

Adopted: October 9, 2017
Revised: April 11, 2022

**COMMUNITY OF PEACE ACADEMY
POLICY AND PROCEDURE No. 4.3.3
EMPLOYEE TUITION REIMBURSEMENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

I. PURPOSE

Community of Peace Academy (“CPA”) aspires to support employees in attaining licensure in areas that have historically had high turnover and teacher shortages including, but not limited to, special education, secondary mathematics, and secondary science, and to ensure that all CPA students are taught by effective teachers by offering tuition assistance programs to current employees.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

CPA supports the efforts of individual employees to advance their skills and knowledge by acquiring the education necessary to enhance their abilities and prepare for a career related to the topic of special education, secondary mathematics, secondary science, or other hard-to-fill licensure areas as determined by CPA administration.

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

III. PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

A. Second License Attainment for Current Certified Staff

The Second License Attainment Program provides certified employees financial support in attaining a second license in the area of special education, secondary mathematics, secondary science, or other hard-to-fill licensure areas as determined by the CPA 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 the area of special education, secondary mathematics, secondary science, or other hard-to-fill licensure areas as determined by CPA administration.

IV. EMPLOYEE ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION

- A. Certified full-time CPA employees with at least three (3) years of successful teaching experience or practice at CPA, as demonstrated by effective or higher annual summative teacher performance ratings, may apply to the Second License Attainment Program.
- B. Non-certified full-time CPA employees with at least three (3) years of successful performance in their position, as demonstrated by performance evaluation and supervisor recommendation, may apply to the Initial License Attainment Program. C. CPA 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.
 - 2. Secondary (7-12 grade) Mathematics, or
 - 3. Secondary (7-12 grade) Science.
 - 4. Any other area of licensure designated by the CPA administration as hard to fill.
- C. Employees may complete the teacher licensure program at any accredited post-secondary institution, but approval preference will be given to applicants who enroll in the University of St. Thomas under the CPA-UST Tuition Remission agreement.
- D. Applications are due TWO (2) WEEKS before the start date of the course(s).
- E. Applications will be reviewed by the Executive Director and the appropriate administrator.
- F. CPA reserves the right to accept or deny applications based on factors including but not limited to the employee's job performance with CPA, suitability for the position(s) for which licensure is sought within the discretion of CPA administration, CPA's level of need for the licensure area requested, and funds available. The decision to accept or deny an employee's application is subject to the sole discretion of CPA administration, is final, and is not subject to appeal.

V. RESPONSIBILITIES OF EMPLOYEES ACCEPTED INTO A LICENSE ATTAINMENT PROGRAM

- A. CPA 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 CPA throughout the duration of the course in order to be reimbursed (and must be employed at the time of reimbursement).
- B. CPA 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 Executive Director.
- C. CPA employees accepted into either License Attainment program must agree to commit to three (3) additional years of employment to CPA after the acquisition of their license through either License Attainment program or repay CPA's assistance as a loan.

This three-year continuity of service condition does not apply to employees who die, separate due to a long-term disability, are laid off, or are involuntarily terminated for any reason other than termination for cause.

VI. PAYMENT OF EXPENDITURES

- A. The CPA Tuition Assistance Program has four pathways:
 - 1. CPA will pay 100% of tuition and associated costs for an eligible CPA staff person to attain a license in hard-to-fill areas (7-12 Mathematics, 7-12 Science, K-12 Special Education – ABS, SLD, EBD, ASD, ECSE).
 - 2. As an employee benefit, for each 3-credit course taken at the University of St. Thomas Graduate School of Education, UST will pay for 1 credit, CPA will pay for 1 credit, and the employee will pay for 1 credit. All courses and licenses offered by UST are eligible.
 - 3. CPA will pay ½ of the tuition and associated costs for an eligible CPA staff person to attain a license in an area of need that supports specific CPA instructional initiatives. An ESL license is one example.
 - 4. As an employee benefit, CPA will pay up to \$1,000 per year toward the tuition and associated costs for an eligible CPA staff person to pursue higher education coursework at an accredited higher education institution in the field of education and/or attain a license or professional certificate in any desired area.
- B. Upon the provision of a tuition bill, CPA will pay the agreed-upon amount directly to the institution of higher education.

- C. The employee must provide CPA with documentation of continued enrollment and receipt of passing marks (“C” or better) in the licensure program by January 1, June 1, and September 1 of each year in which this policy remains in effect and employee is subject to the terms of this policy.

VII. TAX OBLIGATIONS OF THE PARTICIPATING EMPLOYEE

- A. In accordance with Internal Revenue Code 26 USCA Section 127, payments made by CPA on behalf of the participating employee for tuition, fees, and required textbooks are tax-exempt up to \$5,250 per year. Payments exceeding \$5,250 per year are subject to state and federal income tax and will be included on the participating employee’s Form W-2, box 1 (wages, wages, tips, and other compensation).

VIII. REPAYMENT OF EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE

- A. The employee who is receiving reimbursement assistance pursuant to this policy agrees that if one or more of the events occur as described below in Parts 1-5, the employee will reimburse CPA for all expenses incurred as a loan plus interest pursuant to the provision in the Part(s) with which the employee fails to comply. The interest will be at an annual rate of five percent (5%) which will begin to accrue as of the date CPA made the first reimbursement payment.
 - 1. The employee fails to receive a satisfactory grade of the equivalent of a “C” or better in any portion of the program: the employee is required to repay costs incurred by CPA for tuition, fees, and textbooks for that course plus interest.
 - 2. The employee, without prior approval from CPA, ceases to be enrolled in a program of instruction that is necessary to obtain the approved Minnesota teaching license: the employee is required to repay 100% of all costs incurred by CPA plus interest.
 - 3. The employee is placed onto Awareness or Corrective Action, as outlined in the CPA Staff Handbook: the employee is required to repay 100% of all costs incurred by CPA plus interest.
 - 4. The employee, at any time, fails to complete a requested criminal background check to the satisfaction of CPA: the employee is required to repay 100% of all costs incurred by CPA plus interest.
 - 5. The employee resigns his or her employment from CPA, or is terminated by CPA for cause, at any time prior to the expiration of three (3) school years beyond the attainment of the license; the employee is required to repay:
 - a. 100% of all costs incurred by CPA plus interest if the separation comes within one year of licensure attainment.

- b. 66% of all costs incurred by CPA plus interest if the separation comes within two years of licensure attainment.
- c. 33% of all costs incurred by CPA plus interest if the separation comes within three years of licensure attainment.

IX. NO ENTITLEMENT TO EMPLOYMENT

CPA 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 CPA'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. Dept. 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)