## 438.1. COMPENSATED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT LEAVES

### 1. Purpose

This policy shall establish the district's parameters for granting professional development and classroom occupational exchange leaves for eligible professional employees.

### 2. Definitions

**Professional development leave** shall be defined as a leave of absence granted for the purpose of improving professional competency or obtaining a professional certificate or commission (commission for the positions of Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent), subject to review and authorization by the Board of School Directors and upon recommendation of the Superintendent of Schools. Such leave shall be directly related to an employee's professional responsibilities, as determined by the Board, and be restricted to activities required by regulations of the State Board of Education and by the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for a professional certificate or commission or to improve professional competency (including, but not limited to, the obtaining of a professionally-related master's degree, college courses, attendance at a scheduled conference, attendance at lecture sessions or educational classrooms, curriculum development work, supervised classroom observations of other professional employees).

**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.

### 3. Authority

The Board shall have the sole authority to adopt and enforce policy establishing the conditions for approval of professional development leave. All requests for such leave shall be subject to review by the Board. The Board may approve or reject a proposed plan for professional development leave.

The Board may grant a leave to eligible employees for classroom occupational exchange leave for the specified purpose.
4. Guidelines

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| SC 1166 | **Eligibility**

To be eligible for professional development leave, an employee shall have completed ten (10) years of satisfactory service in the public schools of the Commonwealth; at least five (5) consecutive years of such service shall be in the Spring-Ford Area School District. Thereafter, one (1) leave of absence for professional development shall be allowed after each seven (7) years of service.

| SC 1166 | A leave for professional development may be taken for a half or full school term or for two (2) half school terms during a period of two (2) years, at the option of the employee, and shall further be subject to limitations on numbers of employees who may take a professional leave or leave of absence, as well as the remaining timing requirements for taking professional leaves as set forth in the Public Code of 1949, as amended.

| SC 1166.1 | **Hours**

The hours which shall be counted for professional development activities shall meet the minimum requirement of one hundred and eighty (180) hours of actual professional development activities per half school term and three hundred and sixty (360) hours of actual professional development activities per full school term.

The hours counted for a professional development activity relating to approved college courses may involve up to ninety (90) hours per half school term and up to one hundred and eighty (180) hours per full school term. These hours may include a combination of both classroom hours and resource and/or preparation hours (e.g., forty-five (45) classroom hours and up to forty-five (45) resource and/or preparation hours per half school term). Travel time shall not be counted in meeting the hourly requirements.

In order to be eligible as an appropriate professional development activity, the professional employee must actually attend regularly scheduled courses at an accredited and recognized institution of higher learning. Such courses must extend through an entire semester at such institution of higher learning. College programs or courses of studies or courses that are delivered under accelerated schedules (i.e., over a truncated period of time, a weekend, or a few weeks), as well as on-line courses, or any courses that are delivered via an institution that has been deemed to be a diploma mill by the district and/or any reviewing body, will not be eligible for Compensated Professional Development Leave. For the purposes of this policy, a **diploma mill** is an institution of higher education operating without supervision of a state or professional agency and granting diplomas which are either fraudulent or, because of lack of proper standards, worthless within the eyes of the district. Diploma mills or degree mills
are substandard or fraudulent colleges that offer potential students degrees with little or no serious work. Some diploma mills are simply fraudulent: a mailbox to which individuals send money in exchange for paper that purports to be a college degree. Others require some nominal work for the student but do not require college level course work that is normally required for the degree. For the purposes of this policy, a diploma mill will have the characteristics that are outlined by the University of Illinois in [http://www.hep.uiuc.edu/home/g-gollin/pigeons/](http://www.hep.uiuc.edu/home/g-gollin/pigeons/), as well as the Council on Higher Education accreditation at [www.chea.org](http://www.chea.org). Further, any educational institution that is deemed to be a diploma mill or degree mill by the Oregon Office of Degree Authorization cannot be approved as an educational institution or an institution of higher learning eligible for a compensated professional development leave under this policy.

The hours counted for eligible professional development activities other than approved college courses must be actual hours of attendance at approved, scheduled conferences, attendance at lecture sessions or educational classrooms, and other study and professional activities approved by the Superintendent and the Board. Travel time shall not be counted in terms of meeting the one hundred and eighty (180) hours per half school term or three hundred and sixty (360) hours per full school term of professional development activities.

Other than the college course option which shall allow up to ninety (90) hours, no other activity listed herein can exceed a total of three hundred and sixty (360) hours per school term (i.e., ninety (90) hours for a college course plus forty-eight (48) hours of professional meetings/conferences and forty-two (42) hours of classroom observation of other professional employees equals one hundred and eighty (180) hours).

**Application**

Professional development leaves shall only be granted if:

1. The district must determine that the applicant applying for the professional development leave does indeed require the improvements or additional training/expertise sought by the applicant.

2. The district must determine a need for a professional certificate or commission on the part of the applicant.

3. The applicant shall provide certification that s/he is enrolled in an approved program of studies entailing a minimum of nine (9) graduate credits or twelve (12) undergraduate credits or its equivalent per half school term in an approved
institution of higher learning or eighteen (18) graduate credits or twenty-four (24) undergraduate credits or its equivalent per full school term in an approved institution of higher learning, or

4. Completion of one hundred and eighty (180) hours of professional development activities per half school term or three hundred and sixty (360) hours of professional development activities per school term, as described herein.

Requests for professional development leaves shall be submitted on the approved district form and forwarded with a detailed plan to the Superintendent.

All required application materials shall be submitted before May 1 for leaves to begin August 1 or on or before November 1 for leaves to begin January 1 (except in the case of an employee who is to be furloughed, when the deadline will be waived).

Requests for classroom occupational exchange leave shall be submitted on the approved district form and forwarded with the appropriate documentation to the Superintendent. All required application materials shall be submitted as of the same dates applicable to professional development leaves.

Documentation

Applicants for professional development leave shall submit with the application form a detailed plan describing the professional development activities to be undertaken and a statement specifying the benefits of the leave to the employee and the school district. The plan shall provide sufficient information to permit the Board and the Superintendent to adequately evaluate the request.

The Board may, at any time, require additional information from the employee in order to assist the Superintendent in evaluating the request and the leave's benefits to and impact on the employee and the school district.

In the event that the Superintendent and the Board approve the professional development leave application, the professional employee shall receive a copy of this policy in order to make the professional employee aware of the reporting obligations.

At the conclusion of an official collegiate or university time sequence, such as semester, quarter, or other such designation, a record of the course work completed, together with marks earned therein, shall be submitted to the Superintendent of Schools. In the event of incomplete or unsatisfactory work, the Board reserves the right to withdraw approval at the end of the such period of time if the nature of the work indicates that a "good faith" performance of graduate work is not forthcoming.
Written reports shall be submitted at least two (2) times per semester to the Superintendent of Schools. Such reports shall describe the nature of the graduate program of studies pursued and the accomplishments to date. Such reports shall also describe the nature of the professional development program of graduate or undergraduate study, as well as any of the professional development activities listed herein, the accomplishments to date, and the time expended on a day-to-day enumeration. Failure to submit required reports on time shall result in forfeiture of monies paid by the district.

SC 522.2, 1166.1

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

Commitment Of Employee

SC 1166.1, 1168

Acceptance of professional development leave or classroom occupational exchange leave incurs a commitment by the employee to return to active duty in this district immediately following the leave for one (1) full school year, unless prevented by illness or disability. As a prerequisite to receiving the compensation and benefits during the compensated professional development leave, the employee must complete the professional competencies applied for in the compensated professional development leave or obtain a professional certificate or commission during the period of the compensated professional development leave. Employees shall submit required reports on time or forfeit all compensation and benefits. The Board reserves the right to require, at its own expense, additional examinations and reports by physicians of its own choice to determine the employee's ability to return to work.

Upon completion of the compensated professional development leave, the employee is required to provide to the Board of School Directors evidence deemed satisfactory to the Board of School Directors that the approved plan of professional development was fulfilled in accordance with the application during the compensated professional leave. This evidence will include but not limited to documentation from the institution of higher education and/or application filed, receipt for certification by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, or other documentation evidencing the fulfillment of such requirements. Should the employee fail to fulfill these requirements, unless prevented by illness or physical disability, the employee shall forfeit all benefits to which said employee would have been entitled to under the provisions of this Act for the period of the compensated professional development leave.
Compensable employment may not be engaged in while the employee is on professional development leave. A leave for professional development shall be considered a leave of absence without pay from all other school activities.

If the employee fails to return to school service upon expiration of the professional development leave and classroom occupational exchange leave, unless prevented by illness or physical disability, the employee shall forfeit all benefits to which said employee would have been entitled under the provisions of this act for the period of the leave.

If the employee resigns or fails to return to his/her employment, the amount contributed by the school district under Section 1170 of the Public School Code to the Public School Employee’s Retirement Fund shall be deducted from the refund payable to such employee under existing law and the amount so deducted shall be refunded to the school district by which it was paid.

### Commitment Of Employer

| SC 1168 | At the expiration of the professional development leave or classroom occupational exchange leave the employee shall, unless agreed otherwise, be reinstated in the same position held at the time of the granting of the leave. |
| SC 522.1, 1170 | Time on professional development leave shall be counted as time on the job for purposes of seniority, where applicable in the district, and for retirement fund purposes but for no other purpose. |

### Compensation

| SC 1169 | During the period of the professional development leave, an employee shall be compensated one-half (1/2) of the salary to which s/he would have been entitled had the employee not taken the leave. |
| SC 522.2 | The business, industry or government to whom 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. |
References:

School Code – 24 P.S. Sec. 522.1, 522.2, 1166, 1166.1, 1167, 1168, 1169, 1170, 1171
Spring-Ford Area School District
Royersford, Pennsylvania

Application for Professional Development Leave/Occupational Exchange

I, ________________________________, hereby make application for a Professional Development Leave/Occupational Exchange of absence for the school term _______ (year), from _____________(date) to ___________ (date), incl., understanding that if this leave is granted it shall operate as a leave of absence without pay from all other school activities.

The purpose of this leave of absence shall be for ___________________________. Accompanying this application is a justification of the reasons for this request or such other documentation as is required by regulations adopted by the Board of School Directors.

I agree to return to my employment with the Spring-Ford Area School District for a period of not less than one school year immediately following such leave of absence.

In the event that I am unable to give this period of service, I hereby agree to repay to the Spring-Ford Area School District the salary paid to me which I understand will be one-half of my annual salary rate for the same comparable period of time in the _________________(year) school term and refund to the school District all moneys contributed for benefits to the Public School Employee’s Retirement Fund under Section 1170 of the Public School Code.

I understand that said application is made in conformance with the provisions for Professional Development Leave/Occupational Exchange Leave as outlined in the Pennsylvania School Laws and by the Board of School Directors. I acknowledge that I have read School Board Policy 438.1 and understand my responsibilities under that
Policy. I will submit regular reports of activities while on leave of absence and comply with all other requirements of the Board of School Directors, as outlined in School District Policy #438.1.

Signed ______________________

Recommended by _________________________, Superintendent

Approved by Board of School Directors on _________________________

Attest: _________________________, Secretary       Date _________________