

Baltimore County Public Schools
Department of Human Resources
Office of Employee Benefits, Leaves and Retirement

Leave Requirements and Information Sheet

Academic/Educational Leave

Summary

- Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) provides eligible Education Support Professionals of Baltimore County (ESPBC) represented employees either: (1) one semester OR (2) one year of **unpaid Academic/Educational leave** for the purpose of furthering their education.
- BCPS provides eligible Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO) represented employees one year of **unpaid Academic/Educational leave** for the purpose of furthering their education.

Eligibility

- Regular employees with a full-time equivalency of .5 or greater covered by the ESPBC and TABCO bargaining unit agreements with **two (2) or more years of satisfactory continuous service** with BCPS in an ESPBC represented position OR **three (3) or more years of satisfactory continuous service** with BCPS in a TABCO represented position are eligible.
- However, non-tenured and provisional/conditional teachers are not eligible for Academic/Educational leave.
- During budget preparation, the number of Academic/Educational leaves granted during any one (1) year will be decided by the Board based upon the best interest of the school system.

Approved By: The Board of Education (Board)

The application, and all required documentation noted below, should be sent to:

The Department of Human Resources
Office of Employee Benefits, Leaves and Retirement
6901 N. Charles Street, Building B, Towson, MD 21204
Fax # 410-887-8950
Email: Leaves@bcps.org

For additional information and questions, contact the Office of Leaves, 443-809-8947.

General Information

- Academic/Educational leave is unpaid.
- No more than two (2) consecutive Board Approved leaves of absence of any type, excluding military leave, will be granted.
- The Office of Benefits, Leaves and Retirement (BLR) will send notification of the approval or denial of the leave request immediately following the applicable Board meeting.
- Employees must notify the Office of Benefits, Leaves and Retirement (BLR) immediately if there is no longer a need for leave or dates/circumstances change.
- Gainful, permanent employment with another employer while on an approved leave of absence is prohibited.
- Employees on approved leave, paid or unpaid, are prohibited from being employed by BCPS in a temporary assignment unless authorized by the Chief Human Resources Officer.

Required Documentation

- (1) Completed *Application for Leaves of Absence and Conversions* **prior to June 1**, preceding the year for which the leave is requested, **OR prior to November 1** for ESPBC-represented employees requesting leave for the spring semester.
- (2) Official documentation from the applicable educational institution which supports the need for Academic/Educational leave and provides dates of the requested leave (including an acceptance letter into the college program and enrollment documentation).
- (3) Members of the Maryland State Teachers' Pension System (MSTPS) may complete the Maryland State Retirement Agency (MSRA), form 46, *Qualified Leave Of Absence Request or Notification of Military Service Entry*. This form is required to obtain retirement service credit for the period of the approved leave and for the survivor benefit to remain in effect during this leave. For additional information employees may refer to the MSRA website, www.sra.state.md.us.
- (4) Official transcript verifying completion of the requested Academic/Educational program must be provided to the Office of BLR and to the Office of Certification (for reimbursement and/or credit).
- Leave processing may be delayed or denied if documentation is not received within the required timeframe.

Technology Device Requirements

- Employees must surrender all technology devices and all assigned device accessories to his/her principal or supervisor prior to the commencement of Academic/Educational leave of absence.

Effect on Position

- **The employee's current position is released if the leave is approved for a full academic year.** If the Academic/Educational leave for ESPBC-represented employees is approved for a semester only, a long-term substitute may be hired, unless the release of position is deemed necessary by HR. Employees returning from leave will be restored to

a **comparable position** (see procedures outlined in the appropriate bargaining unit agreements concerning the release of positions and job restoration).

- Certificated teachers will be placed no later than the beginning of the next school year if the leave expires during the school year, as per the bargaining unit agreement.
- If an employee rejects a position offered within his/her classification upon reinstatement, BCPS is relieved of the commitment to provide any employment.

Effect on Salary Increment

- Upon completion of the Academic/Educational leave and return to active status with BCPS, ESPBC-represented employees will receive the full step increase, provided he/she has fulfilled the plans approved by the Board of Education.
- Teachers who successfully complete a minimum of twelve (12) hours each semester will have the time spent on approved Academic/Educational leave of absence included in computing eligibility for a step increase.
- For teachers, in cases of consecutive leave (sabbatical followed by an Academic/Educational leave OR two Academic/Educational leaves for TABCO-represented employees), only one (1) step will be granted on the salary schedule.

Effect on Payroll

- Upon completion of the Academic/Educational leave and return to active status with BCPS, employees are responsible for notifying the Office of Payroll (443-809-4240) as soon as possible to re-establish any applicable payroll deductions.

Effect on Healthcare Benefits

- The Office of Benefits will notify employees regarding continuation of healthcare coverage options, payment method, etc.
- Employees may choose to continue healthcare and flexible spending plan coverage by paying a monthly premium equivalent to the COBRA rate (full cost plus an administrative charge of 2%).
- BCPS-paid basic life insurance continues during the approved leave of absence.
- Employees must handle other payroll deductions (e.g., First Financial Federal Credit Union, optional life insurance, etc.) directly with the appropriate organization.
- Unless continuation of benefits is elected, **benefits terminate on the last day of the month in which the employee worked or is in active pay status.** If the employee ceases employment with BCPS after the final benefit deduction is taken at the end of the school year, coverage continues through the end of August.
- Upon completion of the Academic/Educational leave and return to active status with BCPS, employees are responsible for notifying the Office of Employee Benefits (443-809-8943) to re-enroll in any applicable benefit plans (must be re-enrolled within 30 days of return to work).

Effect on Retirement Plans

- MSRA recognizes this leave as a qualified leave of absence for service credit purposes; therefore, the unpaid service time may be purchased. To purchase the unpaid service time, upon completion of the Academic/Educational leave, employees must contact the BCPS Office of Retirement at 443-809-8949 to initiate the process. There is no deadline

to initiate the purchase of the service credit, if the employee returns to work. However, if the employee decides to resign from employment with BCPS after the completion of the Academic/Educational leave and wants to purchase the service credit, BCPS requires the MSRA, form 26, *Request to Purchase Previous Service*, be sent to the Office of Retirement no later than 45 days after the expiration of the leave. This is to ensure the employee meets MSRA's deadline of receiving the paperwork no later than 60 days after the expiration of the leave.

- The Baltimore County Employees Retirement System (ERS) does not recognize this leave as a qualified leave of absence for credit purposes. Therefore, the unpaid service time cannot be purchased.

Return-to-Work Requirements

- At least fifteen (15) business days prior to the expected date of return to active status with BCPS, employees are responsible for notifying the Office of BLR of the intent to either (1) return to work, (2) request an extension, if available, OR (3) resign via email, letter or phone call.
- The appropriate HR Officer/Analyst will review the staffing needs of the schools/offices for placement and will notify the employee and offer the employee a comparable position as available.
- The appropriate HR Officer/Analyst will notify the employee's Principal/Supervisor of the employee's expected return to work date.
- Upon completion of the Academic/Educational leave and return to active status with BCPS, employees are responsible for notifying (1) the Office of Payroll (443-809-4240) to re-establish the payroll deduction plans as soon as possible, (2) the Office of Employee Benefits (443-809-8943) to re-enroll in benefit plans (**must be reenrolled within 30 days of return to work**) AND (3) the BCPS Office of Retirement (443-809-8949) to purchase the qualified service time (optional).
- If an employee rejects a position offered within his/her classification upon reinstatement, BCPS is relieved of the commitment to provide any employment.

Extension of Leave Requirements

- Extensions of the Academic/Educational leave are only available for employees covered by the TABCO bargaining unit agreement.
- Employees must apply for the extension **prior to June 1**, preceding the year for which the leave is requested.
- **No more than two (2) consecutive Board Approved leaves of absence of any type, excluding military leave, will be granted.**

Resignation Requirements

- Employees who choose to resign their employment with BCPS after the completion of an Academic/Educational leave must complete the resignation and off-boarding process, available on the Human Resources Intranet at https://intranet.bcps.org/offices/human_resources/.
- Also, employees must notify the Office of Leaves at 443-809-8947 or benefits@bcps.org if they resign from leave.

- Members of the MSTPS who choose to resign their employment with BCPS after the completion of an Academic/Educational leave and wish to purchase the time off taken for leave must complete MSRA form 26, *Request to Purchase Previous Service*. BCPS requires the MSRA, form 26, *Request to Purchase Previous Service*, be sent to the Office of Retirement no later than 45 days after the expiration of the leave in order to process the paperwork by the MSRA's deadline of no later than 60 days after the expiration of the leave. (refer to Retirement Section).

Policy: Board of Education Policy 4203, Absences and Leaves

Rule: Superintendent's Rule 4203, Absences and Leaves

Bargaining Unit Information

- Education Support Professionals of Baltimore County (ESPBC)
Article 8 - Absences & Leaves
Section 8.4-8.4.4 - Educational Leave
- Teachers Association of Baltimore County (TABCO)
Article XII - Absences & Leaves
Section 12.11-12.11.5 - Study Leave - Academic

For informational purposes only. For additional questions or concerns, employees must refer to Board Policies, Superintendent's Rules and appropriate bargaining unit agreements.