

AGREEMENT
between

The Board of Education
of
The Mercer County
Special Services
School District

and

The Mercer County
Special Services
Educational and Therapeutic
Association

Covering the period
07/01/2024 – 06/30/2027

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PREAMBLE

This Agreement entered into this June 4, 2024 by and between the Board of Education of the Mercer County Special Services School District (hereinafter the “Board”) and the Mercer County Special Services Educational and Therapeutic Association (hereinafter the “Association”).

ARTICLE I RECOGNITION

1:1 The Board hereby recognizes the Mercer County Special Services Educational and Therapeutic Association as the exclusive and sole representative for collective negotiations concerning the terms and conditions of employment for the following personnel under contract by the Board:

- Teachers
- Therapists
- Classroom Assistants*
- One on One Assistants*
- Individual Behavioral Assistants*
- Nurses
- School Nurses
- School Counselors
- School Social Workers
- School Psychologists
- Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants
- Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants*
- Physical Therapy Assistants*
- Crisis Intervention Specialist*
- Case Manager
- Substance Assistance Counselor

but excluding supervisory, executive personnel, and all hourly-paid personnel.

*Shall be referred to as non-certified staff.

1:2 Unless otherwise indicated, the term “employee” when used hereinafter in this Agreement shall refer to all members included in the unit as defined above and references to “employees” shall be deemed to include both male and female.

1:3 The term “teacher” when used hereinafter in this Agreement shall refer to all members working in a position requiring a professional certificate, and reference to “teachers” shall be deemed to include both male and female.

**ARTICLE II
NEGOTIATIONS PROCEDURE**

2:1 The Board and the Association agree to commence negotiations for a successor agreement in accordance with the timetable established by the Public Employment Relations Commission pursuant to N.J.S.A. 34:13A-1 et seq.

2:2 The Board shall make available to the Association, upon request, all information of the Mercer County Special Services School District required by law.

2:3 The Agreement shall not be modified in whole or in part by the parties except by an instrument in writing duly executed by both parties.

2:4 Neither party in any negotiations shall have any control over the selection of the negotiating representatives of the other party.

**ARTICLE III
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURE**

3:1 Definition

3:1.1 "Grievance" is a claim by an employee based upon an interpretation, application or a violation of this Agreement, Board policies or administrative decisions affecting the terms and conditions of employment of said employee. As used in this Article, the term "employee" shall mean (a) an individual employee, (b) a group of employees having the same grievance, (c) the Association.

3:1.2 A grievance to be considered under this procedure must be initiated by the employee within twenty-five (25) school days of its occurrence.

3:2 Procedure

3:2.1 Failure at any step of this procedure to appeal a decision respecting a grievance to the next step within the specified time limits shall be deemed to be acceptance of the unappealed decision.

3:2.2 It is understood that employees shall during and notwithstanding the pendency of any grievance, continue to observe all assignments and applicable rules and regulations of the Board until such grievance and any effect thereof shall be fully determined.

Step I

3:2.3 Any employee who decides either alone or with the assistance of the Association that he/she has a grievance shall discuss it with their immediate supervisor in an attempt to resolve the matter informally at that level. If, as a result of the discussion, the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the employee, or no decision is rendered, within ten (10) school days of such

discussion, the employee shall set forth their grievance in writing to their principal or other immediate supervisor, specifying:

- a. The nature of the grievance and the date of its occurrence.
- b. The results of the previous discussions.
- c. Their dissatisfaction with the decisions previously rendered.
- d. Relief sought.

The principal or immediate supervisor shall communicate their decision to the grievant and their representative in writing within seven (7) school days of receipt of the written grievance.

Step II

3:2.4 The employee no later than ten (10) school days after receipt of the principal's, or immediate supervisor's decision, may appeal the principal's or immediate supervisor's decision to the Superintendent of Schools. The appeal to the Superintendent of Schools shall be made in writing reciting the matter submitted to the principal as specified above in 3:2.3 and the employee's dissatisfaction with the decision previously rendered and whether a meeting with the Superintendent is desired.

The Superintendent shall attempt to resolve the matter as quickly as possible, but within a period not to exceed fifteen (15) school days, and the Superintendent shall communicate their decision in writing to the employee, the principal and the Association. If the grievant or the Association requests a meeting at the Superintendent's level, the Superintendent or their representative shall conduct a meeting and render a decision within the time limits set forth herein.

Step III

3:2.5 If the grievance is not resolved to the employee's satisfaction, he/she, no later than ten (10) school days after receipt of the Superintendent of School's decision, may appeal to the Board by submission in writing through the Superintendent of Schools who shall forward the appeal within seven (7) calendar days of their receipt to the Board. The Board shall review the grievance and shall, at the option of the Board, hold a hearing with the employee and render a written decision in any case within fifteen (15) school days of receipt of such grievance by the Board, or within fifteen (15) school days of the date of the hearing with the employee, whichever comes later.

Step IV ARBITRATION

3:2.6 If the employee is dissatisfied with the decision of the Board at Step III herein and only if the grievance pertains to an interpretation of the terms of this Agreement between the Board and the Association, the employee and the Association may request the appointment of an arbitrator, such request to be made known to the Superintendent of Schools and submitted to the Public Employment Relations Commission by the Association no later than ten (10) school days after the written decision of the Board is made known. An employee in order to process their grievance beyond Board level must have their request for such action accompanied by the written recommendation of the Association.

3:2.7 No claim by an employee shall constitute a grievable matter beyond Board level or be processed beyond Board level unless its resolution requires a determination as to the interpretation of this Agreement. In addition, no claim by an employee shall constitute a grievable matter beyond Board level or be processed beyond Board level if it pertains to:

- a. Any matter for which a review by arbitration is prohibited by law.
- b. Any matter for which a procedure for review is mandated by law.
- c. Any rule or regulation dealing with the internal matters of the Board of Education or the State Commissioner of Education.
- d. Any act beyond the Board's legal authority to act.
- e. A complaint of a non-tenure teacher, which arises by reason of their not being re-employed.
- f. A complaint occasioned by appointment to or lack of retention in any position for which tenure is either not possible or not required.
- g. A complaint by an employee occasioned by the withholding of an increment, discharge, charges relating to the withholding of an increment or discharge, or charges before the Commissioner of Education.

3:2.8 Procedure for securing the services of an arbitrator.

a. **Initial Request**

A request will be made to the Public Employment Relations Commission to submit a roster of persons qualified to function as an arbitrator on the dispute in question.

b. Second Request

If the parties are unable to determine a mutually satisfactory arbitrator from the submitted list, they will request the Public Employment Relations Commission to submit a second roster of names.

c. Final Designation

If the parties are unable to determine a mutually satisfactory arbitrator from the second submitted list, the Public Employment Relations Commission may be requested by either party to designate an arbitrator.

d. Authority of Arbitrator

The arbitrator shall limit himself/herself to the issues submitted to him/her and shall consider nothing else. They can add nothing to nor subtract anything from nor modify any of the terms of the Agreement between the parties or any policy of the Board of Education. The decision of the arbitrator shall be final and binding upon the Board, the Association and all employees.

e. Decision of Arbitrator

The arbitrator shall be requested to render their decision within thirty (30) days after the case is presented for arbitration.

3:2.9 Costs

- a. Each party shall bear the total costs incurred by their participation. The fees and expenses of the arbitrator and the Public Employment Relations Commission are the only costs, which shall be shared by the two parties, and such costs shall be shared equally.
- b. The time lost by an employee or employees due to arbitrator proceedings must either be unpaid or charged to personal leave except where the employee(s) is appearing at the request of the Board.

3:3 General Regulations

3:3.1 All time limits stated in this Article must be strictly adhered to unless an extension is mutually agreed upon in writing by both parties to this Agreement. If the processing of a grievance extends beyond the end of the school year, all timelines thereafter shall refer to calendar days not including Saturdays, Sundays, or holidays.

3:3.2 The grievant and their representatives shall have the right to be present at all meetings or hearings conducted at any step of the grievance procedure, provided however, that the grievant shall be limited to two (2) representatives at any such meetings or hearings.

3:3.3 The right of an employee to attempt to resolve a grievance directly through a normal administrative procedure is not to be abridged in any way.

3:3.4 The employee shall have the right to present their own appeal or designate representatives of the Association to appear with him/her or for him/her at any step of their appeal under this Article. If the grievant does not designate a representative, the Association shall be informed that a grievance is in process and shall have the right to be present at all hearings pertaining to the grievance unless excluded by law.

3:3.5 In the event that a grievance results from the action of a school official higher than the rank of principal, the grievant may commence their grievance with that official specifying:

- a. The nature of the grievance and the date of occurrence.
- b. Relief sought.

ARTICLE IV EMPLOYEE RIGHTS

4:1 Employees employed by the Board of Education shall have the right to organize, join and support the Association for the purposes of collective negotiations in accordance with the New Jersey Employer-Employee Relations Act.

4:2 Nothing contained herein shall be construed to deny or restrict to any employee such rights as their may have under New Jersey School Laws or other applicable laws and regulations. The rights granted to employees hereunder shall be deemed to be in addition to those provided elsewhere.

4:3 Whenever any employee is required to appear before the Board or any committee thereof concerning any matter which could adversely affect the continuation of that employee in their office, position or employment, or the salary or any increments pertaining thereto, then he/she shall be given prior notice of reasons for such meeting or interview, to the extent possible, and shall be entitled to have two representatives of the Association present to advise him/her and represent him/her during such meeting or interview.

4:4 Alleged violations of paragraphs 4:1 and 4:2 may be appealed before the Public Employment Relations Commission, the State Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education, or other such appropriate legal forums and shall not be arbitrable under Article III of this Agreement. Alleged violations of paragraph 4:3 of this Article may be appealed to arbitration under Article III of this Agreement, but shall not be appealable to the Public Employment Relations Commission, the State Commissioner of Education, the State Board of Education or any legal forum.

ARTICLE V ASSOCIATION RIGHTS

5:1 Information

The Board agrees to furnish to the Association in response to reasonable request from time to time available public information concerning the financial resources of the district and such other information as may be required by law.

5:2 Use of Building

The Association and its representatives shall have the right to use school buildings at reasonable hours for meetings upon approval by the building principal of the Mercer County Special Services School District and as permitted by the lease agreement between the Board and owner of the school building. The principal of the building in question shall be notified in advance of the time and place of all such meetings.

5:3 Use of Equipment

The Association shall have the right to use school facilities and equipment including computers, duplicating equipment, calculating machines and all types of audio-visual equipment at reasonable times, when such equipment is not otherwise in use. No equipment shall be removed from school property without permission of the principal. The Association shall pay for the reasonable cost of all materials and supplies incident to such use and shall pay for any damage to, or loss or theft of school property while being used by the Association.

5:4 The Association shall have the right to use the school mailboxes for Association related purposes only. All Association material placed in school mailboxes shall be on the official stationery of the Association and authorized by the Association. In addition, the Association shall have the exclusive use of a bulletin board in each faculty lounge, if available, unless precluded by the agreement between the Board and the owner/lessor. Copies of all Association materials to be posted on such bulletin boards shall be on official Association stationery, authorized by the Association, and copies thereof shall be given to the building principal on the same date as the material is posted.

5.5 President Schedule Accommodation: The Association President shall have a daily duty-free period during the regular school year when students are in attendance to tend to Association Business so long as the free period is during the morning bus duty time period. The duty-free period shall not occur on professional development days.

ARTICLE VI (A)
REGULAR SCHOOL YEAR

6A:1 Regular School Year

6A:1.1 The regular school year for employees employed on a ten-month basis shall not exceed 185 days, except as provided in 6:2.1 and 6:3.1 below.

6A:1.2 Employees shall work five (5) days which shall be solely for the purpose of professional development. Two (2) of those days shall be designated at the beginning of the school year as determined by the Superintendent and the remaining three (3) days shall be designated through the school year as determined by the District calendar.

6A:2 Definition of Regular School Year

6A:2.1 The regular school year shall include days when students are in attendance, orientation days, professional development days and any other days on which employee attendance is required by the Board. It is recognized by the parties that this is the minimum regular school year. The regular school year is the time period September 1st through June 30th as defined by the Board approved regular school year calendar.

Where the efficient and effective completion of the regular or assigned responsibilities of an employee necessitate their presence on school property prior to the start of, or beyond the end of, this minimum regular school year, the employee shall be considered engaged in his or her regular or assigned duties. The Board encourages employees to provide such additional days of work time if their regular or assigned duties will be more efficiently and effectively completed thereby. Such additional days of work time are not eligible for payment under 6A:3.1, as they are not assigned or required by the Superintendent.

6A:2.2 New Staff Orientation: All newly hired staff for the beginning of the new school year (September) shall attend a one (1) day orientation during the summer prior to the beginning of the school year. For staff hired after the summer new staff orientation, two (2) half days shall be scheduled throughout the school year, with staff assigned to attend the date that most closely follows their date of hire. This date may be changed by mutual agreement between the staff member and the administrator in charge. Staff attending any orientation day shall be paid at their per diem rate.

6A:3 Work Beyond Regular School Year

6A:3.1 Work beyond the 185 days as outlined in 6A:1.1 which is assigned by the Superintendent and which is required to be done between September 1 and June 30 and which is a continuation of the Employee's regular school year responsibility shall be compensated at the per diem rate of 1/185th of the Employee's annual salary.

ARTICLE VI (B)
EXTENDED SCHOOL YEAR

6B:4 Extended School Year

6:4.1 An Extended School Year (ESY) Program will be provided pursuant to each student's need as determined by their IEP's.

Effective July 1, 2024, staff working the ESY will have a total work year of 185 days plus the additional days worked during ESY. They shall be paid 1/185th of their ten-month salary for each of the extra ESY days worked. The length of the day and all other terms and conditions of employment of the regular school year shall be in effect for these Employees except that these Employees shall receive one (1) additional sick leave day per year and one (1) additional personal day per year.

6B:4.2 Compensation for the ESY program will be in four (4) equal paychecks during July and August.

6B:4.3 ESY Employees working fifty percent (50%) or more of the ESY school year will receive their salary at their regular rate of pay. Employees working less than fifty percent (50%) of the ESY school year will receive hourly wage at the per diem rate with no extra benefits.

6B:5 Extended School Year Employment, Attendance, Probation and Forfeiture

6B:5.1 All current Employees in the bargaining unit with previous district ESY/12-month experience since July 1, 1999, will be given first preference for openings. Every effort will be made to fill ESY positions with bargaining unit Employees prior to seeking employees from outside the bargaining unit. ESY Probation and Forfeiture terms will supersede automatic eligibility.

6B:5.2 If an Employee working ESY is absent more than three (3) days during an ESY, paid or unpaid, inclusive of sick leave, personal leave, family illness leave, bereavement leave, unpaid leave or unspecified paid approved leave by the Board, with the exception of jury duty, professional days when directed in writing by the Superintendent their designee or when approved by the procedure in Article 9.9; however, for professional days during ESY, the request shall be made thirty calendar days prior to ESY commencing, and/or five (5) bereavement days as per Article 9:6.1(a), that Employee will be docked for the fourth day and any additional days absent during that ESY as follows: Teachers (Certified staff) will be docked \$90.00 (ninety dollars) per day and Assistants (non-certified staff) will be docked \$70.00 (seventy dollars) per day. Should an Employee that has been absent more than three (3) days during the ESY work in the ESY in a subsequent year, they would be placed on Probation Status.

6B:5.3 If an Employee is placed on Probation Status pursuant to Section 6:5.2 works during the ESY in the year immediately following the year in which the Employee was placed on Probation Status, or if the employee does not work the year immediately following the year in which the employee was placed on Probation Status, then the year following the employee works, the Employee shall be docked their per diem rate of pay for any days on which he/she is

absent, exclusive of jury duty, Professional days when directed in writing by the Superintendent or their designee or when approved by the procedure in Article 9.9; however, for professional days during ESY, the request must be made thirty calendar days prior to ESY commencing, and/or five (5) bereavement days as per Article 9:6.1(a).

6B:5.4 If an Employee on Probation Status is absent for more than three (3) days exclusive of jury duty, Professional days when directed in writing by the Superintendent or their designee or when approved by the procedure in Article 9.9; however, for professional days during ESY, the request must be made thirty calendar days prior to ESY commencing, and/or five (5) bereavement days as per Article 9:6.1(a) and/or if the employee does not work the year immediately following the year in which the employee was placed on probationary status, then the year following the employee works, in the year immediately following the cause of Probation Status as per Article 6:5.2, the Employee shall forfeit their option to work any future ESY and shall forfeit all future hiring preference. Should the administration offer the Employee an ESY position, after this forfeiture status, the Employee shall receive no more than the same terms and conditions offered all out of district Employees.

6B:5.5 If an Employee works in a subsequent year and the Employee has no absences while on Probation Status during the ESY, with the exception of jury duty and/or five (5) bereavement days as per Article 9:6.1(a), then the Employee will be restored from Probation Status at the start of the ESY in the immediate following year.

6B:5.6 No later than October 1st immediately following the ESY program the Association shall receive the names of all ESY employees (district and out of district); the rate of compensation, the number of days absent during the ESY program, the reason the days were taken, and probation or forfeiture status for the subsequent school year of all in-district employees.

6B:5.7 If an ESY employee on probation status is absent due to an extreme unforeseen catastrophic medical condition that arises during ESY, such as cancer, heart attack, stroke, etc., they may appeal to the Superintendent in order to be granted exclusionary status for these absences which were due to extreme unforeseen circumstances. If the Superintendent grants exclusionary status for the absences then the absences will not count against the staff member's ESY attendance status.

ARTICLE VII WORK HOURS AND WORKLOAD

7:1 Workday

7:1.1 It is recognized by the parties that the time periods set forth in this Article describe the minimum in-school workday. Where the efficient and effective completion of the regular or assigned responsibilities of an employee necessitate their presence on school property earlier or later than the times set forth in this section, the employee shall be considered engaged in his or her regular or assigned duties. The Board encourages employees to arrive before

the start of the minimum school day, and to remain after the end of the minimum school day, if their regular or assigned duties will be more efficiently and effectively completed thereby.

7:1.2 Employees shall record their daily arrival and departure by initialing a daily attendance sheet, which shall be kept at a location designated by the principal or their designee.

7:1.3 The arrival and departure times for all employees shall be designated by the Board. Employees' total in-school workday shall consist of not more than seven (7) hours which shall include a duty-free lunch period of one-half (1/2) hour. Any part-time staff working a maximum of 3.5 hours per day shall receive a duty-free break period of fifteen (15) minutes.

7:1.4 Employees shall not be required to work more than a total of ninety (90) minutes more than the length of the students' school day, except as otherwise provided in this agreement. The ninety (90) minutes may be flexibly scheduled. However, not more than sixty (60) minutes shall be required before the opening or after the closing of the students' school day. This time shall be scheduled on a building wide basis.

7:1.5 Certified staff shall have daily scheduled preparation time of thirty (30) continuous minutes, when they shall not be expected to participate in meetings with their supervisors, parents, students or staff. This shall be in addition to a duty-free lunch under section 7:1.3 of this agreement. This time shall be mutually scheduled with the principal with the approval of the Superintendent. If there is no agreement, the time shall be scheduled by the Superintendent. Scheduled preparation time shall not be rescheduled, except as required by Article 7:1.7.

7:1.6 Work Beyond the In-School Work Day

Work, which is assigned by the Superintendent and which is required to be done beyond the regular work day, shall be compensated on an hourly pro-rata of the employee's annual salary.

7:1.7 Pay for a Lost Preparation Period

In the event a teacher is required to cover the class of an absent teacher, or in the event of a physical or medical crisis of a student in which the teacher participates at the direction of the principal, and the teacher consequently loses a preparation period, the teacher will be paid \$50.00 for the lost preparation period. There shall be no early release for the teacher.

7:1.8 Inclement Weather

Employee attendance shall not be required whenever student attendance is not required due to inclement weather. If students are dismissed during the school day because of inclement weather, employees shall be permitted to depart after all vehicles transporting students have departed and they have been notified by the principal that they may leave. In cases of delayed openings, teachers shall report one half hour before the students.

7:1.9 Therapists Daily Documentation Time

Physical Therapists, Occupational Therapists and Speech Therapists/Correctionists shall be released from PM bus duty in order to use this time to enter daily documentation, via the computer, for each student that they service throughout the day.

7:2 Leaving the Building

7:2.1 Employees may leave the building during their scheduled duty-free periods without requesting permission after initialing the sign-out sheet located in the main office.

7:3 Meetings

7:3.1 Employees may be required to work up to seven- and one-half hours for the purpose of attending faculty or other professional meetings, not exceeding four (4) days each month. One (1) of the four (4) meetings shall be set aside exclusively for Association business.

7:3.2 An Association representative may meet with employees at the meeting referred to in 7:3.1 subject to the Board of Education's right to utilize the building at the time such meeting is to be held and provided twenty-four (24) hours' notice is given to the Superintendent or their designee.

7:3.3 The notice of an agenda for any meeting to be held after the regular in-school workday shall be given to the employees involved at least one (1) day prior to the meeting.

7:3.4 Employees may be required to attend not more than three (3) evening assignments or meetings each school year without additional compensation as designated by the Superintendent. An evening assignment, other than parent/teacher conferences, shall be limited to two (2) consecutive hours. Parent/teacher conferences shall be limited to two (2) and one-quarter consecutive hours.

7:4 Parent Conferences

Twice per year, a four-hour student day shall be scheduled, and parent conferences shall be scheduled between the time of student dismissal and the end of the normal in-school day. Additional time for parent conferences shall be scheduled during the evenings as deemed necessary by the administration and in accordance with 7:3.4. Teachers may request additional release time from student contact time to schedule and/or conduct parent conferences where special circumstances, such as large class load, warrant. Such additional release time may be granted at the approval of the principal.

7:5 Training Days

Crisis Intervention Specialists shall receive three (3) professional days per school year. The selection of training shall focus on behavioral issues and be with the approval of the supervisor. Cost of training shall be paid by the Board of Education.

ARTICLE VIII SALARIES

8:1 The salaries of all employees covered by this Agreement are set forth in schedules A, B, C, D and E which are attached hereto and made a part hereof.

8:2 General requirements for credits on the salary guide in degree-plus categories for positions for which a certificate is required shall be as follows:

- B.A.+15 15 hours (6 of which shall be directly related to assigned instructional or service responsibilities)
- B.A.+30 30 hours (12 of which shall be directly related to assigned instructional or service responsibilities)
- M.A./B.A.+45 45 hours (18 of which shall be directly related to assigned instructional or service responsibilities)
- M.A.+15/ B.A.+60
 - M.A.+15 15 hours (6 of which shall be directly related to assigned instructional or service responsibilities)
 - B.A. +60 60 hours (24 of which shall be directly related to assigned instructional or service responsibilities)
- M.A.+30/ B.A.+75
 - M.A.+30 30 hours (12 of which shall be directly related to assigned instructional or service responsibilities)
 - B.A.+75 75 hours (30 of which shall be directly related to assigned instructional or service responsibilities)
- Doctorate/PHD/M.A.+45 45 hours (18 of which shall be directly related to assigned instructional or service responsibilities)
- “Credits” shall be defined as credits for courses successfully completed at an accredited institution of higher learning. In order to move on the salary guide for degree plus (non-certified staff for a certificate or bachelor’s degree) the employee must submit their application and proof of credit received to the Business Office between January 1st and June 30th to move on the guide as of July 1st, and between July 1st and December 31st calendar year to move on the guide effective January 1st of the next calendar year.

8:3 New teachers shall be granted credit on the salary guide (Schedule A) for educational courses satisfying the requirements specified in 8:2. Credit for experience on the salary guide (Schedule A) for new teachers shall be subject to the discretion of the Superintendent and approval by the Board.

8:4 New employees shall move up on the salary guides who have begun work in the district no later than January 31st of the preceding school year.

8:5 Tuition Reimbursement

Employees will be reimbursed for the cost of tuition for courses or training programs related to their job duties, subject to the prior written approval of the Superintendent, up to the limit of the tuition rates prevailing at The College of New Jersey, for a maximum of nine (9) credits for any one employee in any contract year, up to a maximum of \$55,000 per year for certified employees and \$20,000 per year for non-certified employees. Any funds not committed by December 31 of each year for non-certified employees shall be allocated for certified employees for the remainder of the school year ending the following June 30. Any funds not utilized by June 30 of each year shall not be carried over to the following school year. To be eligible to apply, employees must have completed one full year of service with the district at the time of application.

To obtain reimbursement, employees must receive no less than a grade of C in the courses taken. Part-time employees shall be eligible for a pro-rated amount of reimbursement per credit, based on their salary as a percentage of a full-time salary. Employees receiving reimbursement shall agree in writing to remain in the employ of the district for one year after receiving reimbursement, or shall repay the district in full for the reimbursement received in the year prior to their resignation. Such repayment shall be made before the last paycheck is issued.

8:6 Employees shall be entitled to one incremental step for experience on salary guides each year for satisfactory performance of duties as determined by the Superintendent based on established evaluation procedures and upon approval of the Board, except as modified by Schedules A, B, C and D.

8:7 The Board upon the Superintendent's recommendation shall designate the appropriate location upon the salary guide of new employees.

8:8 Paydays shall be the fifteenth (15) and thirtieth (30) of each month. (In months with less than thirty days the second pay shall be paid on the last day of the month). Except for the second June payment, when a payday falls on or during a district holiday, employees shall receive their paychecks on the last previous working day. The second June payment shall be on or before June 30th. Payments shall be as equal as possible.

8:9 Employees may elect to have a designated amount deducted from their checks to be deposited in the Mercer County Teachers' Credit Union.

8:10 The Board agrees to deduct dues of the Association and its affiliates from the salaries of its employees as said employees individually and voluntarily authorize the Board to deduct in compliance with Chapter 233, New

Jersey Public Laws of 1969 (N.J.S.A. 52:14-15.9e) and under rules established by the State Department of Education. Said monies together with current records of any corrections shall be transmitted to the designated official of the Association by the 15th of each month following the monthly pay period in which deductions were made.

8:11 Whenever classroom assistants who hold a substitute teacher certification cover classes on days when no teacher is present, they will receive additional compensation for such coverage at the rate of \$85.00 per day. This rate shall be prorated for coverage less than a full work day.

The Board may assign assistants to serve as substitute teachers up to five (5) days per year if they work 185 days, and up to six (6) days per year if they work Extended School Year days. These assistants may volunteer for additional assignments. Assistants, voluntary or not, who cover assignments shall be paid. Assignments voluntary or not, shall be within the building to which the assistant is regularly assigned. Assistants will be paid the negotiated stipend for each day of substitute teaching. Effective July 1, 2002, the Assistant designated by the Principal, who performs the instructional and educational duties when the teacher is at meetings or otherwise absent from the classroom during the student day, shall be compensated at the prorated hourly rate for a time period of thirty (30) consecutive minutes.

8:12 Effective July 1, 2012 employees under contract who present a workshop in or out of the District shall be compensated for preparation as follows:

Full day workshop (5 hours)	\$150.00
Half day workshop (2 1/2 hours)	\$ 75.00
Special presentation (1 hour)	\$ 50.00

8:13 Effective July 1, 2002, an employee who performs the duties of an interpreter at an IEP meeting or for students and/or parents with the approval of the principal or their designee shall be compensated at the rate of \$20.00 per day during the school day and \$30.00 per day after the school day, in addition to their contractual salary.

8:14 Work, which is assigned by the Superintendent and which is required to be done beyond the regular work day, shall be compensated on a hourly pro-rata of the employee's annual salary. There may be times when such work can only be completed during the workday, due to the student's availability, at the forfeiture of the employee's contracted time. This work shall be compensated at the curriculum rate:

High School Play – Director – Maximum 40 hours

Interscholastic Athletic Coaches:
Soft Ball – Maximum 20 hours
Soccer - Maximum 20 hours
Basketball - Maximum 30 hours

Drum Line - Maximum 40 hours

Student Council – Maximum 70 hours (to be consistent with current staffing of paid positions)

Cheerleading – Basketball – Maximum 30 hours (to be consistent with current staffing of paid positions)

ARTICLE IX LEAVES OF ABSENCE

9:1 Sick Leave

9:1.1 All employees shall be allowed sick leave with full pay for ten (10) school days in any school year.

9:1.2 Any employee who exhausts their cumulative sick leave may make a request to the Board for consideration of additional sick days, and/or differential remuneration between his contract salary and that of a replacement as allowed by law. Such judgment by the Board shall be based upon the circumstances of each individual case, shall be final, and not subject to the grievance procedure.

9:1.3 All unused sick leave days, which an employee has in their accumulated sick leave account in other school districts, shall be credited to their accumulated sick leave account in the Mercer County Special Services School District after certification from the prior employing school district. In the event the District adopts a policy in compliance with N.J.S.A. 18A:30-3.2 then this Article 9:1.3 shall be void.

9:1.4 Effective July 1, 2012, the Board shall pay to each employee or their estate for unused accumulated sick leave \$69.00 per day for teachers and \$39.00 per day for assistants, for up to two hundred (200) days of unused accumulated sick leave. Payment shall be made upon retirement and entering into TPAF, PERS, death or disability. Under exceptional circumstances, payment upon retiring without entering into TPAF or PERS may be granted by the Board of Education. Decisions rendered by the Board of Education under this section shall be final and binding.

9:2 Family Illness Leave

9:2.1 All employees shall be granted two (2) family illness days with full pay in any school year. Effective July 1, 2024, for all employees, family illness days accumulate to a maximum of five (5) and shall not be payable as accumulated sick leave under 9:1.4 of the article. For any employee hired on or before June 30, 2024, and who has more than five (5) family illness days as of June 30, 2024, such employee is permitted to use the balance of these family illness day.

9:3 Personal Leave

9:3.1 All employees shall be allowed three (3) days leave with full pay in any school year for personal business that cannot be handled outside of school hours. It is the intention of the parties that leave under this Article shall be

available for reasons of hardship or other pressing need and not merely for personal convenience. Such personal days shall not be accumulated from year to year.

9:3.2 Requests for leave must be made five (5) work days prior to the date requested off, except in cases of emergency. Requests for leave shall not be granted on professional development days, except in cases of emergency in which the employee shall provide documentation of said emergency. Administration will not schedule professional development the day immediately before or after a District holiday, with the exception of Labor Day. Administration is permitted to schedule professional development the Friday before or Tuesday after Labor Day.

9:3.3 The Superintendent has discretion in all cases to approve or disapprove the leave requests when, in their judgment, granting the leave request would be detrimental to the best interests of the district's educational program. No requests shall be denied arbitrarily or capriciously.

9:3.4 All personal leave days not used by an employee during that year will be converted to sick leave and added to the employee's accumulated sick leave account.

9:4 Disability Due to Pregnancy

9:4.1 Pregnant employees shall apply for a disability leave of absence. Such leave may be granted commencing with the period of actual disability and terminating with the end of the period of actual disability. The following conditions shall apply to pregnancy disability leaves.

9:4.2 The employee shall notify the Superintendent of their pregnancy as soon as possible after medical confirmation.

9:4.3 Upon request of the Board, request for maternity leave shall include a statement from a physician confirming the pregnancy and anticipated date of birth.

9:4.4 Exact dates of leave will be arranged in consideration of both medical evidence and administrative feasibility. The Board of Education reserves the right to regulate the termination dates of anticipated disability leaves in order to preserve educational continuity. When this occurs, an employee who is placed on an involuntary unpaid leave shall be entitled to all sick leave during the period of actual disability.

9:4.5 A statement from a physician certifying that an employee is physically able to return to duty may be required by the Board before the employee is permitted to return from maternity leave.

9:4.6 An employee's return date to employment may be extended for a reasonable period of time at their request and upon approval by the Board for reasons associated with pregnancy, birth or related medical cause.

9:4.7 A disability leave of absence may not be extended beyond the end of the school year in which the leave is obtained.

9:4.8 Except as provided above, no employee shall be barred from returning to duty after the birth of their child solely because there has not been a certain time lapse between the birth and their desired date of return.

9:4.9 No employee shall be removed from their duties during pregnancy except upon one of the following reasons.

- a. The Board has found that her performance has noticeably declined.
- b. The pregnant employee is found to be medically unable to continue working by their own physician and the Board's physician, or where these physicians disagree, by a physician jointly selected by the Board and the employee.

9:4.10 Any employee granted disability leave may, at their discretion, elect to use all or part of their accumulated sick leave during the period of actual disability and receive full pay and benefits.

9:5 Childcare Leaves

9:5.1 The Board shall grant voluntary unpaid leaves of absence for the purposes of childcare of an infant to those employees who fulfill the requirements set out below. Approval is conditioned upon adequate staffing as determined by the Board of Education.

9:5.2 Childcare leaves shall begin either:

- a. At the beginning of a school year and prior to the beginning of the actual disability:
- b. Immediately following the pregnancy-disability period, or
- c. At a date during the school year, upon the request of the employee and with the approval of the administration such date shall be set by the administration to minimize disruptions in the continuity of the educational program.

Childcare leaves shall normally terminate at the end of the school year in which they begin. An earlier termination date may be established at the request of the employee and with the approval of the administration; such date shall be set by the administration to minimize disruptions in the continuity of the educational program.

9:5.3 Extensions of childcare leave may be for one-half (1/2) school year or one (1) full school year at the request of the employee and the approval of the Board. Extensions beyond one (1) full year will only be granted in extreme emergencies at the discretion of the Board. Commencement and termination

dates shall be agreed upon between the Board and the employee and shall be set to minimize disruptions to the continuity of the educational program. Such extensions shall be available only to tenured teachers.

9:5.4 An employee desiring an unpaid leave shall apply no less than ninety (90) calendar days before the anticipated delivery date of the infant. Said application shall not constitute a waiver of the rights outlined in 9:4.1 above.

9:5.5 In the case of an adoption, notice shall be given to the employee's supervisor when the employee is approved by the adopting agency. In cases of adoption, application shall be made for a specific leave period as soon as the employee is informed of the anticipated date of physical custody of the child.

9:5.6 To be eligible for a salary increment, an employee must work at least ninety (90) days in the school year that the leave commences or terminates.

9:5.7 An employee on a voluntary unpaid leave of absence shall not be eligible to either receive or accrue benefits except as statutorily required.

9:5.8 Employees on childcare leave shall notify the Board of their intent to return following their leave no later than seventy-five (75) calendar days prior to the scheduled end of their leave. Tenured teachers requesting an extension under 9:5.3 above shall submit their request no later than seventy-five (75) calendar days prior to the scheduled end of their leave.

9:6 Bereavement Leave

9:6.1 Leave of absence without loss of pay not exceeding a total of ten (10) days per school year shall be granted for the following purposes subject to the limitations per category stated therein:

- a. Leaves of absence without loss of pay, not to exceed eight (8) days per year with no more than five (5) for a single occurrence, shall be granted when a death occurs in the immediate family. Immediate family is defined to mean, spouse, civil union partner, parent, step-parent, parent-in-law, sister/brother-in-law, child, step-child, son/daughter-in-law, sibling, grandparent, grandchild and/or any other member of the employee's immediate household.
- b. Two (2) days of absence per year without loss of pay to attend the funeral of a close friend or relative not a member of the "immediate family" shall be granted upon request, not to exceed more than one (1) per occurrence.
- c. Additional days with pay may be granted at the discretion of the Superintendent when unfortunate circumstances may warrant additional days. Decisions rendered by the Superintendent under this section shall be final and binding.

9:7 An employee may request leave without pay but the Board determination shall be final and binding.

9:8 Procedure

9:8.1 All applications for leave shall be requested using the districts online absence management system, except in cases of emergency. In cases of emergency, the employee shall immediately request said leave in writing to their Principal and/or immediate Supervisor at least one (1) hour prior to the employee's start time.

9:8.2 All benefits to which an employee was entitled at the time the approved leave of absence commenced shall be restored upon their return, and their shall be assigned to an equivalent position to that held at the time the leave commenced.

9:9 Professional Leaves of Absence

9:9.1 Teachers may apply for leave with pay to attend professional conferences, workshops and seminars that have a direct relationship to the employee's responsibilities in the district. Leave under this section shall not exceed one (1) day per year. Additional days may be taken for such conferences, seminars and workshops from those days available to the employee under 9:3.1 above, subject to the procedures for their use established in 9:3.2 through 9:3.3.

9:9.2 Requests for leave must be made five (5) work days prior to that requested off, and shall include sufficient background information on the conference, workshop or seminar so that the Superintendent can evaluate the value of the conference to the employee's responsibilities in the district. Requests directly related to the goals designated in an employee's Professional Improvement Plan shall receive precedence over other requests.

Employees shall be reimbursed for the cost of attendance of the conference, workshop or seminar that they attend with the use of the professional leave day, as outlined in this article 9:9.1, or for conference, workshop or seminar on their own time, during the weekend, or when school is closed as long as they have prior approval for reimbursement from the superintendent or their designee. There will be a maximum reimbursement for up to 2 conferences, workshops, or seminars per year and at a maximum of two hundred (200) dollars per school year. Proof of payment of the cost of the session(s) and attendance of the Professional Development session(s) must be submitted in order to receive monetary reimbursement from the District.

9:9.3 The Superintendent has discretion in all cases to approve or disapprove such requests when in their judgment, granting the leave request would be detrimental to the best interests of the district's educational program. No requests shall be denied arbitrarily or capriciously.

9:9.4 Upon the recommendation of the Superintendent and the approval of the Board, leaves under this section may exceed one (1) day.

9:10 Military Leave

9:10.1 Brief leaves of absence with pay will be granted annually to personnel required to perform short periods of military duty annually, pursuant to Section 38:23-1 of the New Jersey Statutes. A copy of the military orders shall be filed with the Secretary of the Board.

9:10.2 Leaves of absence for military duty for an extended period of time without pay may be granted upon request and upon filing a copy of the military orders with the Secretary of the Board. An extended leave must be renewed annually if it extends beyond the end of one school year. An extended period is defined as any period longer than ninety (90) days.

9:11 Educational Furloughs

9:11.1 Employees with a minimum of five (5) full years of continuous employment in the District may receive a half-year leave with full health insurance benefits, or a full year with benefits paid fifty percent (50%) by the Board and fifty percent (50%) by the Employee. Such leaves shall be for study only at the equivalent of at least twelve (12) college credits per semester, subject to the prior written approval of the Superintendent. Tuition reimbursement shall be available per the terms of Article 8:5 of this Agreement. Employees on educational furloughs shall agree in writing to return to employment in the District for a period of two (2) years immediately following the leave; failure to return shall obligate the Employee to repay to the Board the cost of benefits and tuition borne by the Board during the leave.

**ARTICLE X
EMPLOYMENT AND PROMOTIONS**

10:1 Opportunity will be given to any employee to apply for available positions in the district by posting notices in the district's school buildings.

10:2 Notice of any vacancies shall be posted on the District's website and in the Human Resources office.

**ARTICLE XI
TEACHER WORK STATIONS**

11:1 Procedure

11:1.1 The Superintendent of Schools will use their best efforts to give written notice not later than June 30 of each year to employees then employed of their tentative class and building assignments for the forthcoming school year. The Superintendent will use their best efforts to give such notice to employees hired after June 30 by the first days of the school year. A list of said classes and building stations shall be simultaneously sent to the Association.

11:1.2 The Superintendent of Schools retains the discretion to make such changes in class and building assignments as may be determined to be necessary

notwithstanding any other provision of the Agreement. In the event that changes in such class and/or building stations are made, the Association and any teacher affected shall be notified promptly in writing.

11:1.3 Employees who may be required to use their own automobiles in the performance of their duties and/or employees who are assigned to more than one (1) school per day shall be reimbursed for all such travel for all driving done between arrival at their first location at the beginning of their workday and last location at the conclusion of the workday

ARTICLE XII EVALUATION PROCEDURES AND PERSONNEL FILE

12:1 Teachers

12:1.1 All monitoring or observation of the work performance of a teacher shall be conducted openly and with full knowledge of the teacher. The use of eavesdropping, cameras, audio systems, and similar surveillance devices shall be prohibited except any teacher may voluntarily agree to the use of such devices. The surveillance cameras in areas such as cafeterias, Retail Marketing Vocational Setting (currently called "Chucks Place"), the High School Technology Classroom, the High School Exercise Room and hallways throughout the district, shall be only used for safety and security monitoring purposes and shall not be used for observation or evaluation of staff in any manner.

12:1.2 Non-tenured teachers (excluding classroom assistants) shall be evaluated at least three (3) times in each school year with each evaluation equal in time to a subject lesson or therapy session. Such evaluations shall be scheduled at various times by the Superintendent of Schools and a written evaluation report shall be prepared after each evaluation.

12:1.3 A teacher shall be given a copy of any class visit, evaluation report or videotape prepared by their evaluators at least one (1) day before any conference to discuss it, and no more than ten (10) school days following the scheduled observation. No such report shall be submitted to the central office, placed in the teacher's file or otherwise acted upon without opportunity provided to the teacher for a prior conference.

12:1.3(a) There shall be only two (2) copies of any videotape prepared by the evaluators of a Teacher in connection with an observation/evaluation of a Teacher (the "Teacher Videotape"). The Teacher's immediate supervisor shall keep one (1) copy of the Teacher Videotape in a secure location and the Teacher shall receive one (1) copy. The Association shall be informed of the location of the copy of the Teacher Videotape maintained by the Teacher's immediate supervisor.

12:1.3(b) The administration shall not voluntarily share the video tape with any party not affiliated with the District and it may only be used by the District for

the purpose of evaluation. The Teacher Videotape shall be no less than a twenty (20) minute observation of the Teacher.

12:1.3(c) The Teacher Videotape may be relied upon by the Teacher's evaluator(s) as one of multiple sources of information which can form the basis of a Teacher's evaluation.

12:1.4 A teacher shall be required to sign the evaluation form, after the conference referred to in 12:1.3 with the express understanding that such signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the contents thereof. No teacher shall be asked to sign a blank or incomplete evaluation form.

12:1.5 Policies and procedures for the evaluation of tenured teaching staff members shall be distributed to each tenured teaching staff member no later than October 1.

12:2 Non-Certified Staff

12:2.1 Non-certified staff shall be evaluated at least once each school year in accordance with policies of the Board.

12:2.2 Prior to the annual evaluation conference, the non-certified staff may request the presence of the teacher in charge of the assistant during the evaluation conference.

12:2.3 A non-certified staff shall be required to sign an evaluation form, after the conference with the express understanding that such signature does not necessarily indicate agreement with the contents thereof. No non-certified staff shall be asked to sign a blank or incomplete evaluation form.

12:2.4 A non-certified staff shall be given a hard copy of any class visit, evaluation report or videotape prepared by their evaluators at least one (1) day before any conference to discuss it and no more than ten (10) school days following the scheduled observation. No such report shall be submitted to the central office, placed in the assistant's file or otherwise acted upon without opportunity provided to the assistant for a prior conference.

12:2.4(a) There shall be only two (2) copies of any videotape prepared by the evaluators of an Assistant in connection with an observation/evaluation of an Assistant (the "Assistant Videotape"). The Assistant's immediate supervisor shall keep one (1) copy of the Assistant Videotape in a secure location and the Assistant shall receive one (1) copy. The Association shall be informed of the location of the copy of the Assistant Videotape maintained by the Assistant's immediate supervisor.

12:2.4(b) The administration shall not voluntarily share the video tape with any party not affiliated with the District and it may only be used by the District for the purpose of evaluation. The Assistant Videotape shall be no less than a twenty (20) minute observation of the Assistant.

12:2.4(c) The Assistant Videotape may be relied upon by the Assistant's evaluator(s) as one of multiple sources of information which can form the basis of an Assistant's evaluation.

12:3 Personnel File

12:3.1 An employee shall have the right, upon request, to review the contents of their personnel file and to receive copies at Board expense of any documents contained therein. An employee shall be entitled to have representative(s) of the Association accompany him/her during such review.

12:3.2 No material pertaining to any employee's conduct, service, character or personality shall be placed in their personnel file unless the employee has been offered an opportunity to review the material. The employee shall acknowledge that they have had the opportunity to review such material by affixing their signature to the copy to be filed with the express understanding that such signature in no way indicates agreement with the contents thereof. The employee shall also have the right to submit a written answer to such material, which shall be attached to the file copy. A response may be filed to the employee's written response and included in the employee's file. In all cases, the employee shall be provided copies of such materials.

12:3.3 At least once every three (3) years, an employee shall have the right to indicate those documents and/or other materials in the file, other than written evaluation reports, which they believe to be obsolete or otherwise inappropriate to retain. Said documents shall be reviewed by the Superintendent and if, in their judgment, they are obsolete or otherwise inappropriate to retain, they will be destroyed. Said decision of the Superintendent shall not be subject to the grievance procedure.

12:4 Mentoring

The District shall provide each mentor as defined in the N.J.A.C. four (4) release periods each of which shall be equal in time to the subject lesson or therapy session for observation of the mentee. Each mentor/mentee pair shall be released from all duties for a period not to exceed thirty (30) minutes following each observation for the purpose of discussing the observation. All release periods shall be approved by the building administrator(s).

ARTICLE XIII SENIORITY AND JOB SECURITY FOR ASSISTANTS

13:1 This Article became effective on July 1, 1999. Seniority earned prior to that date will apply to each employee employed as of that date.

13:2 Seniority becomes effective on the first day of the thirty-seventh month of employment.

Employees shall accumulate seniority credit throughout their employment in the district. When an employee, hired prior to June 30, 2013, that has not yet reached thirty-six (36) months and one day of seniority credit, is laid off due to

a reduction in force and then is rehired, the employee will have their accumulated seniority credit and benefits restored as of the date of the layoff.

Any employee hired on or after July 1, 2013, that has not yet reached thirty-six (36) months and one day of seniority credit, is laid off due to a reduction in force and then is rehired within twelve (12) months, the employee will have their accumulated seniority credit and benefits restored as of the date of layoff.

Example:

One on One 5 years

IBA 2 years

RIF

Back to One on One - (IBA seniority does not continue to grow)

(One on one seniority = 7 years)

(IBA seniority = 2 years)

“Individual Behavioral Assistants” shall earn “IBA” seniority only while working in the category of “Individual Behavioral Assistants.”

13:3 This article shall apply to all assistants. Part-time assistants shall earn seniority on a prorated basis. “One to One” assistants shall earn seniority only in the category of “One to One” assistants, but they shall carry their seniority with them if they move into a classroom assistant position, retroactive to their first day of employment as a “One to One” assistant.

13:3.1 Classroom assistants, one on one assistants, individual behavior assistants and crisis intervention specialists shall carry their seniority with them if they move into certified position employment within the district. They will continue to accumulate seniority credit retroactive to their first day of employment as a classroom assistant, one on one assistant, individual behavior assistant or crisis intervention specialist and will also accumulate seniority in the certificated position from their first day of employment in that position.

13:4 Recall rights under this Article shall exist for eighteen (18) months from the last calendar day of the last month of employment.

13:5 School district seniority is defined as service by assistants in the school district in the collective bargaining unit covered by this Agreement.

13:6 Any reduction of positions shall only be accomplished in the following manner: non-certified staff affected by such a reduction shall have seniority rights over the most junior non-certified staff member. Those non-certified thus affected shall retain the same rights in replacing the most junior non-certified staff.

13:7 In the event that a vacancy occurs, a laid-off non-certified staff shall be entitled to recall thereto in the order of their seniority.

13:8 Notice of recall to work shall be addressed to the assistant's last address appearing on the records of the school district, by certified mail, return receipt requested. Within fifteen (15) days from receipt of such notice of recall, the assistant staff member shall notify the Board of Education, in writing, whether or not their desires to return to the work involved in the recall. If he/she fails to reply or he/she indicates that their does not desire to return to such work, he/she forfeits all of their seniority and all rights to recall.

13:9 Seniority shall not accumulate during the period of lay-off. Upon recall the Assistant member shall have their accumulated seniority and benefits restored to the date of lay-off.

13:10 An assistant shall lose all accumulated school district seniority only if their resigns or is discharged for just cause, irrespective of whether their is subsequently rehired by the school district.

13:11 All currently employed Assistants shall be placed on a seniority list from their date of employment.

ARTICLE XIV PERSONAL AND PROPERTY INTERESTS

14:1 The Board of Education and the Association recognize the mutual rights and responsibilities of the Board and its employees pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-1.

14:2 The Board shall reimburse employees for the reasonable cost of replacement or repair of clothing, eyeglasses, contact lenses, or other personal property on the person damaged or destroyed by a student or stolen by a student or other person while the employee was acting in the discharge of their duties within the scope of their employment but such reimbursement shall not exceed \$400 per occurrence. No reimbursement will be made for stolen money or for jewelry other than watches. In order to claim reimbursement for stolen property, an employee must have:

- a. submitted a police report, and
- b. submitted an insurance claim.

Reimbursement for stolen property will be limited to \$200.00. Employees shall exercise good judgment in the choice of clothing and other personal property worn during classroom or professional activities. Vandalism against employee automobiles caused by district students when the automobile is in a parking lot designated for district use, or parked in the street when no lot is available, is also reimbursable under this section, to the maximum of \$400 per occurrence or to the amount of the deductible under the employee's auto insurance, whichever is less. An incident report indicating the place, date, time, witnesses, and student(s) responsible must be filed along with the request for any reimbursement under this section.

**ARTICLE XV
INSURANCE PROTECTION**

15:1 Insurance Protection

15:1.1 The Board shall provide insurance benefits (“Benefits”), which includes medical, prescription drug, and dental coverage, as described hereinafter to Employees and their eligible dependents, where Employees elect to receive and are eligible for such protection. Any Employee who was previously employed by the Board and resumes employment after a resignation or termination shall be deemed a “new Employee.”

15:1.2 Consistent with applicable law and regulations, Employees who are eligible for and elect to receive Benefits shall contribute toward the cost of the premium for such Benefits as required by law. Consistent with applicable law and regulations, the Board will pay for the remainder of the cost of the premium for such Benefits.

15:1.3 Consistent with applicable law and regulations, the Board shall offer a flexible spending account plan (“FSA Plan”) for participation by all Employees.

15:1.4 The Board shall provide health insurance benefits equivalent to benefits it provides as of June 30, 2018.

15:1.5 The Board shall provide a prescription drug plan, with contraceptives, to Employees and their dependents. The co-pay shall be Ten Dollars (\$10.00) for generic, Fifteen Dollars (\$15.00) for name brand, and Five Dollars (\$5.00) for mail order.

15:1.6 The Board shall pay all dental premiums for all Employees and the dental rider regarding the maximum annual benefit level to One Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$1,500.00) for all Employees and their dependents.

15:1.7 Health Insurance Waiver Incentive Payments

Subject to restrictions involving multiple coverages pursuant to applicable law and regulations, the Board will make the following payments to Employees who voluntarily waive their medical, prescription and/or dental insurance coverage who are eligible for coverage under Article 15:1.1.

	<u>Medical</u>	<u>Prescription</u>	<u>Dental</u>
Single	\$1,000	\$400	\$150
Parent/Child	\$1,500	\$600	\$250
Husband/Wife	\$2,000	\$800	\$350
Family	\$3,000	\$1,000	\$350

This includes medical, prescription, and/or dental coverage. All cash payments shall be prorated. Payments will be made one half in December and one half on or before June 30th. The December payment will reflect any eligible months from July 1st through December 31st. The June payment will reflect any eligible months from January 1st through June 30th. Employees that choose the cash

option must reapply each year. Proof of other coverage must be submitted with each request for the cash option. Employees will be eligible for immediate re-enrollment due to life circumstance changes. The Board will create and maintain Section 125 accounts for participants.

15:1.8 The Board agrees to pay the cost of Disability Income Protection Insurance. It is understood that the plan benefits and rates shall reflect appropriate increases to provide coverage at least equal to that provided under the New Jersey Temporary Disability Benefits Law as mandated by N.J.S.A. 43:21-42.

ARTICLE XVI MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS

16:1 Policy

16:1.1 This Agreement constitutes Board policy for the term of said Agreement, and the Board shall carry out the commitment contained herein and give them full force and effect as Board policy.

16:1.2 The Agreement represents and incorporates the complete and final understanding by the parties of all bargainable issues, which were or could have been the subject of negotiations. During the term of this Agreement, neither party will be required to negotiate with respect to any matter that was within the knowledge or contemplation of either or both of the parties at the time they negotiated or signed this Agreement, except that the Board may reopen negotiations in order to fulfill its obligations by law.

16:1.3 The Board retains, subject to the limitations of the Agreement, all powers, rights, and authority vested in it by all laws, rules, and regulations, including but not limited to the management and direction of all the operations and activities of the school district, the hiring, discharge, and non-renewal of teachers and other employees, the transfer of teachers and other employees and the scheduling of the work year, the evaluation of teachers and other employees, and for just cause, the suspension, reprimand, or discipline of teachers and other employees.

16:2 Separability

16:2.1 If any provision of this Agreement or any application of this Agreement is held to be contrary to law, then such provision or application shall not be deemed valid and subsisting, except to the extent permitted by law, but all other provisions or applications shall continue in full force and effect.

16:3 Compliance Between Individual Contract and Master Agreement

16:3.1 Any individual contract between the Board and any individual employee heretofore or hereinafter executed, shall be subject to and consistent with the terms and conditions of this Agreement. If any individual contract contains any language inconsistent with this Agreement, this Agreement shall be controlling.

16:4 Printing Agreement

16:4.1 Copies of this Agreement shall be printed at the expense of the Board after agreement with the Association on format within sixty (60) days after the

Agreement is signed. The Agreement shall be presented to all employees now employed, hereinafter employed, or considered for employment by the Board.

16:5 Notice

16:5.1 Whenever any notice is required to be given by either of the parties of this Agreement to the other, pursuant to the provision(s) of this Agreement, either party shall do so by email or registered letter at the following addresses:

a. If by the Association to the Board:
Mercer County Special Services School District
1020 Old Trenton Road
Trenton, NJ 08690

b. If by the Board to the Association:
Home address of the President

16:6 Notice of Resignation

16:6.1 A letter of resignation shall be submitted to the Superintendent at least sixty (60) calendar days before resignation for certified staff and thirty (30) calendar days before resignation for non-certified staff.

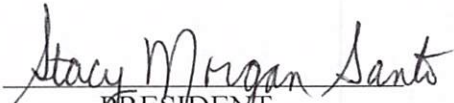
**ARTICLE XVII
DURATION OF AGREEMENT**

This Agreement shall be effective as of July 1, 2024, and shall continue until June 30, 2027.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the parties hereto have caused this Agreement to be signed by their duly authorized officers.

MERCER COUNTY
SPECIAL SERVICES
BOARD OF EDUCATION

MERCER COUNTY SPECIAL
SERVICES EDUCATIONAL
AND THERAPEUTIC
ASSOCIATION


PRESIDENT


PRESIDENT


SECRETARY


SECRETARY

Date: 6/4/24

Date: 6/4/24

SALARY INCREASES:

- 2024-2025: 3.6% Certified Staff
- 2024-2025: 5.0% Non-Certified Staff
- 2025-2026: 3.5% Certified Staff
- 2025-2026: 4.0% Non-Certified Staff
- 2026-2027: 3.5% Certified Staff
- 2026-2027: 4.0% Non-Certified Staff

SCHEDULE A
TEACHERS' SALARY GUIDE

2024-2025

Step	BA	BA+15	BA+30	MA/ BA+45	MA+15/ BA+60	MA+30/ BA+75	PHD/ MA+45
1	73,939	74,559	75,139	75,719	76,339	76,869	77,489
2	74,439	75,059	75,639	76,219	76,839	77,369	77,989
3	74,939	75,559	76,139	76,719	77,339	77,869	78,489
4	75,639	76,259	76,839	77,419	78,039	78,569	79,189
5	76,639	77,259	77,839	78,419	79,039	79,569	80,189
6	78,739	79,359	79,939	80,519	81,139	81,669	82,289
7	81,339	81,959	82,539	83,119	83,739	84,269	84,889
8	84,114	84,734	85,314	85,894	86,514	87,044	87,664
9	87,014	87,634	88,214	88,794	89,414	89,944	90,564
10	90,014	90,634	91,214	91,794	92,414	92,944	93,564
11	93,214	93,834	94,414	94,994	95,614	96,144	96,764
12	96,589	97,209	97,789	98,369	98,989	99,519	100,139
13	100,114	100,734	101,314	101,894	102,514	103,044	103,664
14	103,744	104,364	104,944	105,524	106,144	106,674	107,294

2025-2026

Step	BA	BA+15	BA+30	MA/ BA+45	MA+15/ BA+60	MA+30/ BA+75	PHD/ MA+45
1	75,663	76,283	76,863	77,443	78,063	78,593	79,213
2	76,163	76,783	77,363	77,943	78,563	79,093	79,713
3	76,663	77,283	77,863	78,443	79,063	79,593	80,213
4	77,363	77,983	78,563	79,143	79,763	80,293	80,913
5	78,363	78,983	79,563	80,143	80,763	81,293	81,913
6	80,463	81,083	81,663	82,243	82,863	83,393	84,013
7	83,063	83,683	84,263	84,843	85,463	85,993	86,613
8	85,838	86,458	87,038	87,618	88,238	88,768	89,388
9	88,738	89,358	89,938	90,518	91,138	91,668	92,288
10	91,738	92,358	92,938	93,518	94,138	94,668	95,288
11	94,938	95,558	96,138	96,718	97,338	97,868	98,488
12	98,313	98,933	99,513	100,093	100,713	101,243	101,863
13	101,838	102,458	103,038	103,618	104,238	104,768	105,388
14	105,468	106,088	106,668	107,248	107,868	108,398	109,018

2026-2027

Step	BA	BA+15	BA+30	MA/ BA+45	MA+15/ BA+60	MA+30/ BA+75	PHD/ MA+45
1	77,426	78,046	78,626	79,206	79,826	80,356	80,976
2	77,926	78,546	79,126	79,706	80,326	80,856	81,476
3	78,426	79,046	79,626	80,206	80,826	81,356	81,976
4	79,126	79,746	80,326	80,906	81,526	82,056	82,676
5	80,126	80,746	81,326	81,906	82,526	83,056	83,676
6	82,226	82,846	83,426	84,006	84,626	85,156	85,776
7	84,826	85,446	86,026	86,606	87,226	87,756	88,376
8	87,601	88,221	88,801	89,381	90,001	90,531	91,151
9	90,501	91,121	91,701	92,281	92,901	93,431	94,051
10	93,501	94,121	94,701	95,281	95,901	96,431	97,051
11	96,701	97,321	97,901	98,481	99,101	99,631	100,251
12	100,076	100,696	101,276	101,856	102,476	103,006	103,626
13	103,601	104,221	104,801	105,381	106,001	106,531	107,151
14	107,231	107,851	108,431	109,011	109,631	110,161	110,781

Longevity Factor: For any employee who begins employment on or after July 1, 2024, work outside of the district shall not be considered for longevity. \$1,200 additional pay for teachers with fifteen years to twenty years and \$1,500 additional pay for teachers with 20 years or more experience as certified teachers in a public school, a state operated school or a nonpublic school approved to receive handicapped students from public school districts. Credit will be granted to therapists for experience in clinics, hospitals or similar settings while working under a license or certificate in that discipline.

For Certified teachers, the longevity factor shall be \$1,250 additional pay for teachers with fifteen years to twenty years experience as certified teachers in the district and \$1,550 additional pay for teachers with 20 years or more experience as certified teachers in the district.

Certified teachers who have been in the district for 20 years shall receive additional \$750 per year for a total of \$2,300 per year.

For all references regarding longevity in this section, fifteen years shall mean fifteen full school years, or the aggregate of fifteen years total experience where part-time employment is a factor. Twenty years shall mean twenty full school years, or the aggregate of twenty years total experience where part-time employment is a factor. For persons hired to begin initial employment after January 5, 1999, longevity payments shall be made after fifteen full years in the district.

Those employees who have been in the district in a capacity other than a certified teacher and are then hired or have been hired as a certified teacher shall receive an additional \$600 per year after twelve (12) years of employment until they are eligible for longevity on Schedule A. Such employees shall also be given ½ service credit towards certified teacher longevity for time employed in the district in a capacity other than a certified teacher (as described in the example below):

Example:

Employee A worked for MCSSSD as a Classroom Assistant for 4 full school years

= 2 years credit toward certified teacher longevity.

Employee is then hired as a Certified Teacher and works 13 full school years in the district

= 13 years credit toward certified teacher longevity.

Therefore, Employee A is now eligible for longevity on Schedule A as having achieved the 15 years minimum requirement.

SCHEDULE B
CLASSROOM ASSISTANT'S SALARY GUIDE

2024-2025

Step	A	B	C	D
1-2	30,125	30,425	30,425	30,725
3	30,325	30,625	30,625	30,925
4	30,525	30,825	30,825	31,125
5	30,800	31,100	31,100	31,400
6	31,150	31,450	31,450	31,750
7	31,750	32,050	32,050	32,350
8	32,450	32,750	32,750	33,050
9	33,750	34,050	34,050	34,350
10	35,150	35,450	35,450	35,750
11	36,750	37,050	37,050	37,350
12	38,400	38,700	38,700	39,000
13	40,225	40,525	40,525	40,825
14	42,150	42,450	42,450	42,750
15	44,125	44,425	44,425	44,725

2025-2026

Step	A	B	C	D
1-3	31,208	31,508	31,508	31,808
4	31,408	31,708	31,708	32,008
5	31,683	31,983	31,983	32,283
6	32,033	32,333	32,333	32,633
7	32,633	32,933	32,933	33,233
8	33,333	33,633	33,633	33,933
9	34,633	34,933	34,933	35,233
10	36,033	36,333	36,333	36,633
11	37,633	37,933	37,933	38,233
12	39,283	39,583	39,583	39,883
13	41,108	41,408	41,408	41,708
14	43,033	43,333	43,333	43,633
15	45,008	45,308	45,308	45,608

2026-2027

Step	A	B	C	D
1-4	32,251	32,551	32,551	32,851
5	32,526	32,826	32,826	33,126
6	32,876	33,176	33,176	33,476
7	33,476	33,776	33,776	34,076
8	34,176	34,476	34,476	34,776
9	35,476	35,776	35,776	36,076
10	36,876	37,176	37,176	37,476
11	38,476	38,776	38,776	39,076
12	40,126	40,426	40,426	40,726
13	41,951	42,251	42,251	42,551
14	43,876	44,176	44,176	44,476
15	45,851	46,151	46,151	46,451

Schedule B – Step Progression Guide for Assistants
 2023-2024 2024-2025 2025-2026 2026-2027 Resulting New Step
 Numbering for Years
 Beginning 2027-2028

1 --->	1-2 --->	1-3 --->	1-4	1
2 --->	3 --->	4 --->	5	2
3 --->	4 --->	5 --->	6	3
4 --->	5 --->	6 --->	7	4
5 --->	6 --->	7 --->	8	5
6 --->	7 --->	8 --->	9	6
7 --->	8 --->	9 --->	10	7
8 --->	9 --->	10 --->	11	8
9 --->	10 --->	11 --->	12	9
10 --->	11 --->	12 --->	13	10
11 --->	12 --->	13 --->	14	11
12 --->	13 --->	14 --->	15	12
13 --->	14 --->	15 --->	15	
14 --->	15 --->	15		
15 --->	15			

Advanced/Placement Chart: MCSSETA Assistants
 (Read directly across the line to track advancement/placement)

- Column "A" assistant base salary
- Column "B": assistant base salary plus differential for holding a substitute certificate
- Column "C": assistant base salary plus differential for holding a B.A. degree
- Column "D": assistant base salary plus differential for holding both a substitute certificate and a B.A. degree

Longevity Factor: Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants and Crisis Intervention Specialists with twelve to twenty years experience as Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants, Crisis Intervention Specialists (or equivalent positions) shall be entitled to \$700 additional pay per year.

Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants and Crisis Intervention Specialists with twenty or more years experience as Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants, Crisis Intervention Specialists (or equivalent positions) shall be entitled to \$850 additional pay per year.

For Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants and Crisis Intervention Specialists, the longevity factor shall be \$750 additional pay for Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants and Crisis Intervention Specialists with fifteen years to twenty years in the district as Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants, Crisis Intervention Specialists and \$900 additional pay for Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants and Crisis Intervention Specialists with 20 years or more experience in the district as Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants, Crisis Intervention Specialists.

Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants and Crisis Intervention Specialists with twenty years experience in the district as Classroom Assistants, One on One Assistants, Behavioral Assistants, Crisis Intervention Specialists (or equivalent positions) shall be entitled to an additional \$200 per year for a total of \$1,100 per year.

For all references regarding longevity in this section, twelve years cumulative experience shall mean twelve full school years or the aggregate of twelve years total experience where part-time employment is a factor. Twenty years shall mean twenty full school years or the aggregate of twenty years total experience where part-time employment is a factor. For persons hired to begin initial employment after January 5, 1999, longevity payments shall be made after twelve full years in the district.

Those employees who have been in the district in a capacity other than a certified teacher and are then hired or have been hired as a certified teacher shall receive an additional \$450 per year after twelve (12) years of employment until they are eligible for longevity on Schedule A. Such employees shall also be given ½ service credit towards certified teacher longevity for time employed in the district in a capacity other than a certified teacher (as described in the example below):

Example:

Employee A worked for MCSSSD as a Classroom Assistant for 4 full school years
= 2 years credit toward certified teacher longevity.
Employee is then hired as a Certified Teacher and works 13 full school years in the district
= 13 years credit toward certified teacher longevity.
Therefore, Employee A is now eligible for longevity on Schedule A as having achieved the 15 years minimum requirement.

SCHEDULE C

**CERTIFIED OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY ASSISTANTS AND
PHYSICAL THERAPIST ASSISTANTS' SALARY GUIDES**

	2024-25	2025-26	2026-27
Step			
1	\$ 47,479 1	\$ 49,239 1	\$ 50,999
2	\$ 48,014 2	\$ 49,774 2	\$ 51,534
3	\$ 48,548 3	\$ 50,308 3	\$ 52,068
4	\$ 49,083 4	\$ 50,843 4	\$ 52,603
5	\$ 49,618 5	\$ 51,378 5	\$ 53,138
6	\$ 50,141 6	\$ 51,901 6	\$ 53,661

B.A. Factor: \$300 additional pay per year for possessing a baccalaureate degree.

Longevity Factor: COTAs and PTAs with twelve to twenty years experience as a COTA, PTA or Classroom Assistant shall be entitled to \$700 additional pay per year.

COTAs and PTAs with twenty or more years experience as a COTA, PTA or Classroom Assistant shall be entitled to \$850 additional pay per year.

COTAs and PTAs with twelve to twenty years experience as a COTA, PTA or Classroom Assistant in the district shall be entitled to \$750 additional pay per year.

COTAs and PTAs with twenty or more years experience as a COTA, PTA or Classroom Assistant in the district shall be entitled to \$900 additional pay per year.

COTAs and PTAs with twenty years experience in the district as a COTA, PTA or Classroom Assistant shall be entitled to an additional \$200 per year for a total of \$1,100 per year.

For all references regarding longevity in this section, twelve years cumulative experience shall mean twelve full school years or the aggregate of twelve years total experience where part-time employment is a factor. Twenty years shall mean twenty full school years or the aggregate of twenty years total experience where part-time employment is a factor. For persons hired to begin initial employment after January 5, 1999, longevity payments shall be made after twelve full years in the district.

SCHEDULE D
CRISIS INTERVENTION SPECIALIST
***SALARIES ARE BASED ON 213 DAY WORK YEAR**

2024-2025

Step	A	B	C	D
1	53,405	53,705	53,705	54,005
2	54,030	54,330	54,330	54,630
3	54,655	54,955	54,955	55,255
4	55,280	55,580	55,580	55,880
5	55,905	56,205	56,205	56,505
6	56,530	56,830	56,830	57,130
7	57,155	57,455	57,455	57,755
8	57,780	58,080	58,080	58,380
9	58,405	58,705	58,705	59,005

2025-2026

Step	A	B	C	D
1	55,240	55,540	55,540	55,840
2	55,865	56,165	56,165	56,465
3	56,490	56,790	56,790	57,090
4	57,115	57,415	57,415	57,715
5	57,740	58,040	58,040	58,340
6	58,365	58,665	58,665	58,965
7	58,990	59,290	59,290	59,590
8	59,615	59,915	59,915	60,215
9	60,240	60,540	60,540	60,840

2026-2027

Step	A	B	C	D
1	57,208	57,508	57,508	57,808
2	57,833	58,133	58,133	58,433
3	58,458	58,758	58,758	59,058
4	59,083	59,383	59,383	59,683
5	59,708	60,008	60,008	60,308
6	60,333	60,633	60,633	60,933
7	60,958	61,258	61,258	61,558
8	61,583	61,883	61,883	62,183
9	62,208	62,508	62,508	62,808

Overnight trips

\$90.00 per employee per night