

All professional certified employees of the Columbia County School System may use professional leave to attend seminars, conferences, and other professional meetings for professional growth and development, as approved by the principal or supervisor.

All professional leave must be requested at least two weeks prior to the date and must be approved by the principal or supervisor and the Superintendent of Schools **or designee**.

Professional leave will be allocated and approved as specified in this policy.

- A. PRE-PLANNING/POST PLANNING: At the beginning of the school year, certified personnel new to the system may report after the report date, provided the delay is for approved professional reasons. Salary and benefits begin on the date that the new employee reports for duty.

Returning personnel may be granted professional time during pre and post planning days for attendance in summer school provided that the summer school dates conflict with the work year and arrangements are made for the completion of all employment responsibilities.

- B. SCHOOL REPRESENTATIVES: Each school will be allotted professional leave days for certified personnel to attend **job related** seminars, conferences, and other professional meetings.

Each department will submit with its annual budget a request for particular professional needs for the upcoming school year. This plan will be approved by the department director and the designated superintendent for that department.

Principals **and department directors** will be responsible for maintaining an equitable system for distributing allotted professional leave days among **employees** from year to year to ensure that all **employees** receive an opportunity to profit from **professional learning**.

The allotment does not prohibit teachers from using personal leave for participation in professional meetings. Unused days from the professional allotment **may not accumulate** from year to year.

- C. MEMBERSHIP IN STATE AND REGIONAL AGENCIES AND COMMITTEES: Certified personnel who are approved for offices or positions with state or regional **educational** agencies or committees shall be granted professional leave to carry out official duties of said agency or committee.

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- D. SYSTEM MEETINGS: Certified personnel who are selected for participation on system committees shall be granted professional leave when scheduled meetings conflict with the regular workday. System meetings must be approved by the Superintendent's Office and placed on the monthly calendar.

- E. DUTIES PERFORMED IN OFF-SITE SETTINGS: The performance of regular teaching or extracurricular duty in an off-site setting does not constitute any form of employment leave. Primary examples would include instructional field trips and interscholastic athletic/academic competitions. Expenses related to these activities, including the use of substitute teachers, will be charged against funds specifically allotted for these activities.

- F. NATIONAL BOARD FOR PROFESSIONAL TEACHING STANDARDS: Any teacher employed by the Columbia County School System that is participating in the National Board Certification Program and has paid the program participation fee shall be granted two days of approved paid professional leave to prepare the portfolio of student work required for national certification.

- G. EDUCATIONAL LEAVE: The school system recognizes that an employee pursuing a higher degree may need additional personal days to attend mandatory meetings. An employee, having accumulated a minimum of two days above the state funded maximum of 45 sick leave days, may request up to two additional personal leave days to be deducted from the employee's sick leave balance for the purpose of attending meetings associated with the pursuit of a higher degree, provided the employee has used the allotted three personal leave days for this purpose. The employee will follow the process of requesting these additional personal leave days through the immediate supervisor.

Leave granted under items C, D, E, F AND G will not be deducted from school or system allotments.

O.C.G.A. 20-2-212.2

PROCEDURE: YES

ADOPTED: 08/14/90

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Columbia County Board of Education