


Encl. 09.22
March 31, 2016

RESOLVED, that the Superintendent of Schools, based on the HTA collective bargaining agreement, recommends to the Board of Education, for their consideration and action, the attached Sabbatical Leave Committee's recommendation.

TO: Thomas Douglas, Superintendent

From: Sabbatical Leave Committee


(A. Gill, W. Hynes, S. May, B. Steel, A.M. Bailey, T. Standish)

Date: March 22, 2016

RE: Sabbatical Leave Committee

On March 1, 2016, Christine Harkness submitted a sabbatical leave request (see attached). On March 21 the Sabbatical Leave Committee met to review the request. The committee unanimously recommends Christine's sabbatical application based on the following reasons:

1. She has met the contractual requirements for requesting a sabbatical: employment conditions, length of sabbatical, purpose of sabbatical and timeliness for submission.
2. The purpose of the leave is grounded in research for her dissertation (see attached documents). The dissertation topic (risk-taking and exploration as they relate to writing) has a strong, direct connection to her current assignment and responsibilities in the District. It is clear that our students will benefit from the work Christine has committed to during her sabbatical.

One item of concern from the committee was Christine's request to "continue as the District ASD Consultant and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention instructor." The committee discussed possible issues that may result from Christine fulfilling these responsibilities "one day per week." For example: Would there be a delay in working with students as a result of a one day per week schedule? Will continued involvement in the district during the sabbatical hamper the research process to which she is being released to accomplished?

It was concluded that the committee did not have the necessary information to address these concerns. Rather, it remained within the scope of its charge (i.e., making a recommendation to the Superintendent), leaving these issues left to discussions between Christine and the District.

March 1, 2016

Letter of Intent to Request Sabbatical Leave during 2016-2017 School Year

Dear Mr. Bostwick and Mr. Holloway,

I respectfully request your approval to take sabbatical leave during the 2016-2017 school year. I am requesting to take a full sabbatical of 19 weeks beginning Monday, October 17, 2016 and ending February 24, 2017. The purpose of my leave will be to continue writing my doctoral dissertation.

Since September of 2008, I have been enrolled in a doctoral program through the Interdisciplinary Council on Development and Learning (ICDL), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to redefining and promoting each child's development to his or her fullest potential. Recently, the doctoral program was absorbed by Fielding Graduate University. I have completed all of my coursework and am currently considered PhD/ABD. After I have successfully completed and defended my dissertation, I will have a Ph.D. from Fielding in Infant and Early Childhood Development with Emphasis in Mental Health and Developmental Disorders, particularly autism spectrum disorders.

The topic of my dissertation is written expression skills and related mental health aspects that support them. Particularly, I am theorizing that students who are more comfortable taking risks and/or exploring during play will be better writers than their peers who are less comfortable taking risks. At this point, "risk-taking" and "exploration" still need to be defined. My original research will be conducted with second graders. I plan to collect a writing sample, have parents complete a personality profile, and complete a play scale while the child engages in free play with a variety of materials. The research will focus on typically developing children, the thought being to better understand typical development before determining courses of intervention for children who are not on a typical path. Devising and refining interventions for children who struggle in the area of written expression or with emotion regulation will be topics for my future research.

The time spent during the sabbatical will be devoted to completing my literature review. I plan to begin writing the literature review in the summer of 2016, and possibly conducting research. During my dissertation preparation class, the professor recommended allowing myself 18 to 24 months to complete the entire dissertation process. My dissertation will not be complete at the end of the sabbatical leave, however, a significant portion of the writing should be accomplished during this time. All of my other coursework was completed as I worked full time. Even though the dissertation will not be completed in its entirety during my sabbatical, I do believe that it deserves some amount of my undivided attention. Bookending the sabbatical with summer months, will allow me to devote a great deal of time to my dissertation over a 14 month period, July 2016 to August 2017.

I believe Horseheads Central School District will benefit from my sabbatical leave because of the increased knowledge I will possess after I complete the literature review and my own research. The students on my caseload will directly benefit from my increased knowledge and skills for instructing and remediating written expression skills. They will also benefit from my increased understanding of the underlying characteristics that support effective written expression. I will be happy to share my research and findings through in-service trainings, co-teaching, faculty meetings, professional learning communities, or by sharing resources including an abbreviated version of my dissertation.

During this time, I would like to continue as the District ASD Consultant and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention instructor. I would accomplish this by working one day per week.

I am happy to provide additional information if that would help the committee to make a decision regarding this sabbatical request, such as copies of my transcript or samples of my previous writing.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Harkness, MS, PhD/ABD

Christine Harkness

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Sabbatical Leave Application

My name is Christine Harkness. I am a special education teacher in Horseheads Central School District's Autism Spectrum Disorder program. I have been teaching for twenty years, most of that time has been spent working with children on the autistic spectrum. This is my eleventh year working for Horseheads. In my current position, as a consultant teacher, I support students with autism who are in general education classes in grades five through eight. Our program supports children with autism in a holistic manner, meaning we provide daily academic, social, emotional, and organizational support as each individual requires.

Additionally, I have been the district autism consultant for four years. In this role, I observe any Horseheads students who may present as having characteristics on the autism spectrum. I may recommend suggestions for teachers and families to help them support their students' vulnerable areas. Finally, I enjoy teaching in-service courses that address the social and emotional components that impact academic success. In this vein, I am one of the district's Therapeutic Crisis Intervention instructors. I have also conducted in-service courses on Socratic Seminar and Supporting Emotional Regulation in the Classroom.

In my eleven years in the district, I have been a member of the learning community in several ways. I feel it is important to be an active stakeholder that shapes the culture and climate of the district. While based at the Intermediate School, I was an instructional support coach for two years. I was also co-facilitator of the Intermediate School site based team for one year. At the Middle School, I was a member of the Health and Wellness team and am currently a member of the Building Climate Committee and the Sunshine Committee. On the district level, I was a member of the Enrichment Committee and am currently co-facilitator of the Elementary School Day Committee.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my application. I hope that my past contributions to the district will be a factor in allowing me to take this time to learn and grow in order to return to my position with deeper understanding of written expression and the mental health components that influence written communication skills.

Estimated Dissertation Time Line

CONDUCT LITERATURE REVIEW/PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

- July 2016-December 2016

CONDUCT RESEARCH/ANALYZE DATA

- January-June 2017

SUBMIT DRAFT/REVISE

- August 2017

DEFEND FINAL DRAFT

- December 2017