WEST VIRGINIA CODE: §18A-4-2B

§18A-4-2b. State minimum salary supplement and educational expense reimbursement for professional personnel with recognized national certification in speech-language pathology, audiology, counseling, school psychology or school nursing.

(a) (1) The Legislature finds that achieving a nationally recognized professional certification in speech-language pathology or audiology involves a rigorous process of demonstrating both knowledge and skills and results in highly trained and capable employees. Individuals who attain national professional certification by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association provide needed and essential services to the school students of this state. Individuals should be encouraged to achieve and maintain the national professional certification through reimbursement of expenses and a salary bonus which reflects their additional certification.

(2) The Legislature finds that the rigorous standards and processes for advanced certification by either the National Board of Certified Counselors or the West Virginia Board of Examiners in Counseling helps to promote the quality of counseling in schools. Counselors in the public schools of West Virginia should be encouraged to achieve and maintain the advanced certification through reimbursement of expenses and a salary bonus that reflects their additional certification.

(3) The Legislature finds that achieving a nationally recognized professional certification in school psychology involves a rigorous process of demonstrating competencies in scientific research-based knowledge and skills. School psychologists provide assessment, counseling and consultation to students, teachers, school administrators and parents. Individuals who attain national professional certification by the National Association of School Psychologists provide services to students, families and school systems in this state. School psychologists should be encouraged to achieve and maintain this national professional certification through reimbursement of expenses and a salary bonus which reflects their additional certification.

(4) The Legislature finds that achieving a nationally recognized professional certification in school nursing involves a rigorous process of demonstrating competencies in health care and nursing applications, knowledge and skills. School nurses provide assessment, counseling and consultation to students, teachers, school administrators and parents. School nurses who attain national professional certification by the National Board for Certification of School Nurses provide services to students, families and school systems in this state. School nurses should be encouraged to achieve and maintain this national professional certification through reimbursement of expenses and a salary bonus which reflects their additional certification.

(5) Therefore, the purpose of this section is:

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(A) To provide a statewide salary supplement for certain professional personnel employed in the public schools who hold nationally recognized professional certification in speech-language pathology, audiology, counseling, school psychology or school nursing;

(B) To treat these professional certifications equally;

(C) To encourage others to attain such a certification; and

(D) To help school systems recruit these highly qualified professionals.

(b) In addition to any amounts prescribed in the applicable state minimum salary schedule, any professional personnel who hold national certification or other credential as provided in this section shall be paid an annual salary supplement of $2,500. The payment is:

(1) To be made in equal monthly installments;

(2) To be considered a part of the state minimum salaries for teachers; and

(3) To continue for the life of the certification, or for ten years for any one certification, whichever first expires.

(c) Professional personnel employed as speech-language pathologists, audiologists, counselors, school psychologists or school nurses are eligible upon enrollment for reimbursement for one-half of the fee for certification in accordance with this section. In addition, these personnel are eligible upon attainment of the certification for reimbursement of the remainder of the application fee plus other expenses actually incurred toward attainment of the certification, not exceeding $600, upon approval by the Department of Education. Not more than one hundred fifteen speech-language pathologists, audiologists, counselors, school psychologists and school nurses, combined total, are eligible for reimbursement in any one fiscal year.

(d) Notwithstanding subsection (b) of this section, for the school year beginning July 1, 2008, the number of speech-language pathologists, audiologists, counselors, school psychologists and school nurses paid the annual salary supplement provided for in said subsection may not exceed the number of speech-language pathologists, audiologists and counselors eligible to be paid the annual salary supplement under the provisions of this section in effect during the school year beginning July 1, 2007, by more than one hundred fifteen qualified recipients, and the total amount of qualified recipients may not increase thereafter by more than one hundred fifteen in each subsequent fiscal year.

(e) The state board shall promulgate a legislative rule establishing criteria for selection of the individuals eligible for reimbursement and a salary supplement in accordance with this section. The selection criteria shall prioritize the length of time the certification has been held and the years of experience of the holder in determining eligibility.

(f) The state board shall report the rule to the Legislative Oversight Commission on

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Education Accountability by the January, 2009, legislative interim meeting period and shall report on its progress in developing the rule to the commission during prior interim meetings as requested.

(g) No provision of this section may be construed to require any appropriation, or any specific level of appropriation, by the Legislature, or payment of any supplement or reimbursement described in this section for which a specific appropriation has not been made.

(h) Notwithstanding any other provision of this section or the provisions of section two-a of this article, professional personnel may not be paid a salary supplement pursuant to the provisions of both said sections.

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