

BLUFFVIEW MONTESSORI SCHOOL
POLICY 403 EMPLOYEE (NON-MONTESSORI) TUITION REIMBURSEMENT
ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

I. PURPOSE

Bluffview Montessori School (“BMS”) aspires to support non-Montessori trained employees in attaining and/or advancing licensure in areas that have historically had high turnover and teacher shortages- including, but not limited to Special Education and Physical Education to ensure that all BMS students are taught by effective teachers. To this end, BMS offers tuition assistance programs to current employees.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

BMS supports the efforts of individual employees to advance their skills and knowledge by acquiring the education necessary to enhance their abilities and prepare for and work toward a teaching career in any areas of need as determined by BMS administration.

The following is information regarding two tuition assistance programs available to BMS employees to aid in the continuation of their education.

III. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

The license attainment concept below is designed to support high quality staff in good standing as they further their education and to help fill positions that may be challenging to fill for various reasons.

A. Additional License Attainment for Current Certified Staff

The Additional License Attainment Program provides certified employees financial support in attaining an additional license in the area of Special Education, Developmental Adapted Physical Education (DAPE), or other hard-to-fill licensure areas, as determined by BMS administration.

B. Initial License Attainment for Current Non-Certified Staff

The Initial License Attainment Program provides financial support to non-certified employees in attaining an initial license in an area of need or

hard-to-fill licensure areas, as determined by BMS administration.

IV. EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

A. Benefit eligible BMS staff with at least two (2) years of successful teaching experience or practice at BMS, as demonstrated by proficient or higher annual summative teacher performance ratings, may apply to the Additional License Attainment Program.

B. Benefit eligible employees working with Out of Field Permissions, Tier 1, or Tier 2 licenses at BMS with at least one (1) year of successful performance in their position as demonstrated by performance evaluation and supervisor recommendation, may apply to the Initial License Attainment Program.

C. BMS will support license attainment in any of the subsequent subjects:

1. Special Education Licensure in the following fields:

- a. Specific Learning Disability;
- b. Emotional or Behavioral Disorders;
- c. Developmental Cognitive Disability;
- d. Autism Spectrum Disorder; or
- e. Academic and Behavioral Strategist (ABS)

2. Physical Education

3. Any other area of licensure designated by BMS admin as hard to fill.

D. Employees may complete the teacher licensure program at any accredited post-secondary institution, but approval preference may be given to applicants who enroll in Winona State University or St. Mary's University.

E. Applications are due TWO (2) WEEKS before the start date of the course(s).

- 1. For the initial phase-in of this policy, applicants currently enrolled will be given preference upon completion of application.

F. Applications will be reviewed by the Head of School, and when appropriate the Assistant Head of School and Special Education Coordinator will be included in

the decision.

G. BMS reserves the right to accept or deny applications based on factors including but not limited to the employee's job performance with BMS, suitability for the position(s) for which licensure is sought at the discretion of BMS administration, BMS's level of need for the licensure area requested, and funds available/budgeted. The decision to accept or deny an employee's application is subject to sole discretion of BMS administration, is final, and is not subject to appeal.

H. Applicants will provide a list of courses to be taken as provided by the educational institution, including a projection/estimate of comprehensive costs. This will include the title of the degree to be attained.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES ACCEPTED INTO A LICENSE ATTAINMENT PROGRAM

A. BMS employees accepted into either License Attainment program must remain employed, actively working (not on a leave of absence), and maintain a performance rating of proficient or higher at BMS throughout the duration of the course in order to be reimbursed (and must be employed at time of reimbursement).

B. BMS employees accepted into either License Attainment program must agree to schedule the classes at the post-secondary institution so that the classes do not interfere with their work schedules or otherwise obtain prior written approval from the Head of School.

C. BMS employees must fulfill all post-secondary requirements and **must be granted a Tier 3 or Tier 4 teaching license by the State of Minnesota** in the agreed upon field/licensure to receive the reimbursements.

VI. PAYMENT OF EXPENDITURES

A. BMS will reimburse employees up to 50% (will not exceed \$12,000 per employee per license) of tuition costs incurred in order to attain the agreed upon teaching license. This does not include supplies or stipends, as in other BMS policies.

Employees must provide BMS with verification of license granted and proof of tuition costs by invoice or other documentation, as approved by BMS.

1. Payments will take place on a four year schedule: 25% of the total amount owed the employee will be paid each year over the four years. It will be paid out as “additional salary” to ensure IRS compliance.

1.1. If the budget allows, the repayment schedule may be weighted more heavily in the first years of repayment, up to \$3000 per year. In the case of a staff member requesting a \$2300 reimbursement for example, that could all be paid in year one as opposed to spreading it out over 4 years, assuming the budget line item can support it.

B. Upon the provision of a MN State teaching license and the corresponding tuition bill, BMS will schedule the agreed upon payments to the individual teacher.

VII. NO ENTITLEMENT TO EMPLOYMENT

BMS is not obligated to offer the employee a position in the area of licensure attained through this program. The employee agrees that he or she will be eligible to apply for any open position and will be considered along with all other applicants through the standard selection process. This policy does not, nor is it intended to, constitute an employment contract and does not abrogate BMS's at will employment relationship with those employees who are subject to this policy.

Legal References: 26 U.S.C. §127 Educational Assistance Programs

Minn. R. 8710.4600 Teachers of Mathematics Minn. R. 8710.4750 Teachers of Science Minn. R. 8710.5000 Core Skills for Teachers of Special Education Minn. R. 8710.5050 Teachers of Special Education: Academic and Behavioral Strategist Minn. R. 8710.5400 Teachers of Special Education Developmental Disabilities Minn. R. 8710.5600 Teachers of Special Education: Emotional or Behavioral Disorders Minn. R. 8710.5700 Teachers of Special Education: Learning Disabilities Minn. R. 8710.5850 Teachers of Special Education: Autism Spectrum Disorders *U.S. Dep't of Health & Human Servs. v. Smith*, 807 F.2d 122 (8th Cir. 1986) *In re Daymon*, 490 B.R. 331 (Bankr. N.D. Ill. 2013)