

An educator may apply for tuition reimbursement under the following criteria: 1) holds either a valid West Virginia Certificate or First Class Permit for full-time employment and is seeking an additional endorsement in a shortage area, and either resides in the state or is employed regularly for instructional purposes in a public school in the state; or 2) is seeking certification renewal, and has a continuing contract with a county board.

Reimbursement is limited to the cost of tuition, registration and other required fees only appropriate college or university coursework used for license renewal or for an additional endorsement in a verified shortage subject area. The term “fee” refers to any mandatory cost associated with tuition, as assessed by the college or university, excluding payment for books and supplies.

Reimbursement for an educator who has prior approval to attend an out-of-state institution of higher education as described in W. Va. Code §18A-3-3a(d) or a private institution of higher education may not exceed the amount of the highest corresponding tuition charged at a West Virginia state supported college or university. Reimbursement for courses completed toward certification renewal is limited to 15 semester hours of courses for any educator. Reimbursement for educators completing courses will be limited to 15 semester hours of coursework completed towards an additional endorsement in a shortage area. The educator must have completed the appropriate college or university coursework with a minimum 3.0 GPA.

An application for tuition reimbursement must be received by the WVDE no later than June 15 of the year for coursework completed during that same fiscal year. Each fiscal year begins on July 1.

If all state funds for tuition reimbursement are expended by the time the application is reviewed in order by date received and an Out of Funds denial is issued for the application, an applicant may choose to apply at that time to the employing county for possible reimbursement through county funds or through the county's Title I, Title II, or Title III federal program funds, where available.

Tuition reimbursement, through available funds, shall be provided to core subject area teachers or administrators for the purpose of becoming highly qualified in a core subject area or administration. Title I five percent set aside funds shall be allocated for tuition reimbursement in accordance with Title I budget requirements. Priority shall be given to teachers seeking tuition reimbursement in connection with: the district's critical need subject areas (list annually); schools with low percentage of classes taught by highly qualified teachers; schools with high poverty; and schools with high turnover.

Title I five percent set aside tuition reimbursement funds shall only be available in the event West

Virginia Department of Education professional preparation funds are unavailable and may not be used to reimburse teachers who are not assigned to schools designated as Title I schools.

Title II funds shall only be available for tuition reimbursement in the event West Virginia Department of Education professional preparation funds are unavailable and, with respect to Title I teachers, after the Title I five percent set aside tuition reimbursement funds have been exhausted.

The District shall enter into tuition reimbursement agreements that include provisions relating to: timelines for completing highly qualified status; the length of time candidate must work in the District once their program is completed; to the recoupment of funds if teachers or administrators do not meet the District's requirements; and, compliance with funding source compliance. The Limitations for tuition reimbursement contained in this policy shall apply to Title I and Title II tuition reimbursement. The District agreement specifically lists the following Criteria:

1. The applicant is employed in a critical shortage area in Hampshire County Schools (listed annually).
2. The applicant must provide form 36 and letter denying reimbursement from the state.
3. The applicant must remain employed by Hampshire County Schools for three school terms.
4. If the applicant does not remain employed for three school terms, then the reimbursement stipend must be returned. This may be accomplished through a one-time payroll deduction.
5. The applicant must provide an official college transcript showing hours completed.
6. The applicant must provide a receipt with the name of the college/university verifying payment made in your name for the appropriate term(s) of the coursework claimed for reimbursement.
7. The applicant cannot be reimbursed for more than 9 hours of college classes or a maximum of \$5000.

Non-Discriminatory Clause. These benefits will be offered on a non-discriminatory basis that will not favor highly-compensated educators. This plan serves as notice of the availability and terms of this program to all eligible educators.

Tax Implications for Employees. The IRS sets a maximum dollar amount of tuition reimbursement received from the District which can be excluded from an educator's income each tax year. The District will not include these benefits in the wages, tips, and other compensation box on the educator's Form W-2. This also means the educator does not have to include these benefits on the annual tax return. No tax-free education expenses paid for by the District can be used as a basis for any other deduction or credit, including the lifetime learning credit and the American opportunity credit. Amounts paid in excess of the maximum dollar amount set by the IRS are generally taxable. However, if the excess of benefits paid qualifies as a working condition fringe benefit, the District does not have to include them in the educator's wages. A working condition fringe benefit is a benefit which, had the educator paid for it, the educator could deduct as a business expense.

Legal Authority: West Virginia Code §18A-3-3a; West Virginia Board of Education Policy 5202; Title I, Sections 1119(h)(i) and 1119(l); Title II, Section 2122(b)(10)

First Reading: December 15, 2020

Second Reading: January 4, 2021

THIRD READING AND ADOPTION: January 15, 2021

Criteria for reimbursement of funds:

A professional employee may apply for reimbursement of funds for college tuition provided:

1. The applicant is employed in a critical shortage area in Hampshire County Schools (listed annually).
2. The applicant must provide form 36 and letter denying reimbursement from the state.
3. The applicant must remain employed by Hampshire County Schools for three school terms.
4. If the applicant does not remain employed for three school terms, then the reimbursement stipend must be returned. This may be accomplished through a one-time payroll deduction.
5. The applicant must provide an official college transcript showing hours completed.
6. The applicant must provide a receipt with the name of the college/university verifying payment made in your name for the appropriate term(s) of the coursework claimed for reimbursement.
7. The applicant cannot be reimbursed for more than 9 hours of college classes or a maximum of \$5000.

Name: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Address: _____

List of Courses Claimed for Reimbursement:

Course Number	Name of College	# of Course Hours	Term

Tuition _____

Mandatory _____

Total Requested _____

Amount Approved: _____

Number of hours reimbursed: _____

I certify that I have read the criteria for tuition reimbursement and I meet all eligibility criteria. I further certify that all information I have provided on the application is accurate and I have completed the course(s) indicated on the attached grade report. I swear or affirm under the penalty of false swearing that all information provided in or with this application is true, correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any false statements, misrepresentations, or omissions of fact in or with this application are grounds for denial, suspension, or revocation of the license(s) that I am seeking or currently hold and grounds for denial of reimbursement. I agree to repay any monies gained through the submission of inaccurate information.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Superintendent: _____ Date: _____