

Graduate Incentive Policy

The Cherokee County Board of Education's prime objective is to secure the best possible education for the children of Cherokee County. In pursuing this goal, the Board recognizes the great importance of maintaining, developing, and extending the professional knowledge and skills of all staff members. The Board strongly encourages staff members, at all levels, to engage in programs and activities that will lead to their professional goals and growth, expand their skills, and increase their job competence. College and university course work can be an important and significant method to ensure staff growth and development that will be reflected in increased personal and professional ability.

Within budgetary limits and subject to approval of the superintendent or his designee, reimbursements will be made for tuition payments to staff members from a portion of available staff development funds. The following procedures and guidelines will apply:

1. Reimbursements for college tuition will be limited to certified personnel employed by the Cherokee County Board of Education pursuing an advanced degree in areas of their current job assignment or in an area approved by the superintendent.
 - a. Persons pursuing advanced degrees in areas of their current job assignment or an area approved by the superintendent or his designee.
 - b. Persons adding areas of certification due to state requirements and/or local assignment.
 - c. Persons fulfilling requirements to implement the Basic Education Plan.
 - d. Persons taking a course specified on their professional development plan.
2. As funds are available reimbursement will be made based on the following terms:
 - a. "Professional Component" (12 semester hours 4 core courses) of the Master's Degree Program (M.A.) as outlined in an approved university course of study.
 - b. "Professional Component" (12 semester hours 4 core courses) of an Advanced Degree Program (Ed.S) as outlined in an approved university course of study.
 - c. "Core Component" (12 semester hours 4 core courses) of a Doctoral Degree Program as outlined in an approved university course of study.
 - d. Courses required by the Division of Certification, State Department of Public Instruction to meet requirements in present teaching assignment.
 - e. Courses required and specified on an employee's professional development plan.
 - f. Reimbursement will be made for 4 courses per school year.

Note: Reimbursements will be made to those employees entitled to 100% reimbursement at three times during the year--February 1 for Fall Semester, June 15 for Spring Semester, and September 15 for Summer Semester.

3. Reimbursements of 50% will be made if funds are available for courses leading to an advanced degree in addition to ones outlined in item #2 . In the event there are more reimbursement requests than there are funds available, then the amount of reimbursement will be determined by the number of teachers submitting requests, classification of course(s), and the amount of available funds.

Limitations

- Reimbursement is not available for courses taken solely for renewal credit as required by the Division of Certification. Enrollment in a university approved course of study leading to certification is a prerequisite for tuition reimbursement by Cherokee County Schools.
- When employees are entitled to reimbursement according to the provisions of this policy, staff members enrolled in “resident or out-of-state programs” will be reimbursed at a rate not to exceed the tuition for “distance learning” of similar study at the nearest member institution of the North Carolina University System. For approved staff members of the Cherokee County School system, the distance learning rate of Western Carolina University will be used.
- Only course work resulting in grades of "A" or "B," or equivalent, will be considered for reimbursement.
- Reimbursement for college tuition is in no way to be interpreted as a guarantee of job placement.
- By requesting reimbursement for tuition, a staff member indicates that he/she has not and will not receive reimbursement from another agency or organization nor compensation from a grant-in-aid or scholarship.
- No reimbursement for tuition will be considered for courses taken before the application process is completed and approved.
- This policy becomes effective upon adoption of revisions by the Board of Education. All Cherokee County Schools employees presently engaged in the program must complete the required graduate incentive course plan (Document #5) and graduate incentive tuition reimbursement application (Document #6) to obtain reimbursement. There will be no “grandfather” clause awarded for requests of reimbursement for courses taken prior to the adoption of this policy where no application or approval was given.

Steps to Receiving Reimbursements

To secure reimbursement, the employee must have on file in the central office six documents as explained below.

Document #1. A check list of courses required in his/her graduate course of study--Submitted when first making application for participation in the Graduate Incentive Program, this check list will provide central office staff information they will need to determine which courses will be covered for 100% tuition reimbursement. The employee should not expect to receive tuition reimbursement before receiving central office approval to participate in the Graduate Incentive Program.

Document #2. A notarized agreement to repay tuition if the program participant voluntarily terminates his/her employment with Cherokee County Schools within four years after receiving tuition reimbursement from this school system

Document #3. Proof of tuition payment (registrar's receipt, a canceled check, etc.)--Participants in this program should not request tuition reimbursement from Cherokee County if they have been or will be reimbursed through a scholarship, grant funding, or any other source.

Document #4. A grade card, transcript, or other evidence of successful completion of the course at the "A" or "B" level

Document#5. Graduate Incentive Course Plan. This document must be submitted with Documents #1 and #2, and at the end of each semester. No application will be considered if not fully completed. Notification will be made if funding is not available to make reimbursements. In the event adequate funding isn't available, the application may be approved with the anticipation of future adequate funding upon receipt of which reimbursements will be made on a semester completion basis as described in paragraph E, 2. and 3. herein.

Document#6. Graduate Incentive Tuition Reimbursement Application. The application will be completed and submitted for approval prior to approval for each degree being pursued. The purpose of this application is to afford the central office an opportunity to forecast financial needs for the applicant to better ensure availability of funds. Once approved, a new application must be submitted in the information contained on the initial application has changed or for the beginning of a new degree.

Document #1, #2, #5, and #6 will be on file in Central Office as soon as an employee is approved for program participation. When the employee requests reimbursement for any course, he/she must submit documents #3, #4, #5, and #6 if changes in course selection have been made at the same time and within the required time frame (for Fall semester not later than January 1st; for Spring semester not later than May 15th; and for Summer semester not later than August 15th. Late requests will jeopardize the employee's claim for reimbursement.

Obligations of Graduate Tuition Recipients

Cherokee County employees who receive tuition reimbursement through the provisions of this Graduate Incentive Program policy will have an obligation to continue productive employment with Cherokee County schools for at least four years beyond their final receipt of said reimbursement. If, however, recipients voluntarily default on this four-year obligation, recipients will repay to this school system within six months of terminating the contract an amount equal to the total graduate tuition paid to the recipient by Cherokee County during the last four years of employment with this school system.

If a recipient of graduate tuition reimbursement tenders his/her resignation before completing the required four-years of service, the Cherokee County Schools' finance officer will notify the employee of the amount of money he/she will owe the school system on the date the resignation becomes effective. If the employee resigning under these conditions still has paychecks due him/her, a portion of the amount owed the school system under the stipulations of this policy will be deducted from each paycheck. If the amount owed is less than \$500.00, the total amount will be deducted from the first paycheck due the employee after he/she offers his/her resignation. If the amount owed is \$500.00 or more, \$500.00 will be deducted from the first paycheck due the employee. From subsequent paychecks due him/her, \$500.00 or the remaining total debt (whichever is less) will be deducted.

Counting from his/her last day of employment with Cherokee County Schools, the tuition reimbursement recipient who defaults on his/her four-year continued employment obligation will have six calendar months to repay the total amount of such funds owed to this school system. Less than \$500.00 dollars paid during any one month will be considered a default in payment. Payments are to be made to the **Cherokee County Board of Education** and sent to the attention of the **Finance Officer**.

The Obligation Agreement and Tuition Reimbursement Record forms are attached to this policy.

Teacher Assistant Teaching Degree Incentive Program

The Cherokee County Board of Education's prime objective is to secure the best possible education for the children of Cherokee County. In pursuing this goal, the Board recognizes the great importance of maintaining, developing, and extending the professional knowledge and skills of all staff members. The Board strongly encourages staff members, at all levels, to engage in programs and activities that will lead to their professional goals and growth, expand their skills, and increase their job competence. College and university course work can be an important and significant method to ensure staff growth and development that will be reflected in increased personal and professional ability.

Within budgetary limits and subject to approval of the superintendent or his designee, reimbursements will be made for tuition payments to staff members from a portion of available funds. The following procedures and guidelines will apply:

1. Reimbursements for college tuition will be limited to personnel employed by the Cherokee County Board of Education.
2. Reimbursement of 100% will be provided for the first three (3) classes at the junior level or above leading to a bachelor's degree in education. Students must have passed the test to get into the education program and been accepted into the teacher education program.
3. Reimbursements of 50% will be made **if funds are available** for courses leading to a bachelor's degree in addition to ones outlined in item #2 on September 15 of each year for previous Fall, Spring, and Summer Semesters. In the event there are more reimbursement requests than there are funds available, then the amount of reimbursement will be determined by the number of teacher assistants submitting requests, classification of course(s), and the amount of available funds.

Limitations

- When employees are entitled to reimbursement according to the provisions of this policy, staff members enrolled in "resident or out-of-state programs" will be reimbursed at a rate not to exceed the tuition for "distance learning" of similar study at the nearest member institution of the North Carolina University System. For approved staff members of the Cherokee County School system, the distance learning rate of Western Carolina University will be used.
- Only course work resulting in grades of "A" or "B," or equivalent, will be considered for reimbursement.
- Reimbursement for college tuition is in no way to be interpreted as a guarantee of job placement.
- By requesting reimbursement for tuition, a staff member indicates that he/she has not and will not receive reimbursement from another agency or organization or compensation from a grant-in-aid or scholarship or charitable donation.
- No reimbursement for tuition will be considered for courses taken before the application process is completed and approved.
- This policy becomes effective upon adoption of revisions by the Board of Education. All Cherokee County Schools employees presently engaged in the program must complete the required graduate incentive course plan (Document #5) to obtain reimbursement. There will be no "grandfather" clause awarded for requests of reimbursement for courses taken prior to the adoption of this policy where no application or approval was given.

Steps to Receiving Reimbursements

To secure reimbursement, the employee must have on file in the central office six documents as explained below.

Document #1. A check list of courses required in his/her course of study--Submitted when first making application for participation in the Teacher Assistant Teaching Degree Incentive Program, this check list will provide central office staff information they will need to determine which courses will be covered for 100% tuition reimbursement. The employee should not expect to receive tuition reimbursement before receiving central office approval to participate in the Teacher Assistant Teaching Degree Incentive Program.

Document #2. A notarized agreement to repay tuition if the program participant voluntarily terminates his/her employment with Cherokee County Schools within four years after receiving tuition reimbursement from this school system

Document #3. Proof of tuition payment (registrar's receipt, a canceled check, etc.)--Participants in this program should not request tuition reimbursement from Cherokee County if they have been or will be reimbursed through a scholarship, grant funding, or any other source.

Document #4. A grade card, transcript, or other evidence of successful completion of the course at the "A" or "B" level

Document#5. Graduate Incentive Cours Plan. This document must be submitted with Documents #1 and #2, and at the end of each semester. No graduate incentive course plan will be considered if not fully completed. Notification will be made if funding is not available to make reimbursements. In the event adequate funding isn't available, the application may be approved with the anticipation of future adequate funding upon receipt of which reimbursements will be made on a semester completion basis as described in paragraph E, 2. and 3. herein.

Document#6. Graduate Incentive Tuition Reimbursement Application. The application will be completed and submitted for approval prior to approval for each degree being pursued. The purpose of this application is to afford the central office an opportunity to forecast financial needs for the applicant to better ensure availability of funds. Once approved, a new application must be submitted in the information contained on the initial application has changed or for the beginning of a new degree.

Document #1, #2, and #5 will be on file in Central Office as soon as an employee is approved for program participation. When the employee requests reimbursement for any course, he/she must submit documents #3 and #4 at the same time and within the required time frame (for Fall semester not later than January 1st; for Spring semester not later than May 15th; and for Summer semester not later than August 15th. Late requests will jeopardize the employee's claim for reimbursement.

Obligations of Graduate Tuition Recipients

Cherokee County employees who receive tuition reimbursement through the provisions of this Teacher Assistant Teaching Degree Incentive Program policy will have an obligation to continue productive employment with Cherokee County schools for at least four years beyond their final

receipt of said reimbursement. If, however, recipients voluntarily default on this four-year obligation, recipients will repay to this school system within six months of terminating the contract an amount equal to the total graduate tuition paid to the recipient by Cherokee County during the last four years of employment with this school system.

If a recipient of teacher assistant college tuition reimbursement tenders his/her resignation before completing the required four-years of service, the Cherokee County Schools' finance officer will notify the employee of the amount of money he/she will owe the school system on the date the resignation becomes effective. If the employee resigning under these conditions still has paychecks due him/her, a portion of the amount owed the school system under the stipulations of this policy will be deducted from each paycheck. If the amount owed is less than \$500.00, the total amount will be deducted from the first paycheck due the employee after he/she offers his/her resignation. If the amount owed is \$500.00 or more, \$500.00 will be deducted from the first paycheck due the employee. From subsequent paychecks due him/her, \$500.00 or the remaining total debt (whichever is less) will be deducted.

Counting from his/her last day of employment with Cherokee County Schools, the tuition reimbursement recipient who defaults on his/her four-year continued employment obligation will have six calendar months to repay the total amount of such funds owed to this school system. Less than \$500.00 dollars paid during any one month will be considered a default in payment. Payments are to be made to the **Cherokee County Board of Education** and sent to the attention of the **Finance Officer**.

Legal References: Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. 1681 *et seq.*, 34 C.F.R. pt. 106; G.S. 115C-105.47(b)(9), -333, -333.1; State Board of Education Policy TCP-C-004

Cross References: Grievance Procedure for Employees (policy 1750/7220), Plans for Growth and Improvement of Licensed Employees (policy 7811)

Adopted: March 15, 2012
Amended: November 8, 2012

Graduate Incentive Course Plan

Name: _____ Date: _____

University: _____

Degree Pursued: _____

Semester: _____ Fall 20____
 _____ Spring 20____
 _____ Summer 20____

Courses taken:

	Semester Hours

Please attach:

- Proof of payment for courses which shows
 - The courses registered for
 - The semester hours for each course
 - The amount paid

I understand that reimbursement will be based on the rates of Western Carolina University distance learning and that reimbursement contingent on the availability of funds. I further understand that if my grade is not submitted to central office within 30 days of the semester's end, reimbursement requests will not be honored.

Signature

Date

Graduate Incentive Tuition Reimbursement Application

First Name:	Application Date:
Last Name:	School Assignment:
Current Position:	Degree Held:

University Information

College or University:	
Graduate Course of Study (Major(s)):	
<input type="checkbox"/> Campus Learning	<input type="checkbox"/> Distance Learning
Graduate Degree Pursued:	
Graduate Degree Pursued: (additional choices)	

Reimbursements for college tuition will be limited to certified personnel employed by the Cherokee County Board of Education.

Justification

(Check the appropriate justification below)

	I am pursuing advanced degrees in areas of my <u>current</u> job assignment or an area approved by the superintendent.
	I am adding areas of certification due to state requirements and/or local assignment.
	I am fulfilling requirements to implement a Basic Education Plan (attached).
	I am taking a course specified on my professional development plan (attached).

Curriculum Information

List your professional Core Courses and anticipated semesters:

Course#	Course Title/Anticipated Semester

List your Subject Matter Courses and anticipated semesters:

Course#	Course Title/Anticipated Semester

Estimated Degree Completion Semester and Year: _____

CHEROKEE COUNTY SCHOOLS
GRADUATE INCENTIVE PLAN
FOR TUITION REIMBURSEMENT

OBLIGATION AGREEMENT

As a recipient of graduate school tuition reimbursement through the Graduate Incentive Plan of Cherokee County Schools, I the undersigned affirm that I have read and understand the conditions of this policy of the Cherokee County Board of Education. I, furthermore, today appear before a Notary Public, affixing my signature to this document as my promise to abide by all the conditions stipulated in the policy. I particularly acknowledge my obligations as a recipient of this employment benefit. That is, I hereby promise to continue productive employment with Cherokee County Schools for at least four (4) years beyond my final receipt of graduate tuition reimbursement from this school system's funds. If, however, I for any reason opt to terminate my employment with Cherokee County Schools before completing my four-year obligation, I promise to repay all portions of the teacher assistant college tuition I will justly owe under the provisions of this policy.

Signature of Cherokee County Schools' employee
receiving Graduate School tuition reimbursement

NOTARY PUBLIC CERTIFICATION: State of _____

County of _____

I, as a Notary Public of the said State and County, do hereby certify that _____
personally appeared before me and acknowledge the due execution of the foregoing instrument.

Witness my hand and seal the _____ day of _____, _____.

Signature of Notary

My Commissions Expires: _____

